

**“LES GENS DE CETTE PLACE”:
OBLATES AND THE EVOLVING CONCEPT OF *MÉTIS*
AT ÎLE-À-LA-CROSSE,
1845-1898**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the construction and evolution of categories of indigeneity within the context of the Oblate (Roman Catholic) apostolate at Île-à-Crosse in present-day north-western Saskatchewan between 1845 and 1898. While focusing on one central mission station, this study illuminates broad historical processes that informed Oblate perceptions and impelled their evolution over a fifty-three-year period. In particular, this study illuminates processes that shaped Oblate concepts of *sauvage* and *métis*. It does this through a qualitative analysis of missionary correspondence, mission records and published reports. In the process, this dissertation challenges the orthodox notion that Oblate commentators simply discovered and described a singular, empirically existing and readily identifiable Métis population. Rather, this dissertation contends that Oblates played an important role in the conceptual production of *les métis*.

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INTRODUCTION

From *sauvage* to *métis*:

The evolution of missionary-made categories at Île-à-la-Crosse,
1845-1898

On May 24, 1845, *abbé* Jean-Baptiste Thibault wrote an uncharacteristically forceful letter to his bishop. The normally stolid missionary reported that he had just visited the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post at Île-à-la-Crosse where he had encountered eighty "Montagnais" families who earnestly desired religious instruction. Unfamiliar with their language, Thibault had endeavoured to teach them the Paternoster, the Ave Maria, the Credo and the Gloria Patris in French. Then, before resuming his itinerant mission, he had promised these "bons sauvages" that he would send them priests who would learn their language and provide them with regular spiritual care. Thibault insisted on the urgency of the situation: Île-à-la-Crosse was ripe for mass conversion and the Catholic Church needed to seize the opportunity before its Protestant rivals did. He therefore urged his bishop to waste no time in dispatching missionaries to Île-à-la-Crosse and assured him that these missionaries would be welcomed enthusiastically by the locals. "Il n'est pas possible", asserted Thibault, "que jamais peuple sauvage soit mieux disposé à embrasser la foi que ces Montagnais."¹

¹ Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Archives [hereafter SHSB/Arch.], Fonds Provencher, P2707-P2709, quoted in Joseph-Norbert Provencher to the Central Councils of l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, Saint-Boniface, 1846. See also P2709-P2711 in *ibid.*; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1792-P1796, Jean-Baptiste Thibault to Archbishop Joseph Signay of Québec, St François-Xavier, July 6, 1839; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1803-P1829, Thibault to Signay, Saint-Boniface, June 18, 1843; Alexandre Taché, *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (Montréal: Eusèbe Sénécal, 1866), pp. 4, 13; Barbara Benoit, "The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse," *The Beaver* (Winter 1980), p. 41; Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest* (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1995),

Fifty-three years later, the resident priest at Île-à-la-Crosse bemoaned the faithlessness and degeneracy of the local population. After assuming direction of Saint-Jean-Baptiste mission in January 1898, Father Jean-Marie Pénard undertook “une petite inquisition” among his regular congregants – to whom he referred collectively as *nos métis*.² In reporting the findings of his investigation, Pénard noted “un tel état de dégradation et d’immoralité parmi les pauvres métis de l’Ile à la Crosse, qu’il en vint à se demander pourquoi le bon Dieu n’avait pas encore infligé à cette malheureuse place le châtement de Sodome.” Then, somewhat ironically, the inquisitor posed a rhetorical question: “Comment nos pauvres métis en sont-ils arrivés là?”³

During the half-century bracketed by Thibault’s optimistic report and Pénard’s troubled musing, Catholic missionaries re-labelled, re-classified and re-appraised the people of Île-à-la-Crosse. To a certain extent, this revision paralleled the evolution of local identities and the shift of local demographic patterns due to migration, disease and

pp. 35-37; Pierre Duchaussois, *Aux glaces polaires: Indiens et Esquimaux* (Lyon: Stephanus Faugier, 1921), pp. 134-137; Raymond J.A. Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis: The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Western Canada, 1845-1945* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 1996), pp. 17, 21-22, 47; Germain Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude* (Ottawa: Éditions des Études oblates, 1946), pp. 23-25; Donat Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l’ouest et le nord du Canada, 1845-1967* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 1995), pp. 12-15; Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 1995), pp. 32-33, 36-37; A.G. Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada: From Lake Superior to the Pacific, 1659-1895* (2 vols., Toronto: The Musson Book Company, Ltd., 1910), 1:pp. 200-201.

² SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, PA 1492, “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 1-2, 19-20. See also: SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, PA 1492, “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 295-296; Gaston Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, (4 tomes, Ottawa: Éditions de l’université d’Ottawa, 1977), 3:pp. 59-60; Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, p. 143.

³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” p. 20.

famine.⁴ Yet it also reflected an epistemological change among missionary commentators themselves, namely their adoption of a new and more inclusive concept of *métis*. In applying the term *métis* to the resident population of Île-à-la-Crosse, Catholic missionaries set aside the linguistic, social, cultural and geographic criteria that had previously informed their application of this term. They broadened their concept of *métis* to include a community whose language, lifestyle and location had once been considered hallmarks of “la sauvagerie.” Underlying this reconceptualization was a series of local, regional and national developments as well as intellectual currents circulating within a global network of Catholic missions. The present study seeks to delineate these converging forces and to examine the ways in which they contributed to the revised concept of *métis*.

This line of enquiry engages two distinct historiographies – Métis historiography and Catholic missionary historiography – and potentially broadens the investigative scope of both. Despite their frequent reliance on Catholic mission records, historians of the Métis have seen little need to interrogate missionary epistemologies. For the most part, they have assumed constancy in the observational practice of

⁴ Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West Before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), pp. 415, 420, 423; Robert Jarvenpa, “The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period” in B.G. Trigger et al. eds., “*Le castor fait tout*”: *Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1987), pp. 490-495, 502; Shepard Krech III, “The Influence of Disease and The Fur Trade on Arctic Drainage Lowlands Dene, 1800-1850,” *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Summer 1983), pp. 123-146; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 17, 120-124, 186, 195-209; Brenda A. Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1776-1907” (PhD dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 2005), pp. 41-43; Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 335; Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 98.

missionaries and have scrutinized mission records to yield empirical knowledge of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Métis. In his seminal work, *Le métis canadien : son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest* (1945), Marcel Giraud based his treatment of “la psychologie des métis, leur vie intime, [et] leur évolution morale” almost exclusively on letters, journals and reports written by Catholic missionaries.⁵ Giraud ascribed a privileged perspective to missionaries because of their enduring roles as confessors, educators and advisers to the Métis: “Les fonctions du missionnaire, la confiance qui, généralement, l’unit aux métis, lui permettent de mieux pénétrer ses réactions, de mieux connaître son caractère, de s’associer à toutes les modalités de son existence.”⁶ From this rare vantage point, missionaries produced an allegedly authoritative commentary on behavioural and psychological patterns exhibited by the Métis. Giraud drew abundantly from this commentary, but provided scarce contextualization of its production. With the exception of prelates, the names of particular commentators were relegated to the footnotes. Their origins, education, affiliations and clerical status (i.e., regular vs. secular clergy, priest vs. prelate) eluded consideration altogether. So too did their reasons for writing, their intended audience and their use of epistolary codes.⁷ Emphasizing content to the exclusion of authorship, intention and form, Giraud fused missionary commentators into an undifferentiated, unchanging and unbiased recordkeeping body.

⁵ Marcel Giraud, *Le métis canadien : son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1945), p. xxvi. See also pp. xxvii-xxviii; Marcel Giraud, “Foreword” in J. Peterson and J.S.H. Brown eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), pp. xii-xiii.

⁶ Giraud, *Le métis canadien*, p. xxvii.

⁷ See especially *ibid.*, pp. 847-859, 1040-1048, 1063-1079, 1092-1095, 1131-1133, 1145-1147, 1201-1207.

In the wake of Giraud's study, historians of the Métis developed increasing reservations about the interpretive value of mission records. These reservations emerged from a secular current in post-World War II scholarship and an accompanying reconsideration of missionary-native relations. As Philip Goldring has noted, historians and anthropologists began to conceptualize missionaries as part of "a bureaucratic élite which deliberately erode[d] traditional native identities."⁸ These scholars honed an acute sensitivity to the cultural bias pervading missionary writings and approached these texts with cautious scepticism.⁹ Nevertheless, historians of the Métis remained confident in the empirical soundness of a particular class of Catholic mission record. Embracing quantitative methodologies pioneered by French *Annalistes* and American proponents of "the new social history" in the 1960s and 70s, these historians seized upon mission censuses together with routinely generated records of baptism, marriage and burial in order to delineate patterns of family formation, fertility, mortality and migration.¹⁰ Mission registers were deemed particularly useful in examining micro-level processes and were thus consulted extensively in studies of individual Métis communities – notably Diane Paulette Payment's study of Batoche (1990), Gerhard J. Ens's study of Saint-François-Xavier and St Andrew's parishes in the Red River

⁸ Philip Goldring, "Religion, Missions, and Native Culture," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, vol. 26, no. 2 (October 1984), pp. 46-47. See also Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1991), pp. 9-11.

⁹ See for instance Diane Paulette Payment, «*Les gens libres – Otipemisiwak*» : *Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930* (Ottawa: Études en archéologie, architecture et histoire, 1990), p. 19; Irene M. Spry, "The métis and mixed-bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870" in Peterson and Brown eds., *The New Peoples*, p. 97.

¹⁰ Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 53-64; Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 15-17.

Colony (1996) and, most recently, Brenda A. Macdougall's study of Île-à-la-Crosse, Portage La Loche and Green Lake (2005, 2006, 2010).¹¹ Beholden to the scientific claims of statisticians and database aficionados, these studies devoted scant attention to the missionaries who served as enumerators and registrars. Census-taking and recordkeeping were assumed to be standardized, objective and impersonal processes that registered unequivocal data on Métis communities.

Catholic missionary history holds the potential to problematize this assumption by training a critical lens on the authors of the abovementioned records and by addressing their origins, agendas and worldviews. The post-Vatican II era witnessed radical change in historical writing on the Catholic apostolate in northern and western Canada. In the mid 1960s, the Church ceded its interpretive monopoly on the missionary past and opened its archives to laypeople pursuing diverse research interests.¹² There subsequently emerged a new generation of scholars who approached

¹¹ Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 7-8, 19-27, 36-40, 57-71, 93-122, 156-163, 173, 177-181; Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), pp. xvi, xvii, xviii, 11, 19; Macdougall, "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities," pp. ii, iv, 26-29, 67-76, 83-84, 96-104, 106-109, 131-138, 141, 148, 150-155, 158, 172, 212-214, 222, 228, 235-236, 246, 254, 260, 269, 289, 293, 298, 301-302, 319-320, 327, 335-347; Brenda Macdougall, "Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Metis Communities," *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 3 (September 2006), p. 442-443, 449; Payment, «*Les gens libres – Otipemisiwak*», pp. 12, 34-45, 81, 84-94, 111-143, 343-344, 363-366.

¹² Prior to 1965, historical writing on Catholic evangelization in the northern and western regions of Canada was undertaken exclusively by clerics and required the ecclesiastical *imprimatur* for publication. See especially: Dom Paul Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché, Archevêque de St-Boniface* (2 tomes, Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1904); Paul-Émile Breton, *Le grand chef des prairies : Le père Albert Lacombe, 1827-1916* (Edmonton: Éditions de l'ermitage, 1954); Paul-Émile Breton, *Monseigneur Grandin vous parle* (Edmonton: Éditions de l'ermitage, 1958); Paul-Émile Breton, *Vital Grandin, o.m.i. : La merveilleuse aventure de «l'Évêque sauvage» des prairies et du grand nord* (Montréal: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1960); Joseph-Étienne Champagne, *Les mission catholiques dans l'ouest canadien (1818-1875)*

missionary themes from a self-consciously secular perspective and who drew on theoretical and methodological insights from a number of fields – including administrative history,¹³ biography,¹⁴ missiology,¹⁵ education¹⁶ and medicine.¹⁷ These

(Ottawa: Éditions des études oblates et éditions de l'université, 1949); Jules le Chevalier, *Esquisse sur l'origine et les premiers développements de Calgary* (Calgary: La Paroisse Sainte-Famille, 1936); Pierre Duchaussois, *Apôtres inconnus* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1924); Duchaussois, *Aux glaces polaires*; E. Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin: Oblat de Marie Immaculée, premier évêque de Saint-Albert* (Montréal: Archevêché de Montréal, 1903); Émile J. Legal, *Short Sketches of the History of the Catholic Churches and Missions in Central Alberta* (Edmonton: Archdiocese of Edmonton, 1915); Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*; Germain Lesage, *L'Evêque errant* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1950); Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*; Théophile Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence* (4 tomes, Paris: P. Lethielleux, Libraire-Éditeur, 1909); Une Sœur de la Providence, *Le Père Lacombe, "l'homme au bon coeur"* (Montréal: Le Droit, 1916); Louis Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard* (Paris: 1886). See also: Raymond Huel, "Western Oblate History: The Need for Reinterpretation" in Raymond Huel ed., *Western Oblate Studies 3 – Études oblates de l'ouest 3* (Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers, 1994), pp. 13-39.

¹³ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*; Raymond Huel, "La mission Notre-Dame-des-Victoires du lac la Biche et l'approvisionnement des missions du Nord : le conflit entre Mgr V. Grandin et Mgr H. Faraud" in Raymond Huel ed., *Western Oblate Studies 1 – Études oblates de l'ouest 1* (Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers et Institut de recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 1990), pp. 17-36; Martha McCarthy, "The Founding of Providence Mission" in *ibid.*, pp. 37-49; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*.

¹⁴ Raymond J.A. Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface: The "Good Fight" and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 2003); David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986).

¹⁵ Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien : Mission et Église chez Mgr Vital Grandin, o.m.i. (1829-1902)* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université St-Paul, Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983); McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*.

¹⁶ Robert Carney, "The Native-Wilderness Equation: Catholic and Other School Orientations in the Western Arctic," *Study Sessions, Canadian Catholic Historical Association*, vol. 48 (1981), pp. 61-78; Jacqueline Gresko, "Everyday Life at Qu'Appelle Industrial School" in Raymond Huel ed., *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l'ouest 2* (Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers, 1991), pp. 71-94; Jacqueline Kennedy, "Qu'Appelle Industrial School: White Rites for the Indians of the Old Northwest" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1970); Lise Lundlie, "Les oblates et le Collège Mathieu" in Raymond Huel ed., *Western Oblate Studies 4 – Études oblates de l'ouest 4* (Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers, 1996), pp. 103-117; Brian Titley, "Dunbow Indian Industrial School: An Oblate Experiment in Education" in *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l'ouest 2*, pp. 95-113.

¹⁷ Walter Vanast, "Compassion, Cost and Competition: Factors in the Evolution of Oblate Medical Services in the Canadian North" in *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l'ouest 2*, pp. 179-195.

scholars effectively transformed the Catholic missionary from a heroic figure of hagiographic lore into an object of critical scrutiny. Yet while this transformation has raised questions about the missionary's relationship with the Métis, it has not extended historical inquiry beyond a traditional empiricist focus on observable interaction and praxis. Following in the footsteps of their clerical predecessors, secular historians of the Catholic apostolate have generally limited their discussion of the Métis to behavioural dimensions of religious involvement (such as reception of the sacraments, church attendance and communal devotion) and to services rendered to missionaries (particularly as guides, hunters, trappers, interpreters and language instructors).¹⁸ The constancy of this focus has resulted in the perpetuation of an orthodox, one-dimensional image of the Métis as “auxiliaires du missionnaire,” “guides sûrs et fidèles” and “maîtres dans les langues sauvages.”¹⁹ In some cases, this image has been essentialized by reference to a Lower Canadian legacy underlying the “natural” affinity between the Métis and French-speaking Catholic missionaries. For instance, in his survey of Catholic missionary activity in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory during the latter half of the nineteenth century (1995), Robert Choquette contended that the Métis “readily reverted to the faith of their fathers when the priests appeared among them... Catholic missionaries therefore had a ready-made constituency... throughout the North and the West; the fact that both the priests and the Métis were French-speaking only

¹⁸ See especially: Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 140; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 37, 138, 146, 168, 195, 199; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. xviii; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 41, 46, 107-117.

¹⁹ Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 96-97; Duchaussois, *Aux glaces polaires*, pp. 137-142; Sœur de la Providence, *Le Père Lacombe*, pp. 411-415.

reinforced this tendency.”²⁰ Similarly, in her account of the Catholic apostolate in the Athabasca and Mackenzie river basins during the same period (1995), Martha McCarthy posited a deep-seated predisposition of the Métis to collaborate with French-speaking Catholic missionaries: “Sharing the same language and faith, if only to a small extent in both instances, the Métis were natural allies of the French Catholic Oblates.”²¹

Implicit in both of these historiographies is the notion of a singular, empirically existing and readily identifiable Métis population that was susceptible to discovery and description by Catholic missionaries. The present study challenges this notion by contending that Catholic missionaries did not simply discover and describe a “Métis population”, but rather that they played a critical role in its conceptual production and in the delineation of its collective characteristics. They were empowered to play this role in the absence of a civil administrative infrastructure that could accumulate and organize knowledge about the Aboriginal peoples of Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. After the Dominion of Canada acquired these territories in 1870, the state drew heavily on Catholic missionary knowledge to identify, classify and govern its newest Aboriginal charges. In the process, missionary-made categories of indigeneity were co-opted into a project of intensive government administration.²²

²⁰ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, p. 37. See also: Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 18, 49-50, 69. On missionary encounters with the “Lower Canadian heritage” and the “folk Catholicism” of the Métis, see also John E. Foster, “*Le missionnaire and le chef métis*” in *Western Oblate Studies 1 – Études oblates de l'ouest 1*, p. 120.

²¹ McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 117.

²² On the colonial state's use of “categories of indigeneity” for governing Aboriginal collectivities in the British North American and Canadian contexts, see: Chris Andersen, “From Nation to Population: The Racialisation of ‘Métis’ in the Canadian Census,” *Nations and Nationalisms* vol. 12, no. 2 (2008), pp. 353-355; Chris Andersen, “Mixed Ancestry or Metis?”

Catholic missionaries were acutely conscious of their contribution to this project. As early as March 1873, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin of Saint-Albert – whose canonical jurisdiction included all of present-day Alberta and most of northern Saskatchewan – instructed his missionaries to be increasingly diligent in registering vital events among their congregants. Grandin anticipated that mission records would soon acquire an importance beyond their traditional ecclesiastical function: “[U]n gouvernement régulier étant sur le point de s’établir chez nous, nos registres vont avoir beaucoup plus d’importance.”²³ The bishop reissued this instruction repeatedly over the following years, adding stipulations in the late 1870s and 80s that his missionaries conduct enumerations of “la population sauvage” and “la population métisse” in their pastoral care and that they keep genealogical records of their congregants whenever possible.²⁴ Grandin reminded his missionaries in November 1887 that these records had a direct bearing on the administrative categorization and on the legal entitlement of their congregants: “[Le] *liber animarum*[,] [le] *codex historicus* ou journal quotidien de ce qui se passe dans votre mission, et les registres de baptêmes, mariages et sépultures...

in B. Hokowhitu et al. eds., *Indigenous Identity and Resistance: Researching the Diversity of Knowledge* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2010), pp. 23-24, 26-27.

²³ Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin to “Mes Révérends et bien chers Pères,” Saint-Albert, March 6, 1873, p. 7.

²⁴ Archives Deschâtelets [hereafter AD], GLPP 2205, Prosper Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1877; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, Grandin to “Mes chers pères et frères,” Saint-Albert, 1885, pp. 5-7; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, Grandin to “Mes Révérends et bien chers Pères et Frères,” Saint-Albert, November 18, 1887, pp. 6-7; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, Grandin to “Révérends et bien chers Pères,” Saint-Albert, August 10, 1888, pp. 3-4, 6.

sont les seules sources où l'on puisse se renseigner pour accorder les *Scripts* par exemple...”²⁵

At the time of their co-option by the Canadian state, missionary-made categories of indigeneity had undergone decades of evolution. The present study charts the course of this evolution through the lens of one particular community – Île-à-la-Crosse – from the establishment of a Catholic missionary presence there in 1845 to the onset of federal intervention in local affairs in 1898. The latter year marked the transformation of the local mission school into a state-sponsored boarding school entitled to an annual per capita grant for its “Indian boarders”.²⁶ During the intervening half-century, Catholic missionaries produced a running commentary on Île-à-la-Crosse as well as on its inhabitants, its visitors and its passers-through. This commentary –

²⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, Grandin to “Mes Révérends et bien chers Pères et Frères,” Saint-Albert, November 18, 1887, pp. 6-7. The *liber animarum* and *codex historicus* are discussed below on pages 29-30. “Les *Scripts*” in this context refers to Half-breed scrip – paper vouchers redeemable for land or money. In implementing sections thirty-one and thirty-two of the Manitoba Act (1870), the Crown issued scrip to individual claimants who could establish and swear to their Métis parentage, birthplace and place of residence before a federally appointed “Half-breed Scrip Commission” (incarnations of which were sent to various parts of western and northern Canada between 1885 and 1924). In theory, an individual’s acceptance of scrip “extinguished” his or her Indian title and reified his or her status as a Métis. See especially: Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), pp. 144, 171, 176, 179; Frank Tough, “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*”: *Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), pp. 114-142.

²⁶ On the transformation of the mission school at Île-à-la-Crosse into a federally funded boarding school, see especially: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 295; “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 261; Abel, *Drum Songs*, p. 181. On boarding schools and the per capita grant system (introduced by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1893), see especially: Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 148; J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 102, 104, 114-120, 126-129; J.R. Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada” in Marguerite Van Die ed., *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 110, 114-115.

whose aggregate components are inventoried further below – serves as the main body of primary source material for this study. The commentary is analyzed within an interpretive framework that is based on the epistemological premise of microhistory, which holds that the study of a single community can elucidate the workings and interplay of much larger historical forces.²⁷ Unlike most works of microhistory, however, the present study focuses principally on the authors of the primary source material rather than on the community that they purported to describe. The observers have thus become the observed, and their written observations are conceptualized as windows on their own values, agendas and worldviews.

The authors of this primary source material were members of the congregation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.²⁸ Founded in 1816 by *abbé* Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod in Aix-en-Provence (the department of Bouches-du-Rhône, south-eastern France), this congregation emerged from a powerful evangelical undercurrent within post-Revolutionary Catholicism.²⁹ Mazenod's immediate objective

²⁷ For articulations of this premise by pioneers of microhistory, see especially: Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans., John and Anne Tedeschi (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. xii, xx-xxiv; Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know about It," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 10–35; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans., Barbara Bray (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. xiv-xvii; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 3-5.

²⁸ Strictly speaking, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are a *congregation* as opposed to an *order*. There is a canonical distinction: members of an order are bound by solemn, permanent vows; members of a congregation are bound simpler, temporary ones. See especially: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 1, 25.

²⁹ The congregation was known as *La Société des Missionnaires de Provence* for the first decade of its existence. Mazenod changed the name to *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée* while seeking Pope Leo XII's approval for the congregation in 1826. See especially: Donat Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée : essai de synthèse* (2 vols., Montréal: Maison provinciale, 1983), 1:pp. 28-67; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 77-86, 187-197.

in founding the congregation was to re-evangelize the rural communities of Provence, many of which had been deprived of the spiritual, liturgical and educational services of the Catholic Church since the outbreak of the Revolution over twenty-five years earlier. According to Mazenod, the inhabitants of these communities had been left to languish in moral and spiritual poverty. It was the Oblates' calling to alleviate this poverty – a calling enshrined in the congregation's motto: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*³⁰ To this end, Oblates travelled the Provençal countryside and officiated at Masses, administered the sacraments and taught catechism in the late 1810s and early 20s. Their preferred method of evangelization was *la mission paroissiale* – a localized revivalist campaign based on a model developed by Saint Vincent de Paul in the early seventeenth-century. *La mission paroissiale* drew together the inhabitants of a particular parish for three to six weeks of intensive instruction, preaching and catechizing. Participants were encouraged to bare their souls in the confessional and to repent for their sins. They were also encouraged to join in a solemn procession that culminated in the planting of a large wooden cross, which was meant to remain a permanent feature of the local landscape.³¹

³⁰ “He has sent me to evangelize (or to preach the Gospel) to the poor.” The motto was likely taken from Luke 4:18, in which Jesus reads aloud from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: “*Spiritus Domini super me: propter quod unxit me, evangelizare pauperibus misit me...*” (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me, he has sent me to evangelize the poor...”). My translation. *Biblia Sacra Vulgatæ Editionis, Sixti V et Clementis VIII* (Romæ: Typis S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1861), p. 681. See also: Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 28-30, 83-89; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 41-44, 54-55, 61-67, 77.

³¹ Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 4, 6-7; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 79-96; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 3-4; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 78, 85, 92-104. The Provençale *mission populaire* was the direct

Having established an expansive mission circuit throughout rural Provence by the mid 1820s, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate underwent rapid institutional consolidation over the following decade. Through the influence of his uncle, Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod of Marseilles (1823-1837), Mazenod assumed administrative responsibility for the *grand séminaire de Marseille* in October 1827. This charge enabled him to design and to implement a programme for preparing candidates for the priesthood and, more specifically, for mission work.³² At the core of his programme was an ultramontane ecclesiology predicated on submission to papal authority and profound distrust of liberalism, secularism and individualism – ideologies that had been challenging the Church’s social and moral power since before the Revolution. Mazenod’s project of inculcating an ultramontane mindset was reflected in his choice of textbooks, notably the selected writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas whose dictum “quod subesse Romano pontifici sit de necessitate salutis” would later be marshalled in support of the doctrine of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council (1870).³³

precursor of *la mission de l’automne* and *la mission du printemps* at Île-à-la-Crosse. See pp. 110-111, 127, 141, 213-215 below.

³² During the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830), the administration of *grands séminaires* – or diocesan seminaries – was a particularly difficult charge. The French Revolution had caused a shortage of priests in most dioceses, prompting bishops to curtail the theological and philosophical training of seminarians so as to get them ordained and into an active ministry as quickly as possible. Moreover, seminary teaching staff was often poorly trained because faculties of theology had been closed for most of the 1790s. Thus, by the mid 1820s, French churchmen – including Mazenod himself – were decrying the ill-preparedness of candidates for the priesthood and calling for the overhaul of the *grands séminaires*. See especially: Claude Champagne, “La formation des Oblats, missionnaires dans le Nord-Ouest canadien,” *Study Sessions of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association/Sessions d’études de la Société canadienne d’histoire de l’Église catholique*, no. 56 (1989), pp. 21-33; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 12-16; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 68-69; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 171-175, 202-205.

³³ “[T]hat to be subject to the Roman Pontiff is necessary for salvation” (Originally from Aquinas, *Contra errores Graecorum*, pars 3, caput 38). My translation. Ortolan situated the

Mazenod replicated this training programme on the French island of Corsica after Bishop Xavier Casanelli d'Istria of Ajaccio (1833-1869) granted him the administration of the *grand séminaire d'Ajaccio* in September 1834.³⁴ With two sources of recruitment and training at his disposal, Mazenod considered expanding the Oblates' apostolic field beyond the borders of France. His prospects of securing the necessary diplomatic and financial support improved considerably in December 1837 when he succeeded his uncle as Bishop of Marseilles.³⁵

The initial impetus for the Oblates' expansion beyond France was an invitation from Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal (1840-1876) to establish missions in his vast diocese. Accepting this invitation eagerly, Mazenod dispatched six missionaries from the Oblate General Administration in Marseilles on September 30, 1841. These Oblates

Oblates in the vanguard of an ultramontane ecclesiology that eventually triumphed at the First Vatican Council: "A une époque où l'État imposait comme matière de cours les quatre articles de la Déclaration gallicane de 1682, les Oblats ne cessèrent jamais de promouvoir les thèses les plus franchement ultramontaines. Ils dénonçaient avec vigueur... ce gallicanisme, que tant d'autre continuaient encore à infiltrer dans les jeunes générations, au nom des traditions de l'Église de France. L'infaillibilité du Souverain Pontife [solemnly proclaimed in 1870] était enseignée par eux avec autant d'ardeur et de conviction inébranlable que l'Immaculée Conception de la Sainte Vierge [solemnly proclaimed in 1854], bien avant la définition dogmatique de ces deux vérités. Pour la philosophie et le dogme, ils suivaient saint Thomas d'Aquin." Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:p. 205. See also: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 36-40; Champagne, "La formation des Oblats," pp. 25-30; Richard F. Costigan, *The Consensus of the Church and Papal Infallibility: A Study in the Background of Vatican I* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), pp. 5, 74, 138, 196; Raymond J.A. Huel, "Gestæ Dei Per Francos: The French Canadian Experience in Western Canada" in B.G. Smillie ed., *Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983), pp. 40-42; Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150-1350: A Study of the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1972), pp. 10, 95.

³⁴ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 69-70, 90; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 310-323.

³⁵ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 72-73, 74, 77, 165; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 363-365.

subsequently established their principal residence at Longueuil – across the Saint Lawrence River from Montreal – in August 1842.³⁶ Similar invitations from other prelates prompted Mazenod to dispatch Oblates to Great Britain and Ireland in 1843, the Red River Colony in 1845, the Oregon Territory in 1847, Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) in 1847, Texas in 1849, the Colony of Natal (in present-day South Africa) in 1852, the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1858 and the Colony of British Columbia in 1859.³⁷ Thus, throughout the 1840s and 50s, Oblates became increasingly committed to establishing and consolidating *des missions étrangères*.³⁸ Embracing this new dimension of the Oblate apostolate, Mazenod amended the congregation's *Constitutiones Et Regulæ* and added instructions on the operation of *les missions étrangères* in 1853. In these instructions, he proclaimed that the Oblates had been blessed with an ideal outlet for their zeal: “Les missions étrangères... sont en effet une véritable source de biens spirituels qui rejaillit sur des multitudes d'âmes... en même temps qu'elles constituent une preuve palpable de la divinité de l'Église catholique, non

³⁶ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 122-125; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 24-25; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 2:pp. 7-14, 28-30.

³⁷ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 109-112, 131, 133, 138-146, 149-154, 158-160; Vincent J. McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard: A History of the Oblates and the Catholic Community in British Columbia* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2000), pp. 15-28; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 518-528; *ibid.*, 2:pp. 160-162, 271-282, 330, 335-336, 359, 414-417, 451-455.

³⁸ According to Claude Champagne, mid-nineteenth-century Oblates employed the term *missions étrangères* in reference to “les territoires où les populations n'étaient pas encore converties au catholicisme ou – plus précisément – là où l'Église n'était pas encore suffisamment établie pour se gouverner par elle-même; étant aussi compris sous ce vocable... l'Angleterre, l'Irlande, l'Écosse, le Canada, les États-Unis, le Ceylan et le Natal.” “Instruction de Monseigneur de Mazenod relative aux missions étrangères, présentée et annotée par Claude Champagne, o.m.i.,” *Kerygma*, Vol. 24 (1975), p. 164 n.1.

moins que du zèle de notre Congrégation pour la gloire de Dieu et de sa charité indéfectible à l'égard des âmes les plus abandonnées.”³⁹

Among the first of *les missions étrangères* was that at Île-à-la-Crosse, founded within five years of the Oblates' initial foray beyond France. This mission took root in one of the oldest continuously occupied communities in present-day western Canada. Situated at the confluence of the Canoe, Deep and Beaver Rivers and at the headwaters of the Churchill River system, the community of Île-à-la-Crosse stood – and continues to stand – on a peninsula jutting from the south-western shore of Lac Île-à-la-Crosse.⁴⁰ This peninsula had been a contact zone between distinct ethno-linguistic groups for at least a century before the arrival of the Oblates. By the mid 1700s, it had become a point of overlap in the territories of the Woods Cree and the Chipewyan/Denesuline (the southernmost subgroup of the Dene).⁴¹ Cree and Chipewyan families established

³⁹ Ibid., p. 166. This document is a French-language translation of the 1853 original, “Appendix De Exteris Missionibus. Instructio Illustrissimi Ac Reverendissimi D.D. Caroli-Joseph-Eugenii de Mazenod,” *Constitutiones Et Regulæ Congregationis Missionariorum Oblatorum Sanctissimæ Et Immaculatæ Virginis Mariæ* (Paris: Oblate General Administration, 1887), pp. 167-182. On the promulgation of the Oblates' *Constitutiones Et Regulæ* in July 1826, see: Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 60, 64-67.

⁴⁰ Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 26, 32; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 13-16, 34. In 1851, Oblate Father Henri Faraud noted to one of his confrères that “Île-à-la-Crosse” was a misnomer because the community stood on “une presqu'île” rather than on an actual island. See: “Lettre du R.P. Faraud, Missionnaire Oblat de Marie, à un Prêtre de la même Congrégation. Athabaskaw, 20 avril 1851,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, vol., 24 (1852), p. 222.

⁴¹ See especially: Hetty Jo Brumbach, Robert Jarvenpa and Clifford Buell, “An Ethnoarcheological Approach to Chipewyan Adaptations in the Late Fur Trade Period,” *Arctic Anthropology*, vol. 19 (1982), pp. 1-49; Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, *Ethnoarcheological and Cultural Frontiers: Athabaskan, Algonquian, and European Adaptation in the Central Subarctic* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 31-34; Jarvenpa, “The Hudson's Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” pp. 489-490; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 40-42. Writing in 1898, Pénard referred to oral accounts which held that Île-à-la-Crosse had been a contested site – even a site of violent conflict – between the Chipewyan and the Cree in the mid eighteenth century. This conflict apparently ended, or at

seasonal encampments along the shores of Lac Île-à-la-Crosse, which sustained them with whitefish and waterfowl.⁴² Other ethno-linguistic groups began trickling into the area after 1775, when Thomas and James Frobisher – private entrepreneurs based in Montreal – visited Île-à-la-Crosse and ascertained its strategic potential in the rapidly expanding fur trade. The Frobishers recognized that Île-à-la-Crosse could serve as a gateway into the fur-rich subarctic because of its proximity to the watershed separating the Churchill River system (that flows eastward into Hudson Bay) and the Athabasca River system (that flows northward into the Mackenzie River system, thence to the Arctic Ocean).⁴³ Within fifteen years of this discovery, three rival fur companies – the HBC, the North West Company (NWC) and the New North West Company (XYC) – had constructed posts at Île-à-la-Crosse and had begun manning them with personnel recruited from the British archipelago and the Saint Lawrence Valley.⁴⁴

Following the merger of the HBC and the NWC in 1821, Île-à-la-Crosse acquired a critical role in the commercial operations of the newly reconstituted HBC.⁴⁵

least cooled, in the fur-trade era: “Ces deux tribus ennemies cessèrent les hostilités, d’après les traditions, grâce à la médiation des français [sic] venus dans le pays pour traiter les fourrures.” “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 2-3.

⁴² Macdougall, *One of the Family*, p. 26; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 13.

⁴³ Lawrence J. Burpee, *The Search for the Western Sea: The Story of the Exploration of North Western America* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1935), 1:pp. vii, 317-319; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 11, 15-16, 37-40, 322; Arthur S. Morton, *Under Western Skies* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons Limited, 1936), pp. 172, 174-175.

⁴⁴ Burpee, *The Search for the Western Sea*, 1:p. 499; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 34, 43-49, 60-61, 323-325; Morton, *Under Western Skies*, p. 213.

⁴⁵ Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 280, 283-287; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 30, 34, 46, 49, 325. The NWC and the XYC had merged under the name of the North West Company in 1804. See especially: Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, pp. 160, 203, 241, 245.

It became the headquarters and the central depot of the English River District – a trading jurisdiction comprising most of present-day north-western Saskatchewan.⁴⁶ The peninsula was eminently well suited to this role because of its location on the tortuous chain of lakes, rivers and portages that connected York Factory (on Hudson Bay) and Fort Garry (in the Red River Colony) to the Athabasca and Mackenzie River basins. Each year from mid spring to early autumn, these waterways and portages were plied by boat brigades transporting furs, supplies, trade goods and – of course – young men.⁴⁷ In her extensive research on Île-à-la-Crosse, Brenda Macdougall has identified successive waves of “outsider male fur trade employees” – principally French-Canadian, British and Red River Métis – who arrived in the English River District over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through intermarriage and the forging of interpersonal relationships, these outsider males were incorporated into local Aboriginal family networks that were defined by matrilineal residency patterns. This process of incorporation gave rise to Métis ethnogenesis in the region by the early nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Thus, according to Macdougall, Île-à-la-Crosse holds the

⁴⁶ Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 2, 4, 24; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 11, 13, 34, 49; Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Metis Communities,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 3 (September 2006), p. 440.

⁴⁷ Joseph James Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1871), pp. 160-166; Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, pp. 43-46; Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 24, 32, 38-39; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 34, 51-52.

⁴⁸ Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 17-19; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 28-31, 35-36, 54-55, 58; Macdougall, “Wahkootowin,” pp. 442, 444-446, 449-451. The term “ethnogenesis” refers to a process by which “a people... seem to come into being as a definable group, aggregate, or category... The concept of syncretism – the blending of distinct, even contrasting systems of culture to form a novel system – is a salient feature of ethnogenesis, when the phenomenon dealt with is a definable or stipulated people, rather than an institution or set of institutions.” Quoted in Heather Devine, “Les Desjarlais: The Development and Dispersion of a Proto-Métis Hunting

distinction of being “one of the oldest, most culturally homogeneous Métis communities in western Canada...”⁴⁹

To the Oblates, however, Île-à-la-Crosse was not immediately recognizable as a Métis community. In fact, the term *métis* remained conspicuously absent from Oblate commentary on Île-à-la-Crosse until the mid 1870s.⁵⁰ This absence reflected the Oblates’ conception of *le peuple métis* as an Aboriginal collectivity exhibiting clear markers of a Lower Canadian paternal heritage – namely communication in a dialect of French and membership in the institutional Catholic Church. Oblates had formed this conception in the Red River Colony, where they had established an administrative headquarters in 1845.⁵¹ There they had encountered a self-conscious *métis* community that was francophone and that had been receiving the ministrations of the Church since the arrival of ordained clergy from the Diocese of Quebec in 1818.⁵² Yet while

Band, 1785-1870” in Theodore Binnema et al. eds., *From Rupert’s Land to Canada* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2001), p. 152 (endnote 1). See also: *ibid.*, pp. 129, 133; John E. Foster, “Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis” in *ibid.*, pp. 179-193.

⁴⁹ Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 11. Macdougall applied this distinction more generally to north-western Saskatchewan in *One of the Family*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ It should be noted, however, that Oblates stationed at Île-à-la-Crosse did occasionally acknowledge the presence “des métis de la Rivière Rouge” in the 1860s, but generally as a transitory and seasonal presence in the community. For the most part, these were hired crewmen in the Portage La Loche Brigade that passed through Île-à-la-Crosse each summer. See for instance: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0586-T0588, Valentin Végréville to Alexandre-Antonin Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1519-T1522, Émile Petitot to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 22, 1862. On the Portage La Loche Brigade, see especially: Hargrave, *Red River*, pp. 160-162; Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, pp. 43-44.

⁵¹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l’Amérique*, pp. 7, 10-11. See also: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 38-40; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 16-17; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l’ouest et le nord du Canada, 1845-1967*, pp. 28-30; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 2:pp. 150-162.

⁵² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1571-P1574, Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk to Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis of Quebec, Montreal, October 17, 1818; “Lettre du R.P. Faraut,

perceiving the Red River Colony as the principal homeland of *le peuple métis* during the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, Oblates also acknowledged the existence of *métis* communities beyond the colony. In 1868, Oblate Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché noted that at least one of these communities had been founded by French-speaking Catholic Iroquois:

Une petite colonie d'Iroquois est venue du Canada dans les montagnes Rocheuses, là, ils se sont alliés à des femmes de tribus indigènes et, chose assez étrange, les enfants nés de ces alliances son classés parmi nos métis. *Pas une goutte de sang blanc ne coule dans leurs veines*, et les descendants de ces farouches guerriers, qui faisaient trembler nos ancêtres, lors des premiers établissements du Canada, sont aujourd'hui, considérés comme des métis-Canadiens. Ces pauvres Iroquois ont apporté du Canada la foi catholique, qui les avait arrachés à la barbarie. Isolés dans les montagnes Rocheuses, au milieu de tribus alors toutes infidèles, ils n'ont point oublié le don précieux qu'ils avaient reçu ; ils l'ont transmis aux enfants qu'ils ont eus, par suite d'alliances avec ces tribus, et quelques centaines de ces métis Iroquois n'attendaient que l'arrivée des prêtres, pour compléter l'éducation religieuse commencée par leurs frères, sur les genoux de leurs mères infidèles. *C'est cette circonstance qui les a ralliés à nos métis-Canadiens, avec lesquels ils se confondent et s'unissent comme un seul peuple.*⁵³

Missionnaire Oblat de Marie, à un Prêtre de la même Congrégation. Athabaskaw, 20 avril 1851," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, vol., 24 (1852), p. 221; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0316-T0319, Henri Grollier to Taché, Fort Good Hope, February 24, 1861. See also: Champagne, *Les missions catholiques dans l'ouest canadien*, pp. 49-57; Luc Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint-Boniface, À l'ombre des cathédrales: Des origines de la colonie jusqu'en 1870* (Saint-Boniface: Les Éditions du Blé, 1991), pp. 54-70.

⁵³ Alexandre-Antonin Taché, *Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique par Mgr. Taché, Évêque de St. Boniface, 1868*. (Montréal: Typographie du Nouveau monde, 1869), p. 65 (my italics). This publication also appeared serially in the Oblates' periodical: "Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique, par M^{gr} Taché, Évêque de Saint-Boniface," *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, nos. 29-32 (March, June, September and December 1869). The Iroquois progenitors of these "métis Iroquois" had migrated west from the Montreal area under the auspices of the HBC, the NWC and the XYC. They were contracted as crewmen and as skilled hunters and trappers. After the expiration of their contracts, many of the Montreal Iroquois opted to remain in the Northwest as freemen. On the Montreal Iroquois *engagés* and their role in the ethnogenesis of the western Métis, see especially: Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge, "Montreal Iroquois *engagés* in the Western Fur Trade, 1800-1821" in Binnema et al. eds., *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, pp. 23-58.

In identifying an apparent idiosyncrasy in his and his confrères' application of the term *métis*, Taché highlighted a critical nuance: the term was not necessarily – nor even predominantly – a signifier of mixed-bloodedness. Its racial meaning was preceded in importance by its linguistic and religious meaning.

Upon their arrival at Île-à-la-Crosse, Oblates encountered a community that exhibited neither of the defining characteristics of *le peuple métis*. Its members communicated among themselves in a dialect of Cree, which some spoke as their mother tongue but which all spoke as the local *lingua franca* (common language).⁵⁴ None of its members had had recourse to the sacramental, liturgical or educational services of the institutional Church, as there had been no ordained clergy in the English River District prior to Thibault's visit.⁵⁵ In light of these considerations, Oblates

⁵⁴ The dialect spoken at Île-à-la-Crosse is the subject of ongoing controversy. In his study of Michif – the mixed Cree-French language that developed in Plains Métis communities in the early nineteenth century – linguist Peter Bakker contended that the Île-à-la-Crosse dialect is totally unrelated to Michif. According to Bakker, the Île-à-la-Crosse dialect is simply Cree with some French borrow words (mostly nouns). These French borrow words entered the local language in the late nineteenth century through the Oblate mission and the Catholic school. In response to Bakker's contention, Brenda Macdougall has suggested that the local language began absorbing elements of French much earlier and that a dialect of Michif did indeed develop at Île-à-la-Crosse. *Pace* Macdougall, Bakker's contention is well corroborated by Oblate commentary produced between 1845 and 1898. Oblates acknowledged no difference between the Cree spoken by residents of Île-à-la-Crosse and the Cree spoken by nomadic hunters and trappers elsewhere in the English River District. Oblates referred to both simply as "le cris". See especially: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0582-T0585, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1108-T1111, Julien Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 14, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 92; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928," p. 13; Peter Bakker, *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 10, 175-179, 190-191, 279; Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 7-8; Macdougall, "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities," p. 8; Macdougall, "Wahkootowin," p. 432.

⁵⁵ It should be noted, however, that historians have cited evidence of popular or "folk" Catholicism in and around Île-à-la-Crosse well before the arrival of ordained clergy.

referred to members of the community collectively as *des sauvages*. This term – like *métis* – did not necessarily convey racial meaning. Rather, its primary connotation was remoteness from *la civilisation*, and more particularly from *la civilisation chrétienne*. This meaning was evident in an essay penned in the early 1860s by Bishop Henri Faraud – one of the first Oblates deployed to Île-à-la-Crosse:

Quelle que soit l'origine des peuples sauvages, ils sont nos frères en Jésus-Christ ; ils ont été créés à l'image de Dieu, ils sont une portion de l'humanité, et, comme tels, ils méritent que les peuples avancés s'intéressent à leur sort. Leur origine n'est-elle pas la même que la nôtre?...

L'homme n'est pas sauvage seulement parce qu'il habite les déserts, il est sauvage surtout parce qu'il n'a pas la connaissance du vrai Dieu. Tant que la religion n'est pas venue en l'éclairant adoucir ses mœurs, il se laisse fatalement entraîner par ses instincts animaux et devient barbare.

Mais le Christianisme pénètre où la sauvagerie habite, l'homme acquiert alors le sentiment du vrai et du bien, il cultive les arts, et la civilisation apparaît.

Tous les peuples de la terre ont été barbares à leur heur, tout ont plus ou moins commencé par l'état sauvage...

Nos pères les Gaulois ne furent-ils pas aussi des sauvages?...

Encore quelque temps, et la barbarie, fruit de la superstition, disparaîtra de cette partie du nouveau monde, comme elle a disparu de la Bretagne et de la Gaule...

Popularized rituals and beliefs were imported by NWC and HBC servants from Lower Canada and the Red River Colony in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. According to Robert Jarvenpa, these servants had been observing the feast of Toussaint (All Saints Day, November 1) at Île-à-la-Crosse since at least 1819. Furthermore, Carolyn Podruchny has noted that Portage La Loche served as a site of ritual baptisms (or “mock baptisms”), where novice *voyageurs* underwent a ritualized initiation into a new phase in their lives as “Athabasca men” – considered the bravest and hardiest of the *voyageurs*. Jarvenpa, “The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” p. 491; Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 4-5; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 12, 69; Carolyn Podruchny, “Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 83, issue 2 (June 2002), pp.173-174, 180-181; Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 59-60, 66, 69-70.

La civilisation chrétienne, qui a régénéré tant de peuple depuis la venue de Jésus-Christ, pénétrera un jour dans les pays les plus reculés de l'Amérique du Nord.⁵⁶

According to Faraut, *les sauvages* – in common with all of humankind – possessed an innate capacity for moral, spiritual and intellectual improvement. They could be redeemed from “l'état sauvage” just as Faraut's own Gaulish ancestors had been redeemed centuries earlier. Their redemption could only be effected, however, through their full incorporation into the institutional Catholic Church. Within the Oblates' ultramontane paradigm, the institutional Catholic Church was the one and only source of true civilization – *la civilisation chrétienne*. The Church alone could inculcate and reinforce “civilized” habits of thought and behaviour that conformed with the divinely willed order of things.⁵⁷ Thus, as applied by Oblates, the term *sauvage* referred primarily to a transitory moral and spiritual state rather than to a fixed racial or biological one.⁵⁸

Both terms – *métis* and *sauvage* – connoted a particular relationship to the institutional Catholic Church and, by extension, to *la civilisation chrétienne*. It follows,

⁵⁶ Fortuné-François Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages : voyages et missions de Mgr Henry Faraut, évêque d'Anemour, vicaire apostolique de Mackenzie, dans l'extrême nord de l'Amérique britannique* (Paris: Régis Ruffet & C^{ie}, 1866), pp. 253-255, 258 (my italics). Fernand-Michel – Faraut's nephew – was the co-author and editor of this work. On the authorship of *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, see especially: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3663-T3665, Marc Antoine Sardou [Oblate Treasurer General] to Taché, Paris, November 30, 1865.

⁵⁷ Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 174, 195, 197, 199, 201, 204; Claude Champagne, “Mission et civilisation dans l'Ouest canadien : Vital Grandin, 1829-1902,” *La Société canadienne d'histoire de l'église catholique, Sessions d'études*, Vol. 50 (1983), pp. 341-343; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. xviii, 159, 160, 181.

⁵⁸ Grandin reinforced this point in a letter to his benefactors in France in 1870: “Que nos écoles et nos missions se multiplient, et les sauvages finiront par disparaître sans cesser d'exister.” See: “Lettre de Mgr Grandin à MM. les membres des Conseils centraux de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Fort Pitt (mission de Saint-François Régis), 10 janvier 1870,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 44 (1872), p. 283.

then, that the Oblates' application of these terms implied a commentary on the status and progression of Catholicism among Aboriginal peoples. The present study examines this commentary as a reflection of broader developments in the Catholic apostolate over the latter half of the nineteenth century. It does this through four chapters, each of which provides a chronological examination of a particular aspect of the Oblate mission experience at Île-à-la-Crosse. Chapter one situates the mission at Île-à-la-Crosse within the general context of the Catholic apostolate to Rupertland and the North Western Territory (subsequently western and northern Canada). It charts the evolution of the mission's strategic and administrative role within the apostolate. Chapter two examines the relationship between the Oblates of Île-à-la-Crosse and the HBC, devoting particular attention to the implications of the Company's changing political and commercial fortunes. Chapter three considers the conceptualization and implementation of the Oblates' residential education programme at Île-à-la-Crosse – a programme intended to effect a thorough transformation of Aboriginal childhood and to integrate future generations into *la civilisation chrétienne*. Finally, chapter four examines the evolution of Oblate categories of indigeneity as a function of developments discussed in the three preceding chapters. It concludes with the Oblates' acknowledgment of Île-à-la-Crosse as a *métis* community, but one that differed markedly from the *métis* communities that they had encountered at the beginning of their apostolate.

This study draws on primary source material that was produced in compliance with the official regulations of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In his amendment to the *Constitutiones Et Regulæ* (1853), Mazenod issued clear instructions on the conduct of correspondence between the constituent parts of the Oblate hierarchy.

“Quelles que soient les distances,” stipulated Mazenod, “un commerce épistolaire régulier entre les sujets et les supérieurs sera établi sur les bases suivantes: autant que faire se pourra, chaque missionnaire écrira, une fois par mois, au Directeur de résidence [i.e., the local Oblate superior], une fois tous les trimestres, au Vicaire des missions [i.e., the regional Oblate superior], puis, au moins une fois l’an, au Supérieur général [i.e., Mazenod and his successors].”⁵⁹ Thus, in his capacity as vicar of missions in Rupertsland from 1851 to 1868, Alexandre-Antonin Taché received regular letters and reports from the Oblate personnel at Île-à-la-Crosse.⁶⁰ These letters and reports contain detailed information on the progress of the mission and on the spiritual, moral and physical condition of the local community. Most of these documents are now held in the “Fonds Taché” in the archival collection of the *Société historique de Saint-Boniface* (Winnipeg), where they have been consulted extensively for the present study.⁶¹ Between 1868 and 1891, Île-à-la-Crosse was included within the jurisdiction of the

⁵⁹ “Instruction de Monseigneur de Mazenod relative aux missions étrangères,” p. 171. Mazenod urged Oblates in *les missions étrangères* to make their letters as long and as detailed as possible so as to familiarize the addressees with the minutiae of local affairs. “Songez que vos lettres doivent être des volumes,” he instructed the Oblate superior at Red River in 1846. “Prenez-vous y à temps et ne craignez pas d’entrer dans trop de détails.” Quoted in Martin Quéré, “La correspondance de Mgr de Mazenod avec les missionnaires,” *Kerygma*, Vol. 24 (1975), p. 179.

⁶⁰ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 42, 44; *Atlas O.M.I.* (Roma: Curia Generalizia, 1990), p. 40; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l’ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 46; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 293.

⁶¹ It should be noted, however, that much of Taché’s correspondence dating from before 1861 was destroyed in the fire that consumed the cathedral and the episcopal palace of Saint-Boniface on December 14, 1860. To compensate for this loss, the *Archiepiscopal Corporation of St. Boniface* and the *Société historique de Saint-Boniface* sponsored the transcription of relevant documents held at various religious and civil archives throughout Canada. See especially: Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint-Boniface, tome I*, pp. 219-224; Jacinthe Duval, Timothy Foran, Gilles Lesage and Les Bronconnier, “Engaging Archives: Nation Building, Community Memory and the *Société historique de Saint-Boniface*,” in R. Connors, N. St-Onge and F. Tough, eds., *Hidden by History: The Métis and their Archival Past* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2011), in press.

Vicariate of Saint-Albert, which was administered by Vital-Justin Grandin.⁶² Grandin consequently maintained a regular correspondence with the Oblates of Île-à-la-Crosse. Substantial portions of this correspondence are now held in the Alberta-Saskatchewan Oblate collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (Edmonton), and have been drawn upon for this study. Moreover, Grandin produced a voluminous commentary on the mission at Île-à-la-Crosse while serving as resident superior there (1857-1860, 1864-1868) and during his semi-regular pastoral visits (1868-1891).⁶³ He dispatched much of this commentary to the Oblate General Administration, where it was subsequently transcribed into typewritten form and included in a twenty-six volume collection titled *Les Écrits de Grandin*.⁶⁴ A copy of this collection is currently housed at the *Centre de recherche en histoire religieuse du Canada* (Université Saint-Paul, Ottawa), and has been consulted for this study. Finally, the *Archives Deschâtelets* (Ottawa) contain outward correspondence from individual Oblates who resided at Île-à-la-Crosse during the period under consideration. This correspondence is analysed in detail in the following chapters.

⁶² *Atlas O.M.I.*, p. 56; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 238; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 72.

⁶³ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, "Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l'érection du vicariat religieux de St. Albert 1868 jusqu'en 1872"; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, "Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert," 1868-1884, pp. 130-133; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 106-107.

⁶⁴ Centre de recherche en histoire religieuse du Canada, *Écrits de Grandin* [hereafter CRHRC/É.G.], 26 Volumes. This collection was intended to facilitate canonical investigations for Grandin's beatification. The collection was completed in 1966 – the very year in which Grandin was declared venerable by Pope Paul VI. See especially: Jonathan J. Bonk, "Grandin, Vital Justin," in G.H. Anderson ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1998), p. 255; Raymond Huel, "Vital-Justin Grandin," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 13 (1901-1910).

Besides instructing Oblates to maintain regular correspondence with their superiors, the Oblate General Administration urged them to prepare letters and reports for publication in two French Catholic periodicals: *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée* and *Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*. The former was a quarterly founded in 1862 by Mazenod's successor, Oblate Superior General Joseph Fabre (1861-1892). Its foundational purpose was to facilitate communication between far-flung members of the congregation and to create a sense of community that transcended vast geographical distances.⁶⁵ The latter periodical was founded in 1827 as the official organ of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* – the principal underwriter of Oblate missionary activity in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory (and subsequently western and northern Canada). The avowed aim of this periodical was to solicit funds for *les missions étrangères* and to inspire missionary vocations among a French Catholic readership.⁶⁶ Both periodicals have yielded extensive primary source material for this study. Additionally, Oblate prelates were required to provide *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* with financial reports, receipts and inventories each year. Many of these records have been deposited in the *Archives de la Propagation de la foi de Paris* (Paris), which subsequently provided microfilm

⁶⁵ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 173-175; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 8, 70, 360; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 3:pp. 7-31.

⁶⁶ "Avertissement," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 1 (1827), pp. v-viii; Jean-Claude Baumont, "Une Source de l'Histoire du XIX^e et du Début du XX^e Siècle : Archives et Publications de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi," *History in Africa*, Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 169-170; Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 16, 19; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 42, 59; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 23, 69-71; Nikolaus Kowalsy, "Mgr de Mazenod et l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi," *Études oblats*, no. 11 (1952), pp. 238-260; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 9.

copies to the *Centre de recherche en histoire religieuse du Canada* (Université Saint-Paul, Ottawa).⁶⁷ These microfilm copies have provided primary source material for chapters one and three.

According to another regulation of the congregation, the resident superior of each *mission étrangère* was required to keep a *codex historicus* – a contemporary chronicle of daily life at the mission and its outlying satellite posts.⁶⁸ Yet no such chronicle exists for the mission at Île-à-la-Crosse during the period under study. The original *codex historicus* was destroyed in the fire that engulfed the mission on March 1, 1867.⁶⁹ Subsequently, no *codex historicus* was kept until 1898 when federal intervention in the local mission school compelled Oblates to update and regularize their records.⁷⁰ This task fell to thirty-three-old resident superior Father Jean-Marie Pénard, who composed the nominal “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897” on the basis of primary sources which he acknowledged in the body of his text and in

⁶⁷ Centre de recherche en histoire religieuse du Canada, Archives de la Propagation de la Foi de Paris [hereafter CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi], “Copies sur microfilm des séries intéressant le Canada, inventaire, sommaire.”

⁶⁸ Duval, Foran, Lesage and Bronconnier, “Engaging Archives,” in press.

⁶⁹ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 1, 98. This fire destroyed several other important administrative records in addition to the *codex historicus*. Hence, in the personal memoirs that he commenced in 1898, Grandin noted: “Jusqu’en 1867, j’avais en effet tenue un journal de mes voyages surtout et j’y donnais quelques notes historiques sur toutes les missions que je visitais et les missionnaires qui s’y dévouaient. L’incendie de l’Île à la Crosse ayant détruit toutes ces notes, je fus plusieurs années sans reprendre mon journal et quand je le repris, je me contentais de signaler les fait principaux...” PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” p. 26. See also *ibid.*, p. 112.

⁷⁰ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 1, 295; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 1-2; “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 261.

marginalia.⁷¹ These sources included handwritten records kept by local mission personnel, published reports in *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée* and *Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, and oral accounts from elderly lay residents of Île-à-la-Crosse.⁷² In addition, Pénard initiated the practice of keeping a *liber status animarum* (“book of the count of souls”) which listed all Catholic families and individuals living within the pastoral jurisdiction of the mission. Pénard organized this document by family name, beginning each section with commentary on the family’s founding couple and subsequently listing the couple’s descendants. He indicated each individual’s year of baptism and – if applicable – his or her year of marriage, the name(s) of his or her spouse(s), and the year of his or her obsequies.⁷³ In 2005, both of these records – the *codex historicus* and the *liber status animarum* – were transferred from the Oblate-operated Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas (headquartered at The Pas, Manitoba) to the *Société historique de Saint-Boniface* (Winnipeg), where they have been consulted extensively for the present study.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897” is written entirely in the third person and contains no explicit acknowledgment of authorship. However, in his correspondence with the Oblate General Administration, Pénard did claim authorship of the document: “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 249. Moreover, in 1946, Oblate historian Germain Lesage noted that the document “est tout entier de la main du père J.-M. Pénard, O.M.I., et a été écrit vers 1898.” Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, p. 187. On Pénard, see also: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 59-60.

⁷² See especially: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 1, 6, 11, 22-23, 35, 39-40, 51, 68, 76, 83, 91, 94, 98, 105, 114, 146, 163, 165-166, 170, 183, 189-190, 203, 208, 211.

⁷³ Société historique de Saint-Boniface, Archives, Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (*liber status animarum*); Duval, Foran, Lesage and Bronconnier, “Engaging Archives,” in press.

⁷⁴ SHSB, Acquisition record 2005-03-06; Duval, Foran, Lesage and Bronconnier, “Engaging Archives,” in press.

However, neither has been used as a primary source for the period before 1890 – the year in which Pénard was first posted to Île-à-la-Crosse.⁷⁵

Finally, this study draws on primary sources that were produced outside of the Oblates' institutional and administrative apparatus. These sources serve principally to contextualize and to cross-reference Oblate commentary. They include – from the *Archives des Sœurs Grises de Montréal* (Montreal) – chronicles and reports written by female religious who staffed the mission school and the infirmary at Île-à-la-Crosse between 1860 and 1898.⁷⁶ They also include microfilm copies of correspondence between mission personnel and the federal Department of the Interior. This correspondence is included in the Black Series at Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa).⁷⁷ Lastly, this study incorporates HBC records from the English River District, including post journals, inward and outward correspondence, accounts books, servant rosters and district reports. These documents were accessed through the Hudson's Bay Company Archives microfilm collection at Library and Archives Canada.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 229-232; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:p. 60.

⁷⁶ Archives des Sœurs Grises de Montréal [hereafter ASGM], Sœur Agnès (*née* Marie-Rose Caron), “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse” (2 vols, Hôpital St-Bruno, Île-à-la-Crosse, 1883); ASGM, Mère (Elizabeth Forbes) McMullen, “Ancien Journal,” vols 2 and 3; ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut [des Sœurs grises de Montréal]*. See also ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, “Historique,” pp. 1-26.

⁷⁷ Library and Archives Canada, Black Series, [hereafter LAC/Black Series], microfilm C-10113, file no. 7780; LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10117, file no. 10125; LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10125, file no. 20505.

⁷⁸ The original documents are held at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg – section B, class 89. At Library and Archives Canada, they appear on twenty four separate microfilm reels: Library and Archives Canada, Hudson's Bay Company Post Records [hereafter LAC/HBC], microfilm HBC 1M63-HBC 1M65; HBC 1M183; HBC 1M270; HBC 1M490-HBC 1M499; HBC 1M778; HBC 1M784; HBC 1M877; HBC 1M1007; HBC 1M1066-HBC 1M1070.

On the basis of these primary sources, this study presents a qualitative investigation of Oblate perceptions of their ministry at Île-à-la-Crosse in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It examines the forces that shaped these perceptions and that impelled their evolution over a fifty-three-year period. In particular, this study examines the relationship between the Oblates' evolving objectives, concerns and priorities and their construction of categories of indigeneity at Île-à-la-Crosse.

CHAPTER 1
 “Ad propria”:
 Saint-Jean-Baptiste in an evolving mission network

The centennial of Saint-Jean-Baptiste mission at Île-à-la-Crosse occasioned the publication of the first monograph-length history of a Catholic mission in western Canada – Germain Lesage’s *Capitale d’une solitude* (1946). Commissioned by the Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin, the book presented a collective portrait of the priests, nuns and lay brothers who had staffed Saint-Jean-Baptiste over the previous century. Its avowed aim was to inspire missionary vocations by introducing Catholic readers to paragons of service, devotion, and charity: “Légeard, le souffrant, l’amant du coeur de Dieu”; “Rapet, l’homme du bon coeur”; “Pénard, philosophe, historien, linguiste”; “Dubé, le père des jeunes”; “Labelle, l’homme à tout faire”; “Bowes, le constructeur”; “Agnès, Dandurand, Nadeau, Eugénie, mères admirables au coeur sans limites”.¹ Saint-Jean-Baptiste thus served as a showcase in which to display the diverse talents and qualities required for the extension of God’s Kingdom on earth. It represented the ideal harmonization of these talents and qualities, a harmonization that gave rise to “une cité chrétienne” within a vast expanse of pagan wilderness. The isolation – or “solitude” – of this city underscored the sacrifice of its founding citizens and reminded readers that

¹ Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, pp. 184-185. See also pp. 7-8, 183. Lesage was an Oblate missionary and a professor at the University of Ottawa. See Gaston Carrière, “Bibliographie des professeurs oblates des facultés ecclésiastiques de l’Université d’Ottawa (1932-1961),” *Revue de l’université d’Ottawa* (1962), pp. 37-39.

the work of evangelization was far from complete, for beyond loomed a hinterland where the light of Christ had still to penetrate.²

While arguably effective as a rhetorical strategy, Lesage's emphasis on isolation obscures the historical connectedness of Saint-Jean-Baptiste to regional, national and global processes. The mission belonged to a network that conveyed people, information, funds and freight over vast distances. This network operated under ecclesiastical aegis and existed for the fulfilment of Christ's mandate to evangelize the nations.³ It was sustained – and gradually extended – through collaborative interaction between lower clergy in the mission field, local superiors, regional prelates, and international administrative and financial bodies. The present chapter examines the role of Saint-Jean-Baptiste within this network during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It charts the mission's rise as a central node (1846-1866) and its decline into marginality (1867-1898). In the process, it speaks to a broader transformation of the Catholic mission network in which Saint-Jean-Baptiste was embedded.

The founding of Saint-Jean-Baptiste represented a critical step in the extension of the Catholic mission network into Rupertsland and the North Western Territory.⁴ Since his installation as the first resident bishop in the region in 1822, Joseph-Norbert

² Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, pp. 183-185. Lesage was not the first to refer to Saint-Jean-Baptiste as "capitale d'une solitude". The designation was coined by Paul Coze – celebrated French writer, artist, ethnologist and co-founder of the *Scouts de France* – during his visit to Île-à-la-Crosse in 1931. See Martin Lajeunesse's preface in *ibid.*, pp. 7-8. See also: René Thévenin et Paul Coze, *Moeurs et histoires des Indiens peaux-rouges* (Paris: Payot, 1928); Paul Coze, *Wakanda : croquis de l'auteur* (Paris: Librairie de la Revue française, c1929); Daniel Dubois, "Indianism in France," *Native American Studies*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (1993), pp. 28-30.

³ Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-8.

⁴ In the estimation of Jean-Marie Pénard, the founding of the mission accelerated the evangelization of the region by at least fifty years: "Ce coup hardi a hâté de plus d'un demi-siècle l'évangélisation du pays, qui ne se serait faite que lentement si l'on s'était contenté de s'étendre graduellement à proportion des sujets et des moyens autour de St Boniface." See "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 5.

Provencher had confined his personnel to the environs of his administrative headquarters at Saint-Boniface in the Red River Colony.⁵ The principle reason for this confinement was the HBC's ban on missionary activity in its chartered territory beyond the colony – a subject that will receive further consideration in the next chapter.⁶ This ban was lifted in 1839 when the governor and committee of the HBC invited the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to establish posts at Norway House, Moose Factory, Cumberland House and Fort Edmonton. The following year, the company permitted the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) to deploy a catechist to The Pas on the Saskatchewan River.⁷ Determined to curb the spread of evangelical Protestantism in the interior, Provencher adopted a programme of expansion beyond the confines of the Red River Colony. On April 20, 1842, he dispatched Jean-Baptiste Thibault – a thirty-two-year-old secular priest from Lévis, Lower Canada – on horseback across the western plain in search of a strategic location for a missionary

⁵ Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint-Boniface, À l'ombre des cathédrales*, pp. 70-125; Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, 1:pp. 116-150.

⁶ It should be noted, however, that Provencher obtained permission from the HBC to deploy two secular priests – François-Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers – to the northern limits of its Oregon territories (modern-day British Columbia) in 1838. See: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 33-36; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp.12-14; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 30; McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard*, pp. 6-7.

⁷ T.C. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies: A History of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land and its Diocese from, 1820 to 1950* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962), pp. 49-51; John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 100-109; Gerald M. Hutchinson, "British Methodists and the Hudson's Bay Company 1840-1854," in D.L. Butcher et al., eds., *Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), pp. 28-43; John Maclean, *James Evans, inventor of the syllabic system of the Cree language* (Toronto: William Briggs, Wesley Buildings, 1890), pp. 146-149, 191-192; Sarah Tucker, *The Rainbow in the North: A Short Account of the First Establishment of Christianity in Rupert's Land by the Church Missionary Society* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852), pp. 203-207; Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 174-176.

beachhead.⁸ Thibault established his residence seventy-five kilometres west of Fort Edmonton on the southern shore of Lac Sainte-Anne.⁹ From there, he reconnoitred eastward along the North Saskatchewan River between Fort Edmonton and Fort Carlton.¹⁰

Thibault's attention shifted northward after his visit to Fort Pitt in the winter of 1843-1844. There he encountered "quelques sauvages de l'Île à la Crosse" who expressed keen interest in receiving his ministrations.¹¹ Yet due to pressing obligations at Lac Sainte-Anne and Saint-Boniface, Thibault was unable to travel to Île-à-la-Crosse until the following year.¹² He arrived by canoe on May 9, 1845, and was warmly received by seventy-three-year-old Roderick McKenzie – Chief Factor of the English River District at Île-à-la-Crosse.¹³ Over the next two weeks, Thibault visited approximately eighty "Montagnais" families living within the vicinity of the HBC

⁸ Provencher had planned to send Thibault onto the western plain several years earlier – since at least 1837 – but it was not until the onset of the Protestant challenge that he managed to put his plan into action. Hence, in the summer of 1839, Thibault reported to Archbishop Signay of Quebec: "Monseigneur de Juliopolis, depuis deux ans, cherche les moyens de me lancer dans l'intérieur parmi les Cris et les Assiniboines Assinipwanak ; mais Sa Grandeur n'a pas encore pu réussir à mettre son dessein à exécution." SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1792-P1796, Thibault to Signay, St François-Xavier, July 6, 1839. See also: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 35-37; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp.12-13.

⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1803-P1829, Thibault to Signay, Red River (?), June, 18, 1843; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1841-P1854, Thibault to Provencher, Fort Pitt, December 26, 1843; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 13.

¹⁰ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10954, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, July 26, 1845; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10955, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, August 4, 1844; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2696-P2731, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, 1846.

¹¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1841-P1854, Thibault to Provencher, Fort Pitt, December 26, 1843. See especially the postscript, P1854.

¹² Thibault to Provencher, Lac Sainte-Anne, December 23, 1844 [P2701-2707], quoted in SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2696-P2731, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, 1846.

¹³ Thibault to Provencher, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 24, 1845 [P2707-P2709], quoted in *ibid.* See also Benoit, "The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse," p. 41.

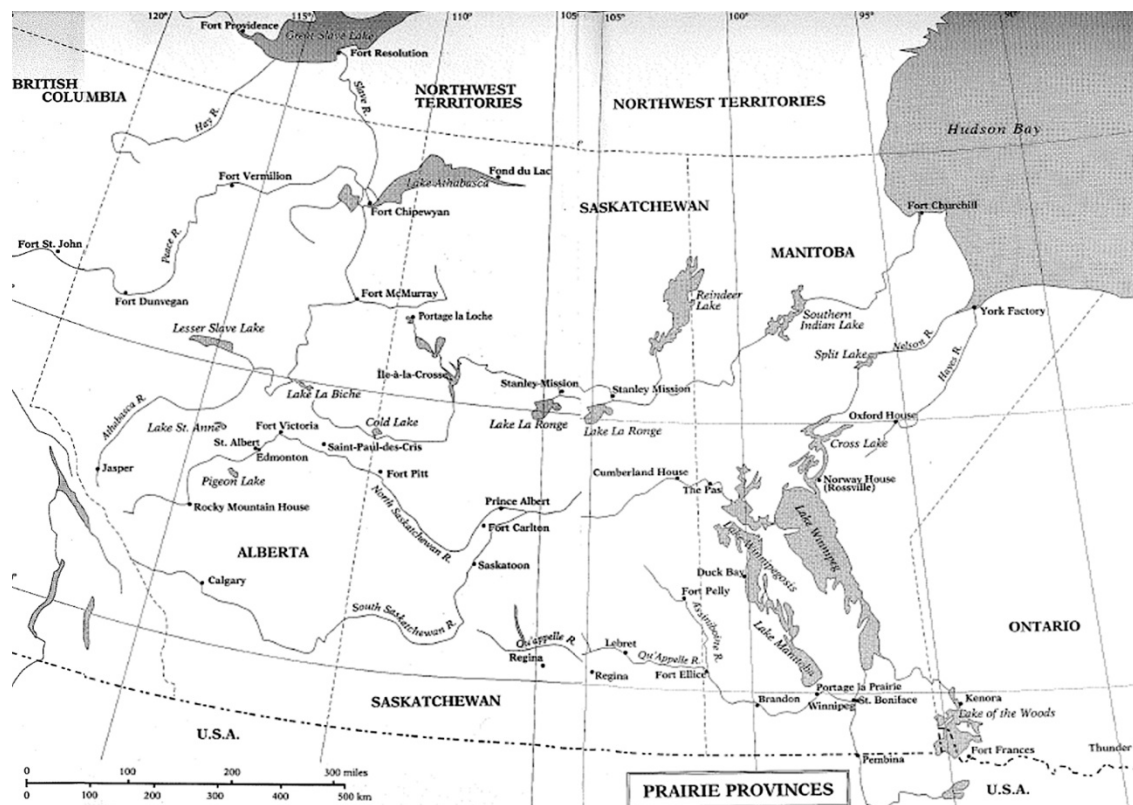
fort.¹⁴ He taught them to recite prayers in French and marvelled at their eagerness for further instruction. “Tous depuis le plus jeune jusqu’au plus vieux montre un zèle extrême à apprendre à servir Dieu,” he reported to Provencher on May 24. “Si nos travaux sont pénibles par intervalle convenons qu’ils sont bien adoucis par les consolations que l’on éprouve au milieu de sauvages aussi dociles et aussi désireux de connaître les moyens d’aller au ciel.”¹⁵ Envisaging mass conversion, Thibault urged his bishop to deploy missionaries to Île-à-la-Crosse without delay.¹⁶ On May 26, he took leave of his catechumens and continued northward to Portage La Loche.¹⁷

¹⁴ Thibault to Provencher, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 24, 1845 [P2707-P2709]. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the missionaries of Saint-Jean-Baptiste used the term “Montagnais” in reference to the Chipewyan-speaking people of the boreal forest. They realized, however, that these “Montagnais” bore little resemblance to the Montagnais – or Innu – of northern Quebec and Labrador. In a letter to his mother dated January 4, 1851, Alexandre Taché acknowledged that the term was being misapplied in the Northwest and that the origins of this misapplication eluded him: “J’ignore complètement pourquoi nos Canadiens les ont appelés *Montagnais*, puisque cette peuplade est précisément la plus éloignée de la grande chaîne, et qu’il n’y a pas une seule montagne considérable dans le territoire qu’elle occupe.” “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Taché, Vicaire apostolique de la Baie d’Hudson, à sa mère,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), pp. 332-333. See also Abel, *Drum Songs*, p. 11.

¹⁵ Thibault to Provencher, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 24, 1845 [P2707-P2709].

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Thibault reiterated this appeal one month later. See Thibault to Provencher, Portage de [sic] La Loche, June 24, 1845 [P2709-2711], quoted in SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2696-P2731, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, 1846.

¹⁷ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a/23, Île à la Crosse Post Journal (1843-1845), Monday, May 26, 1845, p. 58.



Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. xi-xii.

Thibault's report persuaded Provencher to establish a permanent mission at Île-à-la-Crosse. In April, 1846, the bishop commissioned the two youngest priests in his jurisdiction to lay the foundations of the mission – twenty-seven-year-old Louis-François Laflèche (a secular priest from Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, Lower Canada) and twenty-two-year-old Alexandre-Antonin Taché (an Oblate from Rivière-du-Loup, Lower Canada).¹⁸ The latter commission marked a departure from Provencher's

¹⁸ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 4, 12-14. See also Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp, 101-102; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 41-42; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 24-26; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 17-18, 21-22.

exclusive reliance on secular clergy to undertake missionary work.¹⁹ The bishop believed that the launch of “missions sauvages” beyond Red River required a degree of discipline, cohesion and financial stability that only a religious community could provide.²⁰ He had consequently appealed to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in May 1844. Having only recently established an institutional presence in Canada – at Longueuil (1842) and Bytown (1844) – the Oblates did not have sufficient numbers to deploy a hefty contingent into Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. Nevertheless, Joseph-Eugène-Bruno Guigues – the superior of Oblates in Canada – received instructions from the Oblate General Administration to choose two of his personnel from Longueuil to serve under Provencher.²¹ Mindful of the HBC’s aversion to “foreign priests”, Guigues narrowed his choice to the few Canadian recruits in his

¹⁹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 3-6. The Roman Catholic clergy consists of two canonically distinct bodies: regular clergy and secular clergy. Regular clerics belong to religious orders or – in the case of the Oblates – congregations. They live communally under a rule (*regula*) and are bound by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Their administration is distinct from diocesan structures. Secular – or “diocesan” – clerics owe canonical obedience directly to a bishop. Donat Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée : essai de synthèse* (2 vols., Montréal: Maison provinciale, 1983), 1:pp. 50-52, 59-67. See also Nigel Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 30-34, 38-40; Michael A. Mullet, *The Catholic Reformation* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 69-110, 142-145; R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 106-121.

²⁰ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10955, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, August 4, 1844; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2754-2758, Provencher to Signay, Saint-Boniface, June 20, 1845. This belief was informed by an ongoing disagreement between Provencher and secular clerics at Red River – principally Georges-Antoine Bellecourt (1803-1874). At issue was the mission to the local Saulteaux population. Whereas Provencher advocated a “mission ambulante” in which a priest would follow the itinerant Saulteaux, Bellecourt advocated – and attempted to implement – a programme of supervised agricultural settlements and intensive schooling. See Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 13-16; Nicole St-Onge, “Uncertain Margins: Métis and Saulteaux Identities in St-Paul des Saulteaux, Red River 1821-1870,” *Manitoba History*, No. 53 (Oct. 2006), pp. 2-10.

²¹ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 132-134; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l’ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 26-30; Donat Levasseur, “La venue des Oblats de Marie Immaculée en Amérique” in *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l’ouest 2*, pp. 13-29; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 2:pp. 28-139.

otherwise entirely French community.²² Taché seemed an obvious candidate for, despite his extreme youth, he had already displayed an aptitude for teaching and an earnest desire to serve in the west.²³ He reached Saint-Boniface in the company of his new superior, Pierre Aubert, on August 25, 1845. The two Oblates spent the following months ministering to the local Catholic population until Taché received his assignment to Île-à-la-Crosse.²⁴

On July 8, 1846, Taché and Lafèche boarded HBC barges at Fort Garry and set out upon the tortuous waterways that conveyed the Portage La Loche Brigade to Île-à-la-Crosse each summer.²⁵ Having obtained free passage through an agreement between Provencher and George Simpson – governor of the HBC’s trading territories in British North America – the young missionaries descended the Red River into Lake Winnipeg and sailed northward to the source of the Nelson River. After a brief sojourn at Norway

²² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2736-P2747, Provencher to Pierre-Flavien Turgeon (Bishop of Sidyme *in partibus infidelium*), Saint-Boniface, June 14, 1847. See also Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 16-17. It should be noted, however, that Guigues did not endorse the Oblate General Administration’s decision to dispatch missionaries to the Red River Colony and beyond. He wrote to Mazenod on February 14, 1845: “Je considère cette fondation comme imprudente, et, dès lors, comme contraire à la volonté de Dieu. Nous sommes à huit cent lieues de la Rivière-Rouge..., les communications sont extrêmement difficile. Ce sera pour les sujets une vie d’isolement et de dangers de toutes sortes.” Mazenod subsequently responded to Guigues on March 24, 1845, asserting that the decision was non-negotiable: “Ce n’était point une simple proposition à examiner et à discuter, mais une détermination arrêtée dont je vous confiais l’exécution.” Quoted in Champagne, *Les mission catholiques dans l’ouest canadien*, pp. 70-71.

²³ Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 15-29, 53-56; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 12-16. Both biographers have suggested that Taché felt destined to serve in the *pays d’en haut* and thus to follow in the footsteps of his paternal ancestor, Louis Jolliet (“discoverer” and explorer of the Mississippi), and his maternal ancestor, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye.

²⁴ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 10-12. See also Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 133; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l’ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 30. Upon his arrival at Saint-Boniface, Taché was barely twenty-two years old and had yet to be ordained. He was elevated to the diaconate on September 1, 1845 and ordained a priest eleven days later. Provencher officiated at both ceremonies.

²⁵ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 12. See also: Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, pp. 43-46; Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 38-39; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 51-52.

House, they crossed the northern end of the lake to Grand Rapids and proceeded up the Saskatchewan River to Cumberland House. They then ascended the rapids of the Sturgeon-Weir and crossed over Frog Portage to the English River (known today as the Churchill River). On September 10, Taché and Laflèche reached Île-à-la-Crosse after travelling 1,600 kilometres in just over two months.²⁶ With winter steadily approaching, the missionaries postponed constructing a residence and accepted McKenzie's offer of temporary room and board at the HBC fort – a cluster of houses and stores enclosed within a palisade. There they spent five months studying Cree and Chipewyan under the tutelage of McKenzie's resident interpreter.²⁷

In spring, Taché and Laflèche began physical work on the mission and entrusted their labours to the patronage of Saint John the Baptist.²⁸ They settled into a crude log cabin that McKenzie had offered them as a gesture of goodwill. Located approximately one and a half kilometres south of the HBC fort, the cabin stood on the long-abandoned site of the NWC fort near the tip of the peninsula. It measured eleven by seven metres and had yet to be caulked, such that the elements found their way into every nook and

²⁶ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 13. For more details on their voyage, see: Benoit, "The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse," pp. 42-44; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 107-122; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, p. 41. See also: Hargrave, *Red River*, pp. 160-166; Greg Marchildon and Sid Robinson, *Canoeing the Churchill River: A Practical Guide to the Historic Voyageur Highway* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2002), pp. 23-65, 141-143.

²⁷ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 14. See also Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 125-130. Chapter four will devote close attention to the missionaries' acquisition of language from members of the local community.

²⁸ According to Pénard, the dedication to John the Baptist reflected the Lower Canadian origins of Taché and Laflèche: "L'établissement fut mis sous la protection de S^t Jean-Baptiste sans doute par suite de la grande dévotion des deux missionnaires canadiens pour ce grand saint, patron du Canada." See "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 9. It is also possible that Taché and Laflèche sought to pay tribute to their predecessor, Jean-Baptiste Thibault, by invoking his patron saint. In 1861, Taché would pay similar tribute to Oblate Father Albert Lacombe by dedicating a new mission to Saint Albert (Albertus Magnus). See Sœur de la Providence, *Le Père Lacombe*, pp. 137-138.

cranny. The missionaries therefore spent two weeks filling chinks with mud and hay, then plastering the interior with a mixture of earth and ash.²⁹ At one end of the cabin, Laflèche built sleeping quarters and an alcove for the sacrament. The remainder of the “maison-omnibus” served as kitchen, refectory, parlour, confessional, choir and nave.³⁰ In order to lessen their reliance on the provisioning services of the HBC, Taché and Laflèche cleared a garden plot and sowed potatoes, which grew well in the sandy soil of Île-à-la-Crosse.³¹ They also learned to fish in the lake where, according to Taché, “le poisson se press[ait] en foule dans nos rêts.”³² Their efforts to consolidate the mission were redoubled with the arrival of another Oblate in July 1848. Hailing from the Vaucluse in south-eastern France, twenty-five-year-old Henri Faraud had served in the Red River Colony for a year before Provencher assigned him to Île-à-la-Crosse.³³ A skilled carpenter and woodworker, Faraud spent several months renovating the

²⁹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p., 18. See also: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 8-9; Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” pp. 46-47; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 147-148.

³⁰ Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 147. These functions tended to intersect and to blend awkwardly, as Vital-Justin Grandin later recalled in his description of a Mass officiated by Taché in 1848: “Pendant que la messe se chantait, la cuisine se faisait dans le même appartement ; c’est-à-dire qu’une chaudière contenant le poisson était suspendue dans la cheminée, car il n’y avait pas alors de poêle. Après la post-communion, le célébrant se tourne pour dire : *Dominus vobiscum*, et voit son chantre en surplis tenant dans sa main, à l’aide d’un torchon quelconque, la chaudière et en agitant le contenu pour l’empêcher de brûler, tout en répondant à l’officiant... M. Laflèche cumulait, presque sans s’en douter, les fonctions assez disparates de chantre et de cuisinier : le P. Taché, lui, eut peine à garder son sérieux.” Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 153.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 151, 161-162. In his letters from Île-à-la-Crosse (1846-1854), Taché made repeated references to abundant potato harvests and to the centrality of potatoes in the local missionary diet. Writing to his mother in 1853, he commented: “Nos jardins donnent dans le progrès de toute la vigueur du terrain qu’ils occupent. Nous avons cueilli près de 200 minots de pommes de terres, en sorte que si nous ne devenons pas Irlandais, ce sera faute de foi et non par manque de patates.” AD, HE 2221. T12L 25, Alexandre Taché to Louise-Henriette Taché (his mother), Île-à-la-Crosse, January 5, 1853.

³² Quoted in Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 138 (from Taché’s letter to his mother, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 23, 1847). See also Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, p. 37.

³³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2732-P2735, Provencher to Signay, Saint-Boniface, November 24, 1846; Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, pp. 12-18, 23-76, 87; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 25.

“maison-omnibus” by rebuilding its roof, panelling its interior, installing locks on its doors and adorning its alcove with a wooden tabernacle and candlesticks.³⁴

While still in the initial phases of consolidation, Saint-Jean-Baptiste served as a launching pad for Catholic missionary activity further afield. Taché and Laflèche reached an agreement whereby the former would undertake a series of excursions to outlying HBC posts while the latter – whose mobility was becoming increasingly restricted by rheumatism – would remain at Île-à-la-Crosse.³⁵ Thus, in late February 1847, Taché procured snowshoes, a sled, harnesses and four emaciated dogs from McKenzie. He then ventured 165 kilometres southward to the HBC post at Green Lake where he baptized a small party of Cree-speakers. Taché returned to Île-à-la-Crosse on March 5 only to embark four days later on a much longer expedition to the post at Reindeer Lake – a journey of approximately 550 kilometres to the north-east.³⁶ He travelled in the company of four HBC servants whom McKenzie had instructed to guide the young missionary. After sixteen days of arduous sledding, Taché reached Reindeer Lake and took up residence in the home of HBC clerk Charles Thomas. Over the next two months, he evangelized forty Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking families living in the vicinity of the post. Taché returned to Île-à-la-Crosse by canoe on June

³⁴ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 17; Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, pp. 79-81.

³⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2760-P2765, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, June 14, 1848; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2766-P2770, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, July 1848; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 17, 22-23.

³⁶ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 17. See also “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 7; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 130-131. The journey from Île-à-la-Crosse to the HBC post at Reindeer Lake was approximately 330 kilometres longer by summer route (i.e., by canoe along circuitous waterways).

15.³⁷ Two months later, he departed for Fort Chipewyan on the shore of Lake Athabasca – approximately 715 kilometres north-west of Île-à-la-Crosse. Travelling by canoe in the company of “deux guides sauvages”, Taché traversed Lac Île-à-la-Crosse and headed north-westward across Clear and Buffalo Lakes, ascended La Loche River and entered Lac La Loche. He disembarked at the south-eastern end of the portage, walked its twenty-kilometre trail, and re-embarked by canoe down the Clearwater and Athabasca Rivers.³⁸ Taché arrived at Fort Chipewyan on September 2 and was received as a guest of Chief Trader Francis Ermatinger.³⁹ The young missionary devoted the next three and a half weeks to evangelizing local families and reportedly performed 194 baptisms.⁴⁰ He left Fort Chipewyan by canoe on September 27 and reached Île-à-la-Crosse on October 15 – four days before ice sealed the lakes and rivers.⁴¹

Over the course of this intensive tour, Taché had laid the foundations of a satellite mission at each HBC post on his itinerary – namely Green Lake, Reindeer Lake, Portage La Loche and Fort Chipewyan. These posts were subsequently visited on

³⁷ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p., 18. See also “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 8; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 131-137. Taché’s mission to Cree- and Chipewyan-speakers of Reindeer Lake was severely hindered by his lack of fluency in either Cree or Chipewyan. In his report on the founding of the mission, Taché recalled his dependence on an ad-hoc team of translators (which included Charles Thomas): “Le P. Taché parlait français à M. Thomas, qui traduisait ses paroles en cris, tandis qu’un des deux montagnais traduisait en leur langue la traduction crise de M. Thomas. Qu’on juge des difficultés, et même des désagréments que la multitude des interprètes, et de tels interprètes apporta au missionnaire.” Quoted in Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 135-136.

³⁸ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 20-21. See also “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 9-10; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 138-141; McCarthy, “The Founding of Providence Mission,” p. 37.

³⁹ Benoît, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 47; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 141, 144-145. Barbara Benoît erroneously dates Taché’s arrival at Fort Chipewyan to September 5, 1847. This date corresponds to his celebration of the first Mass at the fort, not to his arrival there.

⁴⁰ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 146, 148.

a semi-regular basis by missionaries from Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁴² Taché returned by dogsled to Green Lake in early January and to Reindeer Lake in early March 1848. In late August, he returned by canoe to Portage La Loche en route to Fort Chipewyan.⁴³ At Ermatinger's request, he prolonged his visit to the latter post by several weeks until the departure of the winter mail party on January 2, 1849.⁴⁴ This prolongation enabled Taché to grasp the strategic value of Fort Chipewyan as a potential staging point for missionary expansion to Fond-du-Lac on the eastern end of Lake Athabasca and Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake. The task of consolidating this important position fell to Faraud, who consequently left Île-à-la-Crosse in late August and travelled by canoe to Fort Chipewyan to build a permanent chapel and residence there.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the addition of two new Oblates to the personnel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste resulted in more regular visits to the other satellite missions. Shortly after their arrival at Île-à-la-Crosse in early September 1849, twenty-four-year-old Jean Tissot (from the French department of Haute-Savoie) and twenty-five-year-old Augustin Maisonneuve (from the department of Ardèche) relieved Taché of his ministry at Green Lake, Reindeer Lake

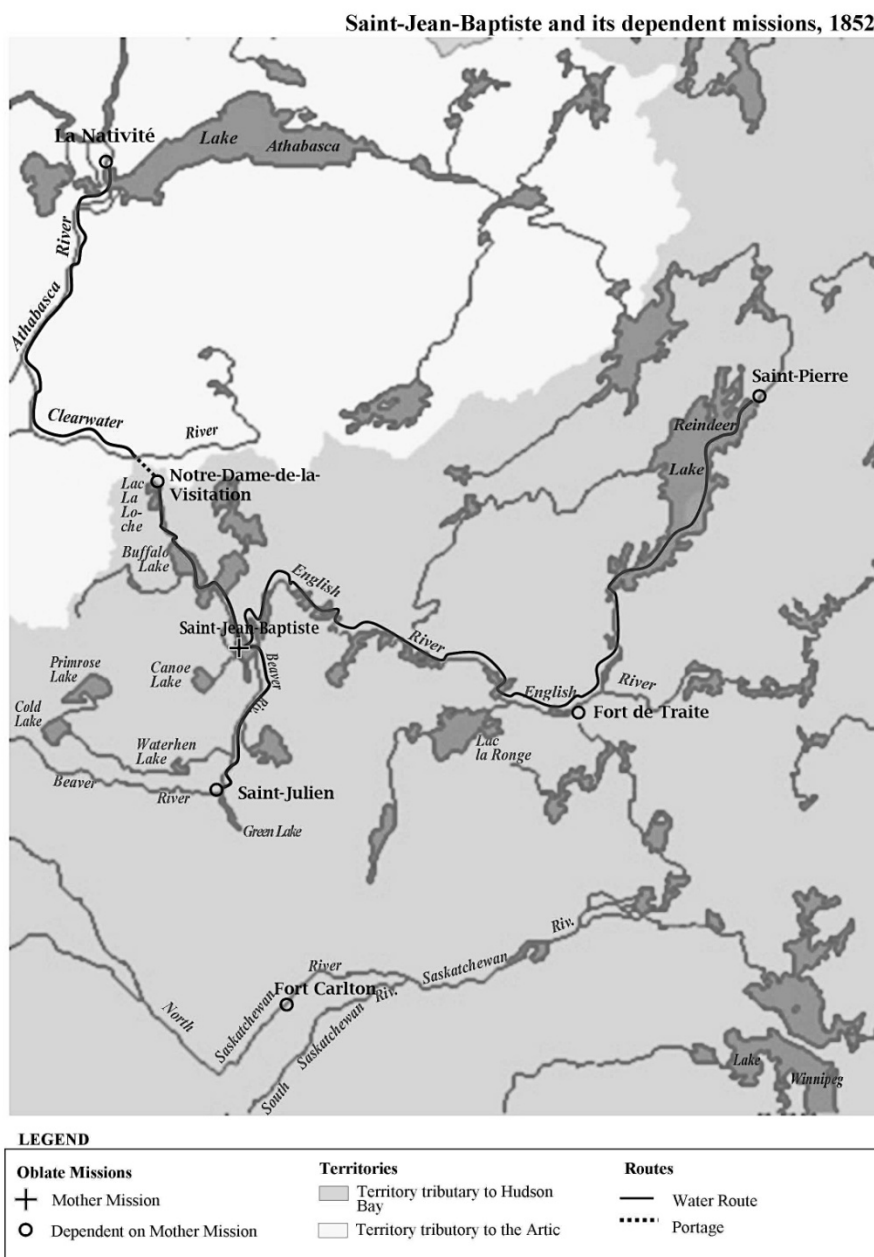
⁴² "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 1, 10-11, 15, 20.

⁴³ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 23-28. See also "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 12-15; Benoit, "The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse," pp. 48-49; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 156-160, 162; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 28-30.

⁴⁴ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 28-29; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 163-169.

⁴⁵ "Lettre du R.P. Faraud, Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, à un Prêtre de la même Congrégation, Athabaskaw, 20 avril, 1851," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), pp. 220-223. See also Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, pp. 95-125; McCarthy, "The Founding of Providence Mission," pp. 37-38.

and Portage La Loche.⁴⁶ Their presence enabled Taché to remain at Saint-Jean-Baptiste after Lafèche's rheumatism compelled him to quit the mission in late October 1849.⁴⁷



Author's map.

⁴⁶ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 34-36, 45. See also “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 20-28; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 355-356; *ibid.*, 3:p. 233.

⁴⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2805-P2809, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, August 28, 1849; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1876-P1883, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, August 5, 1850; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 31.

As Saint-Jean-Baptiste extended its influence beyond Île-à-la-Crosse, it required increasing financial support from its chief benefactor – *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. Founded in 1822 by a group of laypeople in Lyons, this society endeavoured to assist Catholic missions throughout the world by prayer and funding. To this end, it drew on hundred of thousands of associates from virtually every diocese in France. These associates made weekly contributions to a general fund that was managed by two central councils – one in Lyons, the other in Paris. Monies from this fund were then disbursed to individual bishops, vicars and prefects apostolic according to their stated needs.⁴⁸ Provencher was among the earliest beneficiaries. Since 1828, he had received an annual allocation from *l'Œuvre* for the undertaking of missionary activity in the vicinity of Saint-Boniface.⁴⁹ As the Catholic mission network expanded northward in the mid-1840s, Provencher repeatedly requested that this allocation be increased in order to cover mounting travel and provisioning expenses.⁵⁰ His requests were denied on the grounds that civil unrest in France – culminating in the revolution of 1848 – was hindering the administration of *l'Œuvre* and reducing donations from its

⁴⁸ “Coup-d’œil sur l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 18 (1846), pp. 1-44; *Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (Québec: Imp. P.G. Delisle, 1857), pp. 1-4. See also Jean-Claude Baumont, “Une Source de l’Histoire du XIX^e et du Début du XX^e Siècle : Archives et Publications de l’Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi,” *History in Africa*, Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 165-170.

⁴⁹ “Letter de Mgr Provencher,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 4 (1830), p. 719; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2696-P2697, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, 1846; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1876-P1883, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, August 5, 1850.

⁵⁰ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10955, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, August 4, 1844; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10954, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, July 26, 1845; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2810-P2813, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, November 30, 1849.

associates.⁵¹ Provencher's allocation was consequently frozen at its 1845-46 level of 20,000 francs and his nascent missions beyond Red River faced the prospect of closure.⁵² In January 1849, Taché and Faraud received orders from Saint-Boniface to restrict their ministry to the immediate vicinity of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and to abandon all satellite missions until *l'Œuvre* could provide sufficient funding for their maintenance.⁵³

This funding was ultimately obtained through the intercession of the Oblate General Administration in Marseilles.⁵⁴ In the aftermath of Laflèche's departure, the Oblate General Administration took an active interest in Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions as these were now staffed entirely by members of the congregation.⁵⁵

⁵¹ "Compte-rendu de 1847," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 20 (1848), pp. I, 145-149-152; "Compte-rendu de 1848," *ibid.*, pp. I-IV. See also: Claude Langlois, "Politique et religion" in Jacques Le Goff and René Rémond eds., *Histoire de la France religieuse : Du roi Très Chrétien à la laïcité républicaine* (4 tomes, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), pp. 125-143; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 59; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 70.

⁵² "Compte-rendu de 1846," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 19 (1847), p. 208; "Compte-rendu de 1847," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 20 (1848), p. XXII; "Compte-rendu de 1848," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 21 (1849), p. XXIX; "Compte-rendu de 1849," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 22 (1850), p. 194.

⁵³ These orders were issued by Pierre Aubert – Oblate superior at Red River. They reached Île-à-la-Crosse in January 1849. Aubert's orders are quoted in Faraud's report to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (1863): "Bornez à la mission de l'île [sic] à la Crosse vos soins et vos travaux. La révolution survenue en France [in February and June, 1848] tarira les ressources de la Propagation de la Foi ; peut-être aussi serons-nous obligés de laisser l'oeuvre commencée ; ne poussez donc pas plus avant." "De Mgr Faraud, Vicaire apostolique d'Atthabaska et de Mackenzie, à MM. les Directeurs de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 36 (1864), p. 382. See generally *ibid.*, pp. 378-395; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 30; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp., 18-19.

⁵⁴ The Oblate General Administration was originally located in Aix-en-Provence (Carmel d'Aix, 1815-21) and was later moved to Marseilles (Maison du Calvaire, 1821-62). It was transferred to Paris (rue St. Petersburg) in 1862. *Atlas O.M.I.* (Roma: Curia Generalizia, 1990), pp. 3-5; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 36-38, 68-69; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:pp. 105-106, 150-153.

⁵⁵ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 140-141; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p., 18.

Bishop Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod of Marseilles – founder and first Superior General of the Oblates – personally recommended these missions to *l'Œuvre* and affirmed that they were worthy of financial support.⁵⁶ In February 1850, Mazenod informed the central councils of Lyons and Paris that these missions were the unique charge of his congregation and that they were maintained by the selfless dedication of his “fils bien-aimés”:

Ceux[-ci]... vivent dans une atmosphère glaciale, et à de si grandes distances les uns des autres qu'il en coûte énormément pour leur procurer les plus simples aliments. Dieu seul pourra tenir compte à ces hommes de sacrifices de tout ce qu'ils souffrent pour sa gloire et pour le salut de ces pauvres âmes vraiment abandonnées.⁵⁷

Through Mazenod's commendation, Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions obtained a separate allocation from the one granted to Provencher. In June 1850, *l'Œuvre* established a fund specifically for Oblate missions in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory.⁵⁸ To ensure the regular replenishment of this fund, Mazenod instructed his missionaries to send letters and reports to the central councils of Lyons and Paris. These texts could then be published in *Les Annales de la Propagation de la*

⁵⁶ Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 23, 312; Martha McCarthy, *To Evangelize the Nations: Roman Catholic Missions in Manitoba, 1818-1870* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation Historical Resources, 1990), p. 31.

⁵⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.200, Item 6, Box 1, Mazenod to the Central Councils of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Marseilles, February 1850. See also “Mgr l'Evêque de Marseille aux Conseils centraux, Février 1850,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 22 (1850), pp. 315-316.

⁵⁸ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10956, Taché to Central Council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (Paris), Paris, February 6, 1855; AD, H 3209. P76R5, Mazenod to the Central Council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (Paris), Marseilles, May 7, 1859; “Compte-rendu,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 23 (1851), p. 194; “Instruction de Monseigneur de Mazenod relative aux missions étrangères,” pp. 168-169. Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite posts – staffed by Taché, Faraut, Tissot, Maisonneuve and Dubé – were the only Oblate missions in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory in 1850. Only one Oblate – François-Xavier Bermond – was posted at Saint-Boniface at this time. He resided in Provencher's episcopal palace and was not actively involved in the mission field. See Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 34-36.

Foi – the official organ of *l'Œuvre* – and circulated among the French Catholic reading public in order to elicit general interest, financial support and vocations.⁵⁹

Underlying Mazenod's advocacy was a realization of the growing importance of Saint-Jean-Baptiste within the broader Oblate apostolate. The mission was quickly becoming the de facto administrative headquarters of Catholic missionary activity in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. Its rise to prominence was accelerated in November 1849, when Provencher recommended to the Canadian bishops that Taché be nominated as his coadjutor with the right of future succession.⁶⁰ Mazenod welcomed this nomination as it endowed his congregation with jurisdiction over a vast mission territory.⁶¹ When Rome ratified the nomination and appointed Taché Bishop of Arath *in partibus infidelium* on June 14, 1850, Mazenod ordered him to accept the appointment and insisted on personally consecrating the young bishop. Obediently, Taché left Saint-Jean-Baptiste in June 1851 and travelled to France where he was consecrated by

⁵⁹ Baumont, "Une Source de l'Histoire du XIX^e et du Début du XX^e Siècle," pp. 169-170; Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 16, 19; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 42, 59, 187; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 23, 70; Nikolaus Kowalsy, "Mgr de Mazenod et l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi," *Études oblates*, no. 11 (1952), pp. 238-260; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1884-P1886, Provencher to Signay, Saint-Boniface, November 29, 1849; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 41-43. Provencher had initially favoured Laflèche as his successor, but the latter declined the nomination on account of his rheumatism. Provencher subsequently chose Taché because of his physical vigour, his competence in Cree and Chipewyan, and his status as a British subject. See SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1876-P1883, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, August 5, 1850; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2805-P2809, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, August 28, 1849; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2814-2819, Provencher to Signay, Saint-Boniface, July 21, 1851.

⁶¹ Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 32-34; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 25; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 45-46.

Mazenod in the cathedral of Viviers on November 23, 1851.⁶² Besides conferring episcopal ordination on Taché, Mazenod appointed him vicar of missions (i.e., Oblate superior) of Rupertsland and the North Western Territory, thereby detaching the region from the Oblate Province of Canada.⁶³ Taché returned to Saint-Jean-Baptiste on September 11, 1852 and undertook the administration of his vicariate from there.⁶⁴ He remained at the mission after succeeding Provencher as Bishop of Saint-Boniface upon the latter's death on June 7, 1853. Entrusting diocesan affairs to Thibault and Laflèche, Taché postponed relocating to Saint-Boniface until he was canonically compelled to take possession of his cathedral in November 1854.⁶⁵ After his enthronement, Taché returned frequently to Saint-Jean-Baptiste and continued supervising its consolidation over the next two years.⁶⁶ Yet his perambulation between Saint-Boniface and Île-à-la-Crosse soon presented serious logistical problems, thus prompting him to write to the

⁶² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0005-T0006, Pierre Aubert to Louise-Henriette Taché, Saint-Boniface (?), May 29, 1850; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 38-43; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 23-25.

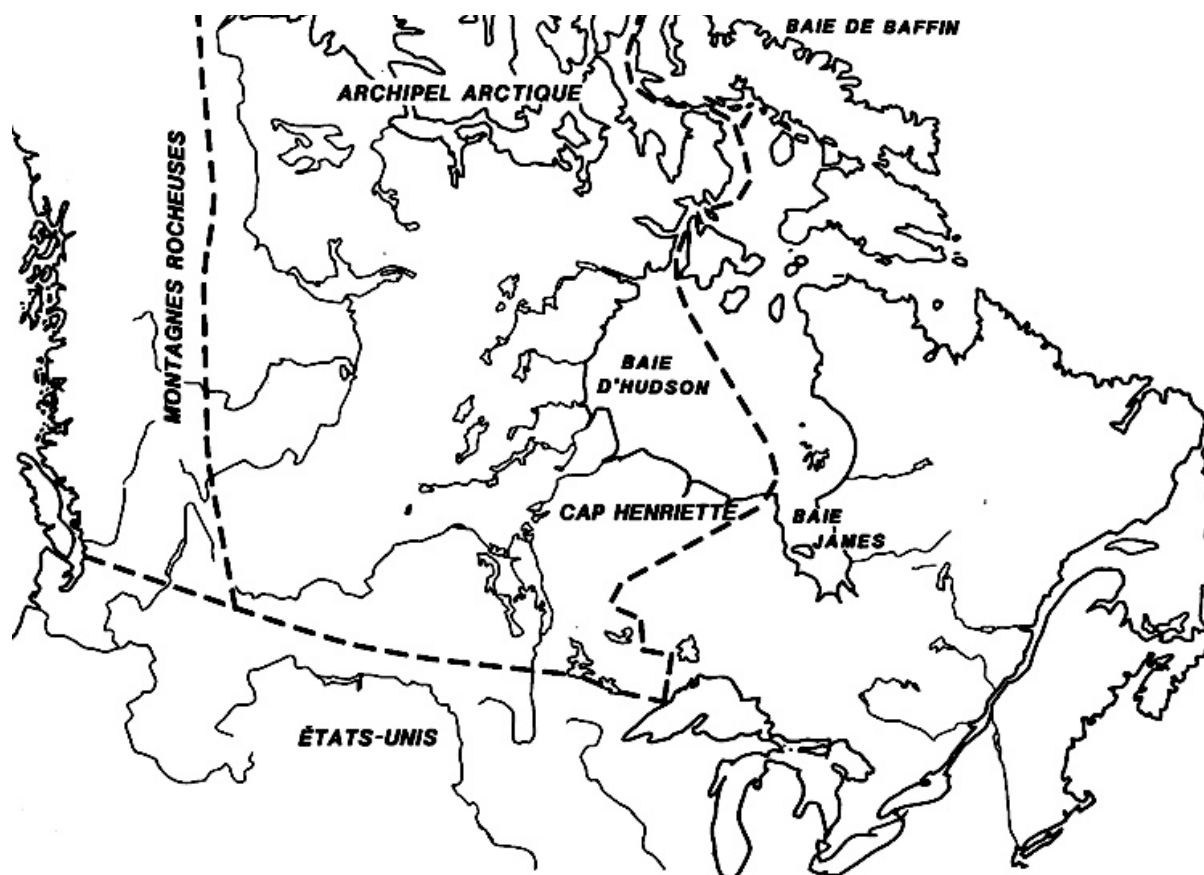
⁶³ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 42, 44; *Atlas O.M.I.*, p. 40; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 46.

⁶⁴ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 49-51; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 29-31.

⁶⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.200, Item 6, Box 1, Taché to Mazenod, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 7, 1854; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 53, 56-59, 65-66, 68-70; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 32-38; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 258-263, 297.

⁶⁶ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10961a, Taché to Étienne Paul Hippolyte Bérard des Glajeux (President of the Paris Council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*), Île-à-la-Crosse, March 26, 1856; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 72-73, 129, 139-143, 208-212; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 38-39, 68-71, 83-85. On Bérard des Glajeux and his tenure as President of the Paris Council (1847-1865), see: Daniël Verhelst, *La Congrégation du Cœur Immaculé de Marie (Scheut)* (Louvain: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 1986), p. 69 (n. 129).

Oblate General Administration in June 1856 to request the appointment of an Oblate coadjutor with permanent residence at Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁶⁷



“Diocèse de Saint-Boniface en 1854” in Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, p. 52.

Acceding to Taché’s request, the Oblate General Administration narrowed its choice of candidates to Oblates residing at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions in January 1857. Four newcomers had lately reinforced this contingent. The first was thirty-year-old Henri Grollier (from the department of Hérault) who had accompanied

⁶⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2826-P2829, Prelates of Quebec to Pope Pius IX, Quebec, November 1856. See especially article 7: “[S]on Coadjuteur demeurerait dans un lieu central pour toutes les missions sauvages, nommé l’isle à la Crose.” See also Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 89-90; Gaston Carrière, “L’élévation du P. Vital-J. Grandin, O.M.I., à l’épiscopat, 11 décembre, 1857,” *Études Oblates*, Vol. 32, no. 2 (avril-juin 1973), pp. 100-134; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 53-54.

Taché on his return voyage from France in 1852.⁶⁸ Grollier had spent only a week at Saint-Jean-Baptiste before continuing northward to assist Faraud in consolidating la Nativité mission (Fort Chipweyan) and Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs mission (Fond-du-Lac).⁶⁹ The second newcomer was twenty-eight-year-old Valentin Végréville (from the department of Mayenne) who had arrived at Saint-Jean-Baptiste in mid-July 1853 and who had subsequently established Saint-Raphaël mission at Cold Lake – approximately 180 kilometres south-west of Île-à-la-Crosse.⁷⁰ Thirty-three-year-old René Rémas (from the department of Mayenne) was the third newcomer. After a brief posting at Saint-Jean-Baptiste in October 1853, Rémas had ventured 320 kilometres south-westward to lay the foundations of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires mission at Lac La Biche.⁷¹ The most recent arrival was twenty-seven-year-old Vital-Justin Grandin (from the department of Mayenne). Grandin had passed through Saint-Jean-Baptiste in July 1855 en route to la Nativité and Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs where he assisted Faraud and Grollier.⁷² Despite having comparatively little experience in the mission field, Grandin was deemed *dignissimus inter dignos* – worthiest among worthies – by the Oblate General Administration and appointed Bishop of Satala *in partibus*

⁶⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2820-P2825, Provencher to Turgeon, Saint-Boniface, July 6, 1852; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 115.

⁶⁹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 46, 49, 51-52, 57-59; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 27, 29, 32; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 55-56.

⁷⁰ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 46, 52-53, 57, 73; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 32-33, 36-40; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 261-262.

⁷¹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.200, Item 6, Box 1, Taché to Mazenod, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 7, 1854; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 57-58; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:p. 119; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, p. 55.

⁷² “Lettre du R.P. Grandin, missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, à sa famille,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 30 (1858), pp. 468-475; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 106; Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 11-50, 56; Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, pp. 2-19, 63-66.

infidelium by the Holy See on December 10, 1857.⁷³ He initially refused the appointment on account of his youth, frail constitution and pronounced speech impediment. Yet Mazenod considered the matter non-negotiable and summoned Grandin to Marseilles to receive consecration. The chastened appointee left Saint-Jean-Baptiste in late August 1859 and was consecrated by Mazenod on November 30. Grandin was installed as coadjutor upon his return to Saint-Jean-Baptiste on October 4, 1860.⁷⁴

While assuming an increasingly important administrative role in the Catholic apostolate, Saint-Jean-Baptiste experienced a dramatic material evolution. Impelling this evolution were Oblate lay brothers – unordained members of the congregation charged with the temporal affairs of the mission.⁷⁵ In July 1849, Saint-Jean-Baptiste welcomed the first Oblate lay brother ever deployed into Rupertsland and the North Western Territory – thirty-one-year-old Louis Dubé (from Saint-André de Kamouraska, Lower Canada).⁷⁶ Upon his arrival at the mission, Dubé assumed the duties of gardener, fisherman, housekeeper and cook. His confrères soon delighted at the service of “petits plats et desserts” at mealtimes and drolly nicknamed their residence “château Saint-

⁷³ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 89-91.

⁷⁴ AD, H 3209. P76R5, Mazenod to the Central Council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (Paris), Marseilles, May 7, 1859; Centre de recherche en histoire religieuse du Canada, *Écrits de Grandin* [hereafter CRHRC/É.G.], Vol. 6, Grandin, “Notice sur le diocèse de S. Albert,” p. 31; CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, “Notes de Monseigneur Grandin sur l'Église du Nord-Ouest,” pp. 151-155. On Grandin's speech impediment, see: Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Duchaussois, *Apôtres inconnus*, pp. 15-17, 19-20; Huel, “Western Oblate History,” pp. 30-36. Huel describes Oblate lay brothers as the underappreciated and understudied “proletariat of the missions, the very foundations of the missionary edifice... [T]hey built the residences and missions, cultivated fields, hunted and fished to provide food for mission personnel, prepared meals, participated in religious services and rendered *‘une foule de services inappréciables.’*” See *ibid.*, p. 30. See also Jacqueline Gresko, “The ‘Serfs of the System?’: Oblate Brothers and the Sisters of St. Ann in British Columbia Schools, 1858-1920” in Raymond Huel ed., *Western Oblate Studies 4 – Études oblates de l'ouest 4*, pp. 119-141.

⁷⁶ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 19-20; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 302; Duchaussois, *Apôtres inconnus*, p. 243.

Jean” in acknowledgment of Dubé’s refining influence.⁷⁷ The lay brother sowed new crops in the garden and in autumn 1852 he harvested three bushels of barley as well as a substantial yield of oats, peas, onions, rutabaga and broad beans.⁷⁸ He procured cattle from the HBC fort and was tending two cows, eight heifers, two bulls and five calves by January 1853. This livestock enabled Dubé to supplement his confrères’ diet with cheese, butter and occasionally beef.⁷⁹ A second lay brother – twenty-five-year-old Patrick Bowes (from Kingston, Upper Canada) – arrived at Saint-Jean-Baptiste on July 16, 1855.⁸⁰ An accomplished carpenter and woodworker, Bowes constructed a wooden church measuring eighteen metres in length and featuring a steeple, a sculptured altar and twelve glass windows along its nave.⁸¹ After completing the structure in spring 1856, Bowes travelled to Lac La Biche where he applied his carpentry skills to the consolidation of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. He returned to Saint-Jean-Baptiste in July 1858 and began construction of a two-storeyed residence for the local mission personnel.⁸² A third lay brother – twenty-four-year-old Louis Boisramé (from the

⁷⁷ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁸ AD, HE 2221. T12L 25, Alexandre Taché to Louise-Henriette Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 5, 1853. In addition to this ample yield, the mission garden produced 200 barrels of potatoes in 1852. No wheat was sown at the mission until the following year.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, “Notes de Monseigneur Grandin sur l’Église du Nord-Ouest,” p. 149; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 31, 38; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 129.

⁸¹ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 31, 38-39; Duchaussois, *Apôtres inconnus*, p. 85; Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, pp. 59-60. According to Pénard and Lesage, this edifice was acclaimed as a masterpiece throughout Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. At the time of its completion in 1856, it was reportedly the largest and most impressive church outside of Red River. By 1861, however, Faraud had overseen the construction of a larger and more impressive church at la Nativité (Fort Chipewyan). See PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Mission de la Nativité d’Athabaskaw, June 24, 1861.

⁸² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0483-T0486, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 8, 1861; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 40, 47; Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, pp. 61, 68.

department of Mayenne) – arrived at the mission on October 4, 1860 to assist Dubé and Bowes in fishing, gardening, tending livestock and chopping and hauling firewood.⁸³ Yet while these lay brothers brought material improvement to Saint-Jean-Baptiste, their numbers remained too limited to release ordained Oblates from the duty of manual labour.⁸⁴ Hence, in April 1861, Végréville wrote to Taché complaining that his days were spent gardening or chopping firewood rather than in prayerful contemplation or in the study of Cree and Chipewyan.⁸⁵ The following month, Grandin reported that all Oblates at Saint-Jean-Baptiste – lay brothers and ordained priests alike – were preoccupied with gardening and with building a cowshed.⁸⁶ In hopes of entrenching a clear division between temporal and spiritual ministries, Grandin appealed for vocations to the Oblate brotherhood in a letter published in *Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* in 1863: “Puisse donc le Seigneur multiplier les bons Frères qui nous sont aujourd’hui adjoints, en trop petit nombre, pour notre consolation et le bien de nos œuvres! Leur mission est bien humble, mais bien belle pourtant et bien importante.”⁸⁷

⁸³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0568-T0571, Boisramé [as transcribed by Grandin] to Taché, Portage La Loche, June 5, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 129-130; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 110.

⁸⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861.

⁸⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0411-T0422, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 15, 1861.

⁸⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861.

⁸⁷ “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Vital Grandin, évêque de Satala et coadjuteur de Mgr l’évêque de Saint-Boniface, à MM. les Directeurs de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 3 décembre, 1861,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 35 (1863), p. 350. See also CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10986, Grandin to Glajeux, Île-à-la-Crosse, December 19, 1860: “Je vous prie de bien vouloir user de votre influence pour qu’on omette pas ce que je dis des frères convers et du bien que nous ferions si nous étions plus nombreux. Peut-être qu’en lisant cela de généreux jeunes gens désirant

Though short of Oblate manpower, Saint-Jean-Baptiste was enhanced by the arrival of three Sisters of Charity of Montreal – known colloquially as Grey Nuns – in autumn 1860.⁸⁸ Having established an institutional presence at Saint-Boniface sixteen years earlier, the Grey Nuns accepted the invitation of the Oblate General Administration to expand beyond Red River and to establish a daughter convent at Île-à-la-Crosse.⁸⁹ They agreed to labour *gratis pro Deo* in the fields of education, healthcare and social work, stipulating only that the Oblates provide them with food, clothing and ownership of a local residence.⁹⁰ Accordingly, two of their members – twenty-seven-year-old Sister Agnès (*née* Marie-Rose Caron from Louiseville, Lower Canada) and twenty-two-year-old Sister Philomène Boucher (from Saint-Rémi, Lower Canada) – were dispatched to Île-à-la-Crosse from the motherhouse in Montreal on June 4, 1860.⁹¹ Agnès and Boucher were joined at Saint-Boniface by twenty-three-year-

procurer la gloire de Dieu et le salut des âmes, seront déterminés à s'enrôler sous notre bannière et plus tard viendront partager nos travaux, nos souffrances et nos mérites.”

⁸⁸ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 196-198; ASGM, Mère McMullen, “Ancien Journal,” I: pp. 26, 45. See also: “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 67-68; Pierre Duchaussois, *Aventures canadiennes des Sœurs Grises* (Paris: Flammarion, 1934), pp. 15-18.

⁸⁹ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 43; Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint-Boniface*, pp. 125, 130-131; Duchaussois, *Aventures canadiennes des Sœurs Grises*, pp. 1-11; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 49, 65; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 57-58, 66-67.

⁹⁰ CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, “Convention entre Mgr Grandin, Evêque de Satala... Et la Révérende Sœur Charlesbois, Assistante Générale de la Congrégation des Sœurs de la Charité,” Saint-Albert, March 4, 1872, pp. 234-236; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 915, Box 32, Grandin to Marc Antoine Sardou (Oblate Treasurer General), Saint-Albert, December 12, 1874; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 57-58.

⁹¹ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 167-169; ASGM, McMullen, “Ancien Journal,” I: p. 45. See also ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, “Historique,” p. 1; Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, pp. 75-76. It should be noted that neither woman had volunteered for this posting. Bound by vows of obedience, Sisters Agnès and Boucher were appointed by their Mother Superior – Julie Hainault Deschamps – and were dispatched without discussion or consultation. See SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0137-T0139, Agnès to Taché, “sur le rivage du Lac Winipig,” August 6, 1860.

old Sister Pepin (*née* Marie-Anne Lachance from La Malbaie, Lower Canada).⁹² The three young nuns travelled under the escort of Grandin and twenty-seven-year-old Jean Séguin (from the department of Puy-de-Dôme) – a recently ordained Oblate assigned to Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁹³ After an arduous ten-week journey along the HBC transport system, the party reached Île-à-la-Crosse on October 4.⁹⁴ The nuns took up residence in a two-storeyed structure lately completed by Dubé and Bowes. Measuring eleven by seven metres, the structure contained a refectory, a kitchen, a dormitory and a common room. It was blessed on the feast day of Saint Bruno (October 6) and was consequently entrusted to his celestial patronage.⁹⁵ “Le couvent Saint-Bruno” was delineated as a feminine space into which Oblates were to consign duties and chores that required “des mains expérimentées et des soins vraiment maternels.”⁹⁶ Hence, Dubé hauled cauldrons, kettles, spits, pans, dishes, cups and cutlery to the convent and relinquished housekeeping responsibilities to its newly installed residents.⁹⁷ Grandin, Végréville and Faraud ceased administering homeopathic remedies at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and referred

⁹² ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 174-176; ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, “Historique,” pp. 1-2; Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, pp. 75-76.

⁹³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0149-T0152, Grandin to Taché, “sur le lac Winipeg,” August 12, 1860; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 175; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 179-180.

⁹⁴ Their journey from Saint-Boniface to Saint-Jean-Baptiste was fraught with complications: Grandin fell violently ill; there were no available HBC servants to conduct the travellers beyond Lac la Ronge; and the barge ran aground near Frog Portage. See Séguin’s account of the journey quoted in “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 62-68. See also ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 175-197.

⁹⁵ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 198-199; ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, “Historique,” pp. 2, 4-5.

⁹⁶ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 43.

⁹⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1085-T1087, Grandin, Inventory of Supplies at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Île-à-la-Crosse, 1861; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 199.

cases of physical affliction to the convent.⁹⁸ Faraud himself became a regular patient at Saint-Bruno as his worsening rheumatism occasioned long periods of bed rest and constant medical attention between 1860 and 1863.⁹⁹

Beyond tending to the alimentary and medical needs of mission personnel, the Grey Nuns engaged directly in the work of evangelization by providing local children with a Catholic education – an undertaking that will receive detailed consideration in chapter three. On November 25, 1860, the nuns opened a convent boarding school for nine girls and six boys.¹⁰⁰ These schoolchildren were divided into two cohorts – a *pensionnat supérieur* (comprising children of HBC officers) and a *pensionnat inférieur* (comprising children of HBC servants and three orphans).¹⁰¹ The ranks of both

⁹⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1921-T1924, Julien Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2017-T2022, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1863. “Homeopathic medicine,” according to McCarthy, “involves treating the patient with minute doses of drugs that would incite similar symptoms in a healthy person (i.e., treating like with like [homeopathic] rather than with contraries [allopathic]).” Oblates in the mission field adopted a variety of homeopathy that was popular as self-help medicine in nineteenth-century France. Developed by the German physician Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), this medicine was made available in kits that were sold with instruction manuals on appropriate remedies and dosages. See McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 124-125, 130, 231 (n28). See also Martha McCarthy, “The Missions of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to the Athapaskans, 1846-1870: Theory, Structure and Method” (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1981), pp. 271-74.

⁹⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0332-T0335, Isidore Clut to Taché, Mission de la Nativité (Fort Chipewyan), March 10, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1523-T1526, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 22, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1921-T1924, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1932-T1935, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1936-T1939, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 17, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2017-T2022, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1863.

¹⁰⁰ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 202-206; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 71.

¹⁰¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0582-T0585, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861. The distinction between *pensionnats* reflected the divided responsibility for the feeding of schoolchildren. In principle, children in the *pensionnat supérieur* were fed at the expense of the mission and ate their meals at the Oblates’ table. Children in the *pensionnat inférieur* were fed at the expense of their parents and ate their meals in the classroom. Yet, as chapter three will reveal, this distinction was by no means clear-cut as the mission was frequently compelled

pensionnats increased steadily over the following years as the Grey Nuns welcomed children from HBC posts throughout the English River District together with a growing number of orphans and foundlings. Enrolment rose to seventeen in 1862, nineteen in 1863, twenty-two in 1864, twenty-eight in 1865 and thirty in 1866.¹⁰² Assembled in the common room at Saint-Bruno, these pupils followed a morning curriculum – consisting of reading, writing and arithmetic – under Pepin’s tutelage. In the early afternoon, they attended catechism class taught by one of the ordained Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Later in the afternoon, the girls received instruction in cooking, cleaning and sewing from Agnès while the boys learned carpentry, husbandry and maintenance from Dubé.¹⁰³ At eight o’clock in the evening, the girls retired to their dormitory at Saint-Bruno and the boys to their dormitory in the Oblate residence where they remained under Dubé’s supervision.¹⁰⁴

to feed both cohorts at its own expense. See SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3099-T3102, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 18, 1865.

¹⁰² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0291-T0294, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 7, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0350-T0353, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0391-T0393, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0688-T0690, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 24, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 183, Pepin to “Ma Très Chère Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, June 14, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2302-T2305, Pepin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 15, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3079-T3082, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3772-T3773, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1866.

¹⁰³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1215-T1217, Dubé to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2302-T2305, Pepin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 15, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3112-T3115, Pepin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 20, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Boniface, June 12-13, 1866; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 203, 205-206.

¹⁰⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 206.

The development of a solid and diversified infrastructure at Saint-Jean-Baptiste strengthened the entire network of Catholic missions in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. Through their labours at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Grey Nuns and Oblate lay brothers provided farm produce, clothing and equipment for missionaries in outlying areas. With assistance from their female pupils, the nuns produced stockpiles of butter, cheese and berry preserves at Saint-Bruno.¹⁰⁵ They made cassocks from coarse wool (obtained at the HBC fort) as well as hats, coats, mittens, trousers and boots from animal skins.¹⁰⁶ The lay brothers kept a store of dried pork, beef and fish as well as barrels of potatoes, wheat, oats, barley, onions and rutabaga. They made fishnets, snowshoes, dogsleds and harnesses with assistance from male pupils.¹⁰⁷ Shortly after his arrival at Saint-Jean-Baptiste in September 1862, forty-five-year-old Joseph Salasse (an Oblate lay brother from the department of Savoie) procured a hand-powered mill from the HBC fort and began grinding flour at the mission.¹⁰⁸ Thus, by

¹⁰⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3282-T3283, Samuel McKenzie to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 20, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3284-T3285, Samuel McKenzie to Agnès, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 20, 1865; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 206, 221, 231.

¹⁰⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1108-T1111, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 14, 1862; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin, "Mission de St J.Bte de l'Île à la Crosse, recettes et dépenses du mois de juin 1864 au mois de janvier 1866"; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to Végréville, Saint-Albert, December 31, 1868.

¹⁰⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1116-T1119, Faraud to Joseph Lestanc [Taché's Oblate counsellor at Saint-Boniface], Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1862; AD, HE 2221. T12Z 60, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; AD, HE 2221. T12Z, 183, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1921-T1924, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 5, 1866.

¹⁰⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1719-T1720, Joseph Salasse to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1925-T1928, Salasse to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 10, 1863; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 77; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:p. 157. The hand-powered mill fell into disrepair after three years

the early 1860s, Saint-Jean-Baptiste had become sufficiently endowed to serve as a central provisioning depot for a vast territory. The mission outfitted Taché and Grandin on their annual episcopal visits to Portage La Loche, Green Lake and Cold Lake between 1860 and 1866.¹⁰⁹ It also outfitted thirty-year-old Julien Moulin (an ordained Oblate from the department of Ille-et-Vilaine) on his overland expedition from Green Lake to Fort Carlton where he founded a mission in December 1860. Saint-Jean-Baptiste continued to provision Moulin's mission throughout the 1860s.¹¹⁰ Concurrently, Saint-Pierre mission (Reindeer Lake) drew its supplies from the same source. Appointed resident superior at Saint-Pierre in August 1861, Végréville placed immediate strain on the stores of Saint-Jean-Baptiste by requisitioning a year's supply of foodstuffs, clothing and equipment for himself and his two subordinates – thirty-one-year-old Alphonse Gasté (an ordained Oblate from the department of Mayenne) and thirty-three-year-old Jean Pérréard (an Oblate lay brother from the department of the

of faithful service. Hence, in January 1866, Grandin reported to Taché: "Le petit moulin... a bien fait son office pendant quelque temps mais il est déjà usé, il laisse maintenant passer la farine grasse comme le sable." Taché consequently purchased a state-of-the-art mill for the mission. See SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3768, Grandin, "Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste", Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1866. See also: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3778-T3781, Patrick Bowes to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 14, 1866; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 204, Taché to "Ma très Honorée Sœur", Saint-Boniface, December 28, 1866.

¹⁰⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2931-T2934, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 31, 1864; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 5, 1866; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 2, 1866.

¹¹⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 5, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0385-T0388, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 15, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0391-T0393, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1108-T1111, Moulin to Taché, Fort Carlton, January 14, 1862; AD, HE 2221. T12Z 60, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3768, Grandin, "Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste", Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1866; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 70, 72-73, 75, 85, 88, 107, 111-113; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 409-410.

Rhône).¹¹¹ Until his reassignment in April 1864, Végréville dispatched Gasté and Pérréard to Saint-Jean-Baptiste every winter to restock on essential supplies.¹¹² For their part, Oblates in the Athabasca and Mackenzie River basins (north-east of Portage La Loche) also drew on the stores of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Although detached from the jurisdiction of the Bishop and Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface by the canonical erection of the Vicariate Apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie (May 13, 1862), these Oblates remained dependent on provisions from Saint-Jean-Baptiste.¹¹³ Hence, while visiting Saint-Jean-Baptiste en route to la Nativité in late July 1862, twenty-three-year-old Émile Petitot (an ordained Oblate from the department of Côte-d’Or) and twenty-two-year-old Émile Grouard (an ordained Oblate from the department of Sarthe)

¹¹¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1601-T1602, Végréville to Taché, Reindeer Lake, August 22, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1725-T1728, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to Végréville, Saint-Albert, December 31, 1868; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 71-72, 75; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 64-65; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 64-65. Végréville’s habitual requisitioning of supplies caused much consternation at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, especially as the 1860s witnessed a sharp increase in the number of residents at the mission (Oblates, Grey Nuns, schoolchildren and hired workers). In April 1863, Moulin urged Taché to release Saint-Jean-Baptiste from the duty of provisioning Saint-Pierre: “Il serait bien à désirer que cette mission du lac Caribou fut complètement séparée de la mission de l’Île à la Crosse... Je sais qu’ils n’ont pas toutes les ressources que nous avons ici, mais il s’en faut de beaucoup qu’ils aient tant de bouches à nourrir [sic].” See SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863.

¹¹² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1745-T1748, Végréville to Taché, Reindeer Lake, November 27, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2011-T2016, Gasté to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2017-T2022, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2229-T2237, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2746-T2750, Gasté to Taché, Reindeer Lake, April 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3768, Grandin, “Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste”, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1866.

¹¹³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 78-79; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 58-59; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 232-234.

procured butter, flour, potatoes and dried meat for themselves and their confrères in the north.¹¹⁴

In addition to producing supplies for outlying missions, Saint-Jean-Baptiste served as a point of transshipment for manufactured goods and liturgical articles sent from Saint-Boniface. The mission was able to perform this function because of its strategic location on the main route of HBC barges plying between Red River and Portage La Loche.¹¹⁵ In accordance with an agreement brokered between Simpson and Taché in 1853, the HBC delivered freight directly to Saint-Jean-Baptiste each July or August.¹¹⁶ This freight consisted of items that had been ordered the previous year by the Oblate superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and his confrères in outlying posts. These missionaries sent their orders to Taché who subsequently arranged for the shipment of specified items from Great Britain and France by way of York Factory (on Hudson Bay) and Norway House (on Lake Winnipeg). Once received at the episcopal palace in Saint-Boniface, the items were inventoried, packaged and loaded aboard HBC barges bound for Portage La Loche.¹¹⁷ At Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Oblate lay brothers unloaded

¹¹⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1503-T1506, Émile Grouard to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 20, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1519-T1522, Émile Petitot to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 22, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1523-1526, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 22, 1861; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 116; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:p. 69. On Petitot and Grouard's journey from Saint-Boniface to la Nativité (May-August, 1862), see: Émile Grouard, *Souvenir de mes soixante ans d'apostolat dans l'Athabaska-Mackenzie* (Lyon: Œuvre Apostolique de Marie Immaculée, 1923), pp. 21-27.

¹¹⁵ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, p. 41; Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, pp. 44-46; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 68-69; Macdougall, "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities," pp. 51-52.

¹¹⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0010-T0013, Simpson to Taché, Fort Garry, June 30, 1853. On the extension of this agreement – the so-called *entente cordiale* – into the 1860s, see: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0949-T0951, Bernard Rogan Ross to Taché, Fort Simpson, November 20, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1792-1793, Alexander Grant Dallas to Robert Campbell, Fort Garry, December 11, 1862 (copy).

¹¹⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1108-T1111, Moulin to Taché, Carlton, January 14, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1116-T1119, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1862;

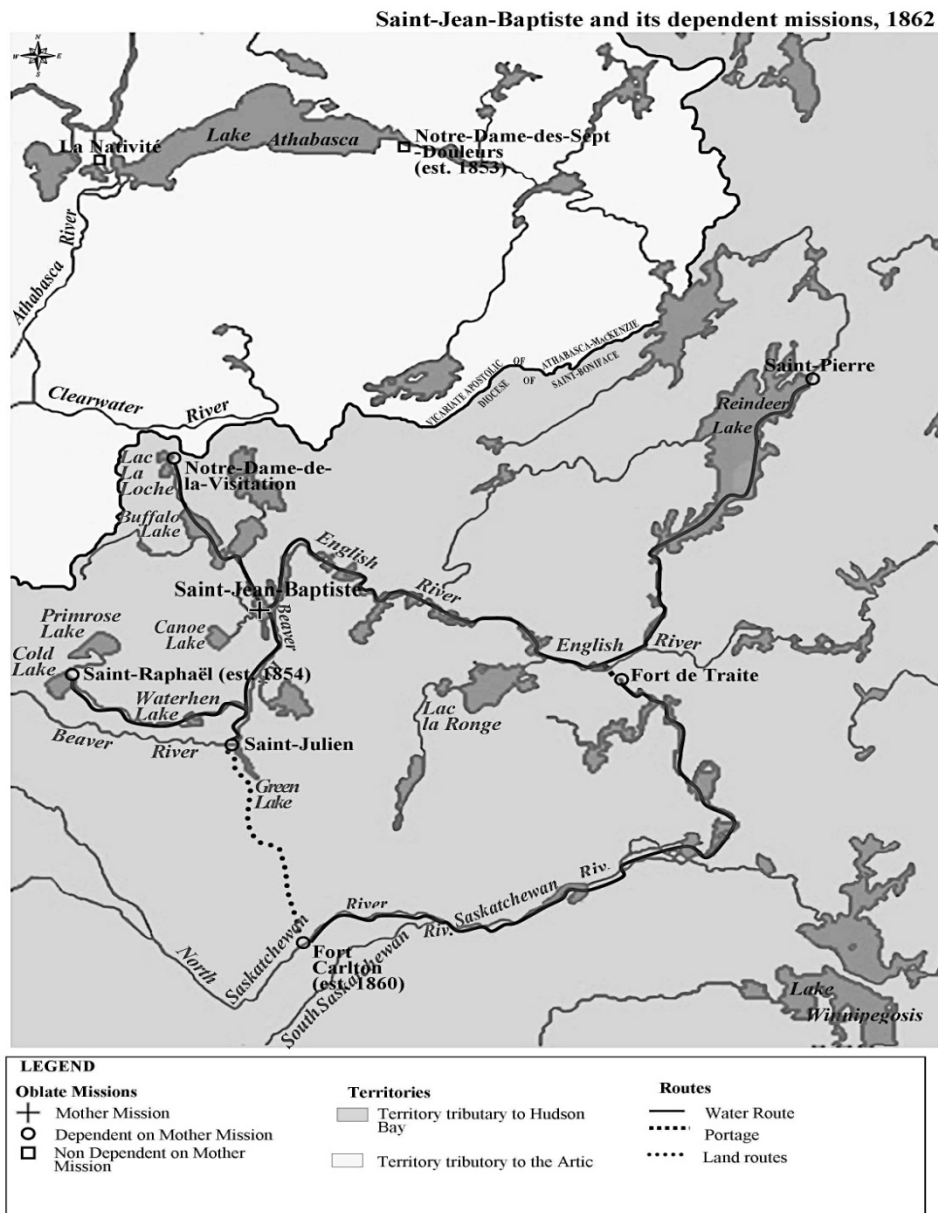
the items and checked them against an accompanying copy of the inventory. Pieces addressed to the Vicariate Apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie were reloaded and shipped north to Portage La Loche, thence hauled to the Clearwater River and shipped up the Athabasca River.¹¹⁸ Pieces addressed to Reindeer Lake and Fort Carlton were held in storage at Saint-Jean-Baptiste until they were claimed and removed by Oblates stationed in those areas.¹¹⁹ Pieces addressed to Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation (Portage La Loche), Saint-Raphaël (Cold Lake) and Saint-Julien (Green Lake) also were stored at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and were carried to their respective destinations by Oblates on pastoral visits. Because these missions were served directly from Saint-Jean-Baptiste, they drew from a common repository of liturgical articles. Oblates lugged vestments, chalices, ciboria, patens, hosts and flagons of wine to these missions for the celebration of Mass, then returned these items to storage at Saint-Jean-Baptiste.¹²⁰

SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2575-T2577, Moulin to Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2768-T2773, Gasté to Taché, Reindeer Lake, April 22, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3759-T3761, Jean-Marie Caër to Taché, Portage La Loche, January 8, 1866; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3769-T3771, Grandin to Taché, “Demandes pour la mission S.-J. Bte (Île à la Crosse)”, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1866; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 78-79, 81-82, 333; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 55-56.

¹¹⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1116-T1119, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1862; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 68.

¹¹⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1601-T1602, Végréville to Taché, Reindeer Lake, August 22, 1862; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 22, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3768, Grandin, “Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste”, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1866; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Reindeer Lake, October 27, 1866.

¹²⁰ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3768, Grandin, “Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste”, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1866; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3759-T3761, Caër to Taché, Portage La Loche, January 8, 1866.



Author's map.

As a further consequence of its location on an HBC thoroughfare, Saint-Jean-Baptiste served as the communications hub between Saint-Boniface and the far-flung missions of Rupertsland and the North Western Territories. Ordained Oblates stationed in the Saskatchewan, English, Athabasca and Mackenzie River basins were required to send written reports to Saint-Jean-Baptiste at least twice a year. Each Oblate was

expected to provide detailed information on the progress of the faith among his neophytes and to comment on his own spiritual and physical condition. He was then to transmit his report to Saint-Jean-Baptiste by the courier system that served the HBC posts of the English River and Athabasca Districts in the winter and summer. Alternatively, he could entrust his report to a fellow Oblate or to an HBC servant travelling to Île-à-la-Crosse.¹²¹ Once all of the reports had been received at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, they were read by Grandin or – in the event of his absence – by his deputy.¹²² Grandin or his deputy then prepared a general report on the progress of the apostolate to Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. Administrative records – such as inventories, receipts and lists of necessary provisions – were appended to the general report. So too were documents marked for forwarding to France – principally reports to the Oblate General Administration and letters to *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*.¹²³ The completed dossier left Saint-Jean-Baptiste by barge in late August or by

¹²¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0379-T0382, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 2, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3068-T3078, Grandin to Taché and Florent Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3116-T3119, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 23, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché and Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 3, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3189-T3191, Grandin to Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 9, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 2, 1866.

¹²² Grandin was away from Saint-Jean-Baptiste between June 1861 and August 1864 on an extensive tour of Catholic missions in the Athabasca and Mackenzie River basins. During his absence, he was replaced as resident superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste by Faraud (June 1861-December 1862) and Moulin (December 1862-August 1864). SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0614-T0617, Grandin to Taché, Mission de la Nativité d'Athabaska, June 24, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1693-T1702, Grandin to Taché, Mission de la Providence, November 10, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2117-T2128, Grandin to Taché, Mission de la Providence, May 3, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2575-T2577, Moulin to Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1864. See also McCarthy, "The Founding of Providence Mission," pp. 44-49.

¹²³ See for instance: CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10986, Grandin to Glajeux, Île-à-la-Crosse, December 19, 1860; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0291-T0294, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 7, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0298-T0301, Grandin to Taché, Île-

dogsled in early January.¹²⁴ After its delivery to the episcopal palace in Saint-Boniface, the dossier was scrutinized by Taché and/or by his counsellor, Joseph Lestanc (an ordained Oblate from the department of Finistère).¹²⁵ Documents destined for France were removed and inserted into Taché's correspondence with the Oblate General Administration and *l'Œuvre*.¹²⁶ The remainder of the dossier provided information upon which Taché ordered supplies for distant posts, deployed reinforcements into the mission field and issued instructions to his coadjutor. In his written response to Grandin, Taché included a list of supplies bound for Saint-Jean-Baptiste the following summer, directives on supervising missionaries and administrative news from France. His letter left Saint-Boniface by courier in December or by barge in June.¹²⁷ After

à-la-Crosse, January 17, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0362-T0368, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; AD, HE 2221. T12Z 64, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3068-T3078, Grandin to Taché and Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3189-T3191, Grandin to Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 9, 1865.

¹²⁴ AD, HE 2221. T12Z 251, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 5, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1725-T1728, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2575-T2577, Moulin to Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3548-T3551, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 25, 1865.

¹²⁵ Lestanc served as Taché's counsellor from 1860 to 1870. Concurrently, Lestanc served as director of Saint-Boniface College. Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 321-322; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 90-91.

¹²⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0937-T0939, Superior General Joseph Fabre to Taché, Marseilles, November 13, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2793-T2796, Sardou to Taché, Paris, May 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2953-T2955, Sardou to Taché, Paris, November 7, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3091-T3093, Glajeux to Taché, Paris, January 11, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2793-T2796, Sardou to Taché, Paris, May 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3253-T3256, Sardou to Taché, Paris, May 12, 1865.

¹²⁷ AD, HE 2221. T12Z 251, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 5, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2793-T2796, Sardou to Taché, Paris, May 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2953-T2955, Sardou to Taché, Paris, November 7, 1864.

reaching Saint-Jean-Baptiste, the letter was read by Grandin and its contents were relayed to missionaries in outlying posts by circular.¹²⁸

The combination of its strategic location and its diversified infrastructure made Saint-Jean-Baptiste the central meeting place for Oblates serving in Rupertsland and the North Western Territories. Beginning in 1860, the mission hosted an annual retreat in October. This event drew Oblates – ordained priests and lay brothers alike – from distant missions to spend eight days in communal worship and reflection.¹²⁹ Although intended primarily as a devotional and reflective exercise, the retreat also served an important administrative function as it facilitated interpersonal communication between Oblates. It enabled superiors to obtain first-hand information on particular missions while enabling subordinates to receive clarification on matters of discipline and organization. Hence, in 1860, Taché availed himself of the retreat at Saint-Jean-Baptiste to consult with his personnel about the missions of the Athabasca and Mackenzie River basins. It was during this consultation that he and Grandin resolved to petition the Holy See to detach the northern missions from the Diocese of Saint-

¹²⁸ Grandin's preferred medium of communication with Oblates in outlying posts was the "lettre commune" carried from mission to mission by an Oblate lay brother or by an HBC courier. Grandin stated frequently that this medium saved him time, paper and ink while fostering an *esprit de corps* among his personnel. Each circular followed a set formula whereby general information – news affecting all Oblates – was presented in the first half of the letter. Information relevant to particular Oblates was presented in the second. See for instance: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to "[Les] Rds Missionnaires d'Athabaskaw, de l'Île à la Crosse et de la Rivière Rouge," Mission du Sacré-Coeur (Fort Simpson), September 27, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to "[Les] missionnaires oblats d'Attabaskaw, de l'Île à la Crosse, de St. Boniface et des autres missions s'il est possible," Mission de la Providence, April 23, 1863; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to "Mes bien chers pères et frères," Île-à-la-Crosse, January 21, 1865.

¹²⁹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 141; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 68. In 1870, the annual retreat at Saint-Jean-Baptiste was cancelled because of the early onset of winter. Waterways were covered with a thin layer of ice and therefore could not be navigated by canoe or by dogsled. From 1871 onward, the retreat was held in the second week of February. See "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 115.

Boniface and to consign them to a new vicariate administered by a resident “évêque-roi” – an office to which they subsequently nominated Faraud.¹³⁰ Four years later, the retreat at Saint-Jean-Baptiste was attended by the Oblate Superior General’s delegate, thirty-eight-year-old Florent Vandenberghe (an ordained Oblate from Belgium).¹³¹ Over the course of the retreat, Vandenberghe collected testimony from Taché, Grandin, Moulin, Gasté, Dubé and Pérréard in order to prepare a comprehensive report on “missions sauvages” for the Oblate General Administration.¹³²

Thus, by the mid-1860s, Saint-Jean-Baptiste had come to occupy a pivotal role in the Catholic apostolate to Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. In addition to serving as the administrative headquarters of the Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface, the mission had become a centre of education and healthcare, a provisioning depot, a point of transshipment and a rallying place for Oblates dispersed throughout the region. As a corollary of its strategic importance, Saint-Jean-Baptiste had assumed an exalted position in the consciousness of Oblates. They referred lyrically to the mission as “le berceau d’évêques” as four prelates had begun their missionary careers there:

¹³⁰ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 139-143, 164; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 68-71. The term “évêque-roi” was coined by Grollier in 1859 after several prominent HBC officers petitioned Simpson and the CMS to authorize a permanent Anglican mission at Fort Simpson (the headquarters of the Mackenzie District). According to Grollier, this request portended a Church-State alliance that could only be counterbalanced by a locally based Catholic prelate wielding quasi-feudal political, religious and social authority. See SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0316-T0319, Grollier to Taché, Fort Good Hope, February 24, 1861. See also: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0130-T0133, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 5, 1860; McCarthy, “The Founding of Providence Mission,” pp. 40-44; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 47, 63.

¹³¹ Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 257-258; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 40.

¹³² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 14, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2931-T2934, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 31, 1864; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to “Mes bien chers pères et frères,” Île-à-la-Crosse, January 21, 1865; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 194-198, 202, 207, 211-212; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 68-71.

Taché, Bishop of Saint-Boniface; Grandin, Bishop of Satala *in partibus infidelium* and Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface; Faraud, Bishop of Anemour *in partibus infidelium* and Vicar-Apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie (consecrated on November 30, 1863); and Laflèche, Bishop of Anhedon *in partibus infidelium* and Coadjutor Bishop of Trois-Rivières (consecrated on February 25, 1867, succeeded to the see on March 30, 1870).¹³³ In his published overview of the Oblate enterprise in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory – *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (1866) – Taché presented Saint-Jean-Baptiste as the congregation's crowning achievement. He paid it homage in describing his visit there in autumn 1864:

Dès le lever du soleil, nous entrons dans le lac de l'Ile-à-la-Crosse, et puis bientôt, la grande croix, le clocher argentin, l'église, tout l'établissement de la Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, reflétaient les rayons de notre magnifique soleil de septembre. En nous renvoyant à la figure des flots de lumière, cette vue inondait notre âme des plus délicieuses émotions. Là, sur les bords de ce lac tranquille, dans un site que bien des touristes admireraient avec enthousiasme, s'assit cet établissement qui a déjà fait tant de bien et qui en promet davantage pour l'avenir... De toutes parts des salves joyeuses disaient que notre allégresse et notre bonheur trouvaient leur écho sur cette rive, où les heureux enfants de l'école agitaient les oriflammes qu'ils tenaient en main... Le Rév. P. Visiteur [Vandenberghe], arrivé depuis plus d'un mois à l'Ile-à-la-Crosse, s'y trouvait avec six Oblats, deux évêques, deux prêtres et deux frères convers. L'ensemble de l'établissement, la piété du bon peuple qui le visite, lui faisaient dire qu'il n'aurait jamais cru pouvoir trouver, au milieu des forêts et à de pareilles distances des dernières limites du monde civilisé, un ensemble aussi complet, une œuvre aussi parfaite. Ce témoignage nous causa la plus vive satisfaction.¹³⁴

To a degree, Taché's panegyric reflected a sense of individual accomplishment in the mission's progress. As its co-founder, Taché acknowledged that he felt personally

¹³³ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 18; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 123-195; Duchaussois, *Aux glaces polaires*, pp. 151-195; Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, pp. 79-81; Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, pp. 89-109; Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, 1:pp. 203-208.

¹³⁴ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 209-211. Taché's study was also published serially in the March, June, September and December issues of *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée* (1866).

invested in Saint-Jean-Baptiste: “Ce coeur a battu si fortement autrefois sur cette plage lointaine et déserte, il l’a tant aimée! Notre corps aussi y a souffert, et l’a arrosée de ses sueurs ; nous l’avons habitée pendant dix ans et... nous avons cru que nous y reposerions à notre dernière heure. C’est assez pour justifier l’appellation *ad propria*.”¹³⁵ Yet far from mere self-congratulation, Taché’s panegyric reflected a sentiment that was widespread among his fellow Oblates. Grouard and Petitot had both marvelled at Saint-Jean-Baptiste while passing through in July 1862. In their respective letters to Taché, the former Oblate praised the mission’s idyllic beauty while the latter praised its strategic location.¹³⁶ Three years later, twenty-nine-year-old Jean-Marie Caër (an ordained Oblate from the department of Finistère) expressed astonishment upon arriving at Saint-Jean-Baptiste. He reported to the Oblate General Administration that the mission emanated “un air de civilisation que je n’aurais jamais cru rencontrer dans ces régions si reculées.”¹³⁷

This sense of collective wonder was short-lived. It perished in the fire that ravaged Saint-Jean-Baptiste on Friday, March 1, 1867.¹³⁸ While taking their evening

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 140-141. The phrase “ad propria” – meaning “our home” in this context – was likely taken from a prayer in the *Breviarium Romanum* (Roman Breviary) recited by travelling priests: “... & Angelus Raphael comitetur nobiscum in via, ut cum pace, salute & gaudio revertamur ad propria...” (“...and may the [Arch]Angel Raphael accompany us on our travels, that we may return once again to our home in peace, health, and joy...”). My translation. See: *Breviarium Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti concilii tridentini restitutum* (Venetiis: Ex typographia Balleoniana, 1799), p. cxcviii.

¹³⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1503-T1506, Grouard to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 20, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1519-T1522, Petitot to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 22, 1862.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 4:p. 124. See also Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 155.

¹³⁸ Two eyewitness accounts of the fire were published. The first was Grandin’s letter to the central councils of *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* (dated January 4, 1868). The second appeared in Sœur Agnès’ *Annales* (written in 1883). The present study draws principally from Grandin’s account because it was written fifteen earlier than Agnès’ and because it offers a more exclusively “Oblate” perspective on the event. See: ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de

meal at Saint-Bruno, Grandin, Caër, Dubé, Bowes and Boisramé were alerted by a schoolboy that their residence had caught fire. The Oblates rushed from the refectory and proceeded to fight the blaze, but their efforts were thwarted by a southward wind that fanned the flames toward a warehouse stocked with gunpowder. Fearing mass injuries and loss of life, Grandin ordered the mission personnel and schoolchildren to assemble on the frozen lake at a safe distance from the imminent explosion:

Nous nous éloignons du théâtre de l'incendie. Les Sœurs, les enfants, les voisins, tous nous nous tenons là debout sur le lac glacé, condamnés à voir périr le fruit de tant de travaux, l'objet de tant d'espérance... [U]ne détonation se fait entendre, c'est la poudre qui vient d'éclater, lançant dans toutes les directions des débris enflammés. Heureusement personne n'est atteint... A neuf heure du soir, tout était fini, c'est-à-dire tout était détruit... Nous n'avions pas une couverture pour nous garantir d'un froid de vingt à trente degrés. L'incendie avait fait fondre la neige, nos pieds étaient mouillés, et puis pas un de nous ne pouvait changer de chaussure.¹³⁹

Although there were no casualties, the conflagration had claimed the Oblate residence and the schoolboys' dormitory together with everything inside – bedding, clothing, furniture and a library that had taken two decades to compile. It had also claimed stores of farm produce, dried meat, manufactured goods and liturgical articles.¹⁴⁰ Left with little alternative, Grandin installed his four confrères and nineteen schoolboys in a hastily refurbished warehouse and supplied them with blankets borrowed from the HBC

l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 222-228; "Lettre de Mgr Grandin, évêque de Satala, à MM. les Membres des Conseils centraux de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. 4 janvier 1868," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 40 (1868), pp. 246-252. For an unpublished primary account of the fire, see CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 26, Grandin to Maisonneuve and Végréville, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 7, 1867, pp. 201-203. For a detailed secondary account, see "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 98-102.

¹³⁹ "Lettre de Mgr Grandin," pp. 247-248.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 248-252. Grandin provided *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* with detailed lists of destroyed items and their estimated value. See: CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10822, Grandin to "Monsieur le Président et à Messieurs les conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris," Paris, December 28, 1867; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10823, Grandin to "M. le Président et à Messieurs les conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris," Paris, April 13, 1868; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10824, "État des recettes et dépenses présumées pour l'année 1868."

fort. Then, after sending orders to Moulin to assume temporary direction of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Grandin set off on March 15 to procure emergency provisions and solicit relief funds.¹⁴¹

Grandin's efforts on behalf of Saint-Jean-Baptiste stretched over a year and drew on an array of benefactors. At Saint-Boniface, he persuaded Taché and Lestanc to reorganize and repackage the annual consignment to the missions of Rupertsland and the North Western Territory so as to provide Saint-Jean-Baptiste with bare essentials. In notifying Gasté of this measure, Grandin warned of looming shortages throughout the entire mission network: "Mgr Taché fait l'impossible pour que les pères et les frères de l'Ile à la Crosse n'aient pas trop à souffrir de nos malheures. Il défait et refait les ballots destinés aux autres missions pour leur prendre une partie des choses qui leur étaient destinées et qu'il ne peut avoir autrement pour les pauvres incendiés."¹⁴² From Saint-Boniface, Grandin travelled to Canada and thence to France where he appeared in person before the Paris council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* in October. He informed the council that Saint-Jean-Baptiste had suffered 60,000 francs in damages and was in urgent need of a special allocation.¹⁴³ After consulting with its counterpart in Lyons, the council advanced Grandin 12,000 francs and promised an additional

¹⁴¹ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10822, Grandin to "Monsieur le Président et à Messieurs les conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris," Paris, December 28, 1867; "Missions d'Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 40 (1868), p. 239; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, "Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l'érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu'en 1872," pp. 2-3.

¹⁴² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to Gasté, Saint-Boniface, April 27, 1867. See also "Lettre de Mgr Grandin," pp. 248-249.

¹⁴³ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10822, Grandin to "Monsieur le Président et à Messieurs les conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris," Paris, December 28, 1867; "Missions d'Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 40 (1868), p. 239.

allocation of 38,080 francs the following year.¹⁴⁴ While still in Paris, Grandin appealed for reinforcements from the Oblate General Administration (which had relocated from Marseilles in 1862).¹⁴⁵ He consequently obtained four recruits for Saint-Jean-Baptiste: twenty-five-year-old Prosper Légeard (an ordained Oblate from the department of Mayenne); forty-six-year-old François Leriche (an Oblate lay brother from the department of Mayenne); twenty-five-year-old Célestin Guillet (an Oblate lay brother from the department of Mayenne); and twenty-six-year-old Auguste Némoz (an Oblate lay brother from the department of Isère). These recruits accompanied Grandin as he sailed from Brest on April 25, 1868.¹⁴⁶

The travellers reached Saint-Jean-Baptiste on August 29.¹⁴⁷ They lent immediate assistance to their confrères who had been absorbed in reconstruction over the previous year.¹⁴⁸ Leriche – a former blacksmith and farrier – set up a forge and wrought hinges, nails, locks, latches and tools. He also mended pots, pans and other

¹⁴⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Grazai, October 31, 1867; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Paris, January 15, 1868; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10823, Grandin to “M. le Président et à Messieurs les conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris,” Paris, April 13, 1868; “Compte-rendu,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 41 (1869), p. 201.

¹⁴⁵ *Atlas O.M.I.*, p. 5; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁴⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 134-135, 160-161, 171-172; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 126, 300-301, 317; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 14-15; Duchaussois, *Apôtres inconnus*, pp. 104-114; 236-240; Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, p. 187.

¹⁴⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 956, Box 33, Taché to Fabre, Saint-Albert, December 20, 1868; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Marseilles, September 10, 1867; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Mgr Grandin, Notes Intimes sur le Diocèse de S^t Albert, rédigées en 1884,” pp. 21-22.

kitchen utensils from Saint-Bruno.¹⁴⁹ Légeard and Némoy assisted Bowes in cutting and planing lumber for the new Oblate residence – a task that was facilitated by Grandin’s procurement of “une machine à scier.”¹⁵⁰ Besides relieving Dubé of his responsibility for tending livestock, Guillet began tanning hides and making soap from rendered beef fat.¹⁵¹ Yet even as Saint-Jean-Baptiste underwent renewal, Grandin expressed misgivings about the mission’s ability to resume its multifarious functions. He opined that the mission had sustained too much infrastructural damage to accommodate large numbers of visitors and to continue producing, storing and transshipping supplies. His principle concern, however, was for the welfare of the resident personnel – half of whom still slept in a cramped, weather-beaten warehouse. Inadequate lodgings and limited food supplies obliged Grandin to consider transferring several of these missionaries elsewhere.¹⁵² Doubtful that Saint-Jean-Baptiste could continue serving as his administrative headquarters, Grandin left on October 1, 1868.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 956, Box 33, Grandin to Fabre, Carlton, August 12 1868; AD, G LPP 2199, Prosper Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1869; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 171.

¹⁵⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 956, Box 33, Taché to Fabre, Saint-Albert, December 20, 1868; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 13, 134, 147, 160; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Mgr Grandin, Notes Intimes sur le Diocèse de S^t Albert, rédigées en 1884,” p. 21.

¹⁵¹ AD, G LPP 2199, Prosper Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1869; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” pp. 15, 17-18.

¹⁵² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Mission de Saint-Joachim (Fort Edmonton), February 13, 1869; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” pp. 2-3. Grandin contemplated moving the Grey Nuns of Saint-Bruno closer to Fort Edmonton – either to join the existing community of Grey Nuns at Saint-Albert or to establish a new convent at Saint-Joachim (within the palisades of the HBC fort). Grandin confessed to Taché that he found this strategy profoundly regrettable, though fiscally sensible:

Three weeks later, Grandin took up residence at the mission of Saint-Albert – approximately 640 kilometres south-west of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.¹⁵⁴ Founded in January 1861 by Taché and thirty-three-year-old Albert Lacombe (an ordained Oblate from Saint-Sulpice, Lower Canada), Saint-Albert showed strong potential as a base of operations.¹⁵⁵ Its location on the Sturgeon River – a tributary of the North Saskatchewan – allowed for relatively easy provisioning from Fort Edmonton. It also provided access to a string of nascent missions along the North Saskatchewan – Saint-Joachim (established in 1860), Saint-Paul-des-Cris (established in 1865), Saint-François-Régis at Fort Pitt (established in 1865) and the mission at Fort Carlton (established in 1860) – as well as overland access to Blackfoot territory in the south.¹⁵⁶

Besides its geographical advantages, the mission boasted a diversified infrastructure

“Ne ferais-je pas bien de faire venir les Sœurs de l’Ile à la Crosse ici [to Fort Edmonton]? Cela diminuera nos dépenses, la gloire de Dieu et peut-être ma misérable vie ce qui ne sera pas le plus grand mal. Cet établissement fait tant de bien, c’est réellement me tuer que de l’abandonner mais enfin dans l’extrémité où je vais me trouver réduit, que faire?” See PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Mission de Saint-Joachim (Fort Edmonton), February 13, 1869.

¹⁵³ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp.12-13.

¹⁵⁴ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10904, Grandin to “M.M., les Présidents et Conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Lyon et à Paris,” Saint-Albert, December 20, 1868; “Lettre de Mgr Grandin, évêque de Satala, à MM. les Membres des Conseils centraux de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 41 (1869), pp. 286, 292-293.

¹⁵⁵ Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 219; Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1920), pp. 82-91; Legal, *Short Sketches*, pp. 14-19; James C. MacGregor, *Father Lacombe* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1975), pp. 113-132; Donald B. Smith, “A History of French-Speaking Albertans,” in *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity*, eds., Howard and Tamara Palmer (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), p. 87; Sœur de la Providence, *Le Père Lacombe*, pp. 137-141.

¹⁵⁶ “Missions d’Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 40 (1868), pp. 243-245; “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” pp. 6-9; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert.” See also M.B. Venini Byrne, *From the Buffalo to the Cross: A History of the Catholic Diocese of Calgary* (Calgary: Calgary Archives and Historical Publishers, 1973), pp. 17-30.

that included a water grist mill, a large farm and a school-cum-infirmary staffed by Grey Nuns (established in 1863).¹⁵⁷ As Grandin's place of residence, Saint-Albert became the de facto seat of a new vicariate erected by the Oblate General Administration and consigned to Grandin's charge on March 20, 1868. This vicariate comprised the northern and western portions of the former Diocese of Saint-Boniface, extending diagonally from the foot of the Rocky Mountains to Hudson Bay. On September 22, 1871, the Holy See recognized Saint-Albert as the administrative centre of this vast territory by elevating the mission to the status of episcopal see and appointing Grandin first Bishop of Saint-Albert.¹⁵⁸



Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, "Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert," 1868-1884, pp.2-11; Duchaussois, *Aventures canadiennes des Sœurs Grises*, p. 15; Legal, *Short Sketches*, pp. 16-17; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 61.

¹⁵⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, "Mgr Grandin, Notes Intimes sur le Diocèse de S^t Albert, rédigées en 1884," pp. 15-25; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 959, Box 33, "Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898)," p. 190. See also: *Atlas O.M.I.*, p. 56; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 238; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 72; Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, 2:pp. 76, 86-88.

Concurrent with its loss of administrative pre-eminence, Saint-Jean-Baptiste ceased functioning as a provisioning depot and a point of transshipment to outlying missions. It was divested of this function in 1868 when the HBC – preparing the transfer of its chartered territory to the Dominion of Canada and seeking to streamline its commercial operations – declined responsibility for the transport of mission freight. Henceforth, mission freight had to be conveyed from Saint-Boniface either by Red River cart along the Carlton Trail or by steamboat along the Saskatchewan River as far as Fort Carlton, Fort Pitt or Fort Edmonton. From these posts, the freight could be transhipped to its destination.¹⁵⁹ Grandin and Faraud were compelled to organize this transshipment and to establish supply routes in their respective jurisdictions. On July 1, 1869, the two prelates reached an agreement whereby Faraud would establish his headquarters at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires (Lac La Biche) – a mission that was technically within Grandin’s jurisdiction.¹⁶⁰ Notre-Dame-des-Victoires subsequently became the entrepôt of the Vicariate Apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie. At his vicarial residence, Faraud received freight transported overland from Fort Pitt and supervised

¹⁵⁹ AD, G LPP 2201, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 29, 1873; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 23, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, October 8, 1878; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 69.

¹⁶⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, “CONVENTION entre Monseigneur GRANDIN, évêque de Satala in partibus infidelium nommé oralement vicaire apostolique des districts unis de la Kisiskajiwán et de la Rivière aux Anglais d’une part et Monseigneur FARAUD, évêque d’Anemour in partibus in fidelium, vicaire apostolique des Districts unis d’Athabaskaw et du fleuve McKenzie,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 1, 1869. This agreement eventually became a source of acrimony between Grandin and Faraud. In 1872, Grandin began pressing his claim on Lac La Biche and accused Faraud of neglecting the spiritual welfare of its inhabitants. Faraud refused to relinquish the mission citing its overriding strategic importance to his vicariate. Notre-Dame-des-Victoires did not revert to the Diocese of Saint-Albert until May 20, 1889. See PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin and Faraud to Taché, Saint-Albert, April 14, 1877. See also: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 74, 89; Terence J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics: Gallicanism, Romanism, and Canadianism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), p. 94; Huel, “La mission Notre-Dame-des-Victoires du lac la Biche et l’approvisionnement des missions du Nord,” pp. 23-36.

its transshipment to the northern missions by way of the Little La Biche River and the Athabasca River.¹⁶¹ Saint-Julien (Green Lake) acquired a similar function in the Diocese of Saint-Albert. This mission became the point of transshipment between Fort Carlton and the missions of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation and Saint-Raphaël.¹⁶² Mission freight was transported by cart from Fort Carlton to Saint-Julien where it was loaded onto barges and shipped north to its destination.¹⁶³ Thus, by the early 1870s, Saint-Jean-Baptiste had been displaced as the Oblates' central depot. Contemplating this displacement in a letter to the Oblate General Administration, Légeard noted: "Autrefois Saint-Jean-Baptiste était le plus important de nos établissements dans le Nord-Ouest, bientôt peut-être, ce ne sera plus qu'une simple mission sauvage sans bien grande importance."¹⁶⁴

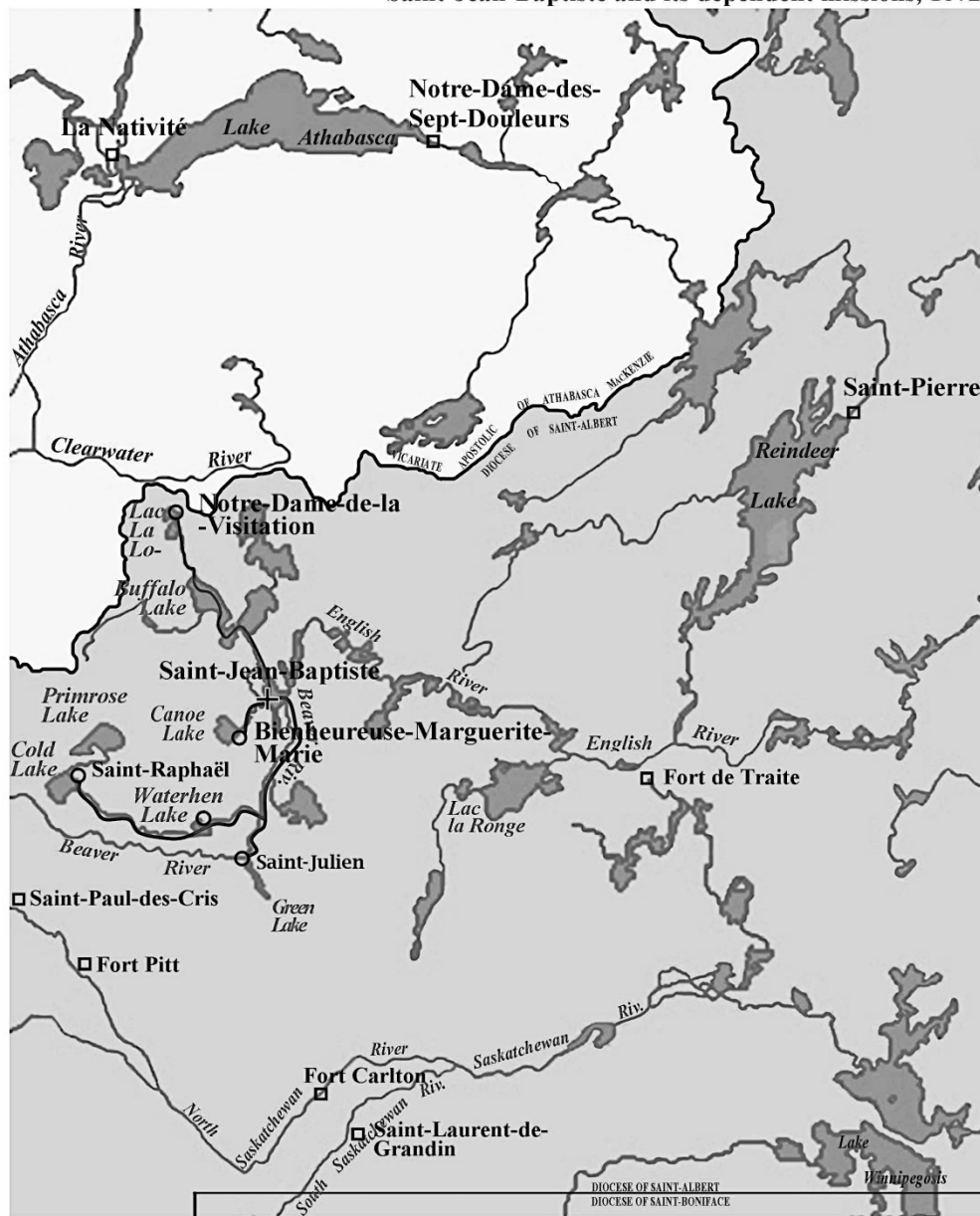
¹⁶¹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 987, Box 34, Grandin, "Liste des missions du diocèse catholique de St. Albert," Saint-Albert, 1883; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 55, 74; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 58; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, p. 59.

¹⁶² Freight destined for Saint-Pierre (Reindeer Lake) was not transhipped through Fort Carlton and Saint-Julien. Rather, it was sent north by way of Cumberland House. Freight destined for Saint-Albert was sent by way of Fort Edmonton. AD, HEC 2500. P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1874; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 9, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 11, 1874.

¹⁶³ AD, HEC 2500. P96C 15, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1871; AD, G LPP 2201, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 29, 1873; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 23, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, October 8, 1878. In 1875, Légeard estimated that it took twelve to fifteen days to transport freight from Fort Carlton to Saint-Jean-Baptiste via Saint-Julien. AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to "Ma très honorée Sœur," Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875.

¹⁶⁴ AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875. Aubert had been appointed Oblate Assitant General in 1867. See Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 34.

Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its dependent missions, 1872



LEGEND

Oblate Missions	Territories	Routes
⊕ Mother Mission	▒ Territory tributary to Hudson Bay	— Water Route
○ Dependent on Mother Mission	□ Territory tributary to the Arctic	⋯ Portage
□ Non Dependent on Mother Mission	— Boundary of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction	⋯ Land routes

Author's map.

Mindful of Saint-Jean-Baptiste's declining role in the Catholic apostolate to the Northwest Territories, Légeard implemented financial and administrative initiatives to

prevent the mission from foundering. As resident superior from October 1870 to June 1879, Légeard developed two means of supplementing the mission's allowance of 10,000 francs per annum – a sum drawn from the annual allocation of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* to the Diocese of Saint-Albert.¹⁶⁵ The first was to exploit his contacts with the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary – known colloquially as the Visitationist Sisters – in the Diocese of Autun (department of Saône-et-Loire). This female religious order was a leading proponent of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its convent in Paray-le-Monial drew upwards of 100,000 pilgrims every summer to the site where the Sacred Heart had appeared to the Blessed Marguerite-Marie Alacoque in the 1670s and 1680s.¹⁶⁶ Through correspondence with the Visitationist Sisters, Légeard obtained clothing, liturgical articles and devotional tracts as well as monetary donations from devotees of the Sacred Heart. In return, Légeard promoted the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the veneration of the Blessed Marguerite-Marie at Saint-Jean-Baptiste – a campaign that will receive detailed

¹⁶⁵ AD, LC 6301 K26R 7, Légeard, “Allocation demandée pour la mission de l’Île à la Crosse,” Île-à-la-Crosse, June, 1876; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 13-14, 115, 134; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 62-63, 125. This sum represented an increasingly marginal proportion of the total allocation from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* to the Diocese of Saint-Albert: 38.5% in 1870; 25.3% in 1871; 23.2% in 1872; 21.6% in 1873; 22.2% in 1874; 21.3% in 1875; 20.4% in 1876; 21% in 1877; 20.2% in 1878; and 18.8% in 1879. See “Compte-rendu,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vols., 43-52 (1871-80).

¹⁶⁶ Jean-Noël Barnoud and Bernard Maviel, “Paray religieux” in *Histoire de ma commune : Paray-le-Monial* (Paray: Association «Histoire de Paray-le-Monial», 1986), pp. 71-75, 79; Philippe Boutry, “Religions «populaires» et religions dissidentes : les mutations des croyances” in *Histoire de la France religieuse*, pp. 492-494; Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000), pp. 4, 9-32, 144; Dominique Julia, “La pesée d’un phénomène” in *ibid.*, p. 192; Claude Langlois, “Une France duelle? L’espace religieux contemporain” in *ibid.*, p. 323.

consideration in chapters three and four.¹⁶⁷ Secondly, Légeard petitioned the Canadian government to subsidize the convent boarding school. He consequently obtained grants of \$300.00 in 1875 and in 1876, but was denied further subvention in 1877 on the grounds that the school was not located within the limits of Treaty Six – an issue that will receive further consideration in chapter three.¹⁶⁸

These pecuniary gains enabled Légeard to effect considerable material improvement at Saint-Jean-Baptiste. In January 1872, he obtained the transfer of Bowes – the self-styled “factotum des missions” – from Saint-Albert where the lay brother had served as resident carpenter for the previous two years.¹⁶⁹ Bowes reached Saint-Jean-Baptiste on June 14 in the company of twenty-five-year-old Léon Doucet (an ordained Oblate from the department of Loiret).¹⁷⁰ With assistance from Doucet and Némoy, Bowes constructed a three-storeyed residence roughcast with lime, sand and gravel. The residence – lauded by Légeard as “la plus belle de tout le Nord-Ouest” – was

¹⁶⁷ AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère” [Superior of the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial], Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877; “Missions d’Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), pp. 443, 448, 453; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père*, pp. 69, 125-126; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 161-162.

¹⁶⁸ LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10113, file no. 7780, “Privy Council’s Report on Grants to Schools at Lac La Biche, Isle a la Crosse and St. Albert,” 1877; LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10117, file no. 10125, “Ile-a-la-Crosse Agency – Reverend Mr. Legard’s [sic] Report on the School at Ile-a-la-Crosse,” 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 928, Box 33, Grandin to Lawrence Clarke (MLA), St. Laurent de Grandin, October 15, 1887 (copy), pp. 66-68; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 928, Box 33, Grandin to Joseph Wrigley (HBC Chief Commissioner for British North America), Ottawa, November 19, 1887 (copy), pp. 98-102.

¹⁶⁹ AD, G LPP 2200, Légeard to Fabre, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1870; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère,” Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 147; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:pp. 129.

¹⁷⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 147; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 121; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 115.

entrusted to the Grey Nuns and inaugurated as their convent, refectory and infirmary on August 10, 1874. The Oblates and schoolboys took up residence in the former “couvent Saint-Bruno” after it had been reinsulated by Bowes. The lay brother also constructed a new schoolhouse – Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur – that opened its doors on September 14, 1874.¹⁷¹ The following spring, Légeard began refurbishing the church with new windows, a bell, external siding, internal wood panelling and several coats of paint. He also purchased and installed a harmonium to accompany the singing of hymns during Mass.¹⁷² Légeard’s extensive renovation campaign was cut tragically short. While drafting plans for an orphanage-cum-hospice in January 1879, the thirty-five-year-old Oblate took ill and was committed to the Grey Nuns’ infirmary where he died five months later.¹⁷³ In tribute, the Oblate General Administration commissioned Louis Soullier – Oblate Assistant General – to write Légeard’s biography.¹⁷⁴ Soullier eulogized Légeard as a model Oblate whose administrative skill and financial acumen

¹⁷¹ AD, HEC 2500 P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1874; AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875; AD, HEC 2500 P96C 11, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 19, 1875; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 2:pp. 201-203; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 123, 134-135, 142, 167.

¹⁷² AD, HEC 2500 P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 13, 1877; AD, HEC 2500 P96C 18, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 25, 1877; AD, HEC 2500 P96C 19, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 14, 1878; AD, HEC 2500 P96C 22, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 24, 1878.

¹⁷³ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 2:pp. 225-227; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 168-170. According to Pénard, the cause of death was neuralgia compounded by tuberculosis. Légeard’s neuralgia appears to have been chronic throughout his tenure as local superior. See for instance: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Albert, August 29, 1872; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Fort Carlton, July 30, 1874; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Fort Cumberland, July 30, 1875; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 14-16, 134-135.

¹⁷⁴ Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 1-4. On Soullier, see: *Atlas O.M.I.*, p. 4; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 175.

had left a tangible legacy at Saint-Jean-Baptiste: “Le voyageur qui parcourt aujourd’hui le district de l’Ile à la Crosse, peut y voir partout la trace du fécond apostolat et des rares vertus du P. Légeard, et y recueillir le témoignage de l’universelle et profonde vénération qui s’attache à son souvenir.”¹⁷⁵

Despite having honoured Légeard’s life’s work, the Oblate hierarchy opted to drain his beloved mission of resources and personnel over the following decade. This measure was a response to rapid demographic growth in the southern portion of the Diocese of Saint-Albert. Although Grandin had foreseen Euro-Canadian immigration as an inevitable consequence of the Rupertsland Purchase (1870), he had not anticipated its scale, its geographic concentration or its overall impact on his diocese.¹⁷⁶ He had only recently established missions in the prairie grasslands – Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix (founded in 1873) near the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers, and its satellite posts on the Blackfoot reserve at Blackfoot Crossing, the Peigan reserve near the entrance of the Crowsnest Pass, and the Blood reserve between the St. Mary’s and the Belly Rivers (all founded after the signing of Treaty No. 7, 1877).¹⁷⁷ These missions

¹⁷⁵ Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, p. 146.

¹⁷⁶ See for instance “Lettre de Mgr Grandin à MM. les membres des Conseils centraux de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Fort Pitt (mission de Saint-François Régis), 10 janvier 1870,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 44 (1872), pp. 272-273: “Notre pays étant cédé au gouvernement canadien, cela va nous attirer assurément beaucoup d’étrangers, probablement l’écume du Canada et des États-Unis.”

¹⁷⁷ “Copy of Treaty and Supplementary Treaty No. 7, Made 22nd Sept., and 4th Dec., 1877, Between Her Majesty the Queen and the Blackfeet and Other Indian Tribes” (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, F.R.S.C., Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1966), p. 4; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert,” Saint-Albert, 1882; Le Chevallier, *Esquisse*, pp. 17-21; Hugh A. Dempsey, *Indian Tribes of Alberta* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1986), pp. 7, 14-15, 22-23, 28-29, 31; Kerbirou, *Les Indiens de l’ouest canadien vus par les Oblats*, pp. 112-122; Lévassieur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats*, p. 242; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, p. 52; Norman Knowles, *Winds of Change: A History of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary Since 1968* (Calgary: Roman Catholic Diocese of Calgary and St. Mary’s College, 2004), p. 179; Venini Byrne, *From the Buffalo to the Cross*, pp. 23-40.

acquired critical strategic importance when the Canadian Pacific Railway reached the Rocky Mountains in 1883, thereafter delivering a steady stream of settlers to the prairies and foothills.¹⁷⁸ From their southern bases, Oblates scrambled to minister to Catholic newcomers and to lay the foundations of churches, schools and hospitals. To expedite their efforts, Grandin initiated a southward redeployment of personnel and resources. He justified this decision in a circular to his clergy in 1887, explaining that the south had become “la partie la plus importante de mon diocèse” and that the development of its missionary infrastructure was now his chief priority:

Dans la partie que j'appelle importante, il y a une population relativement très considérable, nous y comptons au moins huit villes, sans parler de beaucoup d'autres groupes importants. Les pauvres sauvages ont dû être parqués sur des réserves pour faire place aux blancs, en attendant leur destruction complète, qui s'opère vite, par suite d'un genre de vie auquel ils ne sont point faits et d'une immoralité que leur vaut la civilisation moderne. Il faut donc, pour sauver au moins leurs âmes et pour le besoin des blancs venus dans le pays, multiplier nos missions et nos écoles... Vous le voyez, chers Pères, cette partie de mon diocèse est bien la partie importante, la partie où doit surtout résider l'Évêque.¹⁷⁹

This administrative shift resulted in drastic financial reductions for Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

The Diocese of Saint-Albert ceased subsidizing the construction of new buildings and

¹⁷⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 987, Box 34, Grandin, “Liste des missions du diocèse catholique de St. Albert,” Saint-Albert, 1883; M.L. Foran, “Urban Calgary 1884-1895,” *Histoire sociale - Social History*, vol. 5, no. 9 (April 1972), pp. 61-69, 75-76; Donald Smith and Henry Klassen, “Onward! Calgary in the 1890s,” in *Centennial City: Calgary 1894-1994* (Calgary: University of Calgary, 1994), pp. 1-4.

¹⁷⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, “Lettre de M^{gr} Vital Justin Grandin, O.M.I., Vicaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires O.M.I. dans le Diocèse de S. Albert et Évêque de ce même diocèse, aux RR. PP. Oblats missionnaires dans le diocèse,” Ottawa, November 18, 1887, p. 2. Although none had been incorporated as a city, the “huit villes” in question were most likely Regina, Battleford, Swift Current, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Fort Macleod, Calgary and Picher Creek. For information on the Oblate ministry to these settler communities, see: “*Prairie Grass to Mountain Pass*”: *History of the Pioneers of Pincher Creek and District* (Pincher Creek, AB: Pincher Creek Historical Society, 1974), pp. 195-197, 219, 235-236, 239-242, 794-795; Le Chevallier, *Esquisse*, pp. 43-68; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 4:pp. 164-191; Venini Byrne, *From the Buffalo to the Cross*, pp. 61-81, 143-148, 205-215, 232-239, 283-286, 373-376.

the renovation of old ones at the mission, thus leaving local Oblates to fend for themselves.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the mission's regular allocation – 10,000 francs per annum in the 1870s – was permanently reduced by half and local Oblates were forbidden from making “achats extraordinaires” of “ornements, statues, vitraux ou autre chose de ce genre.”¹⁸¹

Besides its financial constraints, Saint-Jean-Baptiste became chronically understaffed as a result of Grandin's prioritization of southern missions. Between 1880 and 1887, the bishop withdrew all Oblate lay brothers who had served under Légeard and reassigned them to missions in the south.¹⁸² In their place, he transferred twenty-six-year-old Félix-Victor Marcilly (an Oblate lay brother from the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle) to Saint-Jean-Baptiste in 1880.¹⁸³ The following year, the mission received a second Oblate lay brother – twenty-eight-year-old Fabien Labelle (from

¹⁸⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 76, Box 2, “Extrait du rapport sur le Vicariat de St. Albert au chapitre général de la congrégation des O.M.I.,” Rome, April 28, 1887; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 172, 279.

¹⁸¹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 930, Box 33, Grandin to Hippolyte (Vicar General of Saint-Albert), St. Antoine de Batoche, October 16, 1887; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, “Lettre de M^{ef} Vital Justin Grandin, O.M.I., Vicaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires O.M.I. dans le Diocèse de S. Albert et Évêque de ce même diocèse, aux RR. PP. Oblats missionnaires dans le diocèse,” Ottawa, November 18, 1887, p. 6; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 288-289.

¹⁸² “Mission de Saint-Albert. Lettre du R. P. Rapet, supérieur de l'Île-à-la-Crosse. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Ile-à-la-Crosse, le 1^{er} janvier 1889,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 106 (June 1889), p. 171; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 173, 181, 202. A notable exception was Dubé, who had died at Saint-Jean-Baptiste on April 29, 1872 (during Légeard's tenure as local superior). See: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 145-146; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 2:p. 240.

¹⁸³ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 200; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 173; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 363.

Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, Quebec).¹⁸⁴ Grandin consigned the mission to the pastoral care of twenty-five-year-old Joseph Rapet (an ordained Oblate from the department of Var) in July 1881.¹⁸⁵ To assist Rapet in his ministry, the bishop appointed twenty-five-year-old Louis Dauphin (an ordained Oblate from the department of Mayenne) in June 1882 and twenty-seven-year-old Jules Teston (an ordained Oblate from the department of Drôme) in January 1884.¹⁸⁶ Grandin recognized that this corps was much too small to fulfil its spiritual and material responsibilities, which extended beyond Saint-Jean-Baptiste to include Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation (Portage La Loche) and Saint-Julien (Green Lake) as well as nascent missions at Canoe Lake and Waterhen Lake.¹⁸⁷ In February 1884, the bishop acknowledged the need for an additional four Oblates at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions, but maintained that he could not spare the manpower to meet this need.¹⁸⁸ The situation worsened when Dauphin was compelled to quit Saint-Jean-Baptiste due to a heart condition in September 1886.¹⁸⁹ His departure left Rapet and Teston heavily overburdened with travel duties and pastoral work. The pair devised a rota whereby Rapet would remain at Saint-Jean-Baptiste while Teston

¹⁸⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 922, Box 32, Grandin to Gasté, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 11, 1881; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 182; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 212-213.

¹⁸⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 922, Box 32, Grandin to Lestanc, Saint-Albert, November 5, 1881; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 182; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 115-116.

¹⁸⁶ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 183, 191; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:pp. 255, 3:pp. 220-221.

¹⁸⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert,” Saint-Albert, 1882; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 987, Box 34, Grandin, “Liste des missions du diocèse catholique de St. Albert,” Saint-Albert, 1883.

¹⁸⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 926, Box 33, Grandin to Lacombe, Saint-Albert, February 26, 1884.

¹⁸⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Lac des Maskeys [Muskeg Lake?], September 16, 1886; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 206-207.

would journey to Saint-Julien by way of Canoe Lake and Waterhen Lake. Upon Teston's return, Rapet would embark for Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation.¹⁹⁰ Although feasible in principle, this arrangement was frequently interrupted by the vicissitudes of mission life. For instance, during epidemic outbreaks in 1886, 1887 and 1889, Rapet and Teston were compelled to undertake simultaneous journeys in order to administer extreme unction in several different places. Saint-Jean-Baptiste was consequently left without ordained clergy for several weeks on end.¹⁹¹

Although conscious of personnel shortages and poverty at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Grandin could offer only limited succour on account of the recent *boulversement* of his primary benefactors – the Oblate General Administration and *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. Crisis gripped both organizations in the wake of the French legislative elections of 1876 and senatorial elections of 1879. Republican victories in these elections led to the promulgation of the Ferry Laws – so named for Minister of Public Instruction – which effectively dissolved all “congrégations non autorisées” in March 1880.¹⁹² Oblates were among the prohibited communities and were forcibly

¹⁹⁰ “Mission de Saint-Albert. Lettre du R. P. Rapet, supérieur de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, le 1^{er} janvier 1889.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 106 (June 1889), pp. 166-168; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 932, Box 33, Grandin to Hippolyte Leduc, Battleford, September 16, 1889; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 207, 210-211, 213-216.

¹⁹¹ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 207-208, 216-217. See also ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, “Historique,” p. 10. According to Pénard, the shortage of ordained clergy at Saint-Jean-Baptiste was especially problematic during the epidemic outbreaks of the late 1880s. On the outbreak of 1887, he noted: “Les deux Pères [Rapet and Teston] ne pouvaient suffire à aller visiter les malades. Pendant qu'ils étaient partis pour aller voir des malades d'un côté ; il arrivait souvent que pendant leur absence on venait les chercher de trois ou quatre autres places. Voyant que le fléau ne diminuait pas d'intensité, les Pères annoncèrent des prières publiques, qui furent suivies bien fidèlement, pour implorer la miséricorde [sic] de Dieu.”

¹⁹² François Furet, *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry, 1770-1880* (Paris: Hachette, 1988), pp. 533-537, 564; Alec Mellor, *Histoire de l'anticléricalisme français* (Paris: Mame, 1966), pp. 317-325; René Rémond, *L'anti-cléricalisme en France de 1815 à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard,

expelled from seventeen establishments across France, including their general headquarters in Paris.¹⁹³ Concurrently, the proceeds of *l'Œuvre* decreased as its associates were inundated with appeals from France's beleaguered congregations.¹⁹⁴ These developments had immediate implications for the Diocese of Saint-Albert. As early as December 1880, Grandin bewailed the shortage of funds and recruits that had resulted from events overseas:

La persécution contre l'Eglise, bientôt générale en Europe et qui n'est plus même dissimulée en France, m'afflige et m'humilie plus que je ne saurais dire. Elle nous atteint jusqu'ici, non seulement en fermant noviciats et scolasticats, qui sont en réalité nos séminaires, mais aussi et surtout en diminuant nos ressources pécuniaires. Déjà nos bienfaiteurs, épuisés par une foule d'œuvres qu'il faut soutenir en France pour diminuer le mal, ne peuvent plus faire pour mes missions ce qu'ils faisaient autrefois... [Ils] me disent : [«]Monseigneur, nous sommes désolés de ne pouvoir continuer à vous aider, mais avant de répandre la foi à l'étranger nous devons tâcher de la maintenir à l'intérieur[»]... Cependant, nos missions s'étendent et nos œuvres se multipliant nos dépenses augmentent nécessairement... Je ne sais vraiment comment faire face à tant de besoins.¹⁹⁵

1976), pp. 176-197; René Rémond, *La droite en France de la première Restauration à la V^e République* (Paris: Aubier, 1968), pp. 154-156. On the category "congrégation autorisée" and the legal recognition of select orders/congregations, see Langlois, "Politique et religion," pp. 134-143.

¹⁹³ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 187; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 3:pp. 226-255.

¹⁹⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 966, Box 33, Grandin to the Oblates of the Diocese of Saint-Albert, Battleford, August 31, 1880; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 966, Box 33, Grandin to Gasté, Bonald, Pasquette and Lecoq, Saint-Albert, November 19, 1880; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Albert, February, 1881. See also "Compte-rendu de 1880," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 53 (1881), p. 141.

¹⁹⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Albert, December 19, 1880. See also Grandin's letter from the following month, PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Albert, January 12, 1881: "Je suis tellement affecté des nouvelles qui me sont venues que malgré moi je ne puis retenir mes larmes. La persécution va toujours en augmentant, notre congrégation est dispersée... Je suis tellement épouvanté de la tournure des affaires en France que je ne sais pas si je dois insister pour avoir des prêtres et des religieuses car les uns et les autres ne feront pas le bien sans argent et déjà la persécution a arrêté les aumônes particulières..."

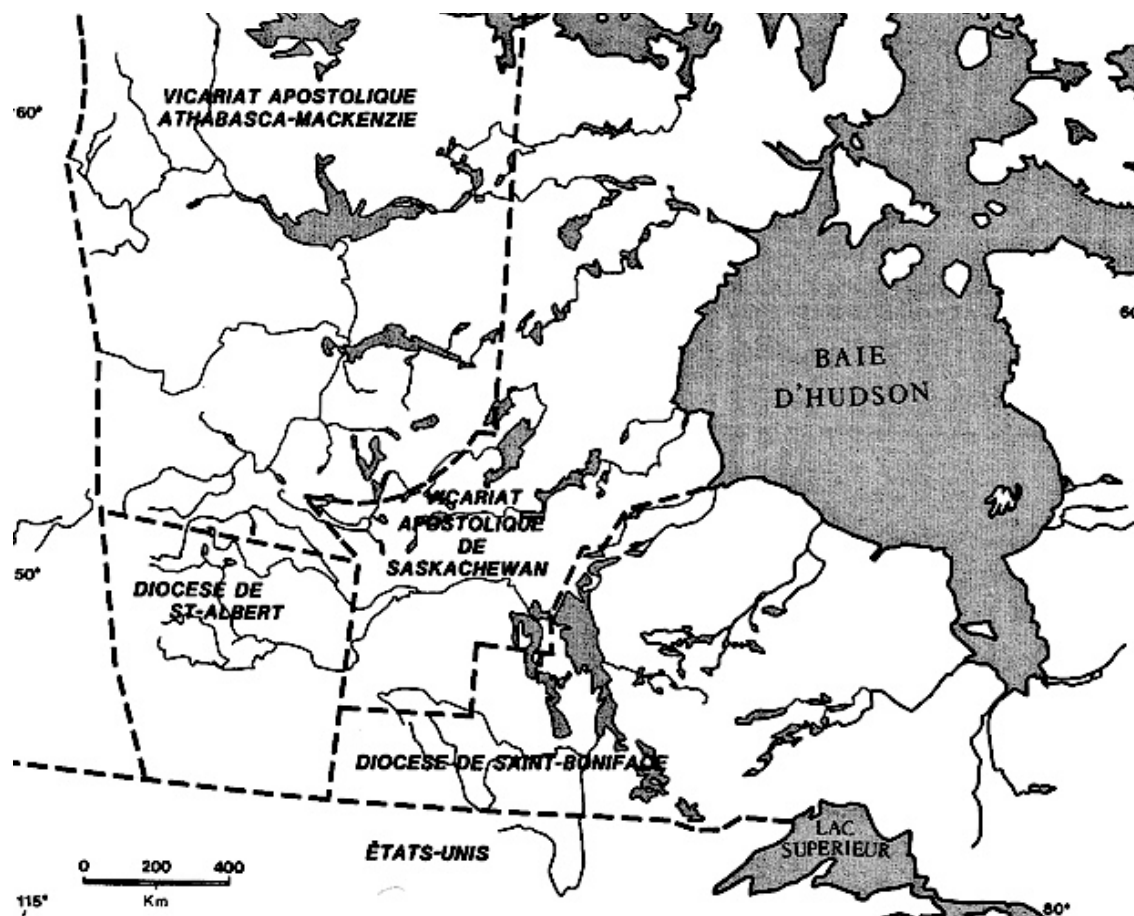
Among the repercussions of this “persécution” was the deferment of Grandin’s administrative scheme for Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its outposts. Since February 1880, the bishop had been planning to divide his diocese and to consign the north-eastern missions to a local vicar who would be entitled to new recruits from the Oblate General Administration and to an annual allocation from *l’Œuvre*. Yet in view of developments in France, Taché and Faraud dissuaded Grandin from pressing for a new vicariate.¹⁹⁶ “Les circonstances sont peu favorables à votre dessein... [vu] l’anarchie déjà très grande où se trouve la France,” asserted Faraud in February 1881. “Il est difficile de supposer que dans cet état nos ressources grandiront en sujets et en argent. Or c’est là le nerf de la guerre pour nous, pas de missionaries, pas d’argent, pas de missions.”¹⁹⁷ In deference to his fellow prelates, Grandin delayed pursuing the division of his diocese until April 1887 after a moderate republican government had permitted the Oblate General Administration to reoccupy its headquarters in Paris.¹⁹⁸ The restored

¹⁹⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 7, 1881; CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, “Procès verbal de la Conférence tenue le 12 septembre ’83 à l’Evêché de Saint-Albert sous la Présidence de Monseigneur l’Evêque de St-Albert : 1^e Division du Diocèse,” p. 214.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Albert, February, 1881.

¹⁹⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 76, Box 2, “Extrait du rapport sur le Vicariat de St. Albert au chapitre général de la congrégation des O.M.I.,” Rome, April 28, 1887; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, “Lettre de M^{gr} Vital Justin Grandin, O.M.I., Vicaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires O.M.I. dans le Diocèse de S. Albert et Evêque de ce même diocèse, aux RR. PP. Oblats missionnaires dans le diocèse,” Ottawa, November 18, 1887, p. 9; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 187. On the republicans’ formulation and application of a more moderate policy toward the clergy after 1880, see: Philip A. Bertocci, *Jules Simon: Republican Anticlericalism and Cultural Politics in France, 1848-1886* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1978), pp. 192-211; Pierre Chevalier, “Jules Ferry et le Saint-Siège,” in François Furet ed., *Jules Ferry, fondateur de la République* (Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1985), pp. 171-189; Jean-Marie Mayeur, “Jules Ferry et la laïcité,” in *ibid.*, pp. 147-160.

administration granted its approval to Grandin's proposal and the Vicariate Apostolic of Saskatchewan was canonically erected on January 20, 1891.¹⁹⁹



Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, p. 58.

Yet despite Grandin's hopes, the creation of a new vicariate brought little financial relief or personnel reinforcement to Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its outposts. Although the vicariate did receive an annual allocation from *l'Œuvre* and a small contingent of missionaries from the Oblate General Administration, these resources were concentrated in Prince Albert, Battleford and other burgeoning settlements along

¹⁹⁹ *Atlas O.M.I.*, p. 56; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 90-93; Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, pp. 137; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 246.

the North Saskatchewan River.²⁰⁰ After fixing his vicarial residence at Prince Albert in September 1891, forty-three-year-old Albert Pascal (an ordained Oblate from the department of Ardèche) endeavoured to establish parishes in “la zone fertile et tempérée du Vicariat” where English-, French-, German- and Polish-speaking Catholics were immigrating each year.²⁰¹ This region claimed most of Pascal’s attention while the north – which he described as “un pays sauvage... sans espoir de colonisation tant à cause des rigueurs du climat que de la nature du sol” – was left largely as it had been in the final years of Grandin’s administration.²⁰² However, Pascal did attempt to ease the travel burden on Oblates serving at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its outposts. In July 1892, the vicar assigned resident missionaries to Saint-Julien and to Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation. He entrusted the former post to Teston and the latter to twenty-eight-year-old Jean-Marie Pénard (an ordained Oblate from the department of Morbihan).²⁰³

²⁰⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 77, Box 2, “Rapport du Vicariat de Saskatchewan,” Prince Albert, February 1898; “Compte-rendu,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vols., 64-71 (1892-99). Oblates in the new vicariate considered both benefactions totally insufficient. They received only three recruits from the Oblate General Administration between 1891 and 1898 and their annual allocation from *L’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* declined steadily from 33,500 francs in 1891 to 27,000 francs in 1898.

²⁰¹ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10846, Albert Pascal to the Central Councils of *L’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Prince Albert, December 3, 1895; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10845, Pascal to “Monsieur le Directeur de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, Bureau de Paris [Charles Hamel],” Prince Albert, December 7, 1895; AD, G LPP 2201, Albert Pascal to Oblate Superior General Louis Soullier, Prince Albert, April 15, 1896; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 47-48; Joséphine Ouellet, “Mgr Albert Pascal, o.m.i. (1848-1920), cheville ouvrière du Diocèse de Prince-Albert” in *Western Oblate Studies 1 – Études oblates de l’ouest 1*, pp. 89-103.

²⁰² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 77, Box 2, “Rapport du Vicariat de Saskatchewan,” Prince Albert, February 1898.

²⁰³ “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Mission de la Visitation au Portage-La-Loche. Lettre du R.P. Pénard au T.R.P. Supérieur Général. Mission Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Ile-à-la-Crosse, 11 avril 1895.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblates de Marie Immaculée*, no. 131 (September 1895), pp. 290-292; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 247; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 59-60. Before his ministry at Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation, Pénard had served at Saint-Raphaël mission, Cold Lake (1888-1890). He was transferred to Saint-Jean-Baptiste in May 1890 and undertook several pastoral visits to Notre-

Although this arrangement relieved Rapet of his circuit between Île-à-la-Crosse and Portage La Loche, it also deprived him of an ordained companion and increased his pastoral responsibilities at Saint-Jean-Baptiste.²⁰⁴ Rapet's workload was compounded by his duty to travel annually to Saint-Julien, Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation and other posts in order to administer the sacrament of confirmation – normally a prelatice function, but one that Pascal performed with decreasing regularity in the northern missions after 1893.²⁰⁵

Desperate to procure a second priest for Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Rapet and Pénard wrote multiple appeals to Pascal and travelled to his vicarial residence to press their case in March and again in June 1894.²⁰⁶ They eventually persuaded Pascal to send twenty-five-year-old Henri Jouan (an ordained Oblate from the department of Morbihan) who reached Saint-Jean-Baptiste on March 31, 1895.²⁰⁷ Shortly after his

Dame-de-la-Visitation before becoming resident missionary there. See “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 229-236, 239-241, 244.

²⁰⁴ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 248-250, 252-266. Rapet's workload was especially onerous at harvest time when the Oblate lay brothers and their male charges spent weeks on end mowing and reaping near Canoe Lake and Waterhen Lake. In their absence, Rapet was the only adult male at Saint-Jean-Baptiste. See Pénard's account of the harvest in *ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

²⁰⁵ “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Rapport de M^{gr} Pascal, vicaire apostolique.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 121 (March 1893), pp. 18, 21; “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Lettre de R.P. Rapet a M^{gr} Pascal.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 132 (December 1895), pp. 428-429; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 257.

²⁰⁶ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 253, 256-257, 259-262. Rapet and Pénard began making their appeals in August 1893: “Pendant ce temps, le P. Rapet et le P. Pénard écrivaient lettre sur lettre à M^{gr} Pascal, alors en France pour le chapitre général [i.e., the Oblate general chapter meeting, held once every six years], afin qu’il amenât un nouveau missionnaire pour le district de l’Île à la Crosse. Mais il ne put faire droit à leur demande pour le moment, et il fallait se contenter du status quo...” *Ibid.*, p. 253.

²⁰⁷ “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Mission de la Visitation au Portage-La-Loche. Lettre du R.P. Pénard au T.R.P. Supérieur Général. Mission Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Ile-à-la-Crosse, 11 avril 1895.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 131 (September 1895), pp. 285, 291; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 266; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 178.

arrival, Jouan attempted to launch an itinerant mission along a circuit that ranged from Buffalo Lake in the north to Waterhen Lake in the south.²⁰⁸ This mission proved abortive, however, as Jouan contracted tuberculosis and was committed to the Grey Nuns' infirmary on June 10, 1896.²⁰⁹ His illness progressed over the following year and he died on September 14, 1897.²¹⁰ Although anticipating a critical strain on the local ministry as a result of Jouan's death, Pascal considered himself powerless to forestall the situation due to the restricted number of ordained Oblates at his disposal. The vicar could do little but implore the Oblate General Administration to send him reinforcements: "Ce cher Père [Jouan] sur qui nous fondions de grandes espérances est mort au début de sa carrière sacerdotale et apostolique, nous laissant... l'âme brisée et inconsolable de la perte d'un tel ouvrier. Il n'est pas remplacé!! Cette perte laisse la mission de St Jean-Baptiste, à l'Île à la Crosse, dans un état de gêne incroyable."²¹¹

As a makeshift remedy, Pascal opted to shuffle the *in situ* personnel of the northern missions. In the vicar's estimation, the forty-two-year-old Rapet was no longer a suitable superior for Saint-Jean-Baptiste as he had grown weary and sullen after seventeen years in that position. Thus, in December 1897, Pascal reassigned him to Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation and consigned Saint-Jean-Baptiste to the younger, more vigorous Pénard. Accordingly, the two Oblates exchanged posts the following

²⁰⁸ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 270-271, 275-277.

²⁰⁹ ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 8 (May and June 1897), pp. 425-426; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 271-272, 275-277.

²¹⁰ ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 11 (November and December 1897), p. 534; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 283-284, 288-289, 293-294.

²¹¹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 77, Box 2, "Rapport du Vicariat de Saskatchewan," Prince Albert, February 1898.

month.²¹² Pénard registered profound trepidation in assuming his new charge. He had been thrust to the helm of a mission that was falling into severe disrepair and that was burdened by a debt of more than 7,000 francs.²¹³ “Lorsque je me fus complètement rendu compte de l’état des affaires,” he informed the Oblate General Administration, “je me trouvai plongé dans une sorte de découragement et j’éprouvai une sensation aussi agréable que celle que doit éprouver un homme qui se noie, au moment où il enfonce dans l’eau, cherchant de tous côté quelque chose pour se raccrocher, sans pouvoir rien atteindre.”²¹⁴

Saint-Jean-Baptiste’s rise as a centre of evangelization (1846-1866) and gradual relegation to the status of a remote, ramshackle outpost (1867-1898) reflected sweeping changes to the Catholic mission network in which it was embedded. In the late 1840s and 1850s, Saint-Jean-Baptiste played a critical role in extending this network beyond the Red River Colony and into Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. Founded in an HBC trading hub, the mission served as a base of operations from which Oblates branched out along pre-existing water and land routes to establish outlying satellite posts. By 1860, Saint-Jean-Baptiste had generated several far-flung missions and served as the central node through which personnel, information, funds and freight were conveyed to these missions. Because of its centrality in the expanding network,

²¹² Ibid.; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 295-296; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 1-2.

²¹³ “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), pp. 257-258; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 296; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 1-2.

²¹⁴ “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 258

Saint-Jean-Baptiste emerged as the administrative headquarters of the Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface as well as a centre of education and healthcare, a major provisioning depot, and a gathering place for Oblates dispersed throughout the region.

After the mid 1860s, however, Saint-Jean-Baptiste was shaken by a series of crises emanating from different parts of the mission network. Locally, the fire of 1867 weakened the physical infrastructure and compromised the administrative capacity of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, thus precipitating the transfer of the Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface to the more westerly mission of Saint-Albert. The fire sent reverberations throughout the network by forcing a temporary concentration of resources and manpower on the burnt-out mission. When the HBC overhauled its transport system in the late 1860s and 1870s, the southern portion of the network came under strain as Oblates scrambled to establish transshipment centres along the Saskatchewan River and to integrate these centres into the network via new supply routes. In the process, Saint-Jean-Baptiste was divested of its function as a central provisioning depot and point of transshipment.

Yet the gravest crisis began in the late 1870s with the encroachment of Euro-Canadian settlement into the arable river valleys of the prairies and foothills – areas the mission network had barely penetrated. In order to minister to Catholic newcomers in these areas, Oblates sought to expand and to consolidate the southern portion of the mission network by establishing churches, schools and hospitals in the 1880s. Their efforts were hindered, however, by contemporary developments in France where state regulations against “les congrégations non autorisées” prevented the deployment of Oblate reinforcements and restricted the flow of finances from *l'Œuvre de la*

Propagation de la Foi. Left with little alternative, Oblate prelates resolved to develop the southern portion of the mission network at the expense of the northern portion. They concentrated their resources and personnel on nascent Euro-Canadian parishes, while older missions in the north – including Saint-Jean-Baptiste – grew chronically underfunded and understaffed.

Hence, by the time of Pénard's appointment as resident superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in January 1898, the mission bore little resemblance to "l'œuvre parfaite" that Taché had extolled over three decades earlier. No longer did it inspire the sense of pride and accomplishment expressed succinctly in the epithet, "ad propria". On the contrary, the mission filled the young Oblate with an overwhelming sense of despair and desolation.

CHAPTER 2

From “ami sincère” to “haute et puissante autocrate”: Oblate perceptions of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Île-à-la-Crosse

In his pioneering survey, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (1984), John Webster Grant defined the Hudson’s Bay Company as “the unquestioned master of the north” in the mid nineteenth century and warned that “any account of mission work that left it out of the picture would be like *Hamlet* without some reference to the state of Denmark.”¹ Although historians of the Oblate apostolate have endeavoured to heed Grant’s warning, they have been surprisingly reluctant to acknowledge the presence of something rotten. These historians have consistently described the relationship between Oblates and the Honourable Company as strategic, harmonious and mutually advantageous. According to their interpretation, the HBC benefited from the Oblates’ inculcation among neophytes of respect for contractual obligations and obedience to duly constituted civil authority, while Oblates depended on the transportation, provisioning and communications services of the HBC to expand and sustain their mission network.² Within this context of institutional symbiosis, personal affinities developed across ethno-linguistic and denominational lines as Anglo-Protestant traders and Franco-

¹ Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 106. See generally pp. 106-109.

² See especially: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 95-97; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 127, 130-131, 165-168; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 27, 63-64; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 35-37, 56, 79, 102-103; Huel, “Western Oblate History,” pp. 28-30; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 27-43. Although it deals with relations between Catholic missionaries and the HBC *before* the Oblates’ arrival in Rupertsland (1845), see also Robert Choquette, “Les rapports entre catholiques et protestants dans le nord-ouest du Canada avant 1840” in *Western Oblate Studies 1 – Études oblates de l’ouest 1*, pp. 129-140.

Catholic missionaries formed friendships based on “an immutable mutuality of experience acquired and shared in the field.”³ By dint of living at the same posts and interacting with the same Aboriginal populations, HBC officers and Oblates developed mutual trust and respect which they expressed in letters, journals and memoirs as well as through personal favours.⁴ Robert Choquette has insisted that this rapport remained unaffected by the contemporaneous raging of an “anti-Catholic crusade in the English-speaking countries of the Western world.”⁵ Impervious to the “No-Popery” that infused British and American Protestantism in the mid nineteenth century, HBC officers were pragmatic businessmen who appraised everything on the basis of its commercial worth to the Company. They valued Oblates as loyal supporters of Company rule and as low-maintenance clients because of their vow of poverty, their effort to become self-sufficient and their freedom from the obligation to provide for wives and children.⁶

³ Huel, “Western Oblate History,” p. 28. Huel borrowed this term from Michael Tobias’ anthropological study on modern mountaineering. Tobias coined it in reference to the bond of trust and reciprocity that is forged between alpinists who climb together. See Michael Tobias, “The Anthropology of Ascent,” *Mountain*, Vol. 44 (July-August 1975), pp. 31-36.

⁴ For expressions of friendship between individual Oblates and HBC officers, see especially: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 165-168; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 63-64; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 35, 37; Huel, “Western Oblate History,” pp. 28-30.

⁵ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 165.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 130-131, 165-169; Choquette, “Les rapports entre catholiques et protestants dans le nord-ouest du Canada avant 1840,” pp. 138-140. According to Choquette, the HBC consistently preferred Catholic to Protestant missionaries. It considered Catholics better suited to the rigours of frontier life and more supportive of company interests because of their material abnegation, their accommodation of local customs (including marriage *à la façon du pays* and Sunday work) and their strict policy of non-interference in company affairs. By contrast, HBC officers frequently expressed hostility toward Protestant missionaries, particularly the Anglican contingent recruited and deployed by the CMS. These clergymen drew copiously on HBC resources to support their families and to maintain a lifestyle that they deemed commensurate with their elevated social status. Moreover, Anglican missionaries sowed social disharmony through their propagation of elitist, racist and sectarian attitudes. Choquette appears to have based his extraordinarily critical assessment of Anglican missionaries on the contentions of Frits Pannekoek. See: Frits Pannekoek, “The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818-1870” in R.D. Francis and Howard Palmer eds., *The Prairie West*:

In addition to providing a uniformly sanguine depiction of relations between Oblates and the HBC, historians of the Oblate apostolate have observed standardized chronological boundaries. They have commonly restricted their focus to the period before the transfer of Rupertsland to the Dominion of Canada (1870). Hence, after its cession of civil authority, the Honourable Company promptly vanishes – like the Dane’s ghost – from historical accounts of the Oblate apostolate.⁷ This disappearance belies the continuity and complexity of relations between the HBC and the Oblates. Although their government-subject relationship did come to an end in 1870, the HBC and the Oblates continued to interact long into the post-Confederation period. Their interaction was particularly long-lived in the boreal forest region where the relatively slow rate of Euro-Canadian settlement left Oblates little alternative but to continue relying on the Company for a variety of services – including provisioning, freighting, transportation and long-range communications. In the case of Île-à-la-Crosse, the HBC fort and the Oblate mission remained the only European/Euro-Canadian institutions with a permanent presence until the onset of federal intervention in local affairs in 1898. The present chapter examines the relationship between these two institutions as it evolved from the Oblates’ arrival in 1846 to the establishment of a federal presence fifty-two years later. In the process, this chapter illuminates a gradual transformation in Oblate perceptions of the HBC and its role in the Catholic apostolate.

Historical Readings (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), pp. 100-115; Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, pp. 10-15, 207-212.

⁷ Neither Huel nor Choquette pursued his investigation of HBC-missionary relations beyond the early 1870s. For her part, McCarthy ended her investigation with the expiry of HBC’s Licence for Exclusive Trade in the Athabasca and Mackenzie Districts (1859). See: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 168-169; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 177-178; Huel, “Western Oblate History,” pp. 28-30; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 43.

As Oblates struggled to establish a presence at Île-à-la-Crosse in the mid 1840s, they recognized that the success of their endeavour depended on the fiat of the HBC. Indeed, it was only as a result of recent change in HBC policy that Oblates had managed to venture beyond the Red River Colony in the first place. Since 1818 (and possibly earlier), the Company had enforced a ban on missionaries in its chartered territory for fear that they would transform nomadic hunters into sedentary agriculturalists and foment sectarian tension among the Aboriginal labour force.⁸ Yet the HBC came under increasing pressure to adopt a more liberal policy toward missionaries in the late 1830s. British humanitarian organizations – principally the Aborigines’ Protection Society (established in 1837) – lobbied Parliament to discontinue the HBC’s Licence for Exclusive Trade if indigenous peoples were to remain cut off from “the benevolent purposes of Christianity... [and] kept as closely as possible to the barbarous and savage state”.⁹ Thus, in 1839 when John Rowand – Chief

⁸ Joseph-Norbert Provencher and Sévère Dumoulin (secular priests from the Archdiocese of Quebec) were the first Catholic clergy assigned to the Red River Colony. Their arrival in 1818 prompted the HBC to articulate its position on missionaries and to establish regulations on evangelization. Missionaries were instructed to remain within the boundaries of the colony, to refrain from indulging in sectarian polemics, and above all to avoid meddling with the company’s trade. SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1592-P1600, Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk to Archbishop Joseph-Octave Plessis of Quebec, Pau (department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France), December 30, 1819; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1627-P1631, John (Wedderburn) Halkett to Plessis, York Factory, August 26, 1822. See also: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 30, 36; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 30-31.

⁹ “The Red River Settlement and the Hudson’s Bay Company,” *The Colonial Intelligencer, or, Aborigines’ Friend*, Vol. 2, No. 3-4 (July and August 1848), p. 39. See also: *ibid.*, pp. 35-47; William Tweedie, *Canada West and the Hudson’s Bay Company: A Political and Humane Question of Vital Importance to the Honour of Great Britain, to the Prosperity of Canada, and to the Existence of the Native Tribes: Being an Address to the Right Honorable Henry Labouchere, Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies: With an Appendix* (London: Aborigines’ Protection Society, 1856), pp. 7, 17-19; Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 106; Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion*, p. 174. On the early history of the Aborigines’ Protection Society and other philanthropic organizations in Victorian Britain, see Andrew Porter, “Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery, and Humanitarianism,” in A. Porter ed., *The Oxford History of the*

Factor of the Saskatchewan District – reported that his servants desired access to clergy, Governor George Simpson and the London Committee had little alternative but to acquiesce.¹⁰ Simpson sought initially to engage a single missionary organization that would be amenable to direction and supervision by the HBC. To this end, he approached the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and offered accommodation at Company posts as well as transportation, communications and provisioning services free of charge.¹¹ His hopes for a Wesleyan monopoly were short-lived, however, as Catholic and Anglican clergy at Red River wasted no time in requesting passage into the new mission field.¹² Anxious to avoid charges of thwarting missionaries, Simpson acceded to these requests but insisted that Catholic, Anglican and Wesleyan clergy abide by three cardinal rules. First, they were to refrain from “injuring the Company’s commercial interests” by interfering with indigenous hunting practices or by assisting free traders – “those fur traffickers who illegally invade the Company’s rights of

British Empire, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 209, 215-217, 220.

¹⁰ Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, p. 94; Giraud, *Le métis canadien*, p. 1063. Over the following decade, Catholic missionaries came to regard Rowand as a trusted friend and an invaluable ally. He became renowned for his generosity in providing them room, board and travel provisions. Ironically, Sylvia Van Kirk has noted that Rowand was harshly critical of missionaries – be they Catholic or Protestant – as they placed an excessive burden on the company’s supplies and its transport system. See especially: Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Missions de l’Orégon et voyages dans les montagnes Rocheuses en 1845 et 1846* (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1848), pp. 148-149; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1803-P1829, Thibault to Signay, Red River (?), June, 18, 1843; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P1841-P1854, Thibault to Provencher, Fort Pitt, December 26, 1843; Sylvia Van Kirk, “John Rowand,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 8 (1851-1860).

¹¹ Abel, *Drum Songs*, pp. 114-115; Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, pp. 101, 107; Maclean, *James Evans*, pp. 146-149, 191-192; Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion*, pp. 174-175.

¹² McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 30, 32-33; Tucker, *The Rainbow in the North*, pp. 203-207.

trade.”¹³ Second, each denomination was to obtain permission from the governor and the London Committee before establishing itself in a particular district. Third, each denomination was to avoid expanding into a district in which another denomination had previously established itself.¹⁴

Seizing upon this change in policy, Bishop Provencher asserted a pre-emptive claim to Île-à-la-Crosse – a claim based on Jean-Baptiste Thibault’s visit in May 1845.¹⁵ To the prelate’s delight, Simpson ratified the claim in May 1846 and offered free transport for two priests to Île-à-la-Crosse.¹⁶ Additionally, Simpson assured

¹³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0010-T0013, Simpson to Taché, Fort Garry, June 30, 1853. See also: Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 105; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 31.

¹⁴ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M270, B.89/c/1, Ile-a-Lacrosse [sic] Correspondence Inward, 1810-1862, Simpson to Taché, Norway House, June 1, 1854. See also: Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 42; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 35. The rationale for the last rule was two-fold. First, the HBC sought to reduce the financial and ecological burden of missionary activity in each district. Second, it sought to isolate the separate denominations so as to avoid sectarian conflict. Despite Simpson’s efforts, the 1850s and 60s witnessed intense rivalry between Catholic and Anglican missionaries, especially in the Athabasca and Mackenzie Districts. See especially: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 141-163, 169-178; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 45-56.

¹⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2754-P2758, Provencher to Signay, Saint-Boniface, June 20, 1845; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Provencher, P2696-P2731, Provencher to the Central Councils of *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Saint-Boniface, 1846; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 102, 125. Contrary to Provencher’s assertion, Thibault was not the first missionary to visit Île-à-la-Crosse. James Evans – General Superintendent of Wesleyan Missions – had sojourned at the post in 1842. Evans attempted a second visit to Île-à-la-Crosse in 1844. En route, however, he accidentally shot and killed his Chipewyan interpreter – Thomas Hassall (also Hassel) – and was obliged to return to his headquarters at Norway House. Evans’ withdrawal enabled Thibault to travel unchecked to Île-à-la-Crosse where he reportedly baptized 300 persons in May 1845. See especially: Maclean, *James Evans*, pp. 194-196; Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 13; Egerton Ryerson Young, *The Apostle of the North: Rev. James Evans* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), pp. 198-199, 243-248.

¹⁶ Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 104, 108; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 33. Simpson may have been swayed by Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie’s insistence on the commercial value of missionaries. In July 1845, McKenzie reported that Thibault had attracted Chipewyan- and Cree-speaking hunters to Île-à-la-Crosse and had thus stemmed their ongoing migration to the prairies. “[E]very Indian at Île à la Crosse would have been in the Plains, had he [Thibault] not come,” insisted McKenzie. Quoted in McCarthy, *From*

Provencher that the priests would be lodged at the HBC fort while their future residence was under construction.¹⁷ Fathers Louis-François Laflèche and Alexandre-Antonin Taché were accordingly conveyed to Île-à-la-Crosse on HBC barges and were received by Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie with “une hospitalité des plus bienveillantes et des plus généreuses.”¹⁸ McKenzie provided the young missionaries with a private room, daily meals and warm clothing during the winter of 1846-1847. He also offered the services of his resident interpreter, under whose guidance Laflèche and Taché began their studies in Cree and Chipewyan.¹⁹ Far from merely obeying Simpson’s orders to “make them comfortable &... keep them in good humour,” McKenzie expressed genuine fondness for his guests and actively sought out their company and conversation.²⁰ As a token of his friendship, he commissioned the building of a log cabin for the missionaries in spring 1847. After its completion, McKenzie reportedly

the Great River to the Ends of the Earth, p. 32. See also Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 42.

¹⁷ Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 42; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 108, 125; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 33

¹⁸ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Mgr Grandin, Notes Intimes sur le Diocèse de S^t Albert, rédigées en 1884,” p. 51. See also: Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 45; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 126-127, 129; Duchaussois, *Aux glaces polaires*, p. 152; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 26.

²⁰ Quoted in Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 43. According to Dom Benoît, “M. MacKenzie [sic] éprouvait une véritable jouissance à la conversation et au commerce d’hommes si distingués.” Elated with the missionaries’ company, McKenzie claimed an enormous amount of their time and attention. His visits to their room became so frequent that the missionaries’ language studies began to suffer. Taché and Laflèche consequently resorted to “une industrie fort innocente pour le congédier sans lui imposer la peine d’un refus.” Afflicted by chronic rheumatic pain, the 72-year-old McKenzie walked with the support of two canes. Whenever the missionaries heard the distinctive *thud* of these canes on the floor outside their room, they would drop to their knees and cast their eyes heavenward. Loath to disrupt the missionaries’ devotions, McKenzie would withdraw from their doorway without uttering a word. Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 129.

remarked: “I shan’t enter the cost of the cabin on the company books: it is such a sorry thing I would be afraid of being reproached.”²¹

Besides helping the missionaries settle at Île-à-la-Crosse, the HBC facilitated their expansion into outlying areas. In February 1847, McKenzie commissioned one of his servants to convey Taché by dogsled to the post at Green Lake.²² Around the same time, McKenzie wrote to his junior officers at Rapid River (Lac la Ronge) and Reindeer Lake and instructed them to arrange for Taché’s safe passage to these posts. The officers dutifully dispatched four guides to Île-à-la-Crosse where Taché was collected on March 9. After replenishing their provisions at Rapid River, the travellers pressed north-eastward and reached Reindeer Lake on March 25.²³ Charles Thomas – resident clerk at Reindeer Lake – offered Taché a private room furnished with the post’s only table and chair. Thomas also offered his services as French-Cree translator to the young Oblate.²⁴ Similar hospitality awaited Taché at Fort Chipewyan where he lodged at the residence of Chief Trader Francis Ermatinger for most of September 1847. The two men developed a friendly rapport and Ermatinger urged Taché to return the following autumn for a longer stay.²⁵ In his published account of these visits, Taché expressed profound gratitude to HBC officers:

En général, les membres de l’Honorable Compagnie de la Baie-d’Hudson non-seulement nous ont rendu service, mais même, dans bien des

²¹ Quoted in Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 46. See also: Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 147; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 26.

²² “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 7; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 130-131.

²³ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 17-18. See also “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 7-8; Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 46; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 131-134.

²⁴ Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 134-137; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 27-28.

²⁵ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 28; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 141, 144-146.

circonstances, se sont montrés des amis sincères et dévoués. Ce que nous avons dit plus haut du digne M. McKenzie, nous pouvons le dire ici de l'aimable M. Ermingter [sic] ; nous pourrions le dire de plusieurs autres...[L]es officiers de l'Honorable Compagnie ont des titres certains à notre reconnaissance et à notre estime...²⁶

In the years following Taché's initial excursions, HBC officers continued to provide the Oblates of Île-à-la-Crosse with safe passage to outlying posts and to offer them lodging. Thomas personally accompanied Taché on his second journey from Île-à-la-Crosse to Reindeer Lake (March 1848) and again assigned him a private room at the post.²⁷ Likewise, Ermatinger accompanied Taché on his second journey to Fort Chipewyan (September 1848) and extended the same courtesy to Father Henri Faraud the following year.²⁸ After McKenzie's retirement in June 1850, his successor – Chief Trader Georges-Fleury Deschambault – maintained the practice of appointing guides and arranging accommodation for itinerant Oblates.²⁹ Deschambault's goodwill was undoubtedly strengthened by the fact that he and Taché were blood relatives and had

²⁶ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 28-29.

²⁷ Benoît, "The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse," p. 48; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 156-158. Writing to his mother from Reindeer Lake on April 10, 1848, Taché marvelled at Thomas' hospitality and affability while making light of his Protestantism: "Je suis traité avec toutes sortes d'égards et de politesses. Mon hôte, protestant de naissance, persévère dans sa croyance que le protestantisme est la doctrine que saint Paul a prêchée en Angleterre, pendant que saint Pierre en enseignait une autre à Rome ; mais il est loin d'être fanatique, respecte notre religion et traite ses ministres bien mieux que ne feraient un grand nombre de catholiques eux-mêmes. Il assiste tous les dimanches à la messe, et d'après ses offres, je l'ai établi mon unique chantre au lutrin." Quoted in Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 158.

²⁸ "Lettre du R.P. Faraud, Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, à un Prêtre de la même Congrégation, Athabaskaw, 20 avril, 1851," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), p. 223; Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, p. 101; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 162-164.

²⁹ "Extrait d'une lettre de Mgr Taché, évêque de Saint-Boniface, à Mgr l'Évêque de Marseille, Supérieur-Général des Oblats de Marie Immaculée," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 27 (1855), p. 211; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 5, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861. See also: Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 178-179, 181, 247.

both grown up in Boucherville, Lower Canada. “Mr. Deschambault est plein de bonté, d’égard et de générosité pour nous”, wrote Taché to his mother on January 8, 1854. “A mille lieues et plus de Boucherville le chef spirituel (Ayamiheh-Okima) et le chef temporel (Okima) sont tous deux de Boucherville, n’est-ce pas encore là une circonstance ménagée par la Providence pour ma satisfaction personnelle?”³⁰

After laying the foundations of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions, Oblates relied on the HBC’s transport system to consolidate their position. In June 1853, Taché and Simpson entered into a formal arrangement whereby the HBC would transport freight to Saint-Jean-Baptiste at the rate charged to officers and servants of the Company.³¹ Oblates subsequently adapted to the Company’s provisioning cycle. Each January, the superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste compiled a list of supplies required at the mission and its outposts. He then sent the list to Red River where the vicar of missions ordered the supplies through an agent of the HBC. Imported goods arrived at York Factory the following summer or autumn. They were then hauled by barge up the Nelson River to Norway House where they remained in storage over the winter. In early June, the Portage La Loche Brigade collected the supplies and carried them westward across Lake Winnipeg, past Grand Rapids and up the Saskatchewan River to Cumberland House. From there the brigade ascended the Sturgeon-Weir River and crossed over Frog Portage to the English River. It usually reached Saint-Jean-Baptiste

³⁰ AD, HE 2221. T12L 25, Alexandre Taché to Louise-Henriette Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 5, 1853. See also: Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 247; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 61.

³¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0010-T0013, Simpson to Taché, Fort Garry, June 30, 1853. This arrangement was one of Taché’s first initiatives as Bishop of Saint-Boniface. He brokered it less than a month after Provencher’s death (June 7, 1853).

by late July or early August.³² In addition to delivering freight, the brigade provided a communications relay to Saint-Boniface and also to Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation (Portage La Loche) and points further north. It carried official reports, personal letters and word of mouth to and from Saint-Jean-Baptiste.³³ The mission also sent and received mail by the HBC courier who passed through Île-à-la-Crosse each winter – usually in January or February.³⁴

Concurrently, Oblates drew on the labour of HBC servants to develop the infrastructure of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and to meet the basic material needs of its inhabitants. In the late 1840s, the HBC outsourced servants to the mission on an ad hoc basis for small-scale projects. These projects consisted mostly of odd jobs for the fort's resident joiner and blacksmith.³⁵ Yet as Saint-Jean-Baptiste grew in population and importance in the 1850s, Oblates requested a wider range of services from local HBC

³² LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M270, B.89/c/1, Ile-a-Lacrosse [sic] Correspondence Inward, 1810-1862, Simpson to Taché, Norway House, June 1, 1854; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1116-T1119, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2575-T2577, Moulin to Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3769-T3771, Grandin to Taché, "Demandes pour la mission S.-J. Bte (Île à la Crosse)", Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1866. For information on the waterways plied by the Portage La Loche Brigade (also known as the English River Brigade), see especially: Hargrave, *Red River*, pp. 160-166; Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, pp. 43-46; Macdougall, *One of the Family*, pp. 38-39.

³³ AD, HE 2221. T12Z 251, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 5, 1861; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Great Slave Lake, April 12, 1862. The brigade's effectiveness at relaying information by word of mouth was clearly demonstrated in July 1858 when it notified Grandin (then superior at Saint-Jean-Baptiste) that he had been appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface. Grandin would not receive written notice of his appointment until the following January (delivered by winter express). See "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 46-47, 49-50.

³⁴ AD, HE 2221. T12L 25, Alexandre Taché to Louise-Henriette Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 5, 1853; AD, HE 2221. T12Z 251, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 5, 1861; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 207, 213; *ibid.*, 2:pp. 196-197, 222; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 23, 49, 76, 115.

³⁵ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M493, B.89/d/70, Isle a la Crosse Account Book, 1849-1850, p. 7; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1850), Tuesday, September 10, 1850, p. 39.

personnel – including the chopping and hauling of firewood, the harvesting and threshing of cereal crops, the tending of livestock and the daily provision of whitefish.³⁶ Thus, in 1855, the HBC initiated the practice of transferring servants to the mission where they served one-year contracts as *engagés* (employees) under the supervision of lay brothers.³⁷ Oblates paid the *engagés*' wages from the annual allocation from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*.³⁸ They supplemented these wages with items known as *butin* – principally tea, sugar, tobacco, chocolate, peppermint, dyed cloth, powder and shot – which they drew directly from mission stores.³⁹ By the early 1860s, Saint-Jean-Baptiste contracted three *engagés* per year at £22 each and provided permanent employment to former HBC servant Pierre Malbœuf.⁴⁰ Originally from Saint-Hyacinthe, Lower Canada, Malbœuf had served as a crewman in the Portage La

³⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0140-T0146, “Rom: Cath: Mission D^{ts} to the Hon^{ble} Hudson’s Bay Comp^y For the following Supplies at Sundry Districts, Outfit 1859”; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-1404, Faraut to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1741-T1743, Faraut to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 26, 1862; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 31. See also Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 62-63.

³⁷ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M494, B.89/d/85, Isle a la Crosse Account Book, 1855, p. 22; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1856), Thursday, January 24, 1856, p. 15.

³⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861; CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 16, “Lettre de Mgr Vital J. Grandin, évêque de Satala à M. le Directeur et a MM. les Conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris, 15 novembre 1865,” pp. 585-594.

³⁹ For inventories of *butin* at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, see: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3771, “Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, recettes et dépenses du mois de juin 1864 au mois de janvier 1866,” January 8-9, 1866.

⁴⁰ AD, HE 2221. T12Z 183, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, Novembre 16, 1862; AD, HE 2221. T12Z 184, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863; AD, HE 2221. T12Z 188, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1864; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 26, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3160-T3163, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 22, 1865.

Loche Brigade before entering the Oblates' employ as resident fisherman at Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁴¹

Beyond providing essential material services, the HBC set the basic seasonal rhythm of the Oblates' evangelical activity. This rhythm emerged from long-established provisioning and trading cycles. Since the 1830s, groups of Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families had gathered at Île-à-la-Crosse each September in the wake of the Portage La Loche Brigade. They sought – and usually obtained – advances for their furs before travelling to their winter hunting and trapping grounds. They returned to Île-à-la-Crosse with their pelts once the waterways were free of ice – generally in late May or early June – at which point local HBC personnel began preparing the year's fur packet for shipment to York Factory.⁴² These biannual gatherings enabled Oblates to make regular contact with large numbers of prospective converts and to provide them with spiritual and liturgical services. Thus, beginning around 1850, Oblates scheduled periods of intensive missionizing to coincide with these gatherings at Île-à-la-Crosse. They held *la mission de l'automne* in the second half of September and *la mission du printemps* in the first half of June.⁴³ Over the

⁴¹ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M493, B.89/d/68, Isle a la Crosse Account Book, 1848-1849, pp. 3-4; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, "Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse" (Liber Animarum), "Famille Malbœuf," p. 15.

⁴² "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 116, 131, 136, 140, 146-147. See also: Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 78-79; Jarvenpa, "The Hudson's Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period," pp. 491-492; Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, "The Microeconomics of Southern Chipewyan Fur-Trade History," in Shepard Krech III ed., *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), pp. 156-158.

⁴³ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 22, 35-36, 44, 166-167, 183. It is difficult to assign a precise year to the first "mission de l'automne" or "mission du printemps" at Île-à-la-Crosse as there is no primary record of the event. In his *Codex* entry for 1850, however, Pénard noted the following: "C'est vers cette époque... que les sauvages

course of each *mission*, Oblates preached in Cree and Chipewyan, administered the sacraments, taught prayers and hymns, oversaw devotional exercises, regularized marriages and attempted to alter behaviour that they deemed immoral – undertakings that will receive further consideration in chapter four.⁴⁴ By the early 1860s, the biannual *mission* at Île-à-la-Crosse had become a focal event of the Oblate calendar in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. It drew Oblates from far afield to join in a collective operation that lasted twelve to eighteen days and that required considerable physical and mental exertion.⁴⁵ In 1861, for instance, Father Valentin Végréville journeyed from Saint-Pierre (Reindeer Lake) to assist in *la mission du printemps* and fell into an exhausting daily routine upon arrival: “Je ne me suis point couché avant 11 heures du soir ni levé après quatre du matin... je comptais sur la force de mon corps plus robuste que jamais, et sur le courage que j’attendais de Dieu pour lequel nous travaillons. Je savais du reste que la mission ne devait pas durer longtemps...”⁴⁶

Yet while adapting to rhythms and routines set by the HBC, Oblates expressed profound disapproval of certain Company-sanctioned practices at Île-à-la-Crosse. They

commencèrent à se réunir autour de la mission au printemps et à l’automne, afin de vaquer aux exercices de la mission et de de [sic] faire certaines des devoirs de la religion.” The corresponding marginalia reads: “Établissement de missions au printemps et à l’automne pour les sauvages.” See *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a/35, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1865), Sunday, September 24, 1865, p. 35; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Mgr Grandin, Notes Intimes sur le Diocèse de S^t Albert, rédigées en 1884,” pp. 52, 60-61; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 208; *ibid.*, 2:pp. 200-201, 211-212. See also Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 78.

⁴⁵ AD, HE 2221. T12Z 178, Moulin to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 31, 1860; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0586-T0588, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2814-T2816, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3303-T3305, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 30, 1865. See also “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 73-74, 77, 79, 90, 92-93, 96, 116, 129, 131.

⁴⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0586-T0588, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861. See also: Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 155; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 72.

deemed these practices prejudicial to their apostolate and generally incompatible with Catholic morality. Particularly troubling to Oblates was the Company's purveyance of alcohol and its endorsement of drinking on festive occasions – namely Christmas and New Year's Day. By the time of the Oblates' arrival at Île-à-la-Crosse, a seasonal custom had taken root whereby the fort dispensed port wine and spirits to HBC officers, servants and their families for the purpose of toasting.⁴⁷ Oblates denounced the custom on the premise that drinking led to depravity, dissipation and sin. Taché expressed this view to Simpson in 1853 and entreated him to discontinue the importation of alcohol altogether so as to serve the interests of morality and public order.⁴⁸ Equally distressing to Oblates was the Company's laxity in policing the sexual mores of its personnel. In 1866, for instance, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin reported that four HBC servants at Île-à-la-Crosse were engaged in extramarital relationships with “des salopes” who had lately arrived with the Portage La Loche Brigade. Grandin asked Taché to discuss the matter personally with William Mactavish, Governor of Rupertsland:

De grâce Monseigneur voyez donc M. le Gouverneur de ma part et priez le de défendre sous les peines les plus sévères à tous les commis, guides et conducteurs de barges de ne plus faire embarquer toutes les salopes qui se trouvent sur leur passage, elles ne peuvent qu'occasionner des désordres dans les barges et elles en occasionnent plus encore dans les barges où elles

⁴⁷ Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 127; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 277-279, 282-283.

⁴⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0010-T0013, Simpson to Taché, Fort Garry, June 30, 1853. In his response to Taché's entreaty, Simpson expressed his desire to “encourage habits of temperance throughout the country,” but insisted that an outright ban on alcohol would not produce the desired result: “Were we at liberty to act as we desired we should forthwith discontinue our importations, but the effects of so doing would be to induce greater evils than at present exist, as the Red River Settlers would engage in illicit distillation while spirits would likewise be imported from the States – and by these means, an increased supply, & consequent consumption would follow from the change.” Ibid., T0011-T0012.

se rendent... Je croyais que le concubinage était un cas d'exclusion du service de l'honorable compagnie.⁴⁹

Underlying the appeals of Taché and Grandin was the belief that the HBC possessed sufficient power to effect moral improvement among the inhabitants of Île-à-la-Crosse, but did not exercise this power with due diligence or paternal care. This power needed to be guided by moral purpose and brought into line with the goals of the Oblates apostolate.

Oblates sought especially to marshal this power in support of their education project. Beginning in the early 1860s, they elicited cooperation from high ranking officers of the HBC in publicizing the convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse and in recruiting pupils. Every year, a chief factor, chief district officer or other commissioned officer assisted in organizing *l'examen public* in the common room at Saint-Bruno. He invited local parents to attend the *examen* and welcomed them personally to the convent on the predetermined day. There followed a programme of readings, recitations and songs by schoolchildren, after which the attending HBC officer awarded prizes and delivered a speech on the value of a mission education.⁵⁰ Chief Factor William Joseph Christie assumed this role while visiting Île-à-la-Crosse in 1865 and again in 1873.⁵¹ Christie's speeches – both delivered in fluent French – reportedly left a deep impression

⁴⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4255-T4259, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 25, 1866. See also N. Jaye Goossen, "William Mactavish," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 9 (1861-1870).

⁵⁰ ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 216-217, 218, 231, 237, 243-244; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 56-57, 85-87, 107-108; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 127-128, 159-160.

⁵¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3282-T3283, Samuel McKenzie to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 20, 1865; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3284-T3285, Samuel McKenzie to Agnès, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 20, 1865; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 127-128. In 1865, Christie was in charge of the Saskatchewan District and visited Île-à-la-Crosse en route to the annual meeting of the HBC's Council of the Northern Department at Norway House. He returned in 1873 during his official inspection of northern posts. See also Irene M. Spry, "William Joseph Christie," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 12 (1891-1900).

on his listeners. According to Father Prosper Légeard, these speeches provided powerful encouragement for local parents to send their children to Saint-Bruno:

Quand ils voient un personnage, le plus haut placé du pays, quand ils l'entendent parler comme nous, cela les fait réfléchir au prix de l'éducation. Aussi, le plus souvent, quand les officiers de la compagnie passent ici, nous en profitons pour faire subir un examen solennel à nos enfants. Ces examens ont beaucoup contribué à donner à notre école de l'Île à la Crosse la réputation dont elle jouit dans le Nord.⁵²

While grateful to HBC officers for placing their social status and political influence at the service of Saint-Bruno, Oblates believed that the school was naturally entitled to such a high level of Company support. One of Saint-Bruno's foundational objectives was to impart skills of literacy and numeracy to future HBC officers.⁵³ In its first year of operation, the school enrolled sons of three officers: Deschambault; Pierriche Laliberté (resident postmaster at Portage La Loche); and Bernard Rogan Ross (Chief Trader in charge of the Mackenzie River District).⁵⁴ It also enrolled three children of William Spencer (clerk in charge of Rapid River and Cold Lake) over the course of the

⁵² Quoted in Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 86-87. This quotation is drawn from "la correspondance du P. Légeard avec la Congrégation" (1873). See *ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0582-T0585, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862.

⁵⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0291-T0294, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 7, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0362-T0368, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861 (postscript); AD, HPF 4191. C75R 183, Pepin to "Ma Très Chère Sœur," Île-à-la-Crosse, June 14, 1863. Deschambault's son was identified simply as "le petit Déchambault [sic]." Laliberté's son was identified as Antoine. Ross's son was identified as Edouard (possibly Edward). On Pierriche Laliberté and his immediate family, see: LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/4, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1872-1875), "Memoranda regarding Officers in Upper English River Dis", pp. 38-39; "Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse" (Liber Animarum), "Famille La Liberté [sic]," p. 109. On Bernard Rogan Ross, see: Hartwell Bowsfield, "Bernard Rogan Ross," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 10 (1871-1880); Lindsay, "The Hudson's Bay Company-Smithsonian Connection and Fur Trade Intellectual Life," pp. 592-617; Lindsay, ed., *The Modern Beginnings of Subarctic Ornithology*, p. xviii.

1860s.⁵⁵ Thus, from the perspective of Oblates, the HBC held a considerable stake in Saint-Bruno and stood to gain long-term benefits from the school.

Another endeavour in which Oblates perceived a mutuality of interests between themselves and the HBC was their campaign against free traders. Having failed to obtain the renewal of its Licence for Exclusive Trade in 1859, the Company faced an onslaught of independent competitors in the early 1860s.⁵⁶ One of these competitors – Charles McDermott of Red River – established a small operation in the vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse in autumn 1861.⁵⁷ His presence caused consternation among Oblates, who regarded it as a moral and physical threat to the community. Oblates were particularly alarmed by the conduct of the young men in McDermott’s party. “Les jeunes gens qui ont accompagné le jeune Mcdermot [sic] deviennent une plaie publique, il n’y a plus de sûreté pour les femmes,” lamented Faraud in spring 1862.⁵⁸ Father Julien Moulin made a similar, if more explicit, charge against the newcomers: “Il y en a eu parmi les gens de Makdermot [sic] qui ont séduit des Montagnaises et leur ont fait violence pour faire le mal avec elles... On peut dire que tous ces gens ont été un véritable fléau pour le

⁵⁵ AD, HPF 4191. C75R 187, Pepin to “Ma Très Chère Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, January 1, 1870. On William Spencer’s career in the English River District, see: LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/4, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1872-1875), “Memoranda regarding Officers in Upper English River Dis^b”, p. 38. Aware that the Spencer family was avowedly Protestant, Oblates did not insist on Catholicizing the Spencer children in their charge. In 1870, Légeard reported to the Oblate General Administration: “Nous n’avons pas grand espoir de les ramener à notre sainte religion, mais c’est déjà beaucoup que leurs parents consentent... à nous confier leurs enfants, et puis cette instruction qu’ils reçoivent aura toujours une grande influence sur le reste de leur vie.” AD, G LPP 2200, Légeard to Fabre, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1870.

⁵⁶ Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, p. 108; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 35-36; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 43.

⁵⁷ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 778, B.89/e/4, Isle-à-la-Crosse, Report on District (1862), “Memorandum regarding the English River District”, p. 1. See also Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 198.

⁵⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-T1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862 and June 2, 1862 (Faraud wrote the letter on two separate days).

pays.”⁵⁹ While outraged at instances of sexual predation, Oblates feared a more insidious and ultimately more destructive evil. According to Faraud, McDermott’s party had imported alcohol as an article of trade and had thus initiated a process that would have devastating consequences for the local population: “Je regarde comme certain que dans un avenir très rapproché nos pauvres missions souffriront beaucoup si elles ne sont pas détruites par l’opposition et le trafic de la boisson.”⁶⁰ In hopes of staving off the moral and physical danger posed by free traders, Oblates urged hunters and trappers in the vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse to continue dealing exclusively with the HBC and to shun commerce with newcomers. Oblates conveyed this message through public preaching during the biannual *missions* and through private conversation with local hunters and their families.⁶¹

Thus, by the mid 1860s, Île-à-la-Crosse had become the site of a complex and mutually reinforcing relationship between Oblates and the HBC. Oblates depended on the Company for the temporal sustenance of their mission and for the basic rhythm of their evangelical activity. They invoked the Company’s authority to enforce their vision of moral order and to legitimize their education project. In turn, Oblates served the interests of the HBC by providing schooling for future officers and by voicing disapproval of free traders. This symbiosis between Oblates and the Company gave rise to expressions of mutual goodwill and appreciation. For instance, during his residence

⁵⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1428-T1431, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1862.

⁶⁰ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1097-T1100, Faraud, to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 4, 1862. On the Oblates’ conceptual correlation of free traders with alcohol (and alcoholism), see Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 36.

⁶¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2229-T2237, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3083-T3085, Lawrence Clarke (resident clerk at Fort-à-la-Corne) to Grandin, Fort-à-la-Corne, January 14, 1865; AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875; *Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897*, pp. 134, 235, 267-268.

at Île-à-la-Crosse (1849-51, 1852-64), Deschambault frequently invited Oblates to the fort and treated them to long, lingering dinners.⁶² He also supplied the mission with fresh meat at no charge when the local fishery foundered in the summer and autumn of 1861.⁶³ For their part, Oblates sent gifts of milk, butter, cheese, eggs and berry preserves to the fort and also loaned their sled dogs when HBC personnel were in need of them.⁶⁴ Moreover, when travelling from Île-à-la-Crosse to an outlying mission or trading post, Oblates and HBC personnel frequently carried each others' provisions, letters and even oral messages.⁶⁵

⁶² LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a/30, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1860), Wednesday, November 14, 1860, p. 4; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0362-T0368, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a/31, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1861), Saturday, April 20, 1861, p. 14; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M65, B.89/a/33, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1863), Friday, January 2, 1863, p. 7. Information on Deschambault's employment history and residence at Île-à-la-Crosse is available online through the Hudson's Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/d/deschambeault_george-sr1818-1870.pdf (accessed July 7, 2009).

⁶³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1097-T1100, Faraud, to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 4, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1116-T1119, Faraud, to Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1862. On the foundering of the local fishery, see: ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:p. 210; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 75. This phenomenon may have been caused by the accumulation of algae and/or bacteria in Lake Île-à-la-Crosse. Agnès noted the following in her entry for 1861: "Par une exception singulière, cet été, le vent se faisant sentir rarement, la belle nappe d'eau de notre immense Lac n'était plus agitée par cet élément ; de grandes herbes y crûrent à une hauteur prodigieuse et se couvrirent d'une mousse verte, laquelle se détachait à la moindre brise et donnait à l'eau un goût si désagréable, la rendait tellement épaisse, im potable et mauvaise, que, pour en boire, il fallait que la soif fût devenue vraie souffrance. Il fallait filtrer l'eau pour s'en servir pour faire la cuisine et, malgré cette précaution, les aliments en conservaient un mauvais goût. C'était un surcroît de travail pour nous ; au temps du lavage, il fallait couler cette eau et encore le linge gardait-il une teinte verte." See ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 209-210.

⁶⁴ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M64, B.89/a/26, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1849), Monday, July 16, 1849, p. 5; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M494, B.89/d/85, Isle a la Crosse Account Book, 1854-1855, p. 26; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M65, B.89/a/35, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1865), Saturday, May 6, 1865, p. 24; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3282-T3283, Samuel McKenzie to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 20, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 913, Box 32, Grandin to Gasté, Saint-Albert, August 24, 1872.

⁶⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0379-T0382, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 2, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15,

Yet while engaged in a mutually supportive relationship with the HBC at Île-à-la-Crosse, Oblates perceived a very different situation developing at other trading posts. These posts had become theatres of rivalry between Catholic and Anglican missionaries since the expiry of the HBC's Licence for Exclusive Trade, at which point the Company had ceased regulating the establishment of new missions and had adopted a policy of impartiality in religious matters.⁶⁶ The rivalry began in the Mackenzie River District where Oblates had held a foothold at Fort Resolution (Saint-Joseph mission) since 1854.⁶⁷ When Anglican Archdeacon James Hunter arrived in the district in August 1858, Oblates hastened to expand beyond Fort Resolution and to establish themselves at other trading posts so as to counter the advance of Anglicanism. Spearheading this expansion was Father Henri Grollier who founded three missions in rapid succession: Sacré-Cœur de Jésus at Fort Simpson (1858); Sainte-Thérèse-d'Avila at Fort Norman (1859); and Notre-Dame de Bonne-Espérance at Fort Good Hope (1859).⁶⁸ As he endeavoured to consolidate these posts and to continue founding new

1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1725-T1728, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1741-T1743, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 26, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3160-T3163, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 22, 1865; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 15, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1871.

⁶⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0134-T0136, Bernard Rogan Ross to Taché, Portage La Loche, August 6, 1860; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 43.

⁶⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0952-T0959, Germain Eynard, "Histoire de la Mission de S^t Joseph, Grand lac des Esclaves," Fort Resolution, November 21, 1861. According to this account, Faraud began construction of Saint-Joseph mission in 1854. It did not become a permanent mission until late July 1858 when it received its first resident Oblate – thirty-two-year-old Henri Grollier (an ordained Oblate from the department of Hérault). Joining Grollier two weeks later were thirty-seven-year-old Germain Eynard (an ordained Oblate from Piedmont-Sardinia) and thirty-year-old Jean Pérréard (an Oblate lay brother from the department of the Rhône). See *ibid.*, T0952-T0953. See also: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 342; *ibid.*, 2: pp. 114-115; *ibid.*, 3:pp. 64-65.

⁶⁸ Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 55-58, 141-163; McCarthy, "The Founding of Providence Mission," pp. 40-43; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 45-56.

ones, Grollier reported that his efforts were being thwarted by “le fanatisme” and “la haine contre le catholicisme” of local HBC officers. He complained in 1861 that the officers in charge of Fort Resolution, Fort Norman, Fort Yukon and Fort McPherson (Peel’s River) had refused him room, board and transport while extending every courtesy imaginable to Anglican missionary William West Kirkby.⁶⁹ On the basis of Grollier’s complaints, Bishop Grandin wrote to Governor Mactavish and to Bishop Taché on September 20, 1861, and formally accused HBC officers in the Mackenzie River District of championing the Anglican cause.⁷⁰ Chief Trader Ross subsequently assured the bishops that he and his officers abided by their “obligations to the Company to treat all religions alike” and suggested that Grollier’s experience had resulted from personal differences with particular officers.⁷¹ Grandin was not convinced by Ross’s claims of neutrality. During his three-year tour of the northern missions (1861-64), the bishop reported sceptically on his encounters with HBC officers in the Mackenzie River District. “Tous ces Messieurs sont aimables envers moi et M. Ross me dit qu’ils le seraient envers tout missionnaire qui de son côté se montrerait aimable,” he wrote to Taché in April 1862. “Il faut là-dessus en prendre et en laisser... ils sont cependant humiliés de nous voir réussir plus que les ministres protestants, ce ceux eux qui ont fait

⁶⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0316-T0319, Grollier to Taché, Fort Good Hope, February 24, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0564-T0567, Grollier to Lestanc, Fort Good Hope, June 9, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1555-T1559, Grollier to Taché, Fort Good Hope, August 2, 1862.

⁷⁰ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0852-T0856, Grandin to Mactavish, Fort Simpson, September 20, 1861 (Taché’s copy).

⁷¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0949-T0951, Ross to Taché, Fort Simpson, November 20, 1861. There was likely some validity to Ross’s suggestion as Grollier was known to make enemies wherever he went. Even his fellow Oblates considered him extraordinarily abrasive and cantankerous. “Je ne sais réellement que faire avec ce cher père,” lamented Grandin in 1863. “Il est souverainement haï de tout le monde, surtout des bourgeois, il n’est guère plus aimé des métis et des sauvages.” SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2272-T2274, Grandin to Taché, Providence Mission, June 29, 1863. See also Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 56-57.

venir le ministre et certains d'entre eux ont pris sa cause en main comme la leur propre...⁷²

Oblates expressed similar suspicions about HBC officers in the English River District. They were particularly wary of Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie's son, Samuel. As resident postmaster at Rapid River (1843-51, 1853-62), Samuel McKenzie had assisted Anglican missionary Robert Hunt in founding and consolidating Stanley Mission at Lac la Ronge – approximately 170 kilometres down the English River from Île-à-la-Crosse.⁷³ In January 1861, Grandin learned that McKenzie and Hunt intended to establish a satellite mission at Reindeer Lake where Oblates had been exercising a ministry for the previous fourteen years.⁷⁴ Determined to strengthen the Oblates' position and to forestall an Anglican incursion into the area, Grandin obtained authorization from Deschambault to establish a mission near Lac-du-Brochet House – an HBC fort on the northern extremity of Reindeer Lake. The bishop assumed that the

⁷² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1313-T1315, Grandin to Taché, Fort Resolution (Saint-Joseph), April 12, 1862. Grandin undertook this tour to make preparations for the establishment of the Vicariate Apostolic of Athabasca-Mackenzie (canonically erected on May 13, 1862). He left Île-à-la-Crosse on June 2, 1861, and travelled by canoe and by barge through the Athabasca and Mackenzie River Districts where he visited the Catholic missions at Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, Fort Liard, Fort Norman and Fort Good Hope. Grandin also chose the site and laid the foundations of Providence Mission during the tour. He returned to Île-à-la-Crosse on August 5, 1864. See: CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, "Notes de Monseigneur Grandin sur l'Église du Nord-Ouest," pp. 162-178; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 73-74, 82-83.

⁷³ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 17-18. Information on Samuel McKenzie's employment history and residence at Rapid River is available online through the Hudson's Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_samuel1827-1874.pdf (accessed July 20, 2009). On cooperation between Samuel McKenzie and Robert Hunt (1850-60), see especially Norma Jaye Goossen, "The Relationship between the Church Missionary Society and the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupertsland, 1821 to 1860, with a case study of the Stanley Mission under the direction of the Rev. Robert Hunt," (MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 1975), pp. 2-48.

⁷⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0291-T0294, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 7, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0298-T0301, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 17, 1861. On the establishment of the Oblate presence at Reindeer Lake (1847), see: Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 18, 23-24; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 7-8.

fort would provide provisioning, transportation and communications services to the new mission.⁷⁵ To his dismay, Grandin learned in April 1861 that McKenzie – in concert with Chief Trader Robert Campbell of the Athabasca District – had petitioned Governor Mactavish to close Lac-du-Brochet House on the grounds that it was draining furs from the Athabasca District. In reporting the matter to Taché, Grandin ascribed sectarian motives to the petitioners and suggested that McKenzie was waging a furtive campaign against Catholicism. Grandin cited evidence of this campaign in McKenzie’s alleged mistreatment of Catholic servants and traders at Rapid River:

M. Samuel McKenzy [sic] est toujours un vrai gentleman quand nous passons chez lui, mais il exerce une tyrannie sur ses engagés et les sauvages au sujet de la religion... Il violente les consciences des engagés et des sauvages qui ne veulent pas partager ses convictions religieuses. Un jeune canadien... a fait baptiser son enfant par le P. Végréville, il a été pour cette raison maltraité en paroles et privé de patates pour son voyage.⁷⁶

Although the petition was denied in July 1861, Oblates continued to perceive McKenzie as a threat to their mission near Lac-du-Brochet House. Shortly after reaching the mission site on October 3, 1861, Fathers Valentin Végréville and Alphonse Gasté heard rumours of McKenzie’s plan to establish a new post with a resident Anglican catechist at Lac la Hache (known alternately as Wollaston Lake) –

⁷⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0411-T0422, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 15, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861. See also: Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 61; J.A. Rodgers, “Lac du Brochet,” *The Beaver* (March 1945), pp. 11-13.

⁷⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0362-T0370, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1-2, 1861. Grandin appears to have based these comments on information obtained from Végréville, who had lately travelled from Reindeer Lake to Île-à-la-Crosse by way of Rapid River. See: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0379-T0382, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 2, 1861; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 72. On Chief Trader Campbell, see Kenneth Stephen Coates, “Robert Campbell,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 12 (1891-1900).

approximately 130 kilometres west of Lac-du-Brochet House.⁷⁷ These rumours continued to circulate over the following year, prompting Végréville to declare in November 1862 that the HBC intended to undercut the Oblate mission near Lac-du-Brochet House: “La compagnie... fait tout pour l’hérésie. Elle envoie un homme tenir le poste du lac la hache uniquement pour traiter des vivres pour le maître d’école qu’il accompagne, et pour détourner les sauvages, leurs pelleteries et leurs vivres de venir [sic] ici.”⁷⁸

Oblate unease deepened in June 1864 when McKenzie replaced Deschambault as Chief Trader in charge of the English River District.⁷⁹ After taking up residence in the HBC fort at Île-à-la-Crosse, McKenzie came into regular contact with the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. This contact was generally courteous and both parties strove to conduct themselves with diplomatic tact. Grandin enjoined his personnel from expressing displeasure with the new chief trader and urged them to continue cooperating with all HBC officers.⁸⁰ For his part, McKenzie made weekly visits to the

⁷⁷ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1057-T080, Gasté to Taché, Lac-du-Brochet House, spring, 1862. This letter is undated, but contains a brief account of “la mission du printemps” (T1079). See also: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1551-T1554, Végréville to Taché, Portage du Fort de Traite, August 1, 1862. On the voyage of Végréville, Gasté and Pérréard from Île-à-la-Crosse to Lac-du-Brochet House (August 3 - October 3, 1861) and their early ministry on the northern shore of Reindeer Lake, see: Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 158, 172-173; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 75, 78.

⁷⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1745-T1748, Végréville to Taché, Lac-du-Brochet House, November 27, 1862. Végréville had made a similar – though somewhat less emphatic – declaration three months earlier. See: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1601-T1602, Végréville to Taché, Reindeer Lake, August 22, 1862.

⁷⁹ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M784, B.89/f/1, Ile-à-la-Crosse List of Servants, 1865-1882, p. 2. See also the online biographical sheets of Georges Deschambeault [sic] Sr. and Samuel McKenzie: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/d/deschambeault_george-sr1818-1870.pdf; http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mckenzie_samuel1827-1874.pdf (accessed July 28, 2009).

⁸⁰ Grandin outlined his policy toward “les bourgeois protestants” while dispensing administrative advice to thirty-three-year-old Isidore Clut (an ordained Oblate from the

mission and even attended Sunday Mass on occasion, though he also held private services at the HBC fort for his family and other Protestants – mostly junior officers and their families.⁸¹ Beneath this polite exterior, however, there simmered intense apprehension and distrust. In February 1865, Grandin reported to Taché:

Tout en étant bien extérieurement avec notre bourgeois, j'en suis cependant on ne peut plus mécontent. C'est un homme qui nous déteste, nous et nos œuvres, et malgré toutes ses bonnes paroles devant moi et devant nos gens, je suis convaincu que s'il pouvait nous faire couler entièrement il le ferait. Je lui fais bonne mine et l'oblige tant que je puis, lui aussi me fait bonne mine et me rend avec empressement des petits services de rien, mais des services un peu importants pas moyen de rien obtenir.⁸²

One of these “services un peu importants” was the feeding of schoolchildren at Saint-Bruno. Since the local fishery had begun foundering a month earlier, Oblate lay brothers and *engagés* had experienced increasing difficulty in securing daily sustenance for the Grey Nuns’ twenty-eight pupils. Grandin therefore asked McKenzie to provide rations for “les enfants du fort” – pupils whose fathers worked for the Company and

department of Drôme) in February 1866. Clut had been nominated Bishop of Arindela *in partibus infidelium* (Coadjutor of Athabasca-McKenzie) one month earlier: “Très souvent vous le savez nous avons besoin des secours de bourgeois protestants qui nous font aider par leurs coréligionnaires. Ainsi voilà six ans lorsque je revenais avec les sœurs notre fanatique bourgeois d’ici [i.e., McKenzie, who was then postmaster at Rapid River] nous faisait partir de son fort dans la barge du ministre [i.e., Hunt] avec les provisions qu’il nous prêtait et même un gouvernail. Je crois donc qu’en pareil cas il est mieux de dissimuler son mécontentement et de ne l’avouer qu’à nous même.” PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Isidore Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 2, 1866. On McKenzie’s conveyance of Grandin and the Grey Nuns by barge (September 1860), see: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 65-66. On Isidore Clut, see: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1: pp. 210-211; Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, pp. 67-73.

⁸¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2939-T2942, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 22, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3116-T3119, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 23, 1865; AD, G LPP 2199, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1869. On Protestant services at McKenzie’s home, see: LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M65, B.89/a/35, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1865), Sunday, April 30, 1865, p. 23; Sunday, October 15, 1865, p. 37; Sunday, October 22, 1865, p. 38. See also: Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 116.

⁸² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3116-T3119, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 23, 1865.

resided in the vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse.⁸³ The bishop claimed that a precedent existed for such assistance as Deschambault had previously provided the children of HBC officers and servants with meat, potatoes and fish during times of scarcity.⁸⁴ However, McKenzie declined to follow the example of his predecessor and instead recommended that the children be released from the mission and sent back to their parents' homes where they would be better fed. Grandin interpreted this recommendation as an expression of contempt for the Oblates' education project and a renunciation of the HBC's traditional support. "Nos écoles, loin de nuire à la Compagnie, ne peuvent que lui être utiles," mused the bishop in March 1865. "M. McKenzie semble croire le contraire."⁸⁵

With their confidence in the HBC waning, Oblates began seeking alternative means of provisioning Saint-Jean-Baptiste. In October 1864, Grandin and Taché resolved to open an ox-cart road from Fort Carlton to Green Lake so that mission freight could be transported overland from Saint-Boniface to Saint-Julien (Green Lake), thence hauled by barge down the Beaver River into Lac Île-à-la-Crosse and finally to Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁸⁶ They enlisted assistance from Pierriche Laliberté (resident

⁸³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3099-T3102, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 18, 1865. Grandin reported that there were altogether twelve "enfants du fort" at Saint-Bruno: three in the *pensionnat supérieur*; nine in the *pensionnat inférieur*. He noted also that the latter *pensionnat* included eight children of HBC servants from other posts. Thus, of the twenty-eight pupils attending Saint-Bruno, twenty were children of HBC officers and servants.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Grandin may have overstated the extent and frequency of Deschambault's assistance. Between 1860 and 1864, Oblates and Grey Nuns occasionally complained that the HBC was not sufficiently forthcoming with food and/or fuel for schoolchildren. See especially: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2814-T2816, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1864; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:p. 205; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 71.

⁸⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3134-T3137, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 13, 1865.

⁸⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3751-T3754, Grandin to Taché, January 5, 1866. The two bishops drafted this plan at Saint-Jean-Baptiste during the visit of Florent Vandenberghe

postmaster at Portage La Loche) in obtaining Company authorization for the project and also in recruiting labourers and overseeing the work.⁸⁷ Hewing began in May 1866 and continued into the autumn of that year.⁸⁸ It was postponed the following spring, however, as Oblates were compelled to concentrate their manpower and financial resources on reconstructing Saint-Jean-Baptiste in the wake of the fire.⁸⁹ As a result of this setback, the road was not completed until August 1870.⁹⁰ Spanning nearly 180 kilometres through forest and over muskeg, “le chemin du Lac Vert” could be travelled by ox-cart in approximately one week in optimal summer conditions. From the road’s northern terminus at Green Lake, one could reach Île-à-la-Crosse by barge in three days if waters levels were sufficiently high.⁹¹ Oblate lay brothers and *engagés* began hauling

(delegate of the Oblate Superior General). It is likely that Vandenberghe was consulted on the matter.

⁸⁷ Ibid. According to this letter, McKenzie was vehemently opposed to the project. He consented grudgingly after Laliberté threatened to become a free trader and to use the projected road to sustain a private enterprise. Information on Laliberté’s employment history and residence at Portage La Loche and Green Lake (1857-91) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/laliberte_pierre.pdf (accessed August 11, 2009).

⁸⁸ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 95.

⁸⁹ “Lettre de Mgr Grandin, évêque de Satala, à MM. les Membres des Conseils centraux de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. 4 janvier 1868,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 40 (1868), pp. 249-252.

⁹⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 13-14. When work resumed in the spring of 1869, Oblate lay brother Patrick Bowes and some *engagés* attempted to extend the ox-cart road northward from Green Lake to Île-à-la-Crosse so that Saint-Jean-Baptiste could be provisioned entirely by land. They do not appear to have completed the extension as the waterway remained the main route of transportation between Green Lake and Île-à-la-Crosse during the period under study. See: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to Leduc, Fort Carlton, January 26, 1870; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 109.

⁹¹ AD, G LPP 2201, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 29, 1873; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère”, Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877. Duration of travel varied according to weather conditions. The road could be extremely difficult to navigate when awash with rainwater and mud. Hence, after a particularly rainy summer in 1872, Grandin experienced “une suite continuelle d’accidents et de contretemps de

mission freight on this route in the early 1870s.⁹² The HBC soon took interest in the “Green Lake Road” as it provided a potential alternative to the Portage La Loche Brigade for shipping freight to the English River, Athabasca and Mackenzie River Districts. By 1872, the Company had incorporated the route into its transport system and had assumed responsibility for its general maintenance.⁹³ The Company periodically rented out oxen, carts and barges to Saint-Jean-Baptiste, but Oblates retained supervisory control over the transport of mission freight on the new route.⁹⁴

While affording Oblates a degree of independence from the HBC, the new provisioning system generated disruption in the rhythm of their evangelical activity. In the early 1870s, the HBC reduced the amount of freight conveyed annually to the northern districts by the Portage La Loche Brigade. This freight was increasingly transported from Red River by ox-cart across the plains or by steamboat up the Saskatchewan and North Saskatchewan Rivers to Fort Carlton, thence carted along the newly hewn road to Green Lake.⁹⁵ There it was loaded onto small barges and

toutes sortes” while travelling from Fort Carlton to Green Lake. “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 124. See also *ibid.*, pp. 173-174, 184-185.

⁹² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” pp. 3, 16; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1874.

⁹³ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/4, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1872-1875), Samuel McKenzie to Lawrence Clarke, Green Lake, March 27, 1872, pp. 18-19; *ibid.*, William McMurray to James A. Grahame (HBC Chief Commissioner), Île-à-la-Crosse, December 5, 1874.

⁹⁴ AD, HEC 2500. P96C 9, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 11, 1874; LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/4, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1872-1875), McMurray to Laliberté, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 16, 1874, p. 60; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 23, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, October 8, 1878; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 130, 185-186.

⁹⁵ This strategy was at least partly a response to strikes – “mutinous conduct” according to Hargrave – by the crewmen of the Portage La Loche Brigade after 1866. See: Hargrave, *Red River*, pp. 160, 165, 167, 168; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 69; Tough, “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*”, pp. 52-57.

transhipped at intervals over the course of the summer.⁹⁶ As a corollary of this southward realignment of the system, the biannual *mission* at Île-à-la-Crosse fell into rapid decline. In 1875, Légeard reported that *la mission de l'automne* “a été presque nulle” as Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and trappers no longer gathered for prolonged periods. “Quelles sont les causes de ce changement?”, asked Légeard.

Les voici : Autrefois les berges de la Compagnie, qui partaient chaque printemps pour York Factory sur la Baie d'Hudson, pour y aller chercher les marchandises pour la traite avec les sauvages, étaient de retour ordinairement dans la première moitié de septembre. L'arrivée des berges était un événement pour le pays. Les sauvages se rassemblaient tous alors, pour prendre, comme ils disent, leurs avances, c'est-à-dire, pour recevoir de la Compagnie ce dont ils avaient besoin pour leur hiver en fait de vêtement ou de munition de chasse. On profitait de leur présence pour leur donner les exercices de la mission pendant douze ou quinze jours, après quoi chacun partait de son côté pour se rendre aux places choisies pour l'hivernement. Actuellement, les choses ont bien changé. Toutes les marchandises venant d'Angleterre par la Rivière Rouge et le lac Vert, les berges ne vont plus à la mer, et elles arrivent ici à différentes époques de l'été, ce voyage au lac Vert ne durant ordinairement qu'un ou deux semaines, aller-et-retour. Les sauvages, assurés de trouver toujours ce dont ils ont besoin, prennent leur temps... Qu'arrive-t-il? C'est que quelques-uns ne viennent point, ou bien ils arrivent les uns après les autres, ou bien ils ne restent que quelques jours. Impossible dans de pareilles conditions de leur donner une mission en règle... Je crois qu'il nous sera difficile de donner à cette mission de l'automne l'importance qu'elle avait précédemment.⁹⁷

The decline of the biannual *mission* spurred Légeard to devise new strategies for reaching Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families. As resident superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, he coordinated pastoral visits to outlying communities and founded permanent satellite missions in wintering grounds at Canoe Lake (la

⁹⁶ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/4, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1872-1875), McMurray to Donald A. Smith (HBC Chief Commissioner), South End of Green Lake, May 30, 1873, pp. 31-34.

⁹⁷ Quoted in “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 146-147. Légeard repeated this observation in subsequent years. See: *ibid.*, pp. 155, 167; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère”, Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877.

Bienheureuse-Marguerite-Marie) and Waterhen Lake.⁹⁸ Légeard also endeavoured to establish a more regular presence at the older missions of Saint-Julien (Green Lake), Saint-Raphaël (Cold Lake) and Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation (Portage La Loche). He appointed Oblates to reside at these posts on a seasonal basis and instructed them to conduct itinerant ministries in surrounding areas.⁹⁹

Légeard anticipated further disruption to the Oblate apostolate as a consequence of the HBC's reduction of operational expenses. Faced with intensifying competition from free traders and decreasing financial profits in the early 1870s, the Company began reducing the number of its servants in the English River District and overhauling the customary "debt system" whereby Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and trappers received advances for their furs each autumn.¹⁰⁰ In 1873, Légeard predicted that these initiatives would drain Saint-Jean-Baptiste of its congregation. He forecasted the dispersal of former HBC servants and the estrangement of Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and trappers from Île-à-la-Crosse.¹⁰¹ Légeard's apprehensions deepened after thirty-eight-year-old Ewen McDonald assumed direction of the English

⁹⁸ AD, HEC 2500. P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1874; "Missions d'Amérique: Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), pp. 443-444; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 117-118, 126-129, 132, 136-137, 139, 144, 147, 151-153, 167.

⁹⁹ "Missions d'Amérique: Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), pp. 440-443, 445-446; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 21, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 5, 1878; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 130-131, 135, 137-141, 144, 147-150, 153-154, 164, 166.

¹⁰⁰ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/4, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1872-1875), McKenzie to Smith, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 2, 1872, pp. 1-2; *ibid.*, McKenzie to Smith, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1872, pp. 21-25; *ibid.*, McMurray, "Remarks regarding the HBC^{o's} Posts in Upper English River Dis^t," Île-à-la-Crosse, January 10, 1873, pp. 35-37; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 131.

¹⁰¹ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 133-134. Légeard made this prediction in his report to the Oblate General Administration in 1873. The report is quoted in its entirety in *ibid.*, pp. 127-138. See also AD, LC 6301 K26R 7, Légeard, "Allocation demandée pour la mission de l'Île à la Crosse," Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1876.

River District in 1877.¹⁰² McDonald placed severe restrictions on advances to hunters and trappers even as fur-bearing animals became increasingly scarce throughout the region.¹⁰³ Expecting widespread suffering to result from these restrictions, Oblates and Grey Nuns increased enrolment at the convent boarding school and dispensed material relief from mission stores. Légeard accounted for these costly measures in a report to Augustin Maisonneuve – commissary to the Vicariates of Athabasca-Mackenzie and Saint-Albert – dated October 8, 1878:

Le bourgeois a annoncé aux sauvages qu'il ne leur donnerait point d'avances cet automne, ou du moins qu'il donnerait si peu et à quelques uns seulement qu'ils comptent cela pour rien. La grande majorité des sauvages sont donc partis pour leur hivernement sans butin pour leurs familles, sans rets, sans munitions, etc. On a trouvé cela dur, c'est vrai, mais la C^o avait ses raisons pour en agir de même et je ne veux point discuter ici ces raisons. Pour venir au secours de ces pauvres gens... nous leur avons donné tout ce que nous avons pu leur laisser avoir... C'est peut-être une imprudence de notre part ; je ne le crois pas cependant, mais en tout cas, nous l'avons fait par charité... Cela a bien vidé notre magasin et nous oblige à demander un supplément de fournitures pour l'année prochaine.¹⁰⁴

Bishop Grandin also expressed alarm at McDonald's austerity. After visiting Saint-Jean-Baptiste in June 1880, the prelate reported that McDonald continued to withhold advances regardless of worsening poverty among local Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking

¹⁰² Despite having been appointed Junior Chief Trader in Charge of the English River District in 1875, McDonald did not assume direction of the district until after Chief Factor McMurray's retirement two years later. Information on McMurray and McDonald's employment history and residence at Île-à-la-Crosse is available online through the Hudson's Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcmurray_william.pdf; http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcdonald_ewen.pdf (accessed August 23, 2009).

¹⁰³ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1066, B.89/b/6, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1877-1881), McDonald to Grahame, Fort Carlton, January 30, 1879, pp. 104-106. On McDonald's treatment of Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters, see Macdougall, "Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities," p. 206.

¹⁰⁴ AD, HEC 2500. P96C 23, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, October 8, 1878. See also: ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 2:p. 224. On Maisonneuve as commissary, see: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2: p. 356; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 336.

families.¹⁰⁵ Yet, owing to the limited financial resources at his disposal, Grandin would not countenance another large-scale relief effort. Instead, he suggested petitioning the Canadian government to disallow free trade in the English River District, which he considered “la cause de l’appauvrissement du pays et des sauvages.” Grandin called for a return to the reciprocal obligations that had existed under the HBC monopoly and predicted dire consequences if these relations were not restored: “Les choses étant ce qu’elles sont, chacun tirera des sauvages ce qu’il pourra tirer et quand ces pauvres malheureux auront tiré le dernier caribou et le dernier renard, on les laissera mourir de faim et de froid...”¹⁰⁶

Over the following decade, Oblates perceived continuing divergence between the welfare of their congregants and the interests of the HBC. They came into protracted conflict with McDonald’s successor – Chief Factor Joseph Fortescue – over the rights of Catholic servants to observe feast days and to participate in devotional exercises at Saint-Jean-Baptiste.¹⁰⁷ The conflict began in early June 1886 after Fortescue had engaged several Chipewyan-speaking men to serve aboard the HBC barges that plied from Green Lake to Portage La Loche. Having issued orders that these men were to set out from Île-à-la-Crosse on June 7, Fortescue was incensed to learn that Fathers Joseph Rapet and Louis Dauphin had counselled them to remain at Île-à-la-

¹⁰⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, “sur une île du lac l’Île d’ours,” July 9, 1880. On Grandin’s visit to Saint-Jean-Baptiste in June 1880, see: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 16-19.

¹⁰⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, “sur une île du lac l’Île d’ours,” July 9, 1880.

¹⁰⁷ Information on Fortescue’s employment history and residence at Île-à-la-Crosse (1885-89) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/f/fortescue_joseph.pdf (accessed August 23, 2009).

Crosse until the end of *la mission du printemps* the following week. The chief factor consequently wrote to HBC Trade Commissioner Joseph Wrigley in Winnipeg and complained that Oblates were undermining Company operations in the English River District.¹⁰⁸ Fortescue redoubled his complaint two years later after the crewmen of an HBC barge had defied his orders to set out from Île-à-la-Crosse for Green Lake on May 10, 1888 – the moveable feast of Ascension Day.¹⁰⁹ Rapet had reportedly forbidden the crewmen to work on the feast day and had insisted that they attend church services at Saint-Jean-Baptiste instead.¹¹⁰ “This is becoming intolerable,” fumed Fortescue in a letter to Wrigley. “As a protestation we shall have to get rid of all our Roman Catholic servants and simply employ none but protestants if we cannot command our men in our own Posts.”¹¹¹ Wrigley subsequently instructed Fortescue to assume a more conciliatory tone and insisted that the Company could not forego the Oblates’ goodwill

¹⁰⁸ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1067, B.89/b/10, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1885-1886), Fortescue to Joseph Wrigley, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 6, 1886, pp. 207-210; *ibid.*, Fortescue to Wrigley, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 19, 1886, pp. 232-235. Information on Wrigley’s tenure as Trade Commissioner for the HBC in Canada (1884-91) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/w/wrigley_joseph.pdf (accessed September 1, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ For a published primary account of this episode, see: Mary Weekes, *Trader King as Told to Mary Weekes* (Regina and Toronto: School Aids and Textbook Publishing Company, Ltd., 1949), pp. 170-171. See also: Jarvenpa, “The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” p.496; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 271-274.

¹¹⁰ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1067, B.89/b/15, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1888-1891), Fortescue to Wrigley, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 10, 1888, pp. 1a-1c; *ibid.*, Fortescue to Rapet, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 30, 1888, pp. 17-20; *ibid.*, Fortescue to Rapet, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 2, 1888, pp. 22-25; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 218.

¹¹¹ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1067, B.89/b/15, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1888-1891), Fortescue to Wrigley, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 10, 1888, pp. 1a-1c. Jarvenpa and Macdougall have described Fortescue’s “protestation” as an expression of profound frustration rather than a genuine policy proposal. According to both authors, the chief factor must have known that the labour pool in his district was overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. See: Jarvenpa, “The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” p.496 (footnote 19); Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 274.

at a time of increasing competition from free traders. In response to this admonition, Fortescue assured Wrigley that he would endeavour to improve his relations with the missionaries.¹¹²

Yet even as he urged conciliation with Oblates, Wrigley devised a series of sweeping administrative reforms that would only alienate them further. In May 1889, he appointed fifty-three-year-old Henry John Moberly to manage the English River District for a period of three years and instructed him to dismiss “refractory servants”, reduce wages, eliminate the debt system and strengthen opposition to free traders. Wrigley promised Moberly a promotion to the rank of chief factor if he implemented these reforms successfully by the end of his three-year term.¹¹³ Moberly therefore wasted little time in executing his agenda. In August 1891, he reported to Wrigley’s successor – Commissioner Clarence Campbell Chipman – that he had reduced the number of servants in the district, stopped “Indian Debts” and established outposts near the wintering grounds of the Cree and the Chipewyan where there was little likelihood of encountering competitors.¹¹⁴ Oblates decried these reforms as detrimental to their

¹¹² LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1067, B.89/b/15, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1888-1891), Fortescue to Wrigley, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 18, 1888; *ibid.*, Fortescue to Wrigley, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 20, 1888. See also Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 275.

¹¹³ Henry John Moberly, *When Fur Was King* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1929), pp. 175-177. The promotion was never granted. Wrigley resigned as trade commissioner in 1891 and his successor – Clarence Campbell Chipman – refused to recognise the verbal promise made to Moberly two years earlier. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177. Information on Moberly’s employment history and residence at Île-à-la-Crosse (1888-94) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/moberly_henry-john.pdf (accessed August 23, 2009). See also Jarvenpa, “The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” pp. 497, 504.

¹¹⁴ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1068, B.89/b/18, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1891-1893), Moberly to Chipman, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 19, 1891, pp. 104, 117-120. See also Moberly, *When Fur Was King*, p. 176. Information on Chipman’s tenure as Commissioner of the HBC in Canada (1891-1911) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives:

apostolate and ultimately prejudicial to the commercial interests of the HBC. According to Father Jean-Marie Pénard, Moberly's attempts at downsizing – particularly his elimination of the debt system – had had the unintended effect of encouraging hunters and trappers to align themselves with free traders based in Prince Albert (approximately 285 linear kilometres south-east of Île-à-la-Crosse). This settlement was eclipsing Île-à-la-Crosse as a centre of trade and was steadily drawing hunters and trappers out of the orbit of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.¹¹⁵ Moreover, Oblates claimed that Moberly's extensive cost-cutting measures were causing a loss in revenue for the mission. To supplement their diminishing allocation from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste had been accepting furs as stipends for Mass intentions and as charitable donations since 1887.¹¹⁶ Each spring or early summer, they delivered these furs to the HBC fort in exchange for payment in kind or cash. In June 1891, however, Rapet discontinued this custom and withheld his furs on the grounds that Moberly did not offer reasonable rates.¹¹⁷ Six months later, Pénard and Brother Fabien Labelle hauled the furs to Prince Albert and sold them there at “un assez bon prix”.¹¹⁸

Beyond expressing dissatisfaction with Moberly's business administration, Oblates levelled charges of moral depravity and licentiousness against the chief trader.

http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/chipman_clarence_campbell.pdf
(accessed September 1, 2009).

¹¹⁵ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 238, 241, 242, 244. See also Jarvenpa, “The Hudson's Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” p. 503.

¹¹⁶ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 210. According to Pénard, this practise was initiated during Grandin's episcopal visit to Saint-Jean-Baptiste in September 1887.

¹¹⁷ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1068, B.89/b/18, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1891-1893), Moberly to Rapet, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 8, 1891, pp. 25-26; *ibid.*, Moberly to Rapet, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 10, 1891, pp. 28-30 (contains an English translation of Rapet's letter to Moberly); *ibid.*, Moberly to Chipman, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 4, 1891, pp. 135-137.

¹¹⁸ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 242. It is not clear from Pénard's account whether the furs were sold to a free trader or to an agent of the HBC in Prince Albert.

They were especially critical of his endorsement of drinking and dancing at the HBC post. In his entry in the “Codex Historicus de l’Île à la Crosse” for 1891, Pénard ascribed to Moberly a desire to corrupt the local population through these activities: “Pendant toute cette année, cet individu sembla prendre à tâche de nous débaucher ainsi nos gens : tantôt en les poussant à boire, tantôt en tâchant de les entraîner à ses bals : et il faut reconnaître qu’il ne réussit que trop souvent.”¹¹⁹ Pénard identified Moberly as the willing instigator of “scandales” and “désordres” that plagued Île-à-la-Crosse over the course of that summer:

Durant cet été, de graves désordres éclatèrent sur la pointe contre lesquels le P. Rapet dut déployer un peu de sévérité, mais sans pouvoir les faire cesser complètement, parce que le fameux Moberly bourgeois de la C^{ie}, cherchait par tous les moyens à neutraliser l’influence des missionnaires. Malgré tous les efforts de ceux-ci la danse et l’ivrognerie faisaient donc de plus en plus irruption dans la place, et Maître Moberly s’en frottait les mains. Cela lui faisait tort pour sa traite avec les sauvages : mais que lui importait les affaires de la compagnie, du moment qu’il faisait celles du diable.¹²⁰

Rapet and Pénard complained about Moberly’s conduct to Inspecting Chief Factor James McDougall during the latter’s visit to Île-à-la-Crosse in February 1892. To ascertain the validity of the Oblates’ complaint, McDougall arranged and presided over a formal inquiry at the HBC fort on March 1 and 2.¹²¹ After the first session, however, Rapet and Pénard were convinced that McDougall sought to discredit their testimony and to exonerate Moberly. The Oblates consequently boycotted the second session:

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 234.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 236. See also *ibid.*, pp. 237-239, 241-242, 256.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 242-243. Information on McDougall’s tenure as Inspecting Chief Factor in the HBC’s Northern Department is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcdougall_james.pdf (accessed September 3, 2009). On Moberly’s response to the Oblates’ allegations, see: Jarvenpa, “The Hudson’s Bay Company, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Chipewyan in the Late Fur Trade Period,” pp. 500-502; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 281-283.

“Devant cette mauvaise volonté évidente les deux Pères décidèrent ensemble de laisser le Visiteur s’arranger avec son bourgeois comme il l’entendrait, et de les envoyer promener tous les deux.”¹²² The subsequent worsening of relations between Oblates and Moberly prompted direct intervention by Vicar Apostolic Albert Pascal. During his first official visit to Saint-Jean-Baptiste in June 1892, Pascal attempted to mediate between Rapet and Moberly.¹²³ His efforts yielded a tentative agreement whereby Oblates would resume the custom of delivering their furs to the HBC fort and Moberly would cease his endorsement of drinking and dancing.¹²⁴

In the aftermath of Pascal’s intervention, Oblates became somewhat more favourably disposed to the HBC.¹²⁵ Contributing to this development was Moberly’s resignation and his replacement by forty-nine-year-old Chief Trader William Cornwallis King in September 1894.¹²⁶ During the first year of his tenure at Île-à-la-

¹²² “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 244. See also LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1068, B.89/b/18, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1891-1893), Moberly to James Macdougall [sic], Île-à-la-Crosse, March 2, 1892.

¹²³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 247. See also LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1007, B.89/a/37, Île-à-la Crosse Journal (1891-1896), Friday, June 10 and Monday, June 13, 1892, p. 15; “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Rapport de M^{gr} Pascal, vicaire apostolique.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 121 (March 1893), pp. 17-19.

¹²⁴ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 247. See also LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1068, B.89/b/18, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1891-1893), Moberly to Chipman, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 18, 1892; *ibid.*, Moberly to Chipman, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 30, 1892.

¹²⁵ According to Pénard, the Vicar Apostolic achieved a *qualified* improvement in relations between Oblates and the HBC: “[L]a tension qui existait depuis plusieurs mois dans les rapports entre la Compagnie et la mission diminua un peu ; M^{gr} Pascal ayant amené le bourgeois Moberly à faire quelques concessions, et à s’engager à ne plus chercher à introduire le désordre dans la place comme il l’avait fait jusque là. Moyennant quoi, on lui promit de continuer à faire des affaires avec la Compagnie, à certaines conditions, qui furent aussi fixées et acceptées de part et d’autre. Depuis lors, les choses sans aller bien, allèrent un peu moins mal.” “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 247.

¹²⁶ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1007, B.89/a/37, Île-à-la Crosse Journal (1891-1896), Monday, September 3, 1894, p. 51; Moberly, *When Fur Was King*, p. 177. William Cornwallis King had previously served at Île-à-la Crosse as a junior chief trader from 1885 to 1886. See

Crosse, King took steps to redeem the Company's reputation and to establish an amicable relationship with Oblates. He discontinued the practices of dispensing alcohol and holding dances at the HBC fort on festive occasions, thus prompting Rapet and Pénard to marvel at the "tranquillité parfaite" that reigned over Île-à-la-Crosse on New Year's Day, 1895.¹²⁷ Additionally, King offered the mission a reduced rate on freighting services from Green Lake to Île-à-la-Crosse and periodically lent barges to Oblate lay brothers.¹²⁸ In return for these services, Rapet and Pénard made a concerted effort to persuade Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and trappers to trade once again with the HBC. "Grâce à ces efforts," reported Pénard, "à Noël [1894] presque tous les sauvages s'étaient réconciliés avec la compagnie, qui encore une fois, se retrouvait maîtresse de la traite dans le pays."¹²⁹ Oblates continued supporting the commercial interests of the HBC over the following year as the Company faced increasing competition from free traders, two of whom – a Mr Tupper from Edmonton and a Mr Peterson from Battleford – established small operations at Île-à-la-Crosse.¹³⁰ Through public preaching and private counsel, Oblates discouraged local hunters and trappers from trading with "des étrangers dont on ne connaissait ni la moralité ni les antécédents."¹³¹

Weekes, *Trader King as Told to Mary Weekes*, pp. 9, 168. Information on King's employment history and residence at Île-à-la-Crosse (1885-86, 1894-99) is available online through the Hudson's Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/k/king_william-cornwallis.pdf (accessed August 23, 2009).

¹²⁷ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 265. See also Pénard's account of New Year's Day, 1896 in *ibid.*, p. 272.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282, 290-292, 294.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268, 271-273.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 267. See also p. 272.

The reconciliation was short-lived, however, as Oblates soon developed grave doubts about King's sincerity and integrity. By January 1896, Rapet and Pénard had come to suspect that the chief trader's goodwill was a mere pretence to regain Oblate support in the struggle against free traders. "Le bourgeois, M. King, tient à rester en bons termes avec la mission, dont il sent qu'il a besoin," noted Pénard in the "Codex Historicus". "Cependant, les rapports entre la mission et le fort sont un peu plus froids, M. King ne pouvant s'empêcher de laisser percer de temps en temps la haine qu'il porte à la religion catholique."¹³² Oblate suspicions deepened as King continued to commit "impairs" over the following year.¹³³ Finally, in summer 1897, Pénard reported that King had abandoned all pretence of friendship and had brazenly exposed his "mauvais vouloir à l'égard de la mission."¹³⁴ This development occurred in the context of a construction project that had been ongoing at Saint-Jean-Baptiste for several months. With permission from their vicar apostolic, Rapet and Pénard had drafted plans for a new church and had recruited workers from the local population.¹³⁵ King had reportedly promised to assist the Oblates by procuring and delivering construction supplies at a reduced rate.¹³⁶ However, when these supplies reached Île-à-la-Crosse in August, King allegedly refused to deliver them to the mission at the agreed upon price. Instead, he

¹³² Ibid., p. 272.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 282. Pénard provided no specific examples of these "impairs", but referred to them broadly as inadvertent expressions of antipathy toward Oblates and/or their congregants. For instance, he noted the following of King's voyage to Prince Albert in the company of Vicar Apostolic Pascal (August 1896): "Pendant ce voyage, il [King] essaya encore de se faire passer auprès de Monseigneur pour un ami dévoué des missionnaires. Mais son manque de tact lui fit commettre plusieurs impairs, qui permirent à Sa Grandeur de voir le compte qu'il fallait tenir de ces protestations de dévouement et de bonnes amitiés. Mais, il s'efforce encore de tenir cachés ses véritables sentiments..." Ibid., pp. 281-282.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 291.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 278-279, 281-282.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 282, 290-292.

charged a considerable markup and declared that Oblates would no longer receive preferential rates on provisioning or freighting services.¹³⁷ Oblates interpreted this new policy – and particularly its abrupt implementation by King – as an expression of hostility to their apostolate. “La guerre est déclarée par là-bas entre la mission et la C^{ie} de la Baie d’Hudson,” reported Pascal to the Oblate General Administration in February 1898. “Ces aimables messieurs ont adopté une politique qui tourne directement à la ruine et à la destruction de nos postes les plus reculés.”¹³⁸

Unable or unwilling to pay the prices demanded by King, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste sought to complete their construction project with assistance from free trader Antoine Marcelin. Originally from Pont Château, Quebec, Marcelin had been trading in the vicinity of Muskeg Lake – approximately 124 linear kilometres southwest of Île-à-la-Crosse – since winter 1890.¹³⁹ He had first attempted to trade at Île-à-la-Crosse in early March 1897, but had reportedly been under-equipped in *butin* to compete with the HBC and other free traders.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Marcelin had made a favourable first impression on Rapet and Pénard who acknowledged him as the only

¹³⁷ Ibid., 292, 294; “Lettre du Révérend Père Pénard au Très Révérend Père Général.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 259.

¹³⁸ AD, GLPP 2582, Pascal to Sardou, Prince Albert, February 9, 1898. Pénard also described King’s implementation of the new policy as tantamount to a declaration of war: “[D]ans le cours de cet été, la Compagnie devait fournir une quantité assez considérable de marchandises... que la mission avait demandées, et que M. King avait promis de livrer aux prix ordinaires, établis depuis longtemps entre la Compagnie et la mission. Ce sinistre personnage se dit que le moment était bien choisi pour déclarer la guerre.” See “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 291-292.

¹³⁹ “Mort de M. Ant. Marcelin, un pionnier de l’ouest canadien,” *Le Patriote de l’ouest*, Thursday, July 15, 1915, p. 4; Richard Lapointe, *100 noms* (Regina: Société historique de la Saskatchewan, 1988), p. 260.

¹⁴⁰ LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1007, B.89/a/38, Isle a la Crosse Post Journal (1897), Wednesday, February 24, 1897, p. 30; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 287-288, 295.

“catholique pratiquant” among local traders.¹⁴¹ Marcelin further endeared himself to the Oblates during his second trading expedition to Île-à-la-Crosse the following autumn when he donated handsaws, a circular saw and a planing machine for the construction of the new church. He also donated \$50.00 and a large consignment of *butin* to pay day workers.¹⁴² Rapet and Pénard accepted these donations gratefully and arranged for Marcelin to provide additional construction supplies – including hardware and a steam-driven log saw – in exchange for Mass intentions.¹⁴³ After assuming direction of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in January 1898, Pénard commissioned Marcelin to provide continued services for the mission. Over the course of the following year, Marcelin oversaw the purchase of provisions in Prince Albert and Winnipeg as well as their shipment to Saint-Jean-Baptiste. He also provided mission personnel with transportation by barge between Green Lake and Île-à-la-Crosse.¹⁴⁴

By December 1898, Marcelin had assumed the role of “fournisseur de la mission” and had effectively obviated the Oblates’ material dependence on the HBC. His services enabled Pénard to terminate a business relationship that had endured for over fifty-two years between Saint-Jean-Baptiste and the HBC fort.¹⁴⁵ In reporting on

¹⁴¹ Pénard noted the following of Marcelin’s first visit: “[U]n nouveau traiteur était descendu à l’Île-à-la-Crosse. C’était M. Marcelin. Ce bon monsieur était catholique et ce qui vaut mieux catholique pratiquant. À ce titre, il méritait d’avoir les sympathies de la mission, tous les officiers de la Compagnie, ainsi que les autres traiteurs libres, étant tous protestants.” See “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 287.

¹⁴² ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l’Institut [des Sœurs grises de Montréal]*, No. 13 (March-April 1898), p. 622; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 295; Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, p. 143.

¹⁴³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ “Lettre du Révérend Père Pénard au Très Révérend Père Général.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), pp. 259-260; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 1, 8, 10, 15-16, 19.

¹⁴⁵ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 295; “Lettre du Révérend Père Pénard au Très Révérend Père Général.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats*

this rupture with the Company, Pénard asserted that King had forfeited the Oblates' support through his oppressive administration and that he would consequently incur heavy commercial losses:

[L]es sauvages indignés de la conduite de ce personnage [i.e., King], s'éloignent de plus en plus de la Compagnie, et se rapprochent des traiteurs libres, surtout de M. Marcelin, qui se montre toujours si bon et si libéral envers la mission, et en même temps si bon chrétien. En somme, c'est un grand service que M. King a rendu à la mission, en la forçant pour ainsi dire à sortir de *l'assujettissement* dans lequel la tenait la Compagnie. Avant la fin de l'hiver, j'espère que *la haute et puissante autocrate du Nord* s'apercevra qu'en réalité la mission lui était beaucoup plus nécessaire qu'elle n'était utile à la mission... La bonne vieille Compagnie doit commencer à s'apercevoir que la religion catholique est un morceau dur à avaler, et qu'en voulant manger du prêtre, on s'expose à avoir une indigestion qui met le trouble et le désordre dans tout l'organisme.¹⁴⁶

Between Taché's grateful acknowledgement of his "amis sincères et dévoués" and Pénard's indignant castigation of "la haute et puissante autocrate du Nord" there lay decades of diverging goals and interests. Driving this divergence were profound structural changes in the regional economic landscape – namely the decline of the HBC's monopoly and the emergence of competitive fur buyers. In the beginning of their apostolate at Île-à-la-Crosse in the late 1840s and 1850s, Oblates took full advantage of the order, stability and predictability afforded by a mercantile monopoly.

de Marie Immaculée, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 259; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928," pp. 4, 15.

¹⁴⁶ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928," pp. 15-16, 21 (my italics). Pénard's allusion to eating priests may have been intended as an inverted reference to Voltaire's novella *Candide* (1759) – commonly regarded by nineteenth-century ultramontanes as the prototypical expression of liberal anticlericalism. During his (mis)adventures in Paraguay, *Candide* encounters "des sauvages nommés Oreillons" who mistake him for a local Jesuit. These "Oreillons" capture *Candide* and prepare to boil him in a large cauldron, while shouting: "C'est un jésuite, c'est un jésuite ! nous serons vengés, et nous ferons bonne chère ; mangeons du jésuite, mangeons du jésuite !" Voltaire, *Candide* (Paris : Livres de poche classique, 1991), p. 98. See also: Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 73-74, 128.

The HBC's vast transport system provided them with a secure lifeline to Saint-Boniface in the Red River Colony and to the Oblate General Administration and *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* in France. The transport system also enabled Oblates to consolidate their mission network by facilitating regular back-and-forth travel between Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its outlying satellite posts. Moreover, Oblates synchronized the rhythm of their local ministry with the HBC's provisioning and trading cycles. They scheduled their principal missionizing campaigns – *la mission de l'automne* and *la mission du printemps* – to coincide with the biannual gathering of Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families at Île-à-la-Crosse. Finally, Oblates mobilized the social and political influence of HBC officers in support of their education project. They assigned these officers a critical role in publicizing the convent boarding school and in recruiting pupils from local families. Thus, by the mid 1860s, Oblates had become heavily dependent on the Company for the temporal sustenance of their apostolate. Acutely conscious of this situation, Oblates endeavoured to buttress the Company's commercial dominance by urging Aboriginal Catholics to avoid contact with free traders.

Despite their efforts, however, Oblates could do little to stem the rising tide of competition. In the late 1860s and 1870s, pressures from independent fur buyers prompted the HBC to implement various streamlining and restructuring initiatives. Among these initiatives was the modification of the transport system through the incorporation of a southern supply route and the adoption of steam power. This initiative had profound repercussions on the Oblate apostolate as it broke traditional provisioning and trading cycles, thereby disrupting the biannual *mission*. Further

disruption resulted from the Company's reductions of its labour force and from its progressive restriction of credit over the course of the 1870s and 1880s. Oblates bemoaned these changes because they provoked the displacement of many regular congregants from Saint-Jean-Baptiste. More gravely, Oblates perceived that the Company was abdicating its traditional responsibility to safeguard the physical, moral and spiritual welfare of Aboriginal peoples. Its officers flouted this responsibility by interfering with the devotional practices of Aboriginal Catholics and by inciting them to dissolute behaviour.

While conscious that market forces were contributing to the erosion of traditional patterns of interaction, Oblates suspected the workings of another force – an insidious anti-Catholicism. Having expressed apprehensions about the Protestantism of “les bourgeois” since the 1860s, Oblates ascribed a sectarian basis to the gradual worsening of relations between the fort and the mission over the following decades. By the 1890s, Oblates had become convinced that the Company sought to sabotage their apostolate by corrupting Aboriginal Catholics and by withholding essential services to Saint-Jean-Baptiste. A striking corollary of this conviction was the Oblates' reinvention of “le traiteur libre”. Once vilified as the enemy of order and the embodiment of greed, the free trader had been transformed into a benevolent entrepreneur whose presence enabled Catholics to liberate themselves from the Company's heretical tyranny.

CHAPTER 3

Sauvages into Frenchmen:

Oblates and the beginnings of residential education at Île-à-la-Crosse

Since the mid 1980s, historians have devoted considerable attention to the role of Oblates in the establishment and administration of schools in northern and western Canada. For the most part, their investigations have focused on the period after the signing of the first seven numbered treaties (i.e., post-1877) when Oblates – together with Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian missionary organizations – entered into a “joint venture” with the federal government to provide residential education for Aboriginal children.¹ The forging of this relationship has generally been regarded as the

¹See especially: Carney, “The Native-Wilderness Equation,” pp. 61-78; Robert Carney, “Residential Schooling at Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution 1874-1974” in Raymond Huel ed., *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l’ouest 2*, pp. 115-138; Jacqueline Gresko, “Creating Little Dominions Within the Dominion: Early Catholic Indian Schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia” in Jean Barman et al eds., *Indian Education in Canada: The Legacy* (2 volumes, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 1:pp. 88-109; Gresko, “Everyday Life at Qu’Appelle Industrial School,” pp. 71-94; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 99-175; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 159-169; Jim Miller, “Denominational Rivalry in Indian Residential Education” in *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l’ouest 2*, pp. 139-155; J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 125, 177, 191, 201-202, 241-245, 274, 310, 312, 320, 346, 361, 366, 381, 394, 428; J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (3rd edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 265, 298; J.R. Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada” in Marguerite Van Die ed., *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 109, 118, 120-124; Diane Persson, “The Changing Experience of Indian Residential Schooling: Blue Quills, 1931-1970” in Barman et al eds., *Indian Education in Canada*, 1:pp. 150-168; Derek G. Smith, “The ‘Policy of Aggressive Civilization’ and Projects of Governance in Roman Catholic Industrial Schools for Native Peoples in Canada, 1870-95,” *Anthropologica*, Vol. 43, Iss. 2 (2001), pp. 253-271; Titley, “Dunbow Indian Industrial School,” pp. 95-113. The term “joint venture” was incorporated into the “Statement of Apology to Former Students of Residential Schools” delivered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on June 11, 2008: “For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870’s, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools... Most

beginning of Oblate involvement in a project of comprehensive social, cultural and linguistic assimilation – a project comparable in intent and implementation to the United States’ “policy of aggressive civilization”. Like their missionary counterparts in the US, Oblates in northern and western Canada were commissioned by the federal state to operate residential institutions in which Aboriginal children were to be isolated from the influence of their families and “educat[ed] in industry and the arts of civilization.”² Yet while acknowledging the Oblates’ role as executors of this assimilative project, some historians have cast doubt on their commitment to its underlying objective. Martha McCarthy, for instance, has suggested that Oblates in the Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie were drawn reluctantly into the project in the aftermath of treaty negotiations: “It was only when the treaties made it mandatory for the government to provide schooling for the Dene that the policy of ‘aggressive civilization’ was promoted, using denominational schools to accomplish this aim more

schools were operated as ‘joint ventures’ with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches.” The full text of the statement is available online through the website of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/rqpi/apo/sig-eng.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2009).

² Quoted in Smith, “The ‘Policy of Aggressive Civilization’ and Projects of Governance,” p. 259. There was more than a passing resemblance between the assimilative projects of the United States and Canada in the late nineteenth century. In January 1879, the Canadian government appointed Nicholas Flood Davin to travel to Washington, DC, to investigate “the policy of aggressive civilization” that had been implemented under the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant (1869-77). In his report to the Minister of the Interior (submitted March 14, 1879), Davin identified “industrial schools” – missionary-run boarding schools in which pupils learned industrial skills and trades – as the principle feature of the American policy and recommended that the Canadian government establish similar institutions. Davin’s report was appended to the Order-in-Council (1883) that created the first industrial schools in Canada. According to Derek G. Smith, Davin’s report “is the de facto founding document, in effect the charter document, which specified the terms within which industrial schools functioned for almost a century.” *Ibid.*, p. 254. See also: *ibid.*, pp. 255, 259-260; Charles Beverley Koester, *Mr. Davin, M.P.: A Biography of Nicholas Flood Davin* (Saskatoon: Western Producers Prairie Books, 1980), p. 40; Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, pp. 101-103; Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, p. 264; John Herd Thompson, “Nicholas Flood Davin,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 13 (1901-1910).

economically than the government could. Thus, even if the Oblates... had had any different notions of education, they would have had to conform to government regulations in order to obtain vital financial support.”³ J.R. Miller has similarly cast Oblates as ambivalent collaborators. According to Miller, Oblates were critical of the virulent assimilative thrust of federal policy, but ultimately accepted residential schooling as an opportunity to subsidize their evangelical work and to assist Aboriginal peoples in adjusting to co-existence with a Euro-Canadian settler population.⁴ Oblates nevertheless held lingering reservations about implementing the most aggressive federal directives and were particularly reluctant to enforce an outright ban on the use of Aboriginal languages in residential schools.⁵

While shedding light on complexities and tensions in the relationship between Oblates and the federal government, the prevailing historiographical focus on the post-treaty period has tended to obscure – if not to negate – the agency of Oblates in formulating an assimilative project predicated on residential education.⁶ Decades before the advent of federal intervention in their mission field, Oblates had devised a

³ McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 166.

⁴ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, pp. 391, 414-416. See also Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada,” pp. 113, 118, 120-122, 125.

⁵ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, pp. 391, 416, 471 n.94; Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada,” pp. 120-122.

⁶ It bears mention that the Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate has not attempted to distance itself from responsibility in the residential schooling experiment. On July 24, 1991, the Oblate Conference of Canada issued “An Apology to the First Nations of Canada” acknowledging that the congregation had played “a key role” in formulating, implementing and sustaining residential schools. The apology made no reference to co-optation or coercion by federal authorities, but rather affirmed that Oblate involvement in the system reflected “the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious imperialism that was part of the mentality with which the peoples of Europe first met the Aboriginal peoples and which consistently has lurked behind the way the Native peoples of Canada have been treated by civil governments and by churches. We [i.e., Oblates] were, naively, part of this mentality...” “An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate Conference of Canada” in *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l'ouest 2*, pp. 259-260.

programme of social, cultural and linguistic transformation that relied on the convent boarding school as its operative instrument. They envisaged the convent boarding school as a highly disciplined space in which Aboriginal children would be weaned from beliefs and behaviours deemed characteristic of *la sauvagerie* and prepared for inclusion in *la civilisation chrétienne*. The present chapter examines the articulation and implementation of this project through the lens of the convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse from its founding in 1860 to its integration into the federal residential school system in 1898. In their capacity as administrators and principals of this school, Oblates produced a vast commentary on the role of residential education in their civilizing project. This commentary is analyzed in the present chapter for its insights into the Oblates' conception of *la civilisation chrétienne* and its accompanying behavioural expectations. This commentary is also analyzed for its insights into the strategies adopted by Oblates in order to sustain a residential education programme without state assistance.

In laying the foundations of a convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse, Oblates acted in accordance with a mandate from the founder and first Superior General of their congregation – Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod. As an addendum to the second edition of the Oblates' *Constitutiones Et Regulæ* (1853), Mazenod issued instructions on the operation of *les missions étrangères* and included a directive on the establishment and supervision of schools:

Loin de considérer le travail de formation des sauvages aux nécessités de la vie sociale comme étranger à leur programme, les membres de la Société y verront au contraire, un excellent moyen de contribuer au bien de la Mission et de rendre plus fructueux leur apostolat... Étant donné que la prospérité des sociétés civiles est intimement liée à l'instruction de la jeunesse, il faudra, autant que possible, ouvrir, dans chaque Mission, une école, où, sous la

direction du maître, les enfants apprendront, avec les rudiments de la doctrine chrétienne, les connaissances humaines et ce qu'il convient de savoir des arts de la vie courante.⁷

Mazenod envisioned a strictly administrative – rather than pedagogical – role for the Oblates. Loath to divert his missionaries' time and energy from their regular ministry, the Superior General encouraged the recruitment of full-time teaching personnel from outside the ranks of the congregation. In January 1857, he approved Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché's proposal to negotiate a contract with the Sisters of Charity of Montreal – or Grey Nuns – to staff a series of convent boarding schools in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory.⁸ According to Taché, the Grey Nuns were particularly well suited to this task as they had been exercising a teaching vocation at Saint-Boniface since 1844 and had expressed willingness to expand beyond the confines of the Red River Colony.⁹ With Mazenod's blessing, Taché met with Mother Superior Julie Hainault Deschamps in summer 1857 and reached an agreement whereby the Grey

⁷ “Instruction de Monseigneur de Mazenod relative aux missions étrangères,” p. 175.

⁸ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 91-93. In January 1857, Taché visited Marseilles to consult personally with Mazenod on two pressing matters: the nomination of the Coadjutor Bishop of Saint-Boniface *cum future succession*; and the establishment of communities of Grey Nuns at various missions west of the Red River Colony. Mazenod consented willingly to the latter proposal – “Notre vénérable Fondateur... consentit volontiers au projet proposé” – and left the details of its implementation to Taché. *Ibid.*, p. 93. See also Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 344-349.

⁹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 92, 109-111. Taché's episcopal predecessor – Bishop Joseph-Norbert Provencher – had invited the Sisters of Charity of Montreal to establish a convent in the Red River Colony in October 1843. Mother Superior Elizabeth Forbes McMullen accepted the invitation and despatched four nuns to “l'Hôpital Général de Saint-Boniface” the following April. The Grey Nuns opened a school for fifty-three children at Saint-Boniface in July 1844. See especially: ASGM, McMullen, “Ancien Journal,” I: pp. 19, 26, 44; Dauphinais, *Histoire de Saint-Boniface*, pp. 130-131; Duchaussois, *Aventures canadiennes des Sœurs Grises*, pp. 4-12; Pierre Duchaussois, *The Grey Nuns in the Far North* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Publishers, 1919), pp. 29-40.

Nuns would staff daughter convents at Lac Sainte-Anne, Île-à-la-Crosse and Lac La Biche.¹⁰

Underlying Taché's choice of personnel was the belief that childrearing – the teaching, disciplining and socialization of children – fell within the natural purview of “la femme missionnaire”. Despite having renounced physical motherhood through her vow of chastity, the female religious was assumed to possess the quintessentially maternal qualities of nurturance, tenderness and patience. Taché believed that these qualities could be harnessed toward the inculcation of civilized habits of thought and behaviour in Aboriginal children.¹¹ His belief was shared – and likely reinforced – by the Grey Nuns themselves, many of whom conceptualized their role in the western mission field as that of adoptive mothers. Hence, while travelling by barge to Île-à-la-Crosse in August 1860, Sister Agnès (Marie-Rose Caron) wrote to Taché to assure him that “mon cœur de mère embrassera tous ces petits sauvages...”¹² As the first superior of Saint-Bruno, Agnès instructed her two subordinates – Sister Philomène Boucher and

¹⁰ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 110-111. Taché proposed that the founding of these convents follow “l'ordre chronologique de nos propres établissements... [et] par conséquent l'on commencerait par le lac Sainte-Anne.” *Ibid.*, 111. Accordingly, the Grey Nuns established a convent at Lac Sainte-Anne in 1859, another at Île-à-la-Crosse in 1860, and another at Lac La Biche in 1862. The convent at Lac Sainte-Anne was relocated to Saint-Albert in 1863. See especially: ASGM, McMullen, “Ancien Journal,” I: pp. 20-23, 45-46; Duchaussois, *Aventures canadiennes des Sœurs Grises*, pp. 14-18, 21; Pierre Duchaussois, *The Grey Nuns in the Far North*, pp. 46-52, 54; Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada*, pp. 57-59.

¹¹ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 91-92. See also “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 43.

¹² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0137-T0139, Agnès to Taché, “sur le rivage du Lac Winipig,” August 6, 1860. For primary accounts of Agnès' voyage to Île-à-la-Crosse (June 4 – October 4, 1860), see: “Extrait d'une lettre de Mgr Vital Grandin, évêque de Satala et coadjuteur de Mgr l'évêque de Saint-Boniface, à MM. les Directeurs de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 3 décembre, 1861,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol., 35 (1863), pp. 345-349; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 175-187, 195-197; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 62-68.

Sister Pepin (Marie-Anne Lachance) – to adopt a motherly approach to the teaching and supervision of Aboriginal schoolchildren.¹³ She outlined this approach in her chronicle,

“Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse”, prepared in 1883:

Il fallait suppléer à ce qui manquait à leur éducation première ; il fallait remplir à leur égard la tâche de la mère et descendre dans les détails. Notre première occupation fut d’essayer de leur faire contracter l’habitude de se laver et de se peigner tous les matins. Jusque-là, leur unique et plus grand agrément avait été de courir dans les bois, en tous sens, pour s’y amuser ou selon l’expression du pays « ramasser des graines, » il fallait donc leur montrer que l’on pouvait s’amuser raisonnablement et plus tranquillement ; que l’on pouvait jouer sans se déchirer et se battre. De plus, il était nécessaire de les former à des manières plus sociables, car, pour eux, parler et répondre poliment était une chose ridicule, et qui provoquait le rire. Tels étaient les enfants que les Sœurs virent se grouper autour d’elles, à leur arrivée à l’Île à la Crosse, en Nov. 1860. Ce n’était certes pas un milieu attrayant pour la nature, mais nous les aimions pourtant ces pauvres enfants des bois!¹⁴

In assuming “la tâche de la mère”, Agnès and her consœurs adhered to a gendered division of roles and responsibilities in the civilizing project. Their duties reflected contemporary French and French-Canadian conceptions of the mother as the ideal educator and the natural agent for instilling norms of civility, composure and cleanliness.¹⁵

To further harness the civilizing potential of motherhood, Oblates enjoined the Grey Nuns to devote particular attention to the education of young girls and thus to

¹³ ASGM, McMullen, “Ancien Journal,” I: pp. 45, 163; ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, “Historique,” pp. 1, 5.

¹⁴ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 206.

¹⁵ On the ascription of maternal qualities to non-cloistered nuns – especially teaching nuns – in nineteenth-century French Catholic discourse, see especially: Hazel Mills, “Negotiating the Divide: Women, Philanthropy and the ‘Public Sphere’ in Nineteenth-Century France” in F. Tallett and N. Atkin eds., *Religion, Society and Politics in France since 1789* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), pp. 29-54; Rebecca Rogers, “Retrograde or Modern? Unveiling the Teaching Nun in Nineteenth-Century France,” *Social History*, vol. 23, no. 2 (May 1998), pp. 146-149.

facilitate the inculcation of *la civilisation chrétienne* in future generations.¹⁶ In December 1861, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin reported to *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* that the Grey Nuns had been called to Île-à-la-Crosse specifically to mould future wives and mothers: “Elles y sont appelées à civiliser nos sauvages, en formant les jeunes filles et par là même les mères de famille.”¹⁷ Accordingly, the first cohort of schoolchildren at Saint-Bruno contained more girls than boys – nine of the former, six of the latter.¹⁸ Among the girls were Julie and Esther, both Chipewyan-speaking orphans; Marie and Thérèse, daughters of Charles Lafleur (an HBC apprentice in the English River District); Sophie, a daughter of Antoine Morin (an HBC guide in the English River District); and Catherine, a daughter of Pierriche Laliberté (postmaster in charge of Portage La Loche).¹⁹ From the first day of class (November 25, 1860), these girls were trained and readied for their future roles as wives, mothers and homemakers through a curriculum based on French and French-Canadian domestic traditions. They

¹⁶ McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 159.

¹⁷ “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Vital Grandin, évêque de Satala et coadjuteur de Mgr l’évêque de Saint-Boniface, à MM. les Directeurs de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 3 décembre, 1861,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol., 35 (1863), p. 349.

¹⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0291-T0294, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 7, 1861; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 202-203, 205.

¹⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0354-T0357, Pepin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 183, Pepin to “Ma Très Chère Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, June 14, 1863; “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (Liber Animarum), “Famille La Fleur [sic],” p. 41; *ibid.*, “Famille La Liberté [sic],” p. 109; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 200, 203. Information on the employment histories of Lafleur, Morin and Laliberté is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/lafleur_charles-b.pdf (accessed November 24, 2009); http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/m/morin_antoine-b.pdf (accessed November 24, 2009); http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/l/laliberte_pierre.pdf (accessed August 11, 2009).

received instruction in cooking, cleaning, laundering, knitting, sewing and embroidery from Agnès and were assigned daily chores in the kitchen and in the refectory.²⁰

Through intensive schooling, the girls of Saint-Bruno were expected to become the vanguard of a regenerated and emancipated womanhood. For at least a decade before the establishment of the school, Oblates had bemoaned the status of Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking women living in the vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse. Oblates had commonly described these women as degraded victims of fathers, husbands and sons who would sell them, beat them and ultimately abandon them.²¹ In his first published letter from Île-à-la-Crosse (1851), Taché had even equated local womanhood with slavery: “Il est pénible de voir celle qui a été créée la compagne de l’homme, devenir l’esclave de celui qui n’avait reçu une force supérieure qu’afin de lui servir de protecteur et non de bourreau... On a vu de ces hommes... assommer leurs épouses, et les traiter constamment avec une rigueur qui tient de la barbarie.”²² According to Taché, Chipewyan-speaking women bore a particularly onerous burden as the

²⁰ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 205-206. See also *ibid.*, p. 203. The Grey Nuns of Saint-Bruno appear to have pursued the same objective as their consœurs in Saint-Boniface. The latter nuns, according to Lesley Erickson, “sought ultimately to prepare their boarding school students to become ideal Catholic wives and mothers...” Lesley A. Erickson, “‘Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart’: Gender and the Métis Response to Colonialism – The Case Study of Sara and Louis Riel, 1848-83” in S. Carter et al eds., *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West through Women’s History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), p. 26. See also *ibid.*, pp. 23-24; Estelle Mitchell, *The Grey Nuns of Montreal and the Red River Settlement, 1844-1984* (Montreal: Éditions du Méridien, 1987), p. 75.

²¹ See especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” p. 71. See also: Abel, *Drum Songs*, p. 135; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 22; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 90-91.

²² “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Taché, Vicaire apostolique de la Baie d’Hudson, à sa mère. Mission de St-Jean-Baptiste, Ile à la Crosse, 4 janvier 1851.” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), p. 343.

conditions of their “esclavage” were aggravated by extreme poverty and frequent starvation:

Si le sort de la tribu en général est triste, celui de la femme en particulier offre un redoublement de privations et de souffrances, tout-à-fait inconnu chez les nations civilisées. « Je multiplierai tes maux, » avait dit Dieu à la première pécheresse ; cet anathème terrible pèse encore ici de tout son poids ; c’est la misère multipliée par la misère, de façon à donner un produit effrayant de tribulations. Femmes chrétiennes, si vous ne comprenez pas tous les avantages que vous procure la Religion, venez à l’école des peuplades infidèles, et alors vous verrez ce que vous seriez sans la salutaire influence du Christianisme!²³

Informing Taché’s ascription of the terms “civilisé” and “barbare” was a normative assumption about the place of women in society. This assumption held that women needed to be cared for and protected in order to fulfil their God-given roles as helpmates and homemakers.²⁴ Only through Christian education could women gain an awareness of their place in the divine order and acquire the skills necessary to assume that place. Thus, in December 1861, Grandin declared that the founding of Saint-Bruno represented a major first step toward “l’émancipation de la femme,... si méprisée et si avilie dans ce pays.”²⁵

The school was also intended to effect a transformation of local manhood by producing conscientious husbands and fathers. With the exception of a Chipewyan-

²³ Ibid., p. 352. See generally *ibid.*, pp. 350-353.

²⁴ Taché’s assumption reflected a common Victorian discursive practice wherein “the status of women” served as an index of civilization. “Advanced” societies were characterized by respect and care for their womenfolk; “primitive” societies by contempt and cruelty toward them. See especially: Catherine Hall, “Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century” in P. Levine ed., *Gender and Empire (The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 50-51; Philippa Levine, “Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?” in *ibid.*, pp. 6-7; Ann McGrath and Winona Stevenson, “Gender, Race and Policy: Aboriginal Women and the State in Canada and Australia,” *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 38 (Fall 1996), p. 53.

²⁵ “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Vital Grandin, évêque de Satala et coadjuteur de Mgr l’évêque de Saint-Boniface, à MM. les Directeurs de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 3 décembre, 1861,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol., 35 (1863), p. 349.

speaking orphan known as Francis, the first contingent of schoolboys consisted of sons of local HBC personnel: Antoine, son of Pierriche Laliberté; Gabriel, son of Charles Lafleur; Baptiste, son of Antoine Morin; and Joseph and Zacharie, likely sons of James Bruce (an HBC boat builder).²⁶ These boys were entrusted to the supervision of Oblate lay brother Louis Dubé who conveyed them at 5:30 each morning from the Oblate residence at Saint-Jean-Baptiste to the common room at Saint-Bruno. There the boys spent the morning learning basic arithmetic and acquiring skills in written and spoken French – a language that none of them spoke natively.²⁷ Their teacher – Sister Pepin – struggled to assert authority over the boys, prompting her sister superior to marvel at her fortitude and devotion:

Quelle patience ne fallait-il pas pour amener au joug de l'obéissance ces enfants habitués à ne faire que leur volonté, car dans le pays, en effet, un garçon de 10 à 12 ans est grand ! *trop homme* ! comme ils disent, pour se soumettre à ses parents... Il est facile de concevoir que ces enfants, grandissant avec de tels principes et se trouvant sous l'autorité d'une sœur, durent se montrer au naturel. Car, à leurs yeux, entre une Sœur ou leur mère, il n'y a de différence que l'habillement. Il fallait donc beaucoup de prudence et de douceur. Il s'agissait de prendre sur ces dures natures l'autorité et l'ascendant, sans les brusquer, ni les humilier. Il fallait surtout le secours du ciel et la bénédiction du Père Céleste. Nous pouvions semer, mais Dieu seul pouvait donner l'accroissement. Ma Sœur Pepin, à qui la principale tâche était dévolue, le sentait et nous le sentions aussi, et pendant que cette dévouée

²⁶ AD, HPF 4191. C75R 183, Pepin to “Ma Très Chère Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, June 14, 1863; “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (Liber Animarum), “Famille La Fleur [sic],” p. 41; *ibid.*, “Famille La Liberté [sic],” p. 109; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 199. Information on James Bruce's employment history (1860-67) is available online through the Hudson's Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/b/bruce_james.pdf (accessed December 1, 2009).

²⁷ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 204-206. According to Agnès, the first cohort of schoolboys had no knowledge of French whatsoever: “Les petits garçons... ne répond[aient] aux paroles que nous leur adressions que par un gros éclat de rire ; car ils ne comprenaient pas un seul mot de français.” *Ibid.*, 1: pp. 203-204. On the schoolboys' inability to speak French, see also: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0582-T0585, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 71.

Sœur donnait ses soins,... nous priions Dieu de bénir ses efforts et de les couronner de succès.²⁸

In the afternoon, Pepin dismissed the schoolboys and they performed manual labour under Dubé's direction. Their tasks were meant to prepare them for lives as industrious heads of households. Hence, the youngest boys worked in the barn milking cows, mucking out stalls and distributing fodder. Older boys were assigned more strenuous tasks, such as the chopping and hauling of firewood and the maintenance of mission buildings. In the spring, the boys tilled the soil around the mission and sowed barley, wheat and potatoes. They assisted in harvesting these crops in the late summer and autumn.²⁹ Eighteen months after the implementation of this daily regimen, Father Henri Faraud reported that a gradual transformation was underway among the schoolboys: "[Ces] enfants... se forment tout doucement à la piété, perdent un peu cet air sauvage si haïssable dans les enfants du Nord, et finiront enfin par faire des pères de famille consciencieux de leurs devoirs."³⁰

Yet while confident in the transformative power of Saint-Bruno, Oblates expressed concern about the rate of the schoolchildren's progress. In June 1861, Father Valentin Végréville reported that the children had made little headway in learning French and recommended that they be subjected to a more intensive pedagogical programme:

²⁸ ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 204-205.

²⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1215-T1217, Dubé to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, February 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1719-T1720, Salasse to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1925-T1928, Salasse to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 10, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864.

³⁰ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862.

Une chose qui presse... c'est de former les enfans à parler français. C'est selon moi la chose qui presserait le plus, il est vrai qu'on y travaille toujours, puisque les Sœurs et nous nous ne parlons aux enfans qu'en français ; mais ce n'est pas assez. Les enfans entr'eux ne se parlent qu'en cris. C'est donc en sauvage que se font plus des trois quarts et demi de leurs conversations. Aussi je trouve que pour un hiver entier ils ont fait peu de progrès dans la conversation en français... Il me semble que ce n'est pas assez pour le moment et jusqu'à ce qu'il ait un noyau formé à parler le français, ce n'est pas assez, dis-je, pour nous ni pour les Sœurs de surveiller les enfans. Nous devrions nous mêler à leurs jeux, nous mettre plus en contact avec eux et ne presque pas souffrir qu'ils parlent sauvage entr'eux ; les forcer à parler français par différents moyens... Il faut faire des sacrifices pour arriver à ce but ; mais notre école sera toujours peu de chose sans cela. Imposons-nous de suite ses [sic] sacrifices, ils ne seront pas longs ; et nous jouirons ensuite du fruit de nos peines ; car une fois un petit noyau formé, les autres, les nouveaux arrivans en prendront la forme sans s'en apercevoir [sic] et sans que nous nous ayons presque la peine de nous en occuper.³¹

Father Julien Moulin echoed Végréville's recommendation seventeen months later, noting that the schoolchildren persisted in speaking Cree among themselves: "Je ne trouve pas qu'on les surveille suffisamment à table et dans les autres lieux. On ne peut pas les empêcher de parler cris entre eux, ce qui nuit beaucoup à leur éducation... Je trouve qu'on leur donne beaucoup trop de liberté."³² Moulin further opined that the children had made little progress in reading and writing. After more than two years of schooling, they could barely hold a pen let alone compose a legible sentence.³³ More worrisome than the pupils' slow progress was their teachers' apparent disappointment and despondency. In his capacity as principal of Saint-Bruno from July 1861 to July 1863, Faraud registered concern that the Grey Nuns were beginning to doubt their own

³¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0582-T0585, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861.

³² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862.

³³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1921-T1924, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863.

abilities and to waver in their commitment to the civilizing project. He confided to Taché that he suspected the nuns of wishing to return to Saint-Boniface and Montreal.³⁴

According to most Oblate commentators, the principle impediment to the schoolchildren's progress was frequent contact with their Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking relatives. Since November 1860, Oblates had endeavoured to alleviate strain on mission food stores by permitting the schoolchildren to spend Sundays and Thursdays with their families.³⁵ While accepted as an economic necessity, this strategy prompted concerns that the children would remain impervious to *la civilisation chrétienne* because of their regular re-immersion in *la sauvagerie*. Hence, in spring 1861, Végréville and Moulin recommended a decrease in the number of "congés" allotted to the schoolchildren so as to mitigate the influence of their families.³⁶ This recommendation proved impossible to implement, however, as a series of crises shook Saint-Bruno over the following decade and compelled its administrators to return the children to their families for extended periods. The first of these crises occurred in spring 1866 when the local fishery failed completely. Unable to secure daily sustenance for all schoolchildren, acting principal Father Jean-Marie Caër cancelled classes for two

³⁴ AD, HE 2221. T12Z 57, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 19, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1725-T1728, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1936-T1939, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 17, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2017-T2022, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2229-T2237, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1863. On Faraud's tenure as principal, see: "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 75, 79.

³⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0350-T0353, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 1, 1861; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:p. 205; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 71.

³⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0391-T0393, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 6, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0483-T0486, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 8, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0582-T0585, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861.

months and sent away children who had relatives in the vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse.³⁷ The second crisis occurred the following year when the schoolboys' dormitory burned to the ground. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, Oblates attempted to lodge nineteen schoolboys in a small warehouse with beds stacked four high. They soon ascertained that this situation was untenable and returned most of the boys to their families.³⁸ The final crisis occurred as the new dormitory was nearing completion in August 1869. While preparing to resume his supervision of the schoolboys, Dubé suffered a bout of paralysis and was committed to the Grey Nuns' infirmary.³⁹ His incapacity prompted Grandin to introduce "le système d'externes" whereby the children of local HBC personnel – "les enfants du fort" – were permitted to attend classes during the day and to return to their families in the evening. This system remained in operation until April 1871 when Father Prosper Légeard restored the original "système de pensionnaires" whereby all pupils boarded at the mission.⁴⁰

³⁷ ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 220-221; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 95-96. The failure of the local fishery may have resulted from the accumulation of algae and/or bacteria in Lake Île-à-la-Crosse. Agnès recorded that the lake water became "verte et impotable" in spring 1866, prompting Oblates to dig a well and install a pump in the basement of the Grey Nuns' residence. See ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:p. 222.

³⁸ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10822, Grandin to "Monsieur le Président et à Messieurs les conseillers de la Propagation de la Foi à Paris," Paris, December 28, 1867; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:p. 227; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 101.

³⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, "Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert," 1868-1884, p. 145; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 107-108, 120.

⁴⁰ AD, HPF 4191. C75R 187, Pepin to "Ma Très Chère Sœur," Île-à-la-Crosse, January 1, 1870; AD, G LPP 2200, Légeard to Fabre, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1870; AD, HEC 2500. P96C4, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 9, 1871; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 1:pp. 231, 241; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 56, 82.

Beyond their persistent linguistic and cultural influence on schoolchildren, local families prompted concern among Oblates because of their apparent ambivalence – and occasional hostility – toward Saint-Bruno. Under the terms of the “système de pensionnaires”, the families of schoolchildren were expected to pay an annual “pension” – a fee in cash or in kind – to cover their children’s material needs.⁴¹ Yet payment of the “pension” became increasingly rare after the first school year. By the winter of 1862-1863, the schoolchildren were being fed, clothed and sheltered entirely at the expense of the mission.⁴² This situation aggravated the strain on mission food stores and increased the burden of manual labour borne by Grey Nuns, Oblate lay brothers and *engagés*. “Je trouve que c’est vraiment trop pénible que nous soyons obligés de nourrir tous les enfans des engagés de la Compagnie”, grumbled Faraud in late November 1862. “Nos hommes sont constamment occupés à la pêche en sorte qu’on ne peut en retirer aucun service.”⁴³ According to Oblates and Grey Nuns, this

⁴¹ According to Agnès, the original fee for each student was £1 per year. Pénard noted, however, that this fee could be substituted by the provision of foodstuffs. ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 205; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 71.

⁴² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1741-T1743, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 26, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1921-T1924, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863.

⁴³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1741-T1743, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 26, 1862. In March 1864, Moulin reported that the mission was compelled to provide at least twenty fish per day for the sustenance of the schoolchildren in addition to the usual thirty-five required for the sustenance of Oblates, Grey Nuns, *engagés* and sled dogs. The following year, Grandin reported that the schoolchildren required at least thirty-six fish per day. Besides forcing Oblates to devote more time and energy to fishing, this situation presented complications for the Grey Nuns as their kitchen was under-equipped for the preparation of such large meals. The nuns relied on “un système de cheminée” in which fish was cooked slowly and in relatively small quantities. See: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2575-T2577, Moulin to Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3099-T3102, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 18, 1865; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de

lack of material support was symptomatic of a general disengagement with Saint-Bruno among local families. Reinforcing this perception was the reluctance of several families to enrol their young children in the school.⁴⁴ In an effort to extol the benefits of a mission education and to garner community support for Saint-Bruno, Oblates and Grey Nuns launched a publicity campaign centred on the annual *examen public* – an undertaking discussed in the previous chapter.⁴⁵ The priests and nuns reported mixed results from this campaign: although it boosted enrolment and encouraged payment of the “pension”, the campaign did not dispel all misgivings among local families. Hence, in her chronicle entry for the year 1871, Agnès noted that the enrolment of a record thirty-five “pensionnaires” coincided with vociferous criticism from local parents over the treatment of their children:

[L]es parents comprenant mieux les bienfaits de l’instruction, avaient songé d’eux-mêmes à placer leurs enfants pensionnaires. Cependant ces pauvres sauvages conservaient toujours, je dirais, la manie de critiquer, de censurer notre manière d’agir à l’égard de leurs enfants, alors même que, épuisées de fatigues et de privations, nous nous dépensions pour leur bonheur... Pour attirer le plus d’enfants possible à notre petite école, notre bonne Sœur Pepin se résigna généreusement à accepter les reproches, les difficultés et l’assujettissement d’une telle condition.⁴⁶

l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 234; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 80, 163.

⁴⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3134-T3137, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 13, 1865; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 205, 234; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 122, 128, 159. There was at least one instance in the early 1860s in which a pupil was actually withdrawn from Saint-Bruno by a family member. In spring 1862, a young girl identified as Marguerite Sasté was removed from the Grey Nuns’ custody by her aunt – a local Chipewyan-speaking woman whom Pepin had nicknamed “les sept péchés capitaux”. SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1413-T1415, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 26, 1862.

⁴⁵ See pp. 113-114 above. See also: ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 216-217, 218, 231, 237, 243-244; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 56-57, 86-87, 107-108; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 127-128, 159-160.

⁴⁶ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 234. Légeard noted thirty-six – rather than thirty-five – “pensionnaires” at Saint-Bruno in 1871. See: AD, HEC 2500. P96C4, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 9, 1871.

Such “reproches” were especially common when schoolchildren fell ill or perished at Saint-Bruno – as occurred in January 1865 when six-year-old François Beaulieu died of pleurisy and in March 1875 when four-year-old Patrice Stevenson died after an outbreak of chickenpox (“la picotte volante”).⁴⁷ Cases of juvenile illness and death provoked some local families to accuse Oblates and Grey Nuns of being negligent or excessively severe with their charges. While these accusations dwindled during periods of general good health among schoolchildren, they left a legacy of uncertainty among Oblates and Grey Nuns as to the local community’s goodwill and support for Saint-Bruno.⁴⁸

Oblates perceived another obstacle to the operation of Saint-Bruno in the internal dynamics of the mission personnel. Even while publishing descriptions of their relationship with Grey Nuns as a seamless cooperation between missionary bodies, Oblates struggled with scruples and apprehensions in their daily interactions with the

⁴⁷ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 216, 218-219; *ibid.*, 2:pp. 207, 209-210. François Beaulieu was a grandson of the well-known “patriarche Beaulieu” – François Beaulieu, salt trader at Salt River (Athabasca District) and long-time supporter of Oblates. The “patriarche Beaulieu” had confided his grandson to Grandin’s care during the latter’s three-year tour of the northern missions (1861-64) so that the boy could receive a mission education. See: *ibid.*, 1:p. 216; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3079-T3082, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to “Mes bien chers pères et frères,” Île-à-la-Crosse, January 21, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 26, 1865; CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, “Notes de Monseigneur Grandin sur l’Église du Nord-Ouest,” pp. 162-178. On the relationship between the “patriarche Beaulieu” and the Oblates, see especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Mgr Grandin, Notes Intimes sur le Diocèse de S^t Albert, rédigées en 1884,” p. 63; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 109-114; Leslie H. Neatby, “François Beaulieu,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 10 (1871-1880). Patrice Stevenson may have been a member of the family identified as “Famille Stewenson” in the *liber status animarum* of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. However, this document contains no mention of his baptism or burial. See: SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (Liber Animarum), “Famille Stewenson,” p. 65.

⁴⁸ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 2:p. 210.

nuns.⁴⁹ These scruples and apprehensions stemmed in part from the clerical vow of chastity and its accompanying gendered divisions of space, labour and power. In the early 1860s, the Oblate General Administration instructed Oblates to avoid frequent, prolonged and unnecessary contact with Grey Nuns, but it issued no specific protocol on daily interaction between members of these two communities. Such interaction was to be regulated according to the discretion of local superiors.⁵⁰ This situation engendered serious administrative concerns at Saint-Bruno, especially during the intermittent principalships of Father Julien Moulin (November 1862 to January 1863, July 1863 to September 1864, and March 1867 to October 1870).⁵¹ Moulin attempted to impose unprecedented restrictions on personal contact and communication between Oblates and Grey Nuns. For instance, he sought to discontinue the practice whereby

⁴⁹ Some of the most fulsome of these descriptions appeared in Taché's memoir, *Vingt années de mission* (1866). For instance, Taché likened the cooperation between Oblates and Grey Nuns to that between Paul the Apostle and "celles qui ont travaillé avec lui dans l'établissement de l'Évangile" (presumably a reference to Phoebe, Julia and the other female disciples mentioned in Romans 16:1-16). Underpinning this cooperation was "[un] contrat stipulé entre deux communautés qui, quoique différentes dans leur vocation, vont confondre leurs efforts en dirigeant leur action vers une fin commune : la conversion et l'instruction des tribus aborigènes de ces vastes et infortunées régions." See Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 92, 111-112.

⁵⁰ The Oblate General Administration did not issue regulations concerning interaction between Oblates and nuns (or secular women for that matter) until after the canonical visit of Oblate Assistant General Louis Soullier to Canada in 1883: Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 66. On Soullier's canonical visit to Canada, see: *Acte de visite du R.P. Soullier, premier assistant général pour le vicariat de Saint-Albert. Octobre 1883* (Saint-Albert: Typographie privée O.M.I., 1885).

⁵¹ Moulin assumed the temporary direction of Saint-Bruno (and of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in general) in the winter of 1862-63 when Faraud was consigned to the Grey Nun's infirmary because of his crippling rheumatism. Moulin's second principalship began in July 1863 after Faraud left Île-à-la-Crosse to be consecrated in France. Moulin was relieved by Grandin in autumn 1864. Moulin's third principalship began immediately after the fire of March 1, 1867 and ended when Légeard took charge in October 1870. See: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1936-T1939, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 17, 1863; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, "Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l'érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu'en 1872," p. 11; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 78, 79, 85, 102, 112-113; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 410.

Oblates consulted directly with the nuns in preparing the annual list of supplies required at the mission. He urged the nuns to compile their own list and recommended the complete material separation of the two communities.⁵² More drastically, Moulin instructed Oblate lay brothers to conduct their daily exchanges with the nuns through handwritten messages delivered by schoolboys. Even the most prosaic exchanges were to be conducted in writing – including commentary on pupils, updates on the fishery and requests for services and supplies.⁵³ When Bishop Grandin returned to Île-à-la-Crosse after completing his three-year tour of the northern missions in August 1864, he was shocked at the isolation and divisiveness that had arisen under Moulin's supervision.⁵⁴ Grandin reported to Bishop Taché and to Father Florent Vandenberghe – delegate of the Oblate Superior General – that the nuns had encountered inordinate

⁵² AD, HE 2221. T12Z 189, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 8, 1867. Taché and Grandin subsequently rejected this recommendation. Throughout the 1870s, Oblates retained responsibility for procuring and delivering supplies to the Grey Nuns' schools and infirmaries in western and northern Canada. See: CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, "Convention entre Mgr Grandin, Evêque de Satala... Et la Révérende Sœur Charlebois, Assistante Générale de la Congrégation des Sœurs de la Charité," Saint-Albert, March 4, 1872, pp. 234-236; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, "Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert," "Les Sœurs grises," March 1880, p. 232. For examples of earlier lists compiled through consultation with the Grey Nuns of Saint-Bruno, see: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1085-T1087, Grandin, "Pour la mission de S^t Jean Baptiste, l'île à la Crosse," 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1120-T1121, Faraud, "Articles demandées à YF [York Factory] pour l'automne 1862," January 15, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3765-T3768, Grandin, "Mission de St. J. Bte de l'île à la Crosse, Du mois de juin 1864 au mois de janvier 1866," January 9, 1866.

⁵³ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1925-T1928, Salasse to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 10, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3079-T3082, Agnès to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1865. Salasse's letter contains an excerpt from one of Dubé's notes to Pepin. The excerpt reflects the minutiae of written communication between lay brothers and nuns serving under Moulin's supervision: "Ma seur pardon je sai que vous aller vous confeser saite [après-midi?] je nose pas tout vous dire ci sétait un aute jour etc. etc. apraisant nous alon parlé sai ke vote garcon é bien indéssant apraisant ila c'est culote décousu à la place ou etc. etc. etc. sait asé sur saite artique un mot sur vo fille vote Marie du nort et bien éfronté le papié me manque je suis pour lavie vote Ré^d Louis etc. etc."

⁵⁴ On Grandin's three-year tour of the northern missions and his return to Île-à-la-Crosse, see: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2931-T2934, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 31, 1864; CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, "Notes de Monseigneur Grandin sur l'Église du Nord-Ouest," pp. 162-178; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 73-74, 82-83.

difficulty in conveying requests for such basic necessities as water, food and firewood and that they had become sorely alienated from the Oblates. Grandin therefore implored Taché and Vandenberghe to promulgate binding rules and regulations on interaction between the two communities:

Je vous prie Monseigneur et Révérend Père de faire des règlements et de donner des instructions telles que ces deux communautés qui peuvent faire tant de bien en s'entendant n'aient plus à déplorer de semblables choses qui font tant souffrir et ne peuvent qu'empêcher le bien... [I]l me semble que si une supérieure générale ou même une provinciale avait connaissance de semblable misères, elle ne pourrait faire moins que d'exiger un prompt remède ou de rappeler ses sœurs.⁵⁵

In the absence of such “règlements” and “instructions”, Grandin feared that the relationship between Oblates and Grey Nuns could be irreparably damaged at the whim of an injudicious superior. His fears were rekindled in August 1868 when he returned to Île-à-la-Crosse after a year-long sojourn in Canada and France.⁵⁶ Despite having admonished Moulin for his earlier administrative gaffes, Grandin discovered yet again that the Grey Nuns had chafed under Moulin’s austere direction: “Les sœurs ont eu à souffrir de cette direction ; par suite du malaise qu’elles éprouvaient avec le directeur de la mission, elles n’ont pas osé demander bien des choses nécessaires.”⁵⁷ Given Moulin’s “sévérité pénible” and “extérieur désagréable”, Grandin resolved to replace

⁵⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3068-T3078, Grandin to Taché and Florent Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1865. On Vandenberghe and his canonical visit of Oblate missions in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory (1864-1867), see: Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 194-198, 202, 207, 211-216, 218-223, 229-232; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 257-258.

⁵⁶ “Lettre de Mgr Grandin, évêque de Satala, à MM. les Membres des Conseils centraux de l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 41 (1869), p. 289; CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, “Notes sur les origines des missions du N.O.” pp. 110-113; Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, pp. 173-188.

⁵⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 12.

him as superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and principal of Saint-Bruno as soon as a suitable candidate could be found.⁵⁸

Grandin's resolution suggests that the presence of Grey Nuns generated tension not only between religious communities, but also among Oblates themselves. Indeed, during the 1860s, several Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste expressed concerns and misgivings about their confrères' relations with the nuns. In April 1863, for instance, Moulin reported that Faraud was spending excessive amounts of time at the convent. Faraud visited at least once a day in order to give Cree and Chipewyan language lessons to the nuns. He in turn received private English lessons from Sister Pepin. According to Moulin, word of these intimate sessions could be exploited by Protestant detractors who spread scandalous rumours about the sexual hypocrisy of Catholic missionaries. "Déjà les ministres de la grande Rivière [i.e., Anglican missionaries in the Mackenzie River District] disent que sommes tous mariés," noted Moulin, "et cette entrevue habituelle avec les sœurs pourrait accréditer cette imposture et nous faire perdre notre crédit auprès des sauvages."⁵⁹ Three and a half years later, Grandin expressed similar concerns about the conduct of Father Jean-Marie Caër during the latter's brief tenure as superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and principal of Saint-Bruno

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 115. In November 1868, Grandin recorded the following assessment of Moulin and of his performance as an administrator: "Excellent religieux d'une vertu solide, mais d'une sévérité pénible et d'un extérieur désagréable; il n'a pas le talent de se faire aimer. Aussi dans ce pays la direction d'un temporel considérable lui est impossible, il ne peut se plier aux circonstances."

⁵⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863. In giving the nuns daily lessons in Cree and Chipewyan, Faraud may have sought to alleviate what he perceived as their sense of despondency and disengagement. A year earlier, he had reported that the nuns were effectively isolated by their inability to communicate in the local Aboriginal languages: "Sans communication au dehors, incapable de se mettre en rapport avec les personnes avec lesquelles elles auraient à traiter faute de savoir leur langue, elles se voient réduites à elles seules." SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862.

(June to September 1866). Having spent the summer of 1866 at Saint-Boniface, Grandin returned to Île-à-la-Crosse on September 21 and was promptly briefed on an unsettling situation. He subsequently informed Taché of what he had learned:

J'ai... vu tout le monde, les frères et les sœurs, et j'ai pu me convaincre qu'il n'est guère possible de laisser seul ce pauvre père [i.e., Caër] à côté des sœurs surtout. Il n'y a absolument rien mais s'il faut en croire les trois frères [i.e., Louis Dubé, Patrick Bowes and Jean Pérréard] il est plus au couvent qu'ici [i.e., the Oblate residence] et il se permet des familiarités avec les sœurs qui scandalisent les frères et font de la peine à la sœur supérieure [i.e., Agnès]. Cette bonne sœur m'a dit que le père ne va pas chez elles sans raison mais qu'il y reste trop longtemps, il passe des heures entières avec sœur Pepin pendant ses classes... J'ai cru devoir défendre au père de passer tant de temps chez les sœurs.⁶⁰

“Familiarité avec les sœurs” became a recurring theme in the conflict that simmered between Grandin and Caër over the next two years. This conflict reached boiling point in September 1868 when Caër – ostensibly on behalf of the nuns – reproached Grandin for habitually standing too close when speaking with them. In reporting the matter to Taché, a flabbergasted Grandin insisted that he could not keep a greater distance on account of his “oreilles paresseuses” and suggested that Caër had simply delivered the reproach out of spite. “Est-il possible que ces soeurs... me fasse[nt] donner un pareil avis par un inférieur, par un Père Caër?”, asked Grandin with rhetorical incredulity. “Il est heureux certes de me faire une pareille commission, moi qui ai été si souvent dans la nécessité de lui reprocher ces imprudences, moi qui ai insisté auprès des sœurs pour

⁶⁰ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4255-T4259, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 25, 1866. The underlined section [“des sœurs surtout”] appears in the original document. On Grandin’s absence from Île-à-la-Crosse and Caër’s interim administration, see especially: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4043-T4046, Jean-Marie Caër to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 15, 1866; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4072-T4075, Caër to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 1, 1866; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4123-T4126, Caër to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 24, 1866; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4127-T4130, Caër to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 24, 1866; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4150-T4151, Caër to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 1, 1866; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 95-96.

qu'elles ne le vissent qu'au confessionnal... Je serais porté à croire que tout vient de lui.”⁶¹ It was therefore with a sense of relief that Grandin learned of Caër's resolution to leave the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in spring 1869 and to seek admittance to a Carthusian monastery in France. Grandin marked his departure with a terse farewell: “Puisse-t-il être meilleur chartreux qu'il n'a été bon oblat!”⁶²

While never entirely placid or unguarded in the presence of Grey Nuns, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste registered a marked improvement in their relationship with the nuns over the course of the 1870s. This improvement resulted in part from a joint effort by Grandin and Sister Ursule Cécile Charlebois – Assistant General of the Grey Nuns – to clarify and to codify rules on interaction between the two communities.

Grandin accompanied Charlebois on her visit to Île-à-la-Crosse in late August 1871 and

⁶¹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T6286-T6292, Grandin to Taché, Mission de Saint-Joachim (Fort Edmonton), February 13, 1869. Grandin did indeed suffer from “oreilles paresseuses” and grew steadily deaf in the late 1860s and 1870s. He experienced chronic pain and frequent abscesses in both ears, forcing him to undergo intensive medical treatment in Paris and to make a healing pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1878. Neither undertaking was effective. Finally, in 1892, the sixty-three-year-old Grandin was diagnosed with an untreatable “cystite chronique ulcéreuse”. See: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 916, Box 32, Grandin to Leduc, Saint-Albert, December 10, 1875; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Albert, December 29, 1875; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 919, Box 32, Grandin “aux R^d Pères du Lac Caribou” [i.e., Gasté and Moulin], Paris, February 3, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 919, Box 32, Grandin to “Mes Révérends pères et bien chers frères,” Paris, April 22, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 919, Box 32, Grandin to “Mes bien chers pères et frères,” Caeterets (department of Hautes-Pyrénées, thirty-two kilometres south-west of Lourdes), August 11, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 936, Box 33, Dr P. Royal to Grandin, Edmonton, April 27, 1892 (and appended note [from Royal's secretary?]).

⁶² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 118. Caër had informed the Oblate General Administration of his desire to join the Carthusian Order in 1866, but had decided against leaving Saint-Jean-Baptiste short-staffed after the fire of March 1, 1867: “«Non, non, disais-je pendant la messe le lendemain de ce malheur, non, non, je n'abandonnerai pas maintenant surtout cette mission, j'aime mieux renoncer à la Chartreuse. »” Caër entered the Carthusian charterhouse of Le Reposoir (department of Haute-Savoie) in 1870 and left ten years later, prompting Grandin to remark: “Il paraît qu'un mauvais oblat ne peut pas faire un bon chartreux; il a abandonné cet ordre.” Ibid.; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4555-T4558, Caër to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 13, 1867; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 155.

together they devised “de sages règlements” for local use, which included an outright ban on unsupervised contact between individual Oblates and individual nuns outside of the confessional.⁶³ Responsibility for implementing these “sages règlements” fell to a young Oblate who inspired tremendous confidence in his superiors. Having assumed direction of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and Saint-Bruno the previous autumn (October 1870), Father Prosper Légeard quickly garnered praise for his administrative and interpersonal skills. “Toutes mes espérances sur ce Père se réalisent,” reported Grandin after his visit to Île-à-la-Crosse in August 1871. “On peut lui confier n’importe quel emploi; il possède le rare talent de se faire aimer de ses confrères, des sœurs et des fidèles.”⁶⁴ In pursuing his mandate to regularize and to improve relations with the Grey Nuns, Légeard endeavoured to enhance their material position and their standard of living at Île-à-la-Crosse. He drafted plans and oversaw the construction of two buildings that he entrusted to the nuns in 1874. The first was a two-storeyed structure measuring ten by seven metres. It was subdivided into a classroom, a parlour and a dormitory. The second was a three-storeyed structure measuring fifteen by ten metres. It was

⁶³ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1871, p. 14; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” p. 3. On Sister Charlebois’ visit to the missions of northern and western Canada in 1871, see: *Notes and Sketches Collected from a Voyage in the North-West by a Sister of Charity of Montreal for the furtherance of a Charitable Object* (Montreal: Callahan, Book and Job Printer, 1875); ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 236-238; Lesley Erickson, “At the Cultural and Religious Crossroads: Sara Riel and the Grey Nuns in the Canadian Northwest, 1848-1883” (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1997), pp. 62, 100-101, 111-113, 118.

⁶⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” p. 13. See also: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1871, pp. 14, 134; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 113, 118-119.

subdivided into a private chapel, an infirmary, a kitchen, a refectory and a dormitory.⁶⁵

This second structure – commodious by the standards of the time and place – was dubbed “le petit château” by Agnès and her consœurs.⁶⁶

Another reason for rapprochement between Oblates and Grey Nuns was their adoption of a shared devotion in the early 1870s. Through Légeard’s pastoral guidance, both communities began venerating the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its most celebrated interlocutor, the Blessed Marguerite-Marie Alacoque.⁶⁷ Légeard had developed a personal devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Marguerite-Marie while studying at the Oblate scholasticate of Sacré-Cœur in the Diocese of Autun (department of Saône-et-Loire) from June 1864 to October 1865. This diocese was home to a burgeoning pilgrimage site at Paray-le-Monial, where the Blessed Marguerite-Marie had experienced her divine visions in the 1670s and 1680s and where her remains lay displayed in a reliquary.⁶⁸ “Je te recommande d’avoir une grande dévotion pour cette

⁶⁵ Légeard provided descriptions of these buildings in his report to David Laird – Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories – dated March 25, 1878: LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10117, file no. 10125, “Ile-a-la-Crosse Agency – Reverend Mr. Legard’s [sic] Report on the School at Ile-a-la-Crosse,” 1878. See also: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 123, 134-135, 142.

⁶⁶ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 2:p. 202.

⁶⁷ Raymond Jonas has used the term “interlocutor” – rather than simply “visionary” – in reference to Marguerite-Marie Alacoque because she reported having a dialogic/interactive relationship with the Sacred Heart. During her visions, Marguerite-Marie spoke to and interacted with the divine organ. Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 17-24, 143.

⁶⁸ Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 17-26; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 30. In France, the devotion to the Sacred Heart underwent dramatic renewal and popularization after 1864 when Marguerite-Marie Alacoque was beatified by Pope Pius IX. According to Jonas, this process of renewal and popularization was accelerated by “l’année terrible” (1870-1871) when France was invaded by Prussia and riven by domestic strife during the Paris Commune. Thereafter, the Sacred Heart was increasingly invoked in pursuit of religious, moral and political regeneration. See especially: Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart*, pp. 4, 9-13, 17-33, 147-196. On the Oblate scholasticate of Sacré-Cœur and its relationship with Paray-le-Monial in the 1860s, see: Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 3:pp. 32-37.

Bienheureuse”, Légeard had written to his younger sister, Hortense, in 1865. “Je ne doute pas que tu ne reçoives par son intercession un amour plus grand pour le Cœur adorable de Notre-Seigneur... [O]n ne souffre pas quand on aime véritablement le Cœur de Jésus, car il change les plus grandes amertumes en douceur et fait goûter la joie au milieu des peines et des humiliations.”⁶⁹ Légeard made the very same recommendation to the Oblates and Grey Nuns of Île-à-la-Crosse a few years later. As their confessor and spiritual director, he urged the missionaries to dedicate their labours to the Blessed Marguerite-Marie and to pray constantly for her intercession.⁷⁰ His efforts appeared to bear fruit in the miraculous healing of Sister Sara Riel in autumn 1872. The twenty-four-year-old Riel – younger sister of the famed Louis Riel – had arrived from Saint-Boniface the previous year and had since experienced a rapid decline in her physical health. By November 23, she was bedridden with severe pneumonia and was apparently in extremis. Légeard, after administering the sacrament of extreme unction, advised the dying nun to pray to the Sacred Heart through the intercession of the Blessed Marguerite-Marie. Riel followed his advice and soon experienced a rapid recovery. Oblates and Grey Nuns hailed this recovery as a genuine miracle and both communities endorsed Riel’s decision to pay homage to her heavenly benefactor by adopting a new name – Sister Marguerite-Marie.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Quoted in Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 19-20. Hortense Légeard – like her elder brother – was a member of a religious community. She belonged to the Sisters of Providence at Ruillé-sur-Loire (department of Sarthe). *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁰ AD, G LPP 2199, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1869; AD, G LPP 2200, Légeard to Fabre, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1870; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 188, Pepin to “Ma très chère Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, August 7, 1872; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 230, 235; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 77-79; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 117-119, 126.

⁷¹ There are several primary accounts of Sara Riel’s healing. The present account is based on the following: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T11500-T11507, Légeard to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse,

In the wake of this healing, Oblates and Grey Nuns invoked the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Marguerite-Marie to protect and to promote the convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse. The most committed proponents of this movement were Riel (also known as Sister Marguerite-Marie) and Légeard. When Sister Pepin was reassigned to Saint-Boniface in August 1873, Riel and twenty-six-year-old Sister Angèle Langelier (lately arrived from the Montreal motherhouse) assumed joint responsibility for teaching the schoolchildren. Riel's first initiative as a teacher was to usher the schoolchildren to the mission church where they consecrated themselves and their studies to the Sacred Heart on September 12, 1873.⁷² She subsequently painted images of the Sacred Heart which she hung on the classroom walls and distributed to the children.⁷³ For his part, Légeard made use of his personal contacts with the Visitationist Sisters of Paray-le-Monial to procure devotional material – including sheet music for hymns to the Sacred Heart, printed images of the Blessed Marguerite-Marie in ecstasy, and banners emblazoned with a bleeding heart and the motto: “Honneur, amour, réparation au S.C. de Jésus”. He even obtained a bona fide relic – a lamp that had burned on the spot where the Blessed Marguerite-Marie had experienced her

January 9, 1873; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Grandin to “Mes Révérends et bien chers Pères,” Saint-Albert, March 6, 1873; AD, G LPP 2201, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 29, 1873; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 243; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 84-85. For secondary accounts, see especially: Erickson, “Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart”, pp. 33-34; Erickson, “At the Cultural and Religious Crossroads”, pp. 3, 122-123; Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 40; Mary V. Jordan, *To Louis from your sister who loves you, Sara Riel* (Toronto: Griffin House, 1974), pp. 70-86.

⁷² ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:pp. 246-247; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 134.

⁷³ AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 152, 154.

visions.⁷⁴ Finally, Légeard obtained permission from Grandin to re-consecrate the convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse. It became known officially as “l’École de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur” in August 1874.⁷⁵ Légeard expressed confidence that this re-consecration would bring “de grâces extraordinaires” to the school and to its pupils: “Ce divin cœur ne manquera pas, j’en suis sûr, de leur accorder les bénédictions que lui-même a promis à tous ceux qui l’honoreront.”⁷⁶

This re-consecration was an expression of renewed commitment to residential education in the early 1870s. A sense of urgency infused Oblate writing on the subject after the transfer of Rupertsland and the North Western Territory to the Dominion of Canada. Underlying this sense of urgency was a collective fear that Aboriginal peoples would shortly be displaced and marginalized by large-scale Euro-Canadian immigration and settlement. As early as 1873, Légeard predicted that “l’arrivée des blancs” would have dire consequences for Aboriginal peoples. “La civilisation gagne déjà de notre bord, ou du moins du bord de la prairie,” he reported to the Oblate General Administration in August of that year. “Tout cela est bel et bon, mais ce ne sera pas beaucoup pour l’avantage de nos sauvages et de nos métis qui vont tous disparaître peu à peu. Les étrangers n’attendent plus que le moment où le traité sera conclu entre les sauvages de la prairie et le gouvernement canadien pour se jeter sur la vallée de la

⁷⁴ AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère”, Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877; “Missions d’Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), p. 453.

⁷⁵ AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l’établissement des Sœurs Grises à l’Île à la Crosse,” 2:pp. 201, 204; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 143, 145, 159, 162.

⁷⁶ AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 154.

Siskatchewan [sic] et ailleurs.”⁷⁷ Grandin made a similar prediction two years later in a circular issued to the Oblates and Grey Nuns of the Diocese of Saint-Albert. He insisted, however, that the ills of *la civilisation moderne* could be tempered through the initiative of missionaries:

Les différentes tribus sauvages, qui se partagent l’immense territoire de l’Amérique du Nord peuvent grâce au zèle patient et dévoué du missionnaire se convertir à la foi et devenir de bons chrétiens, mais continuant leur vie errante et malheureuse, ces pauvres Indiens ne pourront être amenés à une vie civilisée et resteront par conséquent toujours sauvages.

Par suite de l’annexion de leur territoire au Canada, leur pays de chasse est et va être de plus en plus habité par des étrangers ; leur chasse déjà précaire va devenir nulle, la misère s’en suivra et se joignant à l’immoralité dont trop souvent les peuples civilisés leur donnent l’exemple, ils se perdront physiquement et moralement.

Il y a longtemps que les missionnaires prévoient avec peine ce malheur qu’ils voudraient à tout prix éviter ou au moins retarder. Ils ont constaté par de nombreuses expériences que les sauvages, pris dès l’enfance, peuvent être instruits et civilisés ; de jeunes Indiens élevés dans nos orphelinats ou même confiés à des familles catholiques ont par le fait cessé d’être sauvage et pourront vivre honnêtement du fruit de leur travail et faire partie de la société. Pour faire une œuvre si importante, les missionnaires n’ont d’autres moyens que les secours que leur fournissent la Propagation de la foi. Ils n’ont donc pu qu’essayer et prouver par leurs succès que la civilisation des sauvages par les petits enfants est possible, mais il leur faut les moyens d’accomplir cette œuvre.⁷⁸

In other words, the imminent physical and moral degeneration of Aboriginal peoples could be forestalled – or at least mitigated – by missionary intervention in Aboriginal childhood. Whereas the behaviours and lifestyles of adults were deemed fixed and unalterable, those of children were deemed eminently mutable. Missionaries could harness this mutability to effect a transformation among Aboriginal peoples and thereby

⁷⁷ AD, G LPP 2201, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 29, 1873.

⁷⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 965, Box 33, Grandin “aux R^{des} Missionnaires O.M.I. de St. Albert et des environs et à communiquer aux R^{des} sœurs,” Marseilles, Mars 24, 1875.

prepare them for the encroachment of Euro-Canadian settlement.⁷⁹ The convent boarding school seemed a particularly well-suited institution for this purpose; indeed, it had been at the core of the Oblates' civilizing project for over a decade. In order to meet the vicissitudes of the 1870s, however, this institution would need to be thoroughly revamped. It would need to intensify its assimilative capacity. It would need to enrol, lodge, feed and clothe greater numbers of children. Above all, it would need to obtain a significant increase in funding.

In hopes of meeting this financial challenge, Oblates turned to their long-established underwriter – *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. At the dawn of the 1870s, this society remained the principal financier of Oblate missionary activity in the Northwest Territories and Grandin commended it to Pope Pius IX as “la bienfaitrice temporelle du Diocèse de Saint-Albert.”⁸⁰ In 1872, Grandin requested that *l'Œuvre*

⁷⁹ Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 186, 194-195; Claude Champagne, “Mission et civilisation dans l'Ouest canadien : Vital Grandin, 1829-1902,” *La Société canadienne d'histoire de l'église catholique, Sessions d'études*, Vol. 50 (1983), pp. 342-343, 348-353.

⁸⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Grandin to “Monsieur le Secrétaire” (secretary of the Lyons council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*), Rome, November 26, 1873. It should be noted, however, that another French society – *l'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance* – had begun supporting Oblate missions in the Northwest by the early 1870s. Established in 1843 by Charles-Auguste de Forbin-Janson, Bishop of Nancy (1823-1844), *l'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance* provided funds to promote the baptism and education of children in foreign mission fields. Grandin does not appear to have received regular assistance from this society before 1869 or 1870. In 1868 he declared that he had no revenue other than his annual allocation from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, but added: “J'ai l'espérance d'être assisté par la Ste Enfance.” By the mid 1870s, he was receiving an annual allocation from *l'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance*, but this amount was significantly less than his annual allocation from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. For example, in 1876, he received 5,000 francs from *l'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance* versus 49,000 francs from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. See: CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10824, “État des recettes et dépenses présumées pour l'année 1868”; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 915, Box 32, “État des recettes et dépenses présumées pour l'année 1876-77”; “Compte-rendu,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), p. 328; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 41, 59, 98; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 69-71. On Bishop Forbin-Janson and the establishment of *l'Œuvre de la Sainte-Enfance*, see: Philippe

increase his annual allocation so that he could improve the existing schools in his diocese and establish several new ones. To publicise this project and elicit donations from associates of *l'Œuvre*, Grandin embarked on an extensive lecturing tour through several dioceses in France the following year.⁸¹ He also made use of *l'Œuvre*'s official periodical – *Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* – to reach the broader French Catholic reading public. In the 1872 edition of *Les Annales*, Grandin extolled the civilizing potential of the convent boarding schools through a panegyric on Grey Nuns' establishment at Île-à-la-Crosse:

Depuis dix ans, quatre Sœurs de charité, dites de la *Congrégation des Sœurs grises* de Montréal, nous prêtent le secours de leur zèle et de leur dévouement. Les sujets de cet institut se dépensent sans mesure dans plusieurs de nos maisons ; mais le bien qu'elles font est plus sensible à l'Île-à-la-Crosse qu'ailleurs... Plus de quarante enfants, dont trente sont pensionnaires, et bon nombre nés de parents sauvages, y reçoivent une éducation vraiment soignée et solide. Plusieurs d'entre eux écrivent et parlent le français avec tant de correction, qu'en assistant aux examens on ne se croit plus exilé du beau pays de France. Ces enfants pensionnaires sont répartis dans les deux maisons : les petits garçons chez les Pères, les petites filles chez les Sœurs. On parle beaucoup de civiliser les sauvages. Je ne vois point de meilleur moyen que de les prendre enfants. Tous ceux qui sortent de nos écoles, non seulement n'ont

Sylvain, "Charles-Auguste-Marie-Joseph de Forbin-Janson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 7 (1836-1850).

⁸¹ Between August 1873 and February 1874, Grandin lectured in favour of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* in cathedrals, parish churches, seminaries and schools in the (arch)dioceses of Dijon, Laval, Poitiers, Bordeaux, Nevers, Autun, Tours, Lyons, Grenoble, Marseilles, Montpellier, Bourges, Mende, Rodez, Clermont-Ferrand, Besançon, Nancy, Saint-Dié and possibly Limoges. As a beneficiary of *l'Œuvre*, Grandin was forbidden to elicit private donations for his diocese. Instead, he was required to elicit support for *l'Œuvre* and then to content himself with an annual allocation disbursed by the central councils in Paris and Lyons. See: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Grandin to "M.M. les Présidents et M.M. les Conseillers de la Propagation de la foi à Lyons et à Paris," Autun, August 10, 1873; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Grandin to "Monsieur le Président," Paris, September 1, 1873; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Grandin to Leduc, Saint-Andelain (Diocese of Nevers), September 23, 1873; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 965, Box 33, Grandin to "Mes Révérends Pères et bien chers Frères," Saint-Andelain, September 24, 1873; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 914, Box 32, Grandin to "Monsieur le Président," Autun, February 25, 1874; Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, pp. 260-267.

plus rien de sauvage dans les mœurs, mais nous pouvons prévoir qu'ils formeront plus tard des familles vraiment chrétiennes.

Nos écoles ne sont pas très-coûteuses, et cependant nous ne pouvons les multiplier, parce qu'il nous faut seuls en faire le frais, les parents ne pouvant ni ne voulant rien faire pour cela. Si, au lieu de trente pensionnaires, nous pouvions en loger et en nourrir cent, nous les aurions demain. Ces sauvages, dont les enfants sont chez nous, sont fiers de ce que, comme ils disent, leurs enfants sont devenus Français, et une foule d'autres parents nous importunent sans cesse pour nous faire accepter les leurs, afin qu'eux aussi deviennent Français. Que nos écoles et nos missions se multiplient, et les sauvages finiront par disparaître sans cesser d'exister.⁸²

Grandin's panegyric – tailored specifically for a French Catholic readership – presented the convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse as a model to be replicated throughout the Diocese of Saint-Albert. This replication would accelerate an ongoing civilizing process that transformed “sauvages” into Frenchmen and Frenchwomen – a process that had already created an oasis of French Catholicism in the wilderness of British North America. This replication could only occur, however, through an increase in financial support from *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*.

Through his entreaties, Grandin did obtain incremental gains in his allocation from *l'Œuvre* over the course of the 1870s.⁸³ Yet he confided to his confrères that these gains were sorely insufficient to effect any substantial improvements in residential

⁸² “Lettre de Mgr Grandin à MM. les membres des Conseils centraux de l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. Fort Pitt (mission de Saint-François Régis), 10 janvier 1870,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 44 (1872), pp. 282-283.

⁸³ See “Compte-rendu,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vols., 42-52 (1870-80). Grandin was allocated the following sums between 1869 and 1879: 38,150 francs in 1869; 26,000 francs in 1870; 39,500 francs in 1871; 43,160 francs in 1872; 46,315 francs in 1873; 45,135 francs in 1874; 47,000 francs in 1875; 49,000 francs in 1876; 48,000 francs in 1877; 49,000 francs in 1878; and 50,611 francs in 1879. The decrease in his allocation in 1870 resulted from the Franco-Prussian War and subsequent civil unrest during the Paris Commune. These episodes strained *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* to its limits by destroying its communications network and halting its flow of finances. See especially: “À nos associés,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 43 (1871), pp. 157-169; “Compte-rendu,” *ibid.*, pp. 391-393.

education in the Diocese of Saint-Albert.⁸⁴ By spring 1875, Grandin had resolved to solicit additional funding outside the auspices of *l'Œuvre*. He eagerly endorsed a proposal by Légeard for the sponsorship – or “l’adoption” – of schoolchildren at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur (formerly Saint-Bruno) by private benefactors in Europe.⁸⁵ Légeard recommended that the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste use their personal and professional contacts to find a sponsor for every schoolchild. Sponsors could be individuals, families, schools, seminaries, convents, parish congregations or even commercial enterprises. Each sponsor would donate at least fifty francs per year to feed, clothe and shelter a schoolchild. In return, sponsors would receive special mention in the schoolchildren’s daily prayers. An additional honour would be reserved for sponsors of orphans and foundlings (who generally incurred greater expenses than did “les enfants du fort”): “Nous donnerons aux orphelins que nous recevrons *le nom* de ceux qui voudront bien s’en charger ou du moins le nom de l’une des personnes qui auront prit part à cette bonne œuvre et que l’on voudra bien nous désigner.”⁸⁶ Grandin’s elder brother – a Parisian layman – received this honour in 1875 after he agreed to

⁸⁴ Grandin made this observation repeatedly, especially in the second half of the 1870s. See for instance: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 965, Box 33, Grandin “aux R^{ds} Missionnaires O.M.I. de St. Albert et des environs et à communiquer aux R^{des} sœurs,” Marseilles, Mars 24, 1875; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 919, Box 32, Grandin to Leduc, Paris, October 21, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Laval, April 16, 1879.

⁸⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 135; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” p. 13.

⁸⁶ AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875 (my italics). See also: Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 69, 80, 126-127.

sponsor a Chipewyan-speaking foundling who had lately been admitted to Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur. At his baptism, the child was given the name Joseph Grandin.⁸⁷

Although intended originally for the maintenance of schoolchildren at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur, Légeard's proposal became the basis of a large-scale project to finance residential education throughout the Diocese of Saint-Albert. In March 1878, Grandin announced his intention to create a new charitable association that would be known as *l'Œuvre des écoles du Nord-Ouest*. This association would consist of sponsors – or “adoptants” – who would collectively assume the costs of boarding, feeding and clothing Aboriginal schoolchildren in the diocese. Sponsors would be divided into four classes. A first-class sponsor would donate 400 francs per year and, in return, would have the privilege of bestowing his/her surname on a beneficiary. A second-class sponsor would be a group of four to eight members who would each contribute between fifty and 100 francs per year. They would decide among themselves which member would bestow his/her surname on a beneficiary. Third- and fourth-class sponsors would be groups of ten and twenty members who would each contribute “quelques francs ou quelques sous” per year.⁸⁸ To avoid overburdening France with an additional charitable association, Grandin sought to establish *l'Œuvre des écoles du*

⁸⁷ AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875; ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 2:pp. 212; Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, pp. 5-6. There is fragmentary evidence that a member of Légeard's family also sponsored an orphan or foundling at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur. In the table of contents of the *liber status animarum* of Île-à-la-Crosse, the genealogy of a “famille Légeard” is listed as beginning on page 178. Unfortunately, this page has been removed from the document. SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (*Liber Animarum*), p. 2.

⁸⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, “Circulaire de Mgr Grandin à ses missionnaires,” March-April, 1878. In a letter to a potential benefactor written two months earlier, Grandin had referred to this charitable association as *l'Œuvre de la civilisation des sauvages par les petits enfants*. See: CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10905, Grandin to “Madame”, Pontmain (department of Mayenne), January 17, 1878.

Nord-Ouest among Catholics in the United Kingdom and justified this decision on the grounds that the Aboriginal peoples in his diocese were British subjects. He enlisted support for his project from prominent British Catholics – including Father Robert Cooke (superior of the Oblates’ Anglo-Irish Province) and Dr. Henry Edward Cardinal Manning (Archbishop Westminster and titular head of English Catholicism).⁸⁹ Yet while preparing a journey to London to meet with potential sponsors in June 1878, Grandin was stopped in his tracks by the intervention of the Paris council of *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. Members of this council had read published reports of Grandin’s intention to establish “une Œuvre Sœur de la Propagation de la Foi en Angleterre” and had become wary of a possible competitor.⁹⁰ Léon Colin de Verdière – the seventy-seven-year-old president of the Paris council – consequently wrote to Grandin and threatened to withhold his allocation until he renounced *l’Œuvre des écoles du Nord-Ouest*. “Nous avons la ferme et très-douce confiance,” added Colin de Verdière with Parisian aplomb, “qu’en renonçant à ce qui serait une violation complète de l’Œuvre [*de la Propagation de la Foi*], vous nous permettrez de continuer au diocèse de S^t Albert une assistance qui a toujours été pour nous une de nos meilleures

⁸⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 919, Box 32, Grandin to Robert Cooke, N.D. de Sion (Paris), July 5, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 974, Box 33, Grandin, “Remarques importantes sur le plan d’association en faveur des écoles du Nord-Ouest,” 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 959, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” pp. 199, 275. On Father Robert Cooke and the Oblates’ Anglo-Irish Province, see especially: Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 3:pp. 326-345. On Cardinal Archbishop Manning, see especially: Robert Gray, *Cardinal Manning: a biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); James Pereiro, *Cardinal Manning: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁹⁰ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10911-a, François-Adolphe Certes (treasurer of the Paris council), “Lettre de M. Marquis” and “Réponse,” June 1, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Paris, June 17, 1878. On François-Adolphe Certes and his tenure as treasurer of the Paris council (1857-1887), see especially: “Nécrologie,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol., 59 (1887), p. 200.

consolations.”⁹¹ Seeking to defend his project before the Paris council, Grandin insisted that *l'Œuvre des écoles du Nord-Ouest* would pose no threat to *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* because the two organisations would have different functions and would draw their funds from different sources.⁹² The council was unmoved by this argument; it promptly reissued its threat to cut off Grandin’s annual allocation.⁹³ Unable to forgo this allocation – insufficient though it was – Grandin officially abandoned his plan to establish *l'Œuvre des écoles du Nord-Ouest* on June 24, 1878.⁹⁴ He subsequently confided to Taché that *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* had asserted a paralysing grip on the Diocese of Saint-Albert: “Avec ce système exclusif de la Propagation de la foi, nous somme condamnés à toujours végéter, sans pouvoir grandir, sans pouvoir sortir de l’état de caste où nous vivons...”⁹⁵

⁹¹ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10911-b, Léon Colin de Verdière to Grandin, Paris, June 7, 1878. See also: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Colin de Verdière to Grandin, Paris, June 7, 1878. On Colin de Verdière and his tenure as president of the Paris council (1873-1885), see especially: “Nécrologie,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol., 57 (1885), p. 120.

⁹² “Voilà donc, Mr le Président, ce que je veux faire: créer en Angleterre, surtout, une œuvre d’adoption pour les pauvres sauvages des différents diocèses des possessions anglaises de l’Amérique du Nord ; civiliser ainsi, et rendre capables de vivre de leur travail, les pauvres sauvages que, grâce à *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, nous avons pu convertir... L’œuvre projetée diffère absolument de celle que vous dirigez avec tant de dévouement, et à laquelle nous devons tout ; sans laquelle nous ne pouvons rien.” CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10906, Grandin to Colin de Verdière, Paris, June 7, 1878.

⁹³ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10907, Grandin to Certes, Paris, June 22, 1878; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, N.D. de Sion (Paris), June 30, 1878.

⁹⁴ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10908, Grandin to “Monsieur le Président et Messieurs,” Paris, June 24, 1878.

⁹⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T20652-T20655, Grandin to Taché, Angoulême (department of Charente), July 21, 1878. Grandin was profoundly humiliated and embittered by his conflict with the Paris council of *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. In his personal memoirs – written a full twenty years after this incident – he expressed resentment that a council consisting chiefly of laymen had had the audacity to overturn the initiative of a bishop. In his estimation, these Parisian laymen had been motivated more by commercial interests than by the glory of God: “Ces bons laïques sont pour la plupart d’heureux commerçants et ils administrent *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* comme une compagnie commerciale... [L]es évêques missionnaires dépendent presque autant d’eux que du Pape... [J]e déplore que les directeurs de

No longer able to rely exclusively on the largesse of Catholic benefactors in Europe, Oblates in the Diocese of Saint-Albert turned to a new potential source of funding – the government of the Dominion of Canada. In January 1875, Grandin wrote to Alexander Morris – Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories – and informed him that Oblates and Grey Nuns were operating convent boarding schools at Île-à-la-Crosse, Lac La Biche and Saint-Albert. Grandin affirmed that these schools were integral elements of an ongoing civilizing project and insisted that the Dominion government had a vested interest in supporting them so as to facilitate the transformation of “sauvages” into productive citizens. “On ne doit pas ignorer,” noted Grandin, “[que] l’unique moyen de civiliser les sauvages c’est de les prendre petits-enfants. Moi, tous mes missionnaires et les pieuses religieuses qui se dévouent à l’instruction de nos enfants, nous ne pouvons douter que le Gouvernement de sa Majesté ne vienne à notre aide pour une œuvre si éminemment civilisatrice.”⁹⁶ The following year, Grandin commended these three schools to James Farquharson

cette belle œuvre s’opposent au bien qui serait fait par une autre voie... [L]e grand nombre de ces pieux laïques jugent des choses de Dieu comme des affaires commerciales et font humainement l’œuvre de Dieu... et pour cette raison je verrais avec plaisir l’administration de cette œuvre importante confiée à des ecclésiastiques ou religieux, sous le contrôle immédiat de la Propagande [i.e., the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, the Vatican department responsible for coordinating missionary activity and for promoting the interests of Catholics living in predominantly non-Catholic countries].” PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 959, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” p. 200. Grandin’s wish was fulfilled two decades later. In 1922, the headquarters of *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* were transferred to Rome and the organisation was placed under the administrative control of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. See: Baumont, “Une Source de l’Histoire du XIX^e et du Début du XX^e Siècle,” p. 165; Roberto Perin, *Rome in Canada: The Vatican and Canadian Affairs in the Late Victorian Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 40-42.

⁹⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 915, Box 32, Grandin to “son excellence, le Lieutenant Gouverneur de Manitoba,” Saint-Albert, January 4, 1875. On Alexander Morris and his tenure as Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories (1872-1876), see especially: Jean Friesen, “Alexander Morris,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 11 (1881-1890); Robert J. Talbot, *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual and Political Biography of Alexander Morris* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2009).

Macleod – stipendiary magistrate for the Northwest Territories and former assistant commissioner of the North West Mounted Police – and urged him to use his government connections to obtain federal funding for them. The bishop assured Macleod that the convent boarding school was the most effective and the most economical means of redeeming “les sauvages”:

A S^t Albert, à l’Ile à la Crosse et au Lac la Biche, nous élevons au moins soixante enfants... Je puis certifier que ces enfants à quelque nation qu’ils appartiennent ne sont plus sauvages en sortant de chez nous. Ils ne pourraient sans doute figurer dans les sociétés choisies de nos pays civilisés, mais parmi les Métis et colons ordinaires de nos pays, ils peuvent tenir leur place avec honneur. L’expérience prouve que la civilisation tue les sauvages et les fait disparaître ; plus de vingt années d’expérience me prouvent à moi que notre manière de civiliser ne tue point, et si au lieu de trois orphelinats j’en avais dix ou plus, et si au lieu d’élever seulement 15 ou 20 enfants dans chacun de ces établissements nous pouvions en avoir cent ou plus, la civilisation ferait bientôt disparaître les sauvages sans les faire mourir. En sortant de nos maisons ces enfants n’ont plus rien de sauvage que le sang, ils ont même oublié leur langue naturelle, si bien que la vie sauvage ne leur est plus possible ; nous leur inspirons pour ce genre de vie un dégoût prononcé, en sorte qu’ils sont humiliés quand on leur rappelle leur origine. Vous le voyez, Colonel, il ne s’agit pas de faire ici des moines ou des dévots de notre Religion, il s’agit uniquement de faire des hommes. Grâce aux efforts combinés des prêtres, des frères et des Sœurs de Charité, dans leur sphère réciproque, je puis dire que nous pouvons réussir dans ce but, plus facilement et plus économiquement que qui que ce soit. Gardant tous le célibat n’ayant par conséquent personne à pourvoir après nous, nous ne pensons qu’à nos œuvres, nous ne voyons qu’elles, nous ne vivons que pour elles.⁹⁷

Grandin thus presented the convent boarding school as an ideal adjunct to the Canadian state. By sponsoring this institution, the state could hasten the transformation of “les sauvages” into industrious, conscientious and self-sufficient individuals – “*des hommes*” – who would contribute meaningfully to a settler society and raise civilized

⁹⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 915, Box 32, Grandin to “Colonel M^cLeod [sic], Magistrat stipendiaire du Nord-Ouest,” Saint-Albert, January 3, 1876. Underlined passages (“des moines ou des dévots de notre Religion” and “faire des hommes”) appear in the original document. On James Farquharson Macleod and his judicial career in the Northwest Territories (1876-1894), see especially: Roderick Charles Macleod, “James Farquharson Macleod,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 12 (1891-1900).

children. The bishop emphasized two particular benefits of the convent boarding school in order to garner the support of government officials. First, graduates of this institution could never revert to “la vie sauvage” because they had been thoroughly acculturated to European/Euro-Canadian habits of thought and behaviour and because they had been inculcated with contempt for ancestral ways. Second, the operational costs of the convent boarding school were comparatively lower than those of Protestant educational institutions. Oblates and Grey Nuns laboured *gratis pro Deo* and were unencumbered by the obligation to provide for spouses and children. They therefore offered the promise of a better return on state investment in residential education.

To assist Grandin in his bid for federal support, Légeard petitioned for subsidies to Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur. On April 3, 1874, a federal order-in-council authorized the payment of \$300.00 per year to each “Indian school” attended by at least twenty-five pupils in the Diocese of Saint-Albert. Légeard subsequently notified the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories that Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur was attended by upwards of forty pupils and that it was duly entitled to an annual subvention. Accordingly, the convent boarding school received a payment of \$300.00 in 1875 and another in 1876.⁹⁸ The following year, however, the school was denied further subvention on the grounds that it lay outside the limits of Treaty Six – signed initially at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt in late August and early September 1876 by Crown officials

⁹⁸ LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10113, file no. 7780, “Privy Council’s Report on Grants to Schools at Lac La Biche, Isle a la Crosse and St. Albert,” 1877; LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10117, file no. 10125, “Ile-a-la-Crosse Agency – Reverend Mr. Legard’s [sic] Report on the School at Ile-a-la-Crosse,” 1878; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 168; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 117.

and representatives of bands of Plains Cree, Woods Cree, Saulteaux and Chipewyan.⁹⁹ In an effort to obtain a renewal of federal funding, Légeard wrote to David Laird – Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories – on March 25, 1878, and drew his attention to the clause in Treaty Six which obliged the Crown to “maintain schools for instruction... whenever the Indians of the reserve shall desire it.”¹⁰⁰ The most effective way to fulfill this obligation, insisted Légeard, was to support Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur:

It is true one could tell us we are not properly speaking on the ground comprised in the Treaties made by the Government with the Indians of the North West, but a Government as liberal as the one that rules Canada actually will not look so narrowly, I hope, from the moment the question is the promotion of education in a portion of these countries of the North West he [sic] desires so much to civilise. He [sic] will not I trust refuse to come to the help of the most ancient school now existing in the North West, the only one in the English River District. More so I will take leave to make Your Honour observe that this school is open to all of any religion. It is true we only have Catholic children actually, but at different periods we had few Protestant ones, their parents were in the Company service and they entrusted them to our care. Moreover allow me to say that although we are not really in the territories included in the Treaty, we depend from [sic] them in some way. At the time of the Treaty made in 1876 between Her Majesty, Our Most Gracious Queen, and the Indians of the Plains at Carlton and at Fort Pitt, the Government engaged himself [sic] to give to each band who adheres to the Treaty school and teachers. The Indians of Green Lake who have taken the Treaty at Carlton, and the Chipewyans at Fort Pitt would have the right to ask for a school, and the Government I am sure would do all in his [sic] power to satisfy them, but the band of Green Lake and that of Cold Lake are really not in number sufficient to have a school each, they will not ask for one, but finding a school all organized, as much as they can

⁹⁹ “Copy of Treaty No. 6 between Her Majesty the Queen and the Plain and Wood Cree Indians and other Tribes of Indians at Fort Carlton, Fort Pitt and Battle River with Adhesions” (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, F.R.S.C., Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1964); Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories: Including the Negotiations On Which They Were Based, and Other Information Relating Thereto* (Toronto: Bedfords, Clarke & Co, 1880), pp. 168-244.

¹⁰⁰ “Copy of Treaty No. 6”; Morris, *The Treaties of Canada*, p. 353. On David Laird and his tenure as first resident Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories (1876-1881), see especially: Andrew Robb, “David Laird,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 14 (1911-1920).

they will ask us to instruct their children as they have done and as they would do more than ever if they knew we could accept them. We have some of Green Lake, and lately a request has been made from Cold Lake to place a child in the summer. For all these reasons it would be preferable it seems to me to support a large school where the teaching is better organized, where there is more emulation, than to try to establish many small schools that would not maintain themselves certainly.¹⁰¹

Légeard's letter – sprinkled liberally with Gallicisms – outlined the practical advantages of off-reserve education for the Cree and Chipewyan children of Green Lake and Cold Lake. These children would have better educational opportunities at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur than at smaller – and as yet nonexistent – schools on their reserves. They would be better taught, better supervised and better accommodated at “the most ancient school now existing in the North West.” Légeard noted also that the children would receive a solid grounding in both French and English, as the Grey Nuns had been giving English lessons at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur since autumn 1873.¹⁰²

Another advantage identified by Légeard was the large contingent of “Half-breed children” at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur. Légeard's letter to Laird contains the

¹⁰¹ LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10117, file no. 10125, “Ile-a-la-Crosse Agency – Reverend Mr. Legard's [sic] Report on the School at Ile-a-la-Crosse,” March 25, 1878.

¹⁰² Ibid. In his report to the Oblate General Administration for 1873, Légeard noted the Grey Nuns began teaching English at the request of HBC Chief Factor William Joseph Christie. During his sojourn in Montreal the previous winter (1872-1873), Christie had visited the Grey Nuns' motherhouse and had met the Mother Superior: “[Christie] lui fit part de la satisfaction qu'il avait éprouvé en visitant notre école ; mais en même temps, il lui avoua combien il regrettaît qu'on n'y enseignât pas l'anglais, cette langue devenant de plus en plus nécessaire dans le pays. L'ordre fut immédiatement donné de Montréal de commencer l'enseignement de l'anglais, ce qui va donner à notre école une importance de plus en plus grande.” Quoted in “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 134. On June 20, 1876, Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur held its first public exam in both French and English. Légeard subsequently described this exam in a report to *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*: “Les matières de l'examen, moitié en français, moitié en anglais, étaient entremêlées de chansons dans les deux langues... Au dire de tout le monde, cet examen a été le plus beau de tous ceux qui ont eu lieu à l'île à la Crosse. Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est qu'il a été le plus complet, car c'était la première fois qu'il comprenait l'anglais et le français réunis.” “Missions d'Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), p. 449. See also: ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 1:p. 247.

earliest pronouncement by an Oblate that the majority of the schoolchildren were of mixed European and Aboriginal ancestry. This majority had purportedly remained consistent since the early 1860s: “During the first years also Half-breed children were more admitted than Indian ones, room missing absolutely to receive many Indian children, and so much the more that from the opening of the school, all the pupils were boarders.” According to Légeard, this core of mixed-blood pupils would exercise a “civilising influence” on Cree and Chipewyan children recruited from Treaty Six territory.¹⁰³ Informing Légeard’s projection was a growing tendency among Oblates to advertise the instrumentality of mixed-blood children in their correspondence with government officials. In April 1875, for instance, Grandin had written to Laird – then federal Minister of the Interior – and had characterized mixed-blood children as “des personnes plus avancées dans la civilisation.” The bishop ascribed to them a salutary role in the civilizing project:

J’ai l’avantage... [d’]avoir trois [orphelinats] dans mon Diocèse, où sont élevés une cinquantaine d’enfants métis et sauvages. On parle de civiliser les sauvages[,...] quinze ans d’expérience ne me permettent pas de douter qu’on ne puisse réussir en élevant les petits enfants. Beaucoup sans doute ne pourront recevoir une éducation complète ; mais au moins ils cessent de parler leur langue sauvage, s’accoutument au travail ; la vie sauvage ne leur est plus possible, ils peuvent prendre rang et se confondre avec les Métis avec lesquels nous les marierons sans trop de difficulté et ils finiront ainsi je n’en doute pas par former de bonnes familles qui n’auront plus rien de sauvage que le sang. Si donc au lieu de trois orphelinats j’en avais un certain nombre et si je pouvais y admettre tous les petits sauvages qu’on voudrait bien nous donner, nous avancerions la civilisation et il me semble qu’il serait digne d’un bon gouvernement de favoriser de pareilles œuvres : celle-ci est éminemment civilisatrice.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10117, file no. 10125, “Ile-a-la-Crosse Agency – Reverend Mr. Legard’s [sic] Report on the School at Ile-a-la-Crosse,” March 25, 1878.

¹⁰⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 915, Box 32, Grandin to “son Honneur le Ministre de l’Intérieur à Ottawa,” April 5, 1875. Champagne quoted a similar passage from Grandin’s writings on convent boarding schools: “Les enfants métis s’y trouvaient mêlés aux enfants sauvages, ces derniers bénéficiaient plus de ce contact que les autres ne pouvaient

Implicit in the statements of Légeard and Grandin was the notion of a spectrum of moral, social and cultural development between *la sauvagerie* at one pole and *la civilisation* at the other. “Half-breeds” or “Métis” occupied an intermediate – and potentially transitory – position between these poles. They could assist in impelling “les petits sauvages” along the spectrum towards *la civilisation* by serving as role models and by reinforcing new standards of thought and behaviour. Their mere presence enhanced the civilizing potential of convent boarding schools.¹⁰⁵

Yet despite repeatedly touting the merits of convent boarding schools, Oblates failed to obtain the level of federal funding that they considered necessary for the maintenance and growth of these institutions. They were particularly aggrieved by the refusal of Lawrence Vankoughnet – Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs – to consider renewing the annual subsidy to Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur in 1879 and again in 1880 on the grounds that the school was located outside Treaty Six territory. Their requests for smaller one-time grants were also denied for the same reason, such that Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur received virtually no federal assistance at the dawn of

perdre. [...] Presque tous nos enfants sauvages élevés dans nos établissements se mêlaient aux Métis et on ne les distinguait pas de ces derniers ; ce n'était pas la civilisation complète mais au moins c'était un bon commencement.” Quoted in Champagne, “Mission et civilisation dans l'Ouest canadien,” p. 353. On Laird's tenure as federal Minister of the Interior (1873-1876) during the Liberal administration of Alexander Mackenzie, see especially: Andrew Robb, “David Laird,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 14 (1911-1920).

¹⁰⁵ Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, p. 190; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 104. It is worth noting that Nicholas Flood Davin – author of the “Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds” (1879) – expounded similar views on the role of “mixed bloods” in the education of Aboriginal children. According to J.R. Miller, Davin “was unequivocal in his view that the role of mixed-blood people in [American residential] schools was an important part of their success. Turning to Canada, Davin applied the same lesson: ‘the mixed blood is the natural mediator between the Government and the red man, and also his natural instructor.’” Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, p. 101.

the 1880s.¹⁰⁶ Oblate displeasure with this situation soon festered into resentment and suspicion when Anglican schools in the Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River regions began receiving federal support in the mid 1880s, despite being located well outside treaty limits. Grandin expressed his ire at this apparently inequitable financial arrangement in a memoir penned in 1890:

[L'école] de l'Ile à la Crosse existe depuis 30 ans ; il y a en moyenne de 25 à 30 enfants depuis ce temps... Depuis que nous sommes dotés d'un Gouvernement régulier je n'ai cessé de réclamer des secours du Gouvernement pour [cet] établissement... On m'a toujours refusé, sous prétexte que les sauvages de l'Ile à la Crosse n'étaient pas du traité. J'étais convaincu qu'avec de la bonne volonté le Gouvernement pouvait quelque chose et il le montre cette année. À peine y a-t-il eu des établissements protestants au petit lac des Esclaves et à la Riv. la Paix que ces établissements reçoivent des secours du Gouvernement. Ce que je trouve très juste. Mais quelle raison de ne pas faire la même chose pour l'Ile à la Crosse? La raison tout le monde la voit et M.M. du Dépt. Ind. mieux que personne, c'est que cet établissement est catholique, on a beau dire, auprès de certains personnages. C'est un crime indélébile.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 932, Box 33, Grandin to Leduc, Battleford, September 16, 1889; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 928, Box 33, Grandin "to the Most Honorable Sir John A. Macdonald," c. 1887 (postscript); CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, "Mémoire de l'Evêque de Saint-Albert sur ses difficultés avec le Département Indien," 1890, pp. 369-371; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 976, Box 33, Grandin, "Diocèse de St. Albert, missions sauvages avant le traité," c. 1890, p. 12. There is fragmentary evidence of an exception to this rule. Sister Langelier's correspondence with Vankoughnet's office indicates that Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur was awarded four federal grants of \$75 for teachers' honoraria and for renovation work in 1879, but that only one of these grants was received. See: LAC/Black Series, microfilm C-10125, file no. 20505, "Northwest Territories – A Request from Bishop Grandin Regarding Money Sent to the Mission of Ile a la Crosse," March 19, 1880 (Langelier to Vankoughnet, Ile-à-la-Crosse, March 19, 1880). On Lawrence Vankoughnet and his tenure as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian affairs (1874-1893), see especially: Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), pp. 50-51, 66, 81-82, 108, 138, 142, 196; Douglas Leighton, "A Victorian Civil Servant at Work: Lawrence Vankoughnet and the Canadian Indian Department, 1874-1893" in I.A.L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier eds., *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), pp. 104-119.

¹⁰⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 976, Box 33, Grandin, "Diocèse de St. Albert, missions sauvages avant le traité," c. 1890, p. 12. The "établissements protestants" in question were likely the Anglican day school at St. Peter's Mission on Lesser Slave Lake (established in 1886) and the Irene Training School and Industrial Farm at Vermillion Mission on the Peace River (established in 1879). On these two establishments, see especially: *The*

The bishop perceived this “crime indélébile” as evidence of an insidious plot on the part of federal bureaucrats to discriminate against Catholic schools in favour of Protestant ones. He perceived further evidence of this plot in the administration of day schools and boarding schools on the reserves lately established under Treaty Six. According to Grandin, “Treaty Indians” had been guaranteed freedom of conscience and were therefore entitled to schools operated by the denomination of their choosing. He claimed, however, that officers, agents and employees of the Department of Indian Affairs (established in 1880) systematically violated the treaty rights of Catholic Indians by prohibiting Oblates from establishing schools on their reserves and – more commonly – by moving Catholic Indians away from pre-existing convent boarding schools.¹⁰⁸ Grandin informed the Oblate General Administration that the latter practice had effectively ruined several Catholic schools his diocese by 1887: “Bien que le Gouvernement lui-même soit assez libéral, nous avons pu nous convaincre qu’un trop grand nombre de ses agents sont tout le contraire ; pour des motifs inavouables et bien connus de nous, ils ont éloigné les sauvages de plusieurs de nos établissements et ont par là même, rendu ces établissements aussi inutiles que s’ils les avaient réduits en

Missionary Diocese of Athabasca (Toronto: The Literature Committee of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, 1907), pp. 13-15, 17-20; Abel, *Drum Songs*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Ottawa, November 8, 1887 (featuring a copy of Grandin’s letter to Thomas White – Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs – dated November 8, 1887). See also: Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 126-127, 178-186; Huel, “Western Oblate History” in *Western Oblate Studies 3 – Études oblates de l’ouest 3*, pp. 24-28; Jim Miller, “Denominational Rivalry in Indian Residential Education” in *Western Oblate Studies 2 – Études oblates de l’ouest 2*, pp. 139, 143, 155; Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada,” 113-114, 123-124. On Thomas White and his tenure as Minister of the Interior (1885-1888) and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (1887-1888) in the Macdonald administration, see especially: P.B. Waite, “Thomas White,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 11 (1881-1890).

cendres.”¹⁰⁹ Grandin attributed this trend partly to the discriminatory hiring practices of the Department of Indian Affairs. In November 1887, he informed his clergy that the department was staffed almost entirely by like-minded Protestants who were hostile to Catholic interests: “Ces employés, de haut et de bas... ne peuvent échapper aux influence de leur religion, excités qu’ils sont par leurs amis et surtout les ministres de leur culte : ceux-ci, se sentant appuyés, peuvent tout oser, tout entreprendre contre nous... [N]ous ne pouvons plus le dissimuler ; il y a un plan de persécution dirigé contre nous, qui s’accroît de plus en plus.”¹¹⁰

As their hopes of obtaining necessary financial support dwindled in tandem with their confidence in the federal bureaucracy, Oblates abandoned their resolve to maintain Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur as a large-scale residential institution. Three local developments contributed to this decision. The first was the loss of mission personnel

¹⁰⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 76, Box 2, Grandin, “Extrait du Rapport sur le Vicariat de St. Albert au Chapitre Général de la Congrégation des O.M.I. à Rome,” April 28, 1887, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, “Lettre de M^{gr} Vital Justin Grandin, O.M.I., Vicaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires O.M.I. dans le Diocèse de S. Albert et Évêque de ce même diocèse, aux RR. PP. Oblats missionnaires dans le diocèse,” Ottawa, November 18, 1887, p. 3. Grandin was not alone in his conviction that the Department of Indian Affairs discriminated against Catholics. This conviction was expressed by each of the bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Saint-Boniface – Taché, Faraud, Clut and, of course, Grandin. On behalf of these prelates, Taché presented a formal complaint against the Department of Indian Affairs to Lord Stanley of Preston – Governor General of Canada – in 1889. Taché alleged that the department did not treat Catholics “with the degree of impartiality that the law of the country guarantees.” He noted in particular that Catholics were so grossly underrepresented in the department itself “that it is impossible not to be surprised and astonished at it.” For instance, of the twenty-five Indian agents employed by the department in Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Keewatin, only two were Catholic. In response to the Oblates’ allegations, Vankoughnet offered assurances that department personnel observed a policy of strict religious neutrality and that they respected the freedom of conscience of Treaty Indians. PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Taché to “His Excellency the Governor General in Council,” 1889; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 182-185; Huel, “Western Oblate History” in *Western Oblate Studies 3 – Études oblates de l’ouest* 3, pp. 25, 28. On Frederick Arthur Stanley and his gubernatorial career, see especially: P.B. Waite, “Frederick Arthur Stanley,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 13 (1901-1910).

occasioned by the deaths of Légeard (June 1, 1879) and Riel (December 25 or 27, 1883).¹¹¹ Both deaths had serious repercussions on the quality of instruction and the level of surveillance at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur, but Légeard's was especially devastating as it portended the dissolution of an extensive network of private benefactors.¹¹² The second development was the depletion of the natural resource base in the immediate vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse. By the mid 1880s, the inhabitants of the Catholic mission and the HBC fort had drastically altered the surrounding landscape after decades of felling trees, sowing and harvesting crops, and husbanding livestock.¹¹³ Under these circumstances, Grandin doubted that his clergy could continue supplying the quantities of firewood and food required for the maintenance of a large "pensionnat". "Les ressources locales diminuent de plus en plus," the bishop observed to HBC Chief Factor Lawrence Clarke in October 1884. "La pêche devient de plus en

¹¹¹ While there is historiographical consensus on the cause of Riel's death (tuberculosis), there is a discrepancy on the date. According to Agnès and Pénard, she died on December 27, 1883. According to Erickson, she died on December 25, 1883. ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 18 (August 1879), pp. 400-402; ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 1 (March 1884), pp. 21-23; ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 2:pp. 226, 251-252; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 169-171, 190; Erickson, "Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart," p. 36; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 85, 142-143.

¹¹² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, "Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert," 1871, pp. 19, 135; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 80, 126.

¹¹³ Agnès and Pénard both commented on this transformation of the landscape. Agnès noted the following in her chronicle of mission life in January-February 1874: "Sur la fin de janvier, les dévoués Frères Nemoz et Paul partirent pour aller au chantier, afin d'équarrir du bois pour construire une étable et pour faire en même temps du bois de chauffage. C'est tout une difficulté de se procurer cet article aujourd'hui. Nos bons Sauvages, se campant le plus près possible de la Mission, détruisent, sans y regarder, tous les arbres ; et ceux qui se fixent à la Mission font de la terre neuve pour cultiver, de sorte que, sur la pointe de l'Île que la Mission occupe, il n'y a plus que les saules." Writing fifteen years later, Pénard noted that Île-à-la-Crosse had experienced drastic ecological erosion since 1846: "Alors ce n'était qu'une sombre forêt. Aujourd'hui, hélas! la forêt a trop disparue, et il ne reste plus qu'une plage nue et désolée, brûlée du soleil, avec ses stériles collines de sable que le vent disperse et répand comme un suaire sur toute l'étendue de la presque île qu'occupe la mission." ASGM, Agnès, "Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse," 2:pp. 195-196; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 9.

plus précaire, le foin, le bois de chauffage, tout est plus difficile à se procurer qu'autrefois ; bientôt il faudra nourrir ces enfants... de provisions importées, et à ces conditions, il m'est impossible de soutenir cet établissement."¹¹⁴ The third development was the evacuation of the mission during the Northwest Rebellion in spring 1885.¹¹⁵ The immediate impetus for this evacuation was a rumour – relayed on April 28 by a panic-stricken HBC clerk – that a horde of marauding *sauvages* was coming to capture the mission and the fort at Île-à-la-Crosse. Alarmed at this rumour, Father Joseph Rapet and Factor Roderick Ross resolved to relocate their respective personnel and dependents to a guarded encampment on l'Île Sainte-Croix – an islet in the rapids of the English River.¹¹⁶ Preparations for the relocation were frenzied and slapdash: mission stores were dumped into ox-carts and barges; fishing nets were abandoned in the lake; fields were left unploughed; seeds were left unsown. After more than a month in self-

¹¹⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 928, Box 33, Grandin to Lawrence Clarke, Saint-Laurent de Grandin, October 14, 1884. Grandin had been concerned about this depletion of natural resources for at least four years before writing to Clarke. In 1880, for instance, the bishop made the following observation in his private notes: “[T]oute cette pointe est maintenant découverte et... on ne peut plus y trouver du bois de chauffage comme autrefois; les animaux domestiques peuvent à peine y vivre durant l’été.” PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1871, p. 18. Information on Lawrence Clarke and his employment history with the HBC (1851-1890) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/clarke_lawrence.pdf (accessed July 27, 2010).

¹¹⁵ The most detailed eye-witness account of the evacuation was written by Sister Langelier and appears in ASGM, “Sur le bord de la Rivière aux Anglais, 19 Mai 1885,” *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l’Institut*, No. 12 (July 1885), pp. 251-258. Pénard also produced a detailed account of the evacuation based on the recollections of Father Joseph Rapet, Father Louis Dauphin, Brother Félix-Victor Marcilly, Brother Fabien Labelle and Brother Auguste Némoz. Pénard’s account appears in “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 192-202.

¹¹⁶ Information on Roderick Ross’s employment history and residence at Île-à-la-Crosse (as Factor in charge of the English River District, 1884-1885) is available online through the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/r/ross_roderick1857-1889.pdf (accessed July 27, 2010).

imposed exile, the “réfugiés” returned to Île-à-la-Crosse on May 30 and found that neither mission nor fort had been touched by rebel hands. They also found that their exile had taken a serious toll on their material position, making it impossible for Oblates and Grey Nuns to continue providing daily food and fuel for a large contingent of schoolchildren. Rapet was therefore left with little alternative but to re-introduce “le système d’externes” whereby children with relatives in the vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse would be enrolled as day pupils. Only six orphans – three girls and three boys – would remain in residence at the mission; the other thirty would return to their families every evening. Thus, when classes resumed on June 1, 1885, Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur began operating primarily as a day school.¹¹⁷

The abandonment of the large-scale “pensionnat” was a source of bitter disappointment to Oblates. In January 1889, a sullen Rapet informed the Oblate General Administration that a day school could provide only a limited education to local children, whom he described as “des enfants qui n’ont aucun goût pour l’étude et dont le seul désir est de quitter l’école le plus tôt possible”. Nevertheless, he conceded that the Grey Nuns were making tolerable progress with their day pupils.¹¹⁸ Rapet and

¹¹⁷ Writing in 1898, Pénard asserted that the origins of the “système d’externe” at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur could be traced directly to “l’hégire à l’Île S^{te} Croix” in April-May 1885: “[C]ette équipée... avait fait gaspiller pas mal les ressources de la mission, et le résultat fut qu’au retour de l’Île S^{te} Croix, on s’aperçut qu’il était absolument impossible de reprendre en pension les enfants qu’on avait été obligé de rendre à leurs familles avant le départ. On ne put garder à la mission que trois orphelins et trois orphelines... [L]es enfants, ne demeurant presque tous qu’à quelques pas de la mission, pourraient bien venir assister aux classes en qualité d’externes, sans qu’il fût absolument nécessaire de les garder tous en pension. Cette découverte... fit germer le projet d’une classe d’externes. La classe s’ouvrit dès le 1^{er} Juin ; et dès ce jour-là une trentaine d’externes se firent inscrire... L’école se maintint donc... mais les charges de la mission furent diminuées de plus de moitié.” “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 201.

¹¹⁸ “Lettre du R.P. Rapet, supérieur de l’Île-à-la-Crosse. Mission Saint-Jean-Baptiste, l’Île-à-la-Crosse, le 1^{er} janvier 1889.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 106 (June 1889), p. 172.

his confrères attributed this progress to Sister Marguerite Brabant, who had arrived from Saint-Boniface in July 1888 and who had begun teaching at Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur the following autumn.¹¹⁹ In the “Codex Historicus de l’Île à la Crosse”, Father Jean-Marie Pénard described Brabant as “métisse d’origine” and posited a natural affinity between her and the day pupils: “Métisse elle-même, elle connaissait bien les métis, et savait comment les prendre.”¹²⁰ While registering tepid satisfaction with the progress of the day pupils, Oblates pinned greater hopes on the small contingent of orphans who remained under the constant supervision of mission personnel. These orphans were deemed more readily civilizable because of their isolation from family members and their perpetual immersion in the company of clergy. Additionally, Oblates persisted in the belief that the rearing of “des orphelins sauvages” entitled the mission to a modicum of federal financial assistance. Hence, over the course of the late 1880s and 1890s, Rapet and Vicar Apostolic Albert Pascal petitioned repeatedly for funding from the Department of Indian Affairs.¹²¹

Their efforts finally bore fruit in autumn 1897. In preparation for the negotiation of Treaty Eight (1899), the Department of Indian Affairs initiated a major expansion of funding for schools in the northern portions of the Northwest Territories and British

¹¹⁹ ASGM, updates from various daughter houses, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l’Institut*, No. 11 (September 1888), pp. 161-162; ASGM, untitled excerpt from Agnès’ letter, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l’Institut*, No. 14 (January and February 1889), p. 232; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 214.

¹²⁰ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 214.

¹²¹ “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Rapport de M^{sr} Pascal, vicaire apostolique.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 121 (March 1893), pp. 18, 21; CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10846, Albert Pascal to the Central Councils of *L’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*, Prince Albert, December 3, 1895; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 77, Box 2, “Rapport du Vicariat de Saskatchewan,” Prince Albert, February 1898; “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 261.

Columbia.¹²² Within this context, the department recognized Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur as a boarding school and accepted to disburse per capita grants of \$72.00 per annum for twelve of its “Indian boarders”. The school received its first federal payment of \$864.00 the following spring.¹²³ In reporting this development to the Oblate General Administration, Pénard noted that Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur had begun generating regular revenue for the first time in its history and that it would eventually cease being a burden on the debt-ridden mission. To hasten its progress toward financial viability, Pénard considered increasing the enrolment of “les orphelins sauvages” over the following years: “Si nous pouvions obtenir que le nombre des pensionnaires du

¹²² It should be noted, however, that Île-à-la-Crosse was not included in Treaty Eight negotiations. Treaty Eight was intended to cover areas disrupted by the Klondike gold rush (1896-1898). Because of its location east of the principle thoroughfares to the Yukon, Île-à-la-Crosse was excluded from the Treaty Commissioner’s itinerary. Not until the signing of Treaty Ten in 1906 was the Île-à-la-Crosse area brought under treaty. See especially: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” p. 4; Abel, *Drum Songs*, p. 181; Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison, “Treaty Research Report: Treaty No. 10 (1906),” (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986), pp. 12-13, 17, 21, 24; Dennis F.K. Madill, “Treaty Research Report: Treaty Eight (1899),” (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986), pp. 6, 29, 38, 50.

¹²³ ASGM, “Ile à la Crosse,” *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l’Institut*, No. 13 (March and April 1898), pp. 621-622; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 295; “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 261. Beginning in 1883, the Department of Indian Affairs sponsored two distinct categories of residential institutions – industrial schools and boarding schools. The former were large establishments providing training in industrial skills and trades. They were generally located away from reserves. Boarding schools were smaller, more modest institutions that served as feeders for industrial schools. Boarding schools were generally located in closer proximity to reserves and were operated under the auspices of the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. In 1923, the Department of Indian Affairs fused industrial schools and boarding schools into a single administrative category – residential schools. See especially: Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 123-145, 148; Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, pp. 104, 114-141; Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada,” pp. 110-111, 114.

gouvernement soit un peu augmenté, l'orphelinat, au lieu d'être une charge, pourrait fournir un peu d'aide au reste de la Mission.¹²⁴»

For nearly four decades before its integration into the federal residential school system, the convent boarding school at Île-à-la-Crosse had served as the operative instrument in the Oblates' civilizing project. The school had been devised to transform local Aboriginal children into full members of *la civilisation chrétienne*. It was meant to reshape their patterns of thought and behaviour in accordance with contemporary French Catholic norms. Through a pedagogical regimen based on French and French-Canadian notions of childrearing, Aboriginal children were expected to become dutiful Catholics and fluent speakers of French. Their gender relations were to be reconfigured in preparation for their roles as Catholic wives, mothers, husbands and fathers – the progenitors of civilized families. Schoolgirls were to become the vanguard of a regenerated and emancipated womanhood, possessed of domestic skills and fully cognisant of a mother's civilizing vocation within the home. Schoolboys were to be taught care and respect for their future helpmates, whom they would support through diligent work outside the home. Both sexes were to undergo an inward moral improvement and an outward refinement of manners through constant supervision, intervention and role-modelling by missionaries.

Yet, after formulating this civilizing project in the late 1850s and 1860s, Oblates encountered continual challenges in implementing it over the following decades.

¹²⁴ “Lettre du R. P. Pénard au T.R.P. Général,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 261. See also: “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 295.

Among these challenges was the ambivalence – if not outright resistance – of local Aboriginal families. Oblates noted that many families were incorrigibly reluctant to contribute to the material welfare of the school and to enrol their children as “pensionnaires”. Another challenge was the Oblates’ perpetual struggle to maintain a productive relationship with their closest collaborators – the Grey Nuns. This relationship was fraught with tension arising from the imperative of celibacy and the ambiguous division of space, responsibility and power at the convent boarding school. Finally – and perhaps most critically – Oblates encountered tremendous difficulty in securing the financial resources necessary to maintain the school. Despite their repeated entreaties, Oblates were never able to obtain a sufficient increase in their allocation from *l’Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. Nor were they able to supplement this allocation with donations from other corporate benefactors. Their petitions for federal funding were equally unfruitful as the Dominion of Canada declined responsibility for schools located outside of treaty limits. By summer 1885, the school’s material needs had far outpaced its financial resources. Under the circumstances, Oblates had little alternative but to convert Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur into a day school and to retain only a small contingent of orphans as “pensionnaires”.

Thus, when Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur became a federal boarding school in 1898, it was a much attenuated version of the institution that Oblate had envisaged four decades earlier. In deviation from the original civilizing project, missionaries were compelled to relinquish their hold on most of their pupils each evening and to let them return to their families.

CHAPTER 4

“Les gens de cette place”:

Oblates and the categorization of indigeneity at Île-à-la-Crosse

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Oblate missionaries to Rupertsland and the North Western Territory occupied a liminal space between the western societies that produced them and the Aboriginal societies that they sought to evangelize. This position enabled them to serve as two-way conduits, transmitting western religious and cultural values to Aboriginal peoples while at the same time transmitting knowledge of Aboriginal peoples to interested parties in Europe, the United States and Canada. While the former transmission was an inherent goal of the Oblate apostolate, the latter was a response to growing demand from outside the ranks of the congregation. There emerged at least two distinct markets for information on the Aboriginal peoples of Rupertsland and the North Western Territory in the late nineteenth century. The first of these markets was fuelled by the burgeoning scholarly disciplines of anthropology and ethnography. Oblates – together with missionaries from other communities and denominations – were enlisted as “men on the spot” to contribute field data to both human sciences.¹ For instance, the Smithsonian Institution

¹ On the collaborative relationship between missionaries and practitioners of the human sciences in the second half of the nineteenth century, see especially: John M. Cinnamon, “Missionary Expertise, Social Science, and the Uses of Ethnographic Knowledge in Colonial Gabon,” *History in Africa*, vol. 33 (2006), pp. 413-32; Douglas Cole, “The Origins of Canadian Anthropology, 1850-1910,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1973), pp. 33-45; Patrick Harries, “Anthropology” in Norman Etherington ed., *Missions and Empire (The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 238-260; Andrew Porter, “Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm, and Empire” in A. Porter ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III*, pp. 240-241; Martin Staum, “Nature and Nurture in French Ethnography and Anthropology, 1859-1915,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 65, no. 3 (July 2004), p. 475; George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), pp. 79-109.

in Washington, D.C., relied on Oblates for ethnographic and linguistic data on the Dene (or “Tinneh”), the Cree and the “Metifs of Red River” throughout the 1860s and 70s.² Concurrently, French scholarly societies – notably the *Société d’anthropologie de Paris* and the *Société philologique de Paris* – drew on the Oblates’ transcriptions of Aboriginal oral traditions and also on their lexicons, grammars and primers in Aboriginal languages.³ The second market for Oblate knowledge was fuelled by the expansionist aspirations of the Canadian state. This market was inaugurated in 1858

² Smithsonian Institution Archives [hereafter SIA], Record Unit 7215, Box 13, Fort Simpson, Robert Kennicott [Smithsonian naturalist] to Spencer Fullerton Baird [Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian], March 23, 1860; “Report of the Secretary,” *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution* (1861), p. 41; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1572-T1577, George Gibbs [Smithsonian ethnologist and philologist] to Taché, Washington, D.C., August 9, 1862; “Proceedings of the Regents,” *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, (1863), pp. 87-89; George Gibbs, “The Intermixture of Races,” *ibid.*, (1865), pp. 373-377; SIA, Record Unit 7002, Box 57, Folder 5, Baird, “List of Correspondents in Hudson Bay Region,” February 2, 1872. This collaborative relationship was forged as a consequence of Robert Kennicott’s three-year expedition through the subarctic boreal forest region (1859-1862) – an expedition sponsored in part by the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Michigan and the HBC. With special permission from Governor George Simpson, Kennicott enlisted the assistance of several HBC officers as well as Catholic and Protestant missionaries in collecting specimens of natural history and in accumulating ethnographic data on Aboriginal peoples. In the process, he established an expansive network of collectors and correspondents for the Smithsonian in Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. See especially: SIA, Record Unit 561, Box 1, George Simpson Folder (unnumbered), Simpson to “Gentlemen”, Lachine, April 30, 1860; SIA, Record Unit 7221, Box 1, Folders 1 and 2, Bernard Rogan Ross’ notebooks, 1860-1861; Debra Lindsay, “The Hudson’s Bay Company-Smithsonian Connection and Fur Trade Intellectual Life: Bernard Rogan Ross, A Case Study” in B.G. Trigger et al. eds., *Le castor fait tout*, pp. 587-617; Debra Lindsay ed., *The Modern Beginnings of Subarctic Ornithology: Correspondence to the Smithsonian Institution, 1856-1868* (Winnipeg: The Manitoba Record Society, 1991), pp. ix-xxii.

³ See for instance: Émile Petitot, “De la prétendue origine orientale des Algonquins,” *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris* (1884), pp. 248-256; “Discussion sur des contes analogues répandus en diverses contrées,” *ibid.*, pp. 265-271; James Constantine Pilling, *Bibliography of the Athapascan Languages* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), pp. 77-83. There is a profound irony in the fact that the *Société d’anthropologie de Paris* drew on Oblate knowledge. As Martin Staum and Jean-Claude Wartelle have noted, the *Société* became increasingly dominated by militant atheists and philosophical materialists after the death of its founder, Paul Broca (1824-1880). Many of these anthropologists rejected the notion that *sauvages* were adaptable and civilizable – a notion at the very core of the Oblate apostolate. Staum, “Nature and Nurture in French Ethnography and Anthropology,” pp. 477-478, 492-493; Jean-Claude Wartelle, “La Société d’anthropologie de Paris de 1859 à 1920,” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines*, vol. 1, no. 10 (2004), pp. 143-144, 161-162, 164.

when Simon James Dawson – chief surveyor of the Canadian Exploring Expedition – requested that Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché of Saint-Boniface prepare a detailed report on Rupertsland and its inhabitants. In his preface to the official version of Taché’s report (1859), Dawson ascribed unrivalled expertise to the Oblate prelate: “Bishop Taché has been in the country for fourteen years, and has travelled far and wide among the native tribes, and in the exercise of his high office must have had the best opportunities of observing their habits and character. His remarks are therefore of the greatest value...”⁴ Oblate knowledge was increasingly solicited over the following decade as Canadian politicians debated the merits of annexing Rupertsland and the North Western Territory. In an avowed effort to inform this debate, Taché prepared and published his *Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l’Amérique* (1869) which contained seven chapters of detailed information on soil, climate, flora, fauna, transportation and population.⁵ His discussion of the latter subject was subdivided according to the various “nations” that inhabited the vast region.⁶

This purveyance of knowledge of Aboriginal peoples has received consistent acknowledgement from historians of the Oblate apostolate since the early 1970s when

⁴ Simon James Dawson, *Report on the Exploration of the Country Between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement and Between the Latter Place and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan* (Toronto: John Lovell, 1859), p. 10. On Dawson and the Canadian Exploring Expedition, see also: *ibid.*, *passim*; Elizabeth Arthur, “Simon James Dawson,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Vol. 13 (1901-1910); Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 52, 69-71. A French-language version of Taché’s report to Dawson was published in the Oblates’ periodical: “Lettre de M^{gr} Taché à M. Dawson. Rivière-Rouge, le 7 février 1859,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 6 (June 1863), pp. 146-181.

⁵ Taché, *Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l’Amérique*, pp. 3-5. This publication also appeared serially in the Oblates’ periodical: “Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l’Amérique, par M^{gr} Taché, Évêque de Saint-Boniface,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, nos. 29-32 (March, June, September and December 1869); Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 99-101, 363 (n. 138).

⁶ “Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l’Amérique, par M^{gr} Taché, Évêque de Saint-Boniface,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 31 (September 1869), pp. 217-285.

Gaston Carrière first called attention to the enormity of the Oblates' ethnographic and linguistic output.⁷ Yet Oblate knowledge itself – its production, its content and its organization – has received scant critical attention. For the most part, historians of the Oblate apostolate have assumed that this knowledge derived from prolonged empirical observation and that its interpretive value lay solely in its factual content. Hence, in her discussion of the writings of Father Émile Petitot on the Dene of the Athabasca and Mackenzie regions, Martha McCarthy noted that much of this corpus was “valuable” because it contained accurate ethnographic and linguistic information. However, she issued a word of warning about a particular theme that recurs in some of Petitot's writings and that compromises their reliability:

[Petitot] was convinced that [the Dene] were the descendents of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. He saw similarities in Dene myths to Bible stories of the Flood, of Noah and the Ark, of giants, the Tower of Babel and the subsequent confusion of languages... Petitot's writings on the Dene and their traditions and beliefs are one of the major sources of contemporary knowledge about them. His enthusiasm for conversion, however, added to his conviction that the Jewish foundation he saw in Dene life would facilitate their acceptance of Catholicism, led him to extremes. Other Oblates rejected many of his notions about the Jewish traits of the Dene. Though his statements are often valuable, they should be taken cautiously and interpreted in the light of later scholarship.⁸

⁷ Gaston Carrière, “Contributions des missionnaires à la sauvegarde de la culture indienne,” *Études Oblates* vol. 31, no. 3 (July-September 1972), pp. 165-204. Among other works inventoried in this article, Carrière lists 11 published dictionaries, 181 unpublished dictionaries, 12 published grammars and 76 unpublished grammars involving 26 Aboriginal languages in present-day northern and western Canada. For subsequent acknowledgements of the Oblates' role as purveyors of knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, see especially: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest*, pp. 59, 65; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 30-31, 96, 272; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 20, 22, 79, 170-171.

⁸ McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 20. It should be noted that Petitot also saw vestiges of Judaism in Dene birthing, marriage and burial practices as well as in certain seasonal ceremonies. Moreover, he suggested that there were a number of linguistic analogies between Hebrew and Chipewyan. See especially: Émile Petitot, “Étude sur la nation montagnaise,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi des Provinces de Québec et Montréal* (1871), pp. 41-47. If – as McCarthy claimed – some of Petitot's confrères rejected his theory about the Jewish origins of the Dene, other Oblates endorsed it. For instance, in his personal

Implicit in McCarthy's warning is the prescription that Petitot's "valuable" statements be disentangled from his valueless statements (i.e., those whose factual content has been invalidated by later scholarship). Yet even while opting to dispense with the latter statements, McCarthy alluded – perhaps inadvertently – to their interpretive potential: statements about the Dene's Jewish origins are reflective of Petitot's own "enthusiasm for conversion" and of his confidence in the Dene's readiness to become devout Roman Catholics. Thus, while these statements reveal little about the Dene themselves, they reveal a great deal about Petitot as they provide a window on his cultural and intellectual conditioning, his belief system and his professional objectives.⁹ These statements are a salutary reminder that Oblate perceptions and representations of Aboriginal peoples were necessarily informed by an underlying missionary agenda.

The present chapter explores the role of this agenda in shaping Oblate perceptions and representations of Aboriginal peoples. In particular, this chapter examines ways in which the Oblates' objectives, concerns and priorities informed their construction of categories of indigeneity at Île-à-la-Crosse between 1846 and 1898. As these objectives, concerns and priorities evolved over this fifty-two-year period, so too did Oblate-made categories of indigeneity. In the course of this process, the Aboriginal

memoirs (1898), Bishop Grandin asserted that the Chipewyan descended either from "les Hébreux" or from "quelque peuple qui les ont fréquentés". The bishop noted that Chipewyan oral tradition contained vague traces of the Flood and Noah's Ark, the sale of Esau's birthright to Jacob, and the epic journey of Tobias and Raphael. PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, "Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898)," pp. 107-110.

⁹ On the "Lost Tribes of Israel" and their conceptual role in modern Christian mission projects, see especially: Shalom Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue: Hebrew and the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 15-18, 93; Stuart Kirsch, "Lost Tribes: Indigenous Peoples and Social Imaginary," *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 2 (April 1997), pp. 59-60.

inhabitants of Île-à-la-Crosse were reassigned from the category *sauvage* to the category *métis*.

In their earliest writings on Île-à-la-Crosse, Oblates referred to local Aboriginal peoples collectively as *des sauvages*. This practice was evident in Taché's account of the welcome that he and Father Louis-François Laflèche received upon their arrival in 1846: "Les deux hommes de la Prière arrivèrent à l'Île-à-la-Crosse le 10 septembre. Comment redire ce qui se passa dans l'âme des Missionnaires en touchant la main à des centaines de pauvres sauvages avides d'entendre parler de Dieu, et remerciant à grands cris ceux qui venaient continuer l'œuvre commencée par M. Thibault...?"¹⁰ Father Henri Faraud provided a similar – if somewhat more tempered – description of the inhabitants of Île-à-la-Crosse in his first report to *l'Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* in March 1850: "Les gens de cette place sont de braves sauvages, et sont en général très bien disposés à embrasser la Foi."¹¹ Underlying this broad application of the term *sauvage* was the consideration that local Aboriginal peoples had yet to be fully incorporated into institutional Catholicism, which Oblates deemed the precondition of *la civilisation chrétienne*.¹² Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault had initiated their incorporation in May 1845 by baptizing approximately 350 *sauvages* at Île-à-la-Crosse. Taché and his confrères continued this intensive baptizing over the following decade, such that a total of 617 *sauvages* had received the sacrament at Île-à-la-Crosse by

¹⁰ Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, pp. 13-14.

¹¹ CRHRC/Prop. de la Foi, microfilm X, 10949, Henri Faraud to Étienne Paul Hippolyte Bérard des Glajeux, l'Île-à-la-Crosse, Fort Chipewyan, March 1850. See also Faraud's published account of his ministry among "les sauvages" of Île-à-la-Crosse: "Lettre du R.P. Faraud, Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, à un Prêtre de la même Congrégation, Athabaskaw, 20 avril, 1851," *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), pp. 221-223.

¹² Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 174, 195, 197, 199, 201, 204; Champagne, "Mission et civilisation dans l'Ouest canadien," pp. 341-343; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, pp. xviii, 159, 181.

January 1, 1856.¹³ Yet the administration of baptism was merely the beginning of an incorporation process that Oblates expected to last several years, and possibly even generations. Neophytes – those had lately been baptized – had still to imbibe the spiritual and moral teachings of the institutional Church in preparation to receive dispensations of grace through the six remaining sacraments.¹⁴ Their progression towards full membership in *la civilisation chrétienne* would require regular and intensive ministration by ordained clergy.

While ascribing uniformity to *les sauvages* of Île-à-la-Crosse on the basis of their common neophyte status, Oblates divided them into subcategories on the basis of their different linguistic exigencies. This division reflected one of the foundational objectives of the Oblate apostolate – namely that all peoples receive the ministrations of the Catholic Church in their native language. Since founding the congregation in 1816,

¹³ The original sacramental register of Saint-Jean-Baptiste was destroyed by fire on March 1, 1867. These figures were quoted in Taché's letter to S.J. Dawson (1859) and were prefaced with the following assurance: "J'ai pris moi-même ces chiffres dans lesdits registres, lors de ma dernière visite, pendant l'été de 1856." "Lettre de M^{gr} Taché à M. Dawson. Rivière-Rouge, le 7 février 1859," p. 173. On Thibault's administration of the sacrament in 1845, see also: Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, p. 13. Of the 617 baptisms administered at Île-à-la-Crosse between 1845 and 1856, one merits particular attention because it reflects the sense of urgency with which Oblates administered the sacrament. In 1855, Taché administered extreme unction to a dying woman who was heavily pregnant. Immediately after the pregnant woman expired, Taché asked another woman in attendance to remove the foetus from its dead mother's womb so that he could baptize it. The woman – although hesitant – ultimately obliged and Taché administered the sacrament to the exposed foetus, which died almost immediately after. AD, HE 2221. T12L 34, Taché to Louise-Henriette Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 2, 1855.

¹⁴ In his personal memoirs – written forty-four years after his arrival at Île-à-la-Crosse – Grandin identified baptism as the first step in a long-term Christianizing process: "Je mets une grande différence entre un sauvage chrétien et un sauvage christianisé. Le Baptême fait le chrétien mais longtemps encore, ce chrétien se ressent de l'éducation payenne." PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, "Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898)," p. 61. The seven sacraments of the Catholic Church are: baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick (or extreme unction), matrimony and holy orders. See: *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), pp. 239, 311-420.

Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod had instructed his missionaries to follow apostolic tradition by acquiring local vernaculars in order to preach persuasively and to guide laypeople to a deeper acceptance of Catholicism.¹⁵ Hence, the first Oblates were required to be proficient in the Provençal and Auvergnat dialects of Occitan and also in the Ajaccio dialect of Corsican.¹⁶ Mazenod extended this requirement to *les missions étrangères* and elaborated on it in the second edition of the Oblates' *Constitutiones Et Regulæ* (1853):

Pour amener plus aisément les infidèles à la connaissance des vérités nécessaires, les missionnaires s'occuperont de rédiger, dans la langue indigène, sous forme de questions et de réponses, un abrégé de la doctrine chrétienne, que les néophytes devront apprendre par cœur et qui leur sera graduellement expliqué en des termes appropriés à leur capacité. Ils mettront ces mêmes vérités sous forme de cantiques et les feront chanter à leurs populations, composeront des catéchismes illustrés, bref, useront de tous les moyens capables de mettre la doctrine en belle lumière sous les yeux, de la fixer avec plus de force dans les intelligences et de la graver avec plus de vigueur dans les mémoires.¹⁷

Mazenod's directive established "la langue indigène" as the primary strategic consideration in *les missions étrangères*. Proficiency in Aboriginal languages was the *conditio sine qua non* for inculcating the tenets of Catholicism through sermonizing,

¹⁵ According to Acts 2:1-6, the Apostles were enabled to evangelize the world through the Gift of Tongues (dispensed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost).

¹⁶ Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, pp. 32-33; Ortolan, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée durant le premier siècle de leur existence*, 1:p. 77. Mazenod had been convinced of the need for a vernacular-based ministry in Provence since at least 1814. On October 28 of that year, he wrote to his friend, Charles-Auguste de Forbin-Janson: "Ce qui doit nous retenir, c'est que nos contrées sont dépourvues de tout secours, que les peuples laissent quelque espoir de conversion... Il faut parler leur propre langage pour être entendus d'eux ; il faut prêcher en provençal." Quoted in "Lettres choisies de Mgr de Mazenod," *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 89 (1962), p. 202.

¹⁷ "Instruction de Monseigneur de Mazenod relative aux missions étrangères," p. 174. On Mazenod's amendment of the *Constitutiones Et Regulæ* in 1853, see: Timothy P. Foran, "Transcending Language and Ethnicity: Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Canonical Erection of the Diocese of Calgary, 1912-1916," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 41, no. 82 (November 2008), p. 510; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 5-6, 29-31; Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, p. 167.

catechesis and hymnody. Bound by this imperative, the first Oblates at Île-à-la-Crosse categorized their neophytes according spoken language. They identified two target groups for their ministrations: speakers of Cree and speakers of Chipewyan.

Acquiring the vernaculars of these target groups was a protracted process that demanded considerable effort on the part of Oblates. There existed no dictionaries, grammars or primers to facilitate this process in 1846, so the first Oblates at Île-à-la-Crosse were compelled to procure teaching and interpretive services from native speakers of Cree and Chipewyan. Taché and Laflèche received their first lessons in these languages from three Chipewyan-speaking oarsmen during their long journey from Fort Garry to Île-à-la-Crosse in summer 1846.¹⁸ They continued their studies at Île-à-la-Crosse under the tutelage of the HBC's resident interpreter – a native Cree-speaker who was reportedly fluent in Chipewyan, but who spoke no French.¹⁹ While studying with this tutor over the following two years, Taché reported ambivalently on his personal progress. He learned Cree with relative constancy and ease – a feat that he attributed to the grammatical regularity and semantic transparency of the language.²⁰

¹⁸ Benoit, “The Mission at Ile-à-la-Crosse,” p. 44; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 113. In a letter to his mother dated July 31, 1846, Taché identified these oarsmen-tutors as “trois Montagnais” from Île-à-la-Crosse. He also recorded his first impression of their language: “[L]eur langue [est un] véritable jargon qui, pour la prononciation, offre des difficultés qu'on a peine à comprendre avant d'y avoir goûté... M. Laflèche m'exprimait ces jours derniers la crainte de déraciner la lulette, tant il faut que la pauvre langue fasse de contorsions dans la bouche.” Quoted in Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:p. 113.

¹⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” pp. 51-52; Benoit, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 126-127; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, p. 26; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 30.

²⁰ Taché accorded eloquent praise to the clarity, richness and beauty of the Cree language. In a letter published in *Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* (1852), he asserted that Cree surpassed European languages in many respects: “[Cette langue] présente... une énergie, une variété et une netteté d'expression qu'on ne trouve certainement pas dans les langues européennes. Ceci tient au génie même de ce[t] idiome... dont on ne peut avoir d'idée qu'après

Yet Chipewyan beset him with “des difficultés presque insurmontables” – difficulties that he attributed to the complexity of its pronunciation patterns:

Impossible d’imaginer un pareil assemblage de sons bizarres, rauques et étranges ; des interruptions subites au milieu des mots, des aspirations outre mesure, des gutturales qui ne sont égalées que par les sifflantes qui les accompagnent, des kyrielles de consonnes, entre lesquelles se perdent quelques voyelles qu’on peut à peine saisir, forment un ensemble de prononciation qui excite le rire de tous ceux qui l’entendent pour la première fois. C’est là la grande difficulté du dialecte... qui, jusqu’à présent, a déconcerté les plus courageux. On trouve des documents sur les autres langues sauvages ; mais aucun sur celle-ci, à part ceux que nous avons dressés nous-même. Il nous a fallu adopter près d’une vingtaine de signes arbitraires, pour exprimer des sons qui ne peuvent se rendre par les combinaisons possibles de notre alphabet.²¹

Notwithstanding inherent difficulties, the acquisition of Chipewyan was made somewhat easier through the efforts of Father Henri Faraud who quickly distinguished himself as a gifted linguist.²² Immediately after his arrival at Saint-Jean-Baptiste in July 1848, Faraud began learning the two local languages from his confrères’ tutor. In the process, he developed and refined the notes that Taché and Laflèche had compiled over

une étude sérieuse, et lorsque l’usage permet d’en exploiter les richesses...” “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Taché, Vicaire apostolique de la Baie d’Hudson, à sa mère. Mission de St-Jean-Baptiste, Ile à la Crosse, 4 janvier 1851.” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), p. 340. See also : Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 126-127.

²¹ “Extrait d’une lettre de Mgr Taché, Vicaire apostolique de la Baie d’Hudson, à sa mère. Mission de St-Jean-Baptiste, Ile à la Crosse, 4 janvier 1851.” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), pp. 340-341.

²² It should be noted, however, that Faraud’s reputation as a linguist was a source of acrimony among Oblates. Fuelling this acrimony was the brazen self-promotion evident in Faraud’s autobiography, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages* (1866) – co-written with his nephew, Fortuné-François Fernand-Michel. This work contains several passages trumpeting Faraud’s “maîtrise” of Aboriginal languages. In one such passage, a Chipewyan is quoted as saying of Faraud: “Il parle mieux que nous, donc il est plus homme que nous.” Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, p. 111. The Oblate General Administration expressed dismay at the egotistical tone of the work, and Father Marc Antoine Sardou (Oblate Treasurer General) decried it as “un ramassis de sottises et un tas d’inepties mises en volume.” SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3663-T3665, Sardou to Taché, Paris, November 30, 1865. For his part, Bishop Grandin attempted to keep the work hidden from the Oblates in his jurisdiction for fear that they should be scandalized by its many inflated claims. SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T4255-T4259, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, September 25, 1866.

the previous two years. Faraud gradually transformed these notes into Cree and Chipewyan dictionaries, grammars and vocabularies – each of which was eventually copied and placed at the disposal of other Oblates.²³ Moreover, Faraud provided personal language instruction to the Oblate reinforcements who were deployed to Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions over the course of the 1850s and early 60s.²⁴ Hence, in November 1862, Father Julien Moulin marvelled at Faraud’s “grande connaissance des langues” and noted: “Il est on ne peut plus complaisant pour les enseigner aux autres. Ainsi chaque jour il me fait une classe de deux heures, et il est toujours prêt à s’offrir.”²⁵

Yet despite the efforts of the first contingent of Oblates, later arrivals to Saint-Jean-Baptiste still struggled to acquire – and to maintain – proficiency in Cree and Chipewyan. Even with textual resources and a personal tutor at his disposal, Moulin experienced great difficulty in learning these languages. In June 1863, Faraud reported that his student had made little headway after four years of intensive study: “Le père

²³ “Lettre du R.P. Faraud, Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, à un Prêtre de la même Congrégation, Athabaskaw, 20 avril, 1851,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 24 (1852), pp. 222-223; Fernand-Michel, *Dix-huit ans chez les sauvages*, pp. 81, 86, 119-122; Benoît, *Vie de Mgr Taché*, 1:pp. 154, 359; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 28, 41, 61-62; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 30-31. Faraud’s dictionaries, grammars and vocabularies were continually circulated through the Oblate mission network in the 1850s, 60s and 70s. See especially: AD, HEC 2500. P96C 3, Prosper Légeard to Augustin Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1871; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 4, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 9, 1871; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 15, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1877; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 17, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 1, 1877.

²⁴ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0295-T0296, Jean Séguin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1492-T1495, Julien Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 17, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1921-T1924, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1863; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2023-T2029, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 8, 1863.

²⁵ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1721-T1724, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862.

Moulin fait toujours bien peu de progrès dans l'étude des langues, il en est toujours au commencement.²⁶ Moulin professed embarrassment about his slowness, particularly because he considered it a hindrance to his ministry and to the spiritual growth of his neophytes. His embarrassment was most acute when administering the sacrament of penance – a process requiring direct and spontaneous communication between priest and penitent. By his own admission, Moulin struggled to understand confessions in Cree and in Chipewyan, and was incapable of imposing penance or of providing counsel in either language.²⁷ Similarly, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin agonized over his own difficulties in acquiring Chipewyan. The bishop feared that his linguistic shortcomings prevented him from asserting proper authority and from projecting credibility among Chipewyan-speaking neophytes. Much to his chagrin, some of these neophytes accused him of speaking like a stumbling, inarticulate child. “Mais que tu es bête,” they reportedly told him. “[T]u parles comme un enfant qui bégaie.”²⁸

²⁶ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2229-T2237, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1863. Grandin and Faraud had both issued pessimistic appraisals of Moulin's progress over the previous two years. See especially: SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0492-T0499, Grandin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 15, 1861; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1097-T1100, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 4, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1401-T1404, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 19, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1523-T1526, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 22, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1725-T1728, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862.

²⁷ This situation appears to have remained relatively consistent for the first five years of Moulin's active ministry at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions (1859-1864). See especially: AD, HE 2221. T12Z 178, Moulin to Taché, Portage La Loche, July 31, 1860; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1428-T1431, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1492-T1495, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 17, 1862; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2575-T2577, Moulin to Joseph Lestanc, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 9, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2814-T2816, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1864. See also: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 410.

²⁸ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” p. 54. See also: CRHRC/É.G., Vol. 6, Grandin, “Notice sur le diocèse de S. Albert,” p. 31. Grandin's difficulties were likely exacerbated by his pronounced speech impediment – an affliction that had already hampered his missionary ambitions at least

Compounding Grandin's difficulties were the many episcopal duties that diverted his time and attention away from the study of Chipewyan. Preoccupied with administrative affairs and continual travel in the 1860s, Grandin admitted that proficiency in Chipewyan was an ever-elusive goal for him.²⁹

Because of their continued difficulty in acquiring and maintaining proficiency in Cree and Chipewyan, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste relied on long-term assistance from native speakers of these two languages. By June 1864, they were receiving frequent language lessons from a Chipewyan-speaking widow known as "la vieille Catherine" – reportedly one of the first people baptized at Île-à-la-Crosse. Living with her daughter, her son-in-law and her grandchildren some eighty kilometres north-east of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Catherine welcomed Oblates into her family home and treated them as "de sages écoliers".³⁰ Among her pupils was Father Laurent Le Goff (an ordained Oblate from the French department of Finistère) who produced several works

once before. Upon leaving the *Grand séminaire du Mans* in 1851, Grandin had sought admission to the *Séminaire des missions étrangères* in Paris in hopes of becoming a missionary in Asia. However, his application was rejected because the directors of the *Séminaire des missions étrangères* considered his "défaut de langue" too great an obstacle to acquiring Asian languages. Grandin subsequently turned to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and was accepted into the congregation on December 28, 1851. See: Jonquet, *Mgr Grandin*, pp. 21-25.

²⁹ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3068-T3078, Grandin to Taché and Florent Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Isidore Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 7, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Île-à-la-Crosse, August 21, 1865; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to Alphonse Gasté, Saint-Boniface, April 27, 1867; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 180. Other Oblates made similar admissions. In 1872, for instance, Father Prosper Légeard reported to the Oblate General Administration that he and his confrères devoted the winter months to studying local languages, adding: "Nous en profitons ordinairement pour nous appliquer plus fortement à la connaissance des langues sauvages parlées dans ces pays, *qu'il est rare de posséder parfaitement même avec une étude longue et difficile*" (my italics). Quoted in "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 113.

³⁰ AD, G LPP 2199, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 11, 1869. See also: Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 53-54, 57; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 129, 140, 205. See also: Erickson, "At the Cultural and Religious Crossroads," p. 132; Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, p. 123.

in Chipewyan in the 1870s – including a collection of hymns and sermons (1873), a sacred history (1876) and a grammar (1877). Catherine collaborated in the composition of each of these works.³¹ Her contribution was described in Le Goff's personal memoirs:

Il était entendu entre la vieille et moi que nous ne chercherions pas à faire prévaloir obstinément nos idées ; que toute notre application nous la mettrions exclusivement à la recherche de la vérité, de la vraie doctrine. Me voilà donc composant tout haut, et la vieille m'écoutant de ses deux oreilles. Quand le mot ne venait pas, ce qui arrivait à tout bout de champ, je tâchais de lui faire comprendre ce que je voulais dire, et comme elle était très intelligente, elle me comprenait vite et vite aussi me donnait le mot que je cherchais. Si j'employais un mot qui put choquer ou scandaliser, vite elle m'arrêtait et me donnait le mot qu'il fallait. Si ma phrase prenait une tournure irrégulière, elle m'arrêtait et me faisait recommencer. Et c'est ainsi que cette bonne vieille m'a appris, peu à peu, à donner toujours à mes phrases une vraie tournure montagnaise.³²

While receiving instruction and editorial assistance in Chipewyan from Catherine, Oblates obtained comparable services in Cree from another local widow – Marie-Rose Piwapiskus (also known as Marie-Rose Petit-Fer or Marie-Rose Iron).³³ Descended

³¹ AD, HEC 2500. P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1874; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, "Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert," 1868-1884, pp. 130-133; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 916, Box 32, Grandin to Albert Lacombe, "sur le lac Castor," July 28, 1875; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 181, 204-205, 208; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:p. 302.

³² Quoted in Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, p. 123. According to Pénard, this collaboration produced mixed results as Catherine imparted words and turns of phrase that were becoming obsolete by the late nineteenth century. Le Goff's hymns and sermons were therefore of little use in the local ministry by the time of Pénard's arrival [1890]: "Cette vieille Catherine a rendu au P. Legoff [sic] de très-grands services pour la composition de tous ses ouvrages montagnais. On ne peut lui faire qu'un reproche : c'est qu'étant très vieille, elle aimait la langue de son enfance, c'est-à-dire le vieux Montagnais et ses expressions préférées étaient toujours celles qui avaient cessé d'être en usage dans la conversation, que la plupart des Montagnais ne comprennent même plus. Elle a fait le P. Legoff [sic] bourrer ses livres de ces expressions, qui peuvent être très-belles, mais qui ont le grave défaut d'être aujourd'hui complètement surannées, et presque'incompréhensibles." "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 205. The underlined word ["le vieux Montagnais"] appears in the original document.

³³ According to the *liber status animarum* of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Marie-Rose and members of her family were known variously by the Cree surname Piwapiskus (or Piwabiskus), by its

from a Plains Cree family settled at Canoe Lake (approximately forty kilometres southwest of Île-à-la-Crosse), Marie-Rose had been catechized by Taché in the early 1850s and had subsequently acquired a reputation among Oblates for intelligence and piety. She began providing Oblates with Cree-language instruction in 1869 and continued this service for nearly fifty years.³⁴ During the same period, Marie-Rose also ran a small day school at the mission of Canoe Lake – la Bienheureuse-Marguerite-Marie (founded in 1871). There she taught prayers, hymns and catechism in Cree to local children in exchange for an annual stipend disbursed by the Oblate superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.³⁵ Her efforts produced impressive results and garnered high praise from the Oblates. In spring 1876, Father Prosper Légeard reported – with evident admiration – that many of Marie-Rose’s pupils knew the catechism by heart. “C’est la première fois,” noted Légeard, “que nous voyons dans nos missions des enfants sauvages parfaitement instruits du catéchisme. Personne même n’aurait songé à entreprendre cette tâche difficile ; notre petite maîtresse d’école, avec sa bonne volonté et sa persévérance, en est venue à bout.”³⁶

French translation (Petit-Fer), and by its English translation (Iron). SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (Liber Animarum), “Famille Piwabiskus,” pp. 150-158.

³⁴ AD, G LPP 2200, Légeard to Joseph Fabre, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1870; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère,” Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, pp. 59, 66; SHSB/Arch., Oblats de Marie-Immaculée Keewatin-Le Pas, “Arbre généalogique Île-à-la-Crosse” (Liber Animarum), “Famille Piwabiskus,” p. 150; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 228-229. Marie-Rose Piwapiskus lived into her nineties and died in the Grey Nuns’ hospital at Île-à-la-Crosse on June 5, 1931. See: Lesage, *Capitale d’une solitude*, p. 106.

³⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert, décembre 1872”; AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875; Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, p. 66; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 118, 136-137.

³⁶ “Missions d’Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), p. 444. Légeard’s report on the day school at Canoe Lake is quoted in “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 152-153.

The Oblates' enduring pursuit of proficiency in Cree and Chipewyan reflected the centrality of language in the local ministry. Indeed, language was the organizing principle around which all evangelical activity was structured at Saint-Jean-Baptiste. In Ordinary Time – comprising thirty-three or thirty-four weeks of the liturgical year – Oblates followed a weekly schedule that was designed specifically to meet the linguistic exigencies of the local community.³⁷ The focal event of this schedule was dominical Mass, which Oblates sang three times each Sunday: once in the morning with a homily in French (for mission personnel and schoolchildren); once in the afternoon with a homily in Chipewyan; and once in the evening with a homily in Cree. On weekdays, Oblates catechized schoolchildren in French at Saint-Bruno and catechized non-enrolled children and adults in Cree and Chipewyan at the mission and at the HBC fort.³⁸ This schedule was modified slightly during Lent – a liturgical season lasting approximately six weeks – when Oblates guided neophytes through the Stations of the Cross and offered penitential prayers in French, Cree and Chipewyan each Friday afternoon.³⁹ An altogether different schedule was adopted during the biannual *mission* when large numbers of Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking families travelled to Île-à-la-Crosse and swelled the congregation of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in late September and early

³⁷ The canonical term “Ordinary Time” refers to all parts of the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar that do not fall under the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter. See especially: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 285, 301-304.

³⁸ SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2680-T2683, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 10, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3068-T3078, Grandin to Taché and Vandenberghe, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1865; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 113-114, 122, 133. Moulin’s letter reveals that Oblates taught catechism both at the mission and at the fort: “Je suis très occupé ici. Je fais presque chaque jour 3 catéchismes, l’un pour les enfants de l’école, l’autre en cris pour les gens de la Mission et l’autre en Montagnais. Je suis loin d’être un habile dans la langue montagnaise... Je vais deux fois par semaine au Fort pour faire le catéchisme...”

³⁹ Soullier, *Vie du Révérend Père Légeard*, p. 91; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 133. On the timing and duration of Lent, see especially: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 138, 361.

June. Each *mission* proceeded according to a relatively standard programme.⁴⁰ It began shortly after the Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking visitors had set up camp around the mission and the fort, effectively transforming the peninsula into a “un vrai village de tentes”.⁴¹ Over the following twelve to eighteen days, Oblates undertook an intensive missionizing campaign that they structured according to the dictates of language. Father Valentin Végréville outlined this structure in his account of *la mission du printemps* of 1861, which he conducted in concert with Grandin and Moulin:

Nous avons débuté par une procession vraiment digne de la France... Le chant a été très bien soutenu ; nous avons commencé par le Pange Lingua ; puis un cantique montagnais nous a conduit jusqu'au reposoir de la croix ; un cantique cris nous a ramené jusque sur la place devant l'église...

Monseigneur Grandin pensant d'abord rester jusqu'à la fin de la mission, nous annonçâmes les exercices suivans : après la messe des Cris un sermon en Cris de ma part ; après avoir dit la seconde messe Monseigneur prêchait les Montagnais. Le soir avant soleil couché, je parlais à mon tour aux Montagnais et Monseigneur aux Cris. A dix heures du matin et à trois heures après midi, on

⁴⁰ It should be noted, however, that *missions* were occasionally disrupted by unforeseen circumstances. In September 1862, for instance, the usual exercises of *la mission de l'automne* were all but cancelled because of the outbreak of illness among Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking neophytes camped at Île-à-la-Crosse. “Les sauvages ont été malades en masses tout le temps de la mission,” reported Faraud to Taché. “[M]ais malades à tel point qu'ils étaient presque sans connaissance... Peu ou point d'exercices réguliers parce que personne n'avait la force d'y assister.” SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T1725-T1728, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, November 16, 1862. In 1873, some devotional exercises of *la mission du printemps* were cancelled because of dangerously high water levels and flooding at the mission site. “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 129.

⁴¹ ASGM, Agnès, “Annales de l'établissement des Sœurs Grises à l'Île à la Crosse,” 2:p. 246. Agnès' account features a lively, first-hand description of the transformation that Île-à-la-Crosse typically underwent at the time of the *mission*: “A peine abordés au rivage qu'ils s'empressent de débarquer et commencent les embrassements d'usage... Après cette accolade fraternelle, les femmes commencent à sortir le bagage du prosaïque canot. Souvent on aperçoit, au fond du frêle esquif, un petit poupon endormi ou éveillé, couché entre deux, trois ou quatre chiens... En moins d'une heure les tentes sont dressées, et, pour les rendre imperméables, sont garnies de branches de sapins. On place le pauvre bagage : rien de plus élémentaire... Puis on allume un bon feu, à la porte de la loge. Notre Ile, d'ordinaire si déserte, si silencieuse, prend un autre aspect. Souvent à une heure fort avancée dans la nuit, elle retentit de cris, de joyeux éclats de rire, de jeux qui nous empêchent de reposer. Les femmes chantent, les enfants pleurent, les grands enfants crient, c'est un tintamarre qui tient éveillé. Puis, tout-à-coup une fusillade se fait entendre au loin, c'est l'annonce de nouveaux venus. Ce sont des parents, de vieux amis ; la joie augmente, les saluts, les embrassements recommencent, sur la grève même.” Ibid., 2:pp. 245-246.

sonnait pour les enfans. Les Montagnais allaient au catéchisme chez les sœurs ; les Cris étaient instruits par le R.P. Moulin. Mais sa Grandeur ne devait plus nous rester longtemps : la barge du Portage La Loche repartit le samedi infra octavam [i.e., after the first week], et Monseigneur dut se mettre en route... Force fut donc de retrancher des exercices. Mon sermon montagnais du soir fut avancé au matin après la messe ; le soir je prêchais les Cris. Le matin après la messe des Cris, le R.P. Moulin voulut bien leur faire réciter le catéchisme et le leur expliquer...

Après le départ de Mgr Grandin, j'ai eu de l'ouvrage. Dès qu'un Montagnais quittait mon confessionnal, un Cris oubliant sa vieille timidité, pour suivre mes avis s'emparait de la place ; puis un autre Montagnais venait encore ; et ainsi toute la journée et tous les jours... Je remettais après mon sermon du soir, à sept heures, les mariages à préparer et toutes les autres affaires qui doivent se traiter en particulier.⁴²

When not engaged in their primary occupations of preaching, catechizing and administering the sacraments, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste set aside hours of the *mission* to pursuing Cree- and Chipewyan-language literacy programmes. By the early 1860s, Oblates had adopted the syllabic script developed by Wesleyan missionary James Evans for use among the Western Woods Cree. After adapting this syllabary to the Chipewyan language, they endeavoured to teach their neophytes to read and to write it.⁴³ To this end, they gathered Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking families in the

⁴² SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T0586-T0588, Végréville to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 12, 1861. The underlined title ["le Pange Lingua"] appears in the original document. It refers to "Pange Lingua Gloriosi Corporis Mysterium" – a Latin hymn written by Saint Thomas Aquinas for the Feast of Corpus Christi. See especially: *Breviarium Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti concilii tridentini restitutum*, pp. 73-74. Grandin's account of this particular *mission du printemps* was transcribed by Pénard in "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 73-74. For other discussions of the schedule employed during the biannual *mission* at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, see especially: AD, HE 2221. T12Z 178, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, July 31, 1860; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2814-T2816, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 29, 1864; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T3303-T3305, Moulin to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, May 30, 1865; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to "Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère", Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 92, 116, 129-130, 145, 155-156.

⁴³ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, "Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898)," pp. 61-62; Abel, *Drum Songs*, pp. 117-118; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 30, 33, 44; McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, p. 80. On James Evans and his invention of the Cree syllabic system in the

common room at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and assisted them in transcribing prayers, hymns and sermons onto scraps of paper or pieces of bark. “Pendant les missions il nous fallait écrire,” noted Grandin, “et notre salle des sauvages était transformée en véritable salle d’études. Bon nombre de jeunes gens copiaient prières et cantiques surtout et l’un de nous devait être continuellement à écrire pour quelques-uns.”⁴⁴ In the early 1870s, Oblates began supplementing these handwritten notes with hymnals, catechisms and prayer books printed in Cree and Chipewyan syllabics.⁴⁵

Given the strategic and organizational importance of language in the local ministry, the Oblate hierarchy assigned congregants of Saint-Jean-Baptiste to one of two categories – *les Cris* and *les Montagnais* – on the basis of their linguistic affiliation. Hence, after his episcopal visit to the mission in early October 1872, Bishop Grandin reported of the local community: “[V]raiment les sauvages de l’Île à la Crosse se christianisent, aussi bien les Cris que les Montagnais ; les pères sont aimés des sauvages dont ils parlent les langues à la perfection...”⁴⁶ Two months later, the bishop

early 1840s, see especially: Maclean, *James Evans*, pp. 160-174; Young, *The Apostle of the North*, pp. 181-196.

⁴⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 957, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” p. 62. See also: *ibid.*, pp. 63-65; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 116.

⁴⁵ AD, HEC 2500. P96C 3, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1871; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 4, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, April 9, 1871; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 5, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 8, 1872; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 8, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 12, 1874. The earliest of these works were printed in France and in Québec under Oblate supervision. By October 1878, however, Légeard had acquired a hand press from French benefactors and was printing devotional literature at Saint-Jean-Baptiste. See especially: Albert Lacombe, *Le catéchisme en images pour l’instruction des sauvages* (Montréal: Imprimerie de l’Asile de la Providence, 1874); Albert Lacombe, *Catéchisme en image à l’usage des Indiens* (Paris: O.M.I., Imprimerie Bouasse Lebel, 1874); AD, HEC 2500. P96C 23, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, October 8, 1878.

⁴⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 18. On Grandin’s visit to

provided the Oblate General Administration with a brief overview of the material condition of Saint-Jean-Baptiste as well as an approximate enumeration of its congregants:

Mission de St. J. Bte de l’Île à la Crosse : Sur l’extrémité nord de ce lac se trouve un établissement complet composé d’une église, maison des missionnaires, maison des sœurs, école, asile pour les enfants sauvages, salle pour les femmes vieilles et infirmes. *Cette mission est fréquentée par 500 sauvages Montagnais et 200 Cris* et est desservie par 2 prêtres, 2 f. cvs. [i.e., frères convers] et 8 religieuses.⁴⁷

Grandin’s language-based categorization was a necessary concomitant of his administrative responsibility. As Vicar of Missions and Bishop of Saint-Albert, Grandin was responsible for coordinating pastoral and liturgical services for several different language groups dispersed across a vast territory.⁴⁸ This charge compelled him to ascertain the linguistic needs of particular missions and to develop appropriate strategies to meet these needs. Accordingly, Grandin oversaw the regular shipment of Cree- and Chipewyan-language reference and devotional materials to Saint-Jean-Baptiste throughout the 1870s.⁴⁹ Concurrently, he ensured that the mission was always

Saint-Jean-Baptiste in October 1872, see especially: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 124-126.

⁴⁷ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert, décembre 1872” (my italics).

⁴⁸ Between 1868 and 1873, Grandin recognized at least seven different language groups in his ecclesiastical jurisdiction: speakers of Cree, Chipewyan, Blackfoot (subdivided into the dialects of the Blackfoot proper [Siksika], the Blood [Kainai] and the Peigan [Pikuni]), French and English. See especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” pp. 1-18; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert, décembre 1872”; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 987, Box 34, Grandin, “Liste des missions du diocèse catholique de St. Albert,” Saint-Albert, 1883, pp. 3-16. See also: Dempsey, *Indian Tribes of Alberta*, pp. 14-15, 22-23, 28-29, 31.

⁴⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 973, Box 33, “Renseignements demandés par Mgr Taché sur les missions et les Missionnaires de Mgr Grandin depuis l’érection du vicariat religieux de St Albert 1868 jusqu’en 1872,” pp. 2-4; PAA, O.M.I. Collection,

staffed by at least two ordained Oblates – one of whom was proficient in Cree, the other in Chipewyan. He instructed these Oblates to schedule regular visits to Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking families in the broad vicinity of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁵⁰

Yet while the Oblate hierarchy continued to invoke language as the prime criterion for categorizing Aboriginal laypeople, Oblates stationed at Saint-Jean-Baptiste began employing new criteria in the mid 1870s. These new criteria emerged from changing patterns of mobility, residence and trade among the congregants of Saint-Jean-Baptiste – developments that Oblates perceived as cleaving a division across lines of language. Oblates feared that a section of their congregation was becoming detached from the civilizing influence of institutional Catholicism. This section comprised Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families who had customarily travelled to Île-à-la-Crosse each September and June in tandem with the provisioning and trading cycles of the HBC. After surrendering its monopoly trading privileges, the Company broke these cycles through its implementation of various streamlining and restructuring initiatives – notably by restricting the issuance of “Indian debt” (i.e., credit in the form of supplies) and by modifying the transport system through the incorporation of a southern supply route and the adoption of steam power.⁵¹ Concomitantly, Île-à-la-Crosse began drawing fewer Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families

Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Fort Cumberland, July 30, 1875; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, “sur une île du lac l’Île d’ours,” July 9, 1880; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 977, Box 33, “Notes sur le commencement du Diocèse de St. Albert,” 1884, pp. 6-8.

⁵⁰ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 14-19, 113, 130-133, 134-135, 220, 229; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 922, Box 32, Grandin to Lacombe, Saint-Albert, March 26, 1881; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 78, 114, 120, 131-132, 140, 153.

⁵¹ These initiatives are discussed in chapter two. See especially pp. 126-130, 132-133, 141 above. See also: Tough, “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*”, pp. 17, 52-58, 253, 273-276.

each year. Those who did make the journey arrived at scattered intervals and rarely stayed longer than three or four days.⁵² Under these circumstances, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste opined that Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families were no longer receiving the ministrations of the Church with sufficient regularity or continuity. In 1875, for instance, Légeard reported to the Oblate General Administration that these families were forgoing the sacraments and that their children went uncatechized.⁵³ Furthermore, he asserted that these *sauvages* were losing whatever moral and spiritual values they had once espoused, and that they were degenerating toward materialistic greed as their furs fetched rising prices from competitive buyers: “Ces sauvages... commencent à avoir la tête en l’air. Jusqu’à présent pour le commerce de leurs fourrures ils n’avaient eu affaire qu’à la Compagnie ; des traiteurs commençant à arriver par ici, ces pauvres enfants des bois, ces grands enfants, comme on peut bien les appeler, ne pensent plus qu’à leurs pelleteries, qu’à l’argent et pour en gagner un peu plus, quelques uns déjà commencent à se montrer peu soucieux de la justice et de l’argent de leurs dettes...”⁵⁴

⁵² AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Pierre Aubert [Oblate Assitant General], Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875; AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875; AD, G LPP 2205, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1877; AD, HPF 4191. C75R 177, Légeard to “Ma très honorée et Vénérée Mère”, Île-à-la-Crosse, December 20, 1877; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 131, 146-147, 155, 167, 183-184.

⁵³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 147. Légeard’s report for 1875 is quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 146-147. See also: *ibid.*, p. 158; AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875.

⁵⁴ AD, G LPP 2202, Légeard to Aubert, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 3, 1875. See also: AD, HEC 2500. P96C11, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 19, 1875. In insisting on the nefarious effects of free trade on Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families, Légeard echoed an observation made twelve years earlier by Faraut when free traders had first arrived in the English River District: “Les Traiteurs... augmentent les prix pour toute chose et les sauvages finissent par se persuader que tout ce qu’ils ont a une valeur immense. De là chez eux un orgueil insensé qui dérange leur esprit et les fait divaguer sur tout... Toutes ces âmes vénales et anthousiastes [sic] ne ressemblent déjà que trop aux avarés des autres pays, sans

In contrast to these *sauvages* who appeared to be drifting physically and spiritually from the orbit of Île-à-la-Crosse, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste identified a section of their congregation that they believed was still amenable to the civilizing influence of institutional Catholicism. This section comprised Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking families residing permanently at Île-à-la-Crosse or within a distance that allowed them to attend Mass at Saint-Jean-Baptiste *die dominica aliisque diebus festis de praecepto* (“on Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation”).⁵⁵ Among these were the families of local HBC servants, whom Oblates labelled “les gens du fort”.⁵⁶ Also included were the families of “les gens libres” – individuals who were free of contractual obligations to the Company and whose families subsisted principally by fishing, trapping and gardening.⁵⁷ These two groups were settled on the peninsula near

vouloir abandonner la religion, ils en font la moindre de leurs occupations...” SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T2229-T2237, Faraud to Taché, Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1, 1863.

⁵⁵ This phrase is quoted from canon 1247 of the Code of Canon Law: “Die dominica aliisque diebus festis de praecepto fideles obligatione tenentur Missam participandi” (“On Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass.”). The preceding canon – canon 1246 §1 – lists the following ten days as Holy Days of Obligation (apart from Sundays): Christmas; Epiphany; the Ascension; Corpus Christi; the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God; the Feast of the Immaculate Conception; the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Solemnity of Saint Joseph; the Solemnity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul the Apostles; and All Saints Day. See: *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition: New English Translation* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1999), p. 384.

⁵⁶ See especially: AD, HEC 2500. P96C 11, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 19, 1875; AD, G LPP 2205, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1877; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 11, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1877; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that the term “les gens libres” (as applied by Oblates) was not entirely synonymous with the term “freemen” (as applied by HBC officers in the English River District). According to Macdougall, the term “freemen” was generally applied to former HBC servants who continued to live in the English River District after the completion of their contracts. Although free of contractual obligations to the HBC, freemen performed occasional services for the Company as hunters, trappers, fishermen and freighters. In contradistinction, the term “les gens libres” was applied to men who lived permanently in the vicinity of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and whose labour was not – and may never have been – claimed by the HBC. In July 1880, Grandin referred to “les gens libres” as the local labour pool from which the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste could hire short-term workers “au mois, à la semaine et à la journée.”

the fort and the mission, and also along the surrounding shoreline of Lac Île-à-la-Crosse. In autumn 1876, Légeard enumerated their combined population at 159 and noted that they shared devotional traits that distinguished them from Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families.⁵⁸ For instance, the families of “les gens du fort” and “les gens libres” attended church services on a weekly basis, received the sacraments with due frequency and committed their faithful departed to consecrated ground in the local Catholic cemetery.⁵⁹ Légeard identified this cemetery as a community space from which non-resident *sauvages* were generally excluded: “Nos sauvages étant dispersés dans les bois, il en meurt tous les ans quelques uns qui sont enterrés où ils se trouvent. Ce ne sont guère que les gens du fort et les sauvages fixés aux environs qui sont enterrés dans notre cimetièrè.”⁶⁰

PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, “sur une île du lac l’Île d’ours,” July 9, 1880. See also: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 18; Brenda Macdougall, “‘The Comforts of Married Life’: Metis Family Life, Labour, and the Hudson’s Bay Company,” *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 61 (Spring 2008), pp. 31-34; Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” pp. 167-168; Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootowin: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Metis Communities,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 3 (September 2006), pp. 440, 458.

⁵⁸ AD, G LPP 2205, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1877. Légeard conducted the enumeration in late November and early December 1876. On the geographic distribution of “les gens du fort” and “les gens libres” at and around Île-à-la-Crosse, see also: AD, HEC 2500. P96C11, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 19, 1875; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, “sur une île du lac l’Île d’ours,” July 9, 1880; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Vol. 5, Box 35, Grandin, “Notes privées sur les missions et les missionnaires du diocèse de St-Albert,” 1868-1884, p. 18.

⁵⁹ AD, G LPP 2205, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1877; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 15, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1877; “Missions d’Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), pp. 446-447; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 122, 131, 133, 174.

⁶⁰ Quoted in “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 122. On the role of the cemetery at Île-à-la-Crosse in the elaboration and expression of local community identity, see especially: Kevin Gambell, “Cemetery Spaces of Shxwōwhámél Stó:lō and the Île-à-la-Crosse Métis,” (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2009), pp. 25-50.

In the course of cataloguing the devotional traits that distinguished resident from non-resident congregants, Légeard provided the first Oblate-authored reference to Île-à-la-Crosse as a predominantly *métis* community. He made this reference in his report to the Oblate General Administration for the year 1876:

Mission de Saint-Jean Baptiste (Ile à la Crosse).

... [N]ous sommes bien contents de notre petite population. Ces pauvres gens, *la plupart métis*, ont bien leurs défauts, mais ils nous écoutent quand nous les instruisons; les sacrements sont bien fréquentés, et les offices suivis fidèlement. Ce qui nous donne meilleur espoir encore pour l'avenir, c'est qu'il n'y a pas une maison à l'île à la Crosse où il n'y ait une image du Sacré Cœur. Ce divin cœur, j'en suis sûr, ne manquera pas de leur accorder les bénédictions qui lui-même a promises à tous ceux qui l'honoreront.⁶¹

Légeard identified the veneration of the Sacred Heart as a local devotion – one that was as yet restricted to *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse. He reported, however, that he and his confrères sought to encourage its observance among *les sauvages* in outlying areas. Their efforts had thus far been impeded by the limited supply of Sacred-Heart paraphernalia at their disposal – notably medallions, prayer cards and devotional images painted by Sister Sara Riel (also known as Sister Marguerite-Marie). “[A]ctuellement chacune de nos familles métisses appartenant à la mission de l’Île à la Crosse possède une image assez grande du Sacré-Cœur, peinte sur carton par cette Sœur qui a été guérie,” wrote Légeard to a Visitationist Sister of Paray-le-Monial. “Quant à nos sauvages, eux aussi veulent avoir chacun une de ces images du Sacré-Cœur. Jusqu’à présent nous n’avons pu les contenter, car notre chère Sœur Marguerite-

⁶¹ “Île à la Crosse. Extrait d’une lettre du Révérend Père Légeard au R.P. Martinet,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 59 (September 1877), p. 314 (my italics). Légeard’s report is also quoted in “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 151-163. The addressee of Légeard’s report – Father Aimé Martinet – was Oblate Assistant General and Secretary General. On Martinet and his career in the Oblate General Administration (1867-1894), see especially: “R.P. Aimé Martinet, assistant général o.m.i.,” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée* (1914), pp. 489-492; Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, pp. 280-281.

Marie, occupée tous les jours par la classe, n'a pas beaucoup de temps pour peindre ces images."⁶² Thus, by the second half of the 1870s, the veneration of the Sacred Heart – together with its material accoutrements – had become one of the devotional traits cited by the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in distinguishing a local *métis* population from an outlying *sauvage* population. Collectively, these traits signalled a greater amenability to clerical influence and a more thorough integration into institutional Catholicism.⁶³

Yet, within a decade of applying the term *métis* to the resident population of Île-à-la-Crosse, Oblates began reconceptualising the term and reappraising the religious and moral character of those to whom they applied it. Spurring this process were developments in the southern missions of the Diocese of Saint-Albert – particularly those scattered along the fertile Saskatchewan River Valley and its tributary river valleys. In the late 1870s and early 80s, Oblates stationed at these missions reported increasing impiety and immorality among their *métis* congregants. Bishop Grandin attributed this degeneration to the incursion and spread of *la civilisation moderne* through the medium of Euro-Canadian and European settlers.⁶⁴ Unlike *les sauvages*

⁶² AD, G LPP 2203, Légeard to “Ma très honorée Sœur,” Île-à-la-Crosse, July 27, 1875. On the veneration of the Sacred Heart as a local and “*métis*” devotion, see also: “Missions d’Amérique : Nouvelle Bretagne, Diocèse de Saint-Albert,” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 49 (1877), p. 446; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 155, 159.

⁶³ AD, G LPP 2205, Légeard to Grandin, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 13, 1877; AD, HEC 2500. P96C 15, Légeard to Maisonneuve, Île-à-la-Crosse, January 16, 1877; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 133, 174.

⁶⁴ See especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 967, Box 33, “Lettre de M^{gr} Vital Justin Grandin, O.M.I., Vicaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires O.M.I. dans le Diocèse de S. Albert et Évêque de ce même diocèse, aux RR. PP. Oblats missionnaires dans le diocèse,” Ottawa, November 18, 1887, pp. 2-3; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 960, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” pp. 216-218. See also: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 177-179, 181, 184; Champagne, “Mission et civilisation dans l’Ouest canadien,” pp. 346-347; Raymond Huel, “The Oblates, the Métis, and 1885: The Breakdown of Traditional Relationships,” *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies*, vol. 56 (1989), p. 11.

who were somewhat insulated from *la civilisation moderne* on their reserves, *les métis* were left vulnerable to its most nefarious influences – including material greed, sexual dissipation and intemperance.⁶⁵ According to Grandin, many were absorbing the virulently anti-Catholic and anti-clerical attitudes that had accompanied white settlement. These attitudes received tangible expression during the Northwest Rebellion in spring 1885 when – in Grandin’s estimation – the *métis* congregants of Saint-Laurent-de-Grandin, Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue (Batoche) and Sacré-Coeur (Duck Lake) apostatized *en masse* and embraced the prophetic leadership of Louis Riel.⁶⁶ In a particularly violent episode on April 2, 1885, insurgents shot and killed two ordained Oblates at Frog Lake – thirty-four-year-old Félix-Adélar-Léon Fafard (from Saint-Cuthbert, Lower Canada) and twenty-seven-year-old Félix Marchand (from the French department of Ille-et-Vilaine).⁶⁷ Underlying this attack on ordained clergy was the

⁶⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 966, Box 33, Grandin “À Sa Grâce M^{gr} l’Archevêque de Québec et à leurs Grandeurs, Messieurs les Évêques de la Provinces de Québec,” Ottawa, January 29, 1883, pp. 4-6, 9; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 923, Box 32, Grandin to Clut, Prince Albert, August 7, 1884; SHSB/Arch., Fonds Taché, T29966-T29973, Grandin to Taché, Grande Prairie, September 8, 1884. See also: Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 209-210.

⁶⁶ AD, HE 2223 TI 2Z 3, Grandin to Taché, Saint-Laurent-de-Grandin, July 14, 1885; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 960, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” pp. 216-217. On the foundation and early history of these three missions – each of which was located on the South Saskatchewan River – see especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert,” 1882 (numbers 26, 27 and 28); Payment, «*Les gens libres – Otipemisiwak*», pp. 114-115, 117. On Riel’s prophetic leadership and his inauguration of a messianic movement, see especially: Flanagan, *Louis ‘David’ Riel*, pp. 57-104, 133-165; Gilles Martel, *Le messianisme de Louis Riel* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), pp. 211-288. For an account of the conversion to “Rielism” of William Henry Jackson (a.k.a. Honoré Jaxon), see: Donald B. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon: Prairie Visionary* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2007), pp. 49, 58, 61-62, 64.

⁶⁷ “Lettre de M^{gr} Grandin. Saint-Albert, district d’Alberta, Canada, 12 mai 1885.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 91 (September 1885), pp. 310-314; “Vicariat de Saint-Albert. Les martyrs du Nord-Ouest. Lettre de M^{gr} Grandin au père et à la mère du R.P. Fafard, martyrisé au Lac la Grenouille.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 2 (December 1885), pp. 417-430. See also:

corrupting, immoral and irreligious influence of *la civilisation moderne*.⁶⁸ “Les Métis... ont grandement souffert des changements arrivés dans leur pays,” reported Grandin to the Oblate General Council in April 1887:

Ils n'étaient pas assez préparés à cette *civilisation moderne* qui tout à coup est venue fondre sur eux... Ils sont travaillés par des meneurs, qui pour mieux réussir dans leurs fins, les éloignent du prêtre, de l'Église et du bon Dieu. Je pourrais dire que c'est là toute l'explication de la guerre civile dont nous avons tant souffert et dont nous éprouverons longtemps encore les pernicieux effets...

On connaît combien nous avons souffert de la guerre civile : quelles tristes conséquences elle a eues, surtout dans le district de St. Laurent de Grandin. À un moment donné presque tous nos Métis de ces parages étaient apostats, matériellement du moins. Il a été d'autant plus facile de les ramener à l'ordre qu'ils ne se doutaient point de leur apostasie. Cependant cette guerre a laissé chez eux un devoir bien pénible dont les effets se feront sentir longtemps encore...⁶⁹

In Grandin's interpretive scheme, the Northwest Rebellion – “la guerre civile” – had confirmed a widening chasm between “nos Métis” and institutional Catholicism.

Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 2:pp. 13, 361-362; Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women : The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. 58; Jules Le Chevallier, *Batoche : Les missionnaires du Nord-Ouest pendant les troubles de 1885* (Montréal: L'Œuvre de presse dominicaine, 1941), pp. 99-112.

⁶⁸ In offering his condolences to the family of Marchand, Grandin attributed the Frog Lake massacre to the same irreligious current that underlay the general persecution of Catholicism in France (a persecution that involved the promulgation of the Ferry Laws and the expulsion of Oblates from several establishments): “Vous vivez, cher Monsieur, dans un milieu où sans doute on représente la religion comme une vieillerie dont il faut se défaire et le prêtre comme un misérable ennemi de toute science et de tout progrès... Ce sont les idées si répandues maintenant en notre pauvre France qui ont pénétré chez nous et ont porté les sauvages à tremper leurs mains dans le sang humain, dans le sang de leurs prêtres. L'exemple leur venant de loin, de Paris, ils se croyaient autorisés.” PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 927, Box 33, Grandin to “M^r Amb. Marchand” (brother of the slain Oblate), Battleford, July 17, 1885. See also: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 927, Box 33, Grandin to “la famille Marchand,” Saint-Albert, August 27, 1885.

⁶⁹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 76, Box 2, Grandin, “Extrait du Rapport sur le Vicariat de St. Albert au Chapitre Général de la Congrégation des O.M.I. à Rome,” April 28, 1887, pp. 2-3, 8 (my italics). An edited and abridged version of this report was published later in 1887: “Extrait d'un rapport de M^{re} Grandin, Evêque de Saint-Albert, au Supérieur général de la Congrégation des Oblats. Rome, mai 1887.” *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vol. 59 (1887), pp. 112-123.

Swayed by unscrupulous and acquisitive settlers, the rebels had rejected the piety, morality and deference that Oblates had striven to inculcate over the previous four decades.⁷⁰

Locally, however, the Northwest Rebellion did not underscore alienation between *les métis* and missionaries at Île-à-la-Crosse. On the contrary, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste remained confident in the loyalty and steadfastness of their *métis* congregation throughout the spring of 1885. They instead directed their fears toward an unseen – and, unbeknownst to them, probably non-existent – horde of marauding *sauvages* that was rumoured to have set its sights on the HBC fort and the Catholic mission.⁷¹ Panic gripped Île-à-la-Crosse on April 28 when an HBC clerk arrived from Green Lake and warned of the horde's approach from the south. Similar warnings followed over the next two days as terrified “réfugiés” arrived from Green Lake and Muskeg Lake, among whom was thirty-five-year-old Father Mélasyppe Paquette (an ordained Oblate from Sainte-Marie-de-Monnoir, Lower Canada).⁷² These “réfugiés” joined fifty-nine inhabitants of the mission and the fort in their flight to the safety of a small island – l'Île Sainte-Croix – in the rapids of the English River. There they entrusted themselves to the care and protection of a band of Chipewyan-speaking

⁷⁰ Huel, “The Oblates, the Métis, and 1885,” pp. 20-21, 29; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 211-212, 215.

⁷¹ In his secondary account of the evacuation of the fort and the mission at Île-à-la-Crosse (published in 1941), Le Chevallier referred to a rumour that Louis Riel was determined to exact revenge on the Grey Nuns for having allowed his sister – Sara Riel (Sister Marguerite-Marie) – to die without proper care a year and a half earlier. See: Le Chevallier, *Batoche*, p. 129. However, neither of the older accounts contains any mention of this rumour: ASGM, Langelier, “Sur le bord de la Rivière aux Anglais, 19 Mai 1885,” *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 12 (July 1885), pp. 251-258; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 192-202.

⁷² ASGM, Langelier, “Sur le bord de la Rivière aux Anglais, 19 Mai 1885,” pp. 252-255, 259; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 193-195, 197-198; Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, p. 131. Paquette was the founder and resident Oblate superior of Notre-Dame-de-Pontmain mission on Muskeg Lake. See: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:pp. 42-43.

hunters.⁷³ On May 24, the exiles erected a large wooden cross on which they inscribed a narrative of their ordeal: “C’est sur cette Ile que les Pères, les Sœurs, les Frères et le Bourgeois menacés par l’approche des Cris révoltés et persécuteurs sont venus chercher un refuge au milieu de leurs fidèles Montagnais. C’est en souvenir de ce séjour au milieu d’eux que cette Croix a été érigé afin de remercier le bon Dieu.”⁷⁴ Conspicuously absent from the inscription was any mention of *les métis*. This absence reflected the Oblates’ perception of their local congregation as docile and detached from the Northwest Rebellion. In his chronicle of the exile, Father Jean-Marie Pénard noted that *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse rejected the insurrection tacitly and dreaded the prospect of being drawn into the fray:

...[L]e sentiment général fut une sensation de peur bête. Nos métis, pas très braves de leur nature, craignaient de s’attirer ~~les représailles~~ la haine et la vengeance de Riel en se prononçant pour le parti de l’ordre, vers lequel tous penchaient cependant : moins par conviction que par prudence. En général, tous craignaient de voir Riel arriver, non par crainte de ce qu’il pourrait faire de mal soit à la compagnie, soit même à la mission ; mais de crainte qu’il ne les obligeât à se joindre à lui et à aller se battre avec les anglais, dont ils redoutaient terriblement les balles. Donc parmi les métis, sentiment d’inquiétude et de peur.⁷⁵

Although written thirteen years after the events in question, Pénard’s chronicle drew on first-hand accounts from Oblates who had been present at Saint-Jean-Baptiste during the evacuation – namely Fathers Louis Dauphin and Joseph Rapet, and Brothers Fabien

⁷³ ASGM, Langelier, “Sur le bord de la Rivière aux Anglais, 19 Mai 1885,” pp. 252, 255-256; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 196, 198-200.

⁷⁴ Quoted in ASGM, Langelier, “Sur le bord de la Rivière aux Anglais, 19 Mai 1885,” p. 257. According to Pénard, the island refuge was dubbed “l’Île Sainte-Croix” in reference to this large wooden cross. The island was still known by this name when Pénard wrote his account thirteen years later. See: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 200.

⁷⁵ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 193. The crossed-out words [“~~les représailles~~”] appear in the original document.

Labelle, Félix-Victor Marcilly and Auguste Némoz.⁷⁶ Their perception of *les métis* as tractable and orderly was corroborated by their memory of finding the mission and the fort unpillaged, unplundered and unburned upon their return from self-imposed exile on May 30, 1885.⁷⁷

It was only in the aftermath of the rebellion that the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste began reappraising the moral and religious character of their *métis* congregants.⁷⁸ This reappraisal paralleled the development and exacerbation of serious administrative problems in the Diocese of Saint-Albert. At the core of these problems was a critical shortage of Oblate manpower caused by the recruitment crisis in France and by the pastoral exigencies of Catholic settlers in the prairies. Left with little alternative, Bishop Grandin redeployed most of his *in situ* personnel to the southern portion – “la partie importante” – of his diocese over the course of the 1880s.⁷⁹ Concurrently, those Oblates who remained at Saint-Jean-Baptiste and its satellite missions were compelled to assume increasing workloads and to undertake constant travel. By June 1885, three ordained Oblates – Fathers Louis Dauphin, Joseph Rapet and Jules Teston – shared responsibility for ministering to *les métis* of Saint-Jean-Baptiste and to *les sauvages* of Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation (Portage La Loche), Saint-

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 194, 196-198, 201.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 201. See also: ASGM, Langelier, “Sur le bord de la Rivière aux Anglais, 19 Mai 1885,” p. 258.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Pénard’s assessment of “la génération d’après 1885”: “Quelques remarques que nous trouvons semées par ci par là dans le journal tenu par le P. Rapet, nous fait voir que dès lors la nouvelle génération qui poussait sur la Pointe ne valait pas grand-chose, et ne se montrait pas très-docile à la parole des Pères.... [N]ous voyons percer un esprit tout différent, parmi la nouvelle génération dont toute l’ambition semble de plus en plus résumer dans cette formule que le P. Rapet a si justement formuler : ‘se promener en capot de drap fin, avec un bout de ruban au bonnet.’ Il aurait pu ajouter : en cherchant toute chose excepté le bien.” Ibid., 211-212.

⁷⁹ These developments are discussed at length in chapter one. See especially pp. 84-88, 92 above.

Julien (Green Lake), la Bienheureuse-Marguerite-Marie (Canoe Lake) and Waterhen Lake. They were also required to venture beyond these posts and to visit Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking families in outlying camps.⁸⁰ In September 1886, Grandin opted to remove Dauphin from this mission circuit and to redeploy him to Saint-Louis mission at Onion Lake (approximately twenty kilometres north-west of Fort Pitt).⁸¹ According to Pénard, Dauphin's departure marked the beginning of a process of religious and moral degeneration at Île-à-la-Crosse:

...[S]on départ... [a] été un grand malheur pour la mission de l'Île à la Crosse, ainsi que pour celle du lac Vert. Ce Père était très-aimé des Cris et des Métis, sur lesquels il avait un grand ascendant ; les jeunes gens surtout le craignaient et le respectaient ; et il n'est pas téméraire de dire que ces deux missions n'en seraient pas arrivées au point de dégradation où elles sont aujourd'hui si le P. Dauphin était resté à l'Île à la Crosse. C'est justement à partir de son départ que l'on commence à voir les jeunes métis tourner mal et se livrer au désordre avec une licence de plus en plus effrénée, aucun des Pères qui se sont succédés depuis à l'Île à la Crosse, n'ayant pu reprendre sur eux l'influence qu'avait exercée le P. Dauphin.⁸²

Beyond depriving “les jeunes métis” of an apparently exemplary pastor and role model, Dauphin's departure put inordinate strain on the remaining mission personnel. It encumbered Rapet and Teston with additional travel and pastoral duties. The pair endeavoured to coordinate their itineraries so that one of them was always present at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, but their efforts were often thwarted by unforeseen circumstances. Between 1886 and 1889, for instance, a series of epidemics forced Rapet and Teston to

⁸⁰ “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 174, 202-207.

⁸¹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 911, Box 32, Grandin to Taché, Lac des Maskeys [Muskeg Lake?], September 16, 1886; “Vicariat de Saint-Albert. Journal de voyage de M^{gr} Grandin.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 101 (March 1888), p. 35; “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 206; Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 1:p. 255. For information on Saint-Louis mission at Onion Lake, see especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 986, Box 34, Grandin, “Missions et Résidences du diocèse de St. Albert,” 1882 (number 21).

⁸² “Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 206-207.

undertake simultaneous journeys in order to minister to the sick and dying in scattered locations. Saint-Jean-Baptiste was consequently left without ordained clergy for several weeks at a time.⁸³ Despite appealing repeatedly for reinforcements, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste remained acutely understaffed until the arrival of Pénard in May 1890 and Father Henri Jouan in March 1895.⁸⁴ Still, for several months after their arrival, Pénard and Jouan could make only limited contributions to the ministry owing to their lack of proficiency in the local languages.⁸⁵ Moreover, Jouan's missionary career was cut short by critical illness in June 1896.⁸⁶ Thus, stretched to the limits of their pastoral capacity, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste sensed a weakening of their moral and religious influence over *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse. "Ces pauvres métis," noted Pénard, "échappent de plus en plus à l'influence des missionnaires et sont en train de tomber dans l'indifférence religieuse..."⁸⁷

In slipping from the Oblates' supervision and guidance, *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse were deemed to be growing increasingly vulnerable to the corrupting influence

⁸³ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 205-208, 210-211, 213, 215-229, 233; ASGM, L018, Île à la Crosse, "Historique," p. 10; Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, pp. 132-134.

⁸⁴ "Mission de Saint-Albert. Lettre du R. P. Rapet, supérieur de l'Île-à-la-Crosse. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Île-à-la-Crosse, le 1^{er} janvier 1889," *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 106 (June 1889), p. 168; "Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Rapport de M^{sr} Pascal, vicaire apostolique." *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 121 (March 1893), p. 19; "Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Mission de la Visitation au Portage-La-Loche. Lettre du R.P. Pénard au T.R.P. Supérieur Général. Mission Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Île-à-la-Crosse, 11 avril 1895." *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 131 (September 1895), pp. 285, 288-292; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 221-222, 229-230, 236-237, 253, 256-257, 259-262, 266, 274; Lesage, *Capitale d'une solitude*, pp. 137-139.

⁸⁵ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 257, 263, 266, 267, 270-271, 276; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928," p. 3, 13.

⁸⁶ ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 8 (May and June 1897), pp. 425-426; ASGM, *Circulaire mensuelle adressée aux diverses maisons de l'Institut*, No. 11 (November and December 1897), p. 534; "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 271-272, 275-277, 283-284, 288-289, 293-294.

⁸⁷ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928," p. 2.

of *la civilisation moderne*. Oblates expressed mounting apprehension about the presence and conduct of “des étrangers” in the immediate vicinity of Île-à-la-Crosse in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Their concerns were initially directed toward Protestant – or generally non-Catholic – free traders whose business practices they considered immoral and whose personal proclivities they deemed licentious.⁸⁸ By 1892, however, Oblates perceived even the HBC as a source of immorality and irreligion in the local community.⁸⁹ That year they lodged a formal complaint against resident Chief Trader

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 211-212, 223, 229, 239, 241, 267-268. It should be noted, however, that the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste held one particular free trader – William Venne – in reasonably high regard. Venne operated outposts at Île-à-la-Crosse, Green Lake and Canoe Lake for the fur-trading enterprise founded by his father – Salomon Venne from Saint-Norbert, Manitoba. A practicing Catholic, William Venne was attending Mass on a regular basis at Saint-Jean-Baptiste by 1891. See especially: *ibid.*, 229, 239, 241; Payment, «*Les gens libres – Otipemisiwak*», pp. 219, 249 (notes 68 and 69).

⁸⁹ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 234, 236, 237-239. The corollary of this perception was the notion that Aboriginal Catholics stood to benefit morally and spiritually from the HBC’s withdrawal from their communities. Hence, in his report to the Oblate General Administration in 1895, Pénard noted that “les sauvages” of Portage La Loche had been undergoing moral improvement and spiritual renewal since the late 1880s when the HBC had abandoned this portage in favour of the Athabasca Landing Trail (between Edmonton and Athabasca Landing). According to Pénard, the Christianization of “les sauvages du Portage-la-Loche” had been virtually impossible in the heyday of the Portage La Loche Brigade: “Alors, surtout en été, le Portage-la-Loche présentait l’aspect d’une véritable Babel. C’était, en effet, la grande voie de transport de la Compagnie d’Hudson [sic] pour faire entrer ses marchandises dans le Nord et pour faire sortir ses pelleteries. Les barques arrivaient en flottilles nombreuses aux deux extrémités opposées du portage, et y débarquaient, avec des caisses et des ballots de toutes sortes, la population la plus mêlée qu’il soit possible d’imaginer : blancs de toutes les nations de l’Europe, métis de toute provenance, sauvages de toutes les tribus, s’y rencontraient et s’y coudoyaient, et faisaient toute autre chose que de s’édifier réciproquement. On ne pouvait d’ailleurs guère s’attendre à de l’édification mutuelle de la part de ce mélange de gens appartenant à toutes les religions possibles, et dont la plupart n’avaient pas de religion du tout. Aussi nos sauvages, continuellement en contact avec ce ramassis de toutes les nations, ne manquaient point de s’en ressentir... Ce contact avec la population des berges de la Compagnie était d’autant plus déplorable pour ces sauvages nouvellement convertis, qu’il n’y avait point là de prêtre pour contre-balancer l’influence des protestants et des gens corrompus qui essayaient de les perdre.” “Vicariat de la Saskatchewan. Mission de la Visitation au Portage-La-Loche. Lettre du R.P. Pénard au T.R.P. Supérieur Général. Mission Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Ile-à-la-Crosse, 11 avril 1895.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 131 (September 1895), pp. 287-288. On the displacement of Portage La Loche by Athabasca Landing, see especially: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 220; Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, pp. 344-345.

Henry John Moberly for allegedly inciting *les métis* to drunkenness and debauchery at *soirées* in his home. When Moberly was exonerated of this charge by Inspecting Chief Factor James McDougall in March 1892, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste concluded that the HBC had forfeited any moral credibility that it may once have held.⁹⁰ Relations between Moberly and the Oblates reached their nadir in early January 1894 when the chief trader and his wife hosted a particularly bacchanalian New Year's celebration. "Le bourgeois fit boire quelques métis," recounted Pénard.

...[I]l les fit danser avec sa femme et ses filles. Les femmes de la Pointe refusèrent d'aller au bal, quoique le bourgeois les eut fait demander. Il y en eut même qu'il fit venir au fort sous de faux prétextes, et qu'il enferma à clef pour les empêcher de s'y aller. Mais elles refusèrent de se mêler à la danse. La bourgeoise [i.e., Moberly's wife] voulut les faire boire, comme son mari avait fait aux hommes ; mais elle n'y réussit pas. Elle fut obligée de boire toute seule, ce dont elle se tira d'ailleurs fort bien. Seulement elle bût tant, qu'à la fin au moment où elle était en train d'admirer sa bonne mine devant une glace, les jambes lui manquèrent tout à coup, et elle tomba dans la chambre dans un état qu'il est plus convenable de ne pas essayer de décrire. Ce fut l'incident le plus saillant de la soirée.⁹¹

In counterpoising the local women's resolute sobriety with the bourgeoisie's wanton drunkenness, Pénard stressed that *les métis/les métisses* had been exposed to corrupting influences against their will. Indeed, the women had been lured under false pretences to the fort and trapped there for the duration of the revelry. While the veracity of Pénard's account is questionable – he had presumably not been present at the Moberlys' party – its underlying meaning is evident: forces of moral corruption were exerting a powerful pull on *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse.

⁹⁰ Relations between Moberly and the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste are discussed in chapter two. See pp. 132-135 above. See also: "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," pp. 233, 234, 236, 237-239, 241, 242-244, 256.

⁹¹ "Codex Historicus de l'Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897," p. 256. For Pénard's account of the New Year's celebration hosted by Moberly two years earlier, see: *ibid.*, p. 241.

Hoping to counter this pull, the Oblates of Saint-Jean-Baptiste ministered with an increasingly firm hand over the course of the 1890s. They responded to *désordres* among their local congregants by issuing ever-harsher reprimands and by imposing ever-stricter punishments. Oblates were particularly obdurate in their opposition to social dancing – an activity that the prelates of Saint-Boniface and Saint-Albert had banned on the grounds that it was conducive to frivolity, impiety and carnal sin.⁹² “Depuis l’établissement de la mission,” recalled Pénard, “tous les missionnaires avaient sévèrement défendu les danses où les hommes et les femmes dansaient ensemble... l’expérience ayant surabondamment démontrée, qu’outre les désordres qui sont toujours l’accompagnement obligé et la suite immédiate de ces sortes de danses, l’amour de la religion et la fréquentation de l’église diminuent directement dans la proportion où l’amour de la danse et l’assistance aux bals augmente.”⁹³ After learning that several of his local congregants had attended “des bals” in early January 1890, Rapet reprimanded them from the pulpit during Sunday Mass.⁹⁴ He delivered further

⁹² Robert Choquette, “Problèmes de mœurs et de discipline ecclésiastique : les catholiques des Prairies canadiennes de 1900 à 1930,” *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 8, no. 15 (May 1975), pp. 108-109, 118. On Oblate hostility to social dance in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see especially: Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada’s Northwest*, p. 5; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, p. 86.

⁹³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 211. According to Pénard, “les métis” of Île-à-la-Crosse had scrupulously heeded this prohibition over the previous four decades: “[L]es catholiques avaient toujours écouté la voix de leurs pasteurs à cet égard, et à l’Île à la Crosse les danses et les bals étaient choses à peu près inconnues.” Ibid. As Brenda Macdougall has ascertained, however, Chief Trader Moberly took a very different view of this issue. In response to the Oblates’ allegations that he had encouraged *désordres* at Île-à-la-Crosse, Moberly riposted: “What has been said about Drinking and dancing is almost unworthy of notice, as it shews plainly that it is only a trumped up charge for the sake of doing me harm. The evidence shews that whether I was here or not, the HalfBreeds of this place always did and always will dance in spite of the Priests orders.” LAC/HBC, microfilm HBC 1M1068, B.89/b/18, Ile-a-la-Crosse Correspondence Book (1891-1893), Moberly to Inspecting Chief Factor James McDougall, Île-à-la-Crosse, March 2, 1892. See also: Macdougall, “Socio-Cultural Development and Identity Formation of Metis Communities,” p. 282.

⁹⁴ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 212.

scolding from the pulpit in summer 1891 during an apparent rash – “une irruption” – of dancing and drunkenness at Île-à-la-Crosse.⁹⁵ As these *désordres* flared continually into the late summer and early autumn, Rapet and Pénard threatened to take severe disciplinary action against any congregant who attended a dance or who consumed alcohol.⁹⁶ Pénard followed through on the threat in late September after returning from a pastoral visit to a Chipewyan-speaking family in an outlying camp:

A son retour à l’Île à la Crosse, le P. Pénard trouva que les gens de la pointe, *poussés par le bourgeois*, avaient profité de son absence pour faire un grand bal. Toutes les circonstances se réunissaient pour faire de ce bal un acte de mépris de l’autorité du Père au premier chef. Les circonstances dans lesquelles il se donna, en faisaient d’ailleurs un acte aussi scandaleux que possible. Mais les coupables comptaient évidemment sur leur grand nombre pour éviter l’effet des menaces qui leur avaient été faites précédemment... Mais, il [i.e., Pénard] n’hésita pas un instant à exécuter ses menaces jusqu’au bout. *Il mit hors de l’église tous les hommes et toutes les femmes qu’avaient pris part au bal, en tout une quinzaine*. Il y aurait mis le bourgeois Moberly lui-même, si sa qualité de protestant ne l’avait déjà fait se trouver dehors... Nos gens... restèrent ébahis et atterrés en voyant le sans-gêne et la facilité avec lesquels il [i.e., Pénard] les [i.e., his threats] avait exécutés ; la plupart commencèrent immédiatement à regretter leur équipée... Malheureusement, il ne fit pas aussi aisément d’étouffer les germes d’immoralité que ces bals avaient déjà considérablement développés sur la pointe, et qui continuèrent à se développer...⁹⁷

The pronouncement of such a penalty – an *interdictum* against fifteen people – was totally unprecedented at Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Never before had the Oblates punished so many congregants so summarily and so severely.⁹⁸ According to Pénard, the

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 236.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 237-238.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 238-239 (my italics).

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 239-240. In the late 1850s and 1860s, however, Grandin had barred certain neophytes from taking communion if they were known to have been habitual drinkers, dancers or gamblers or if they cohabitated with individuals other than their lawfully wedded spouses (i.e., spouses recognized as such by the Catholic Church). Offenders could only be readmitted to the sacrament after mending their ways and undergoing penance. PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.800, Item 912, Box 32, Grandin to Father Ambroise Tamburini (Procurator to the Holy See), Île-à-la-Crosse, June 1869. On Tamburini, see especially: Champagne, *Les débuts*

pronouncement had an immediate effect on the offenders. Most took steps to gain readmission into the Church by confessing their transgressions and by performing penance.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Pénard reported that their contrition faded quickly and that *désordres* resumed with even greater intensity at Île-à-la-Crosse. He and Rapet consequently redoubled their public reproaches, pronouncing a second *interdictum* in 1895 and a third in 1898.¹⁰⁰ “Au point où en sont les choses,” noted Pénard in the latter year, “le directeur de la mission a besoin d’avoir la main ferme, s’il veut encore pouvoir enrayer tant soit peu la gangrène de corruption qui mine l’édifice spirituel à l’Île à la Crosse.”¹⁰¹

As an extension of casting *les métis* as casualties of “la gangrène de corruption”, Pénard cast them also as agents of this insidious malady. Through them, moral corruption and impiety could spread to *les sauvages*. Hence, by the time of his appointment as superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in January 1898, Pénard had become convinced that *les sauvages* should be kept away from Île-à-la-Crosse “où le contact avec les métis leur est toujours préjudiciable au point de vue de la moralité.”¹⁰² The safest and most effective way of ministering to *les sauvages* was to meet them at

de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien, pp. 131, 134, 155. On the canonical and historical significance of the *interdictum*, its distinction from excommunication, and its imposition by parish priests, see especially: *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition*, pp. 425-429; Edward Benjamin Krehbiel, *The Interdict: Its History and Its Operation, with Especial Attention to the Time of Pope Innocent I* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, LLC, 2009), pp. 1-17, 23.

⁹⁹ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 239-240, 242.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 240, 241, 242, 254, 256, 262, 266; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 19-20.

¹⁰¹ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” p. 274.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 184. See also: *ibid.*, pp. 183, 240, 295-296; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 1-2, 9.

outlying satellite missions or in their wintering grounds.¹⁰³ To this end, Pénard devised a travel rota whereby he, Rapet and Teston would undertake itinerant ministries from their respective bases at Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation and Saint-Julien. Besides shielding *les sauvages* from corrupting influences, this strategy would have the added advantages of providing them with more regular pastoral care and better religious instruction.¹⁰⁴ Pénard believed that the strategy would prove particularly beneficial to Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families, whom he regarded as morally good but highly impressionable and abysmally ignorant of their religious duties. “Nos Montagnais sont beaucoup meilleurs que nos métis,” he plainly informed the Oblate General Administration. “[M]ais ils n’ont pas de consistance, et surtout ils ne sont pas assez instruits de leurs devoirs, ni assez conscients de leurs obligations... Je [peux] constater que beaucoup d’obligations élémentaires, même de droit naturel leur [sont] à peu près inconnues, à tel point qu’ils [sont] tentés de prendre ces vérités pour des inventions nouvelles.”¹⁰⁵

In contrast to *les sauvages*, *les métis* were fully conscious of their religious duties and responsibilities. They had gained this consciousness through their regular contact with missionaries and through their regular reception of the spiritual and liturgical services of the institutional Church. Pénard suspected, however, that this

¹⁰³ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 240, 241, 252; “Lettre du Révérend Père Pénard au Très Révérend Père Général.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), pp. 247-248.

¹⁰⁴ “Lettre du Révérend Père Pénard au Très Révérend Père Général.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), pp. 247-248, 250, 251, 255; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 3, 5, 11, 14-15, 16-17.

¹⁰⁵ “Lettre du Révérend Père Pénard au Très Révérend Père Général.” *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*, no. 151 (September 1900), p. 249. This passage was quoted directly from “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” p. 9. See also: “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 4-5.

consciousness was no longer underpinned by genuine religious belief. The progressive erosion of *métis* belief had resulted in a hollow, perfunctory profession of Catholicism.¹⁰⁶ “Nos métis... semblent sortir de leur apathie morale à l’occasion de certaines solennités,” observed Pénard, “et l’on pourrait croire que leur foi et leurs consciences sont réveillées tout de bon et que les choses vont changer : puis, plus rien, les désordres et les scandales reprennent leur cours de plus belle. C’est à se demander si même dans ces moments de réveil apparent ils ont bien véritablement la foi, et si réellement ils se doutent en tant soit peu de ce qu’ils font.”¹⁰⁷ Wondering at the apparent incongruity between outward religious observance and disordered personal lives, Pénard launched an investigation – “une petite inquisition” – among his regular congregants in early January 1898.¹⁰⁸ He reported being shocked at his findings:

Le résultat de cette inquisition, qu’il n’eût cependant pas le courage de poursuivre jusqu’au bout, la rancœur et le dégoût l’ayant saisi auparavant, lui révéla un tel état de dégradation et d’immoralité parmi les pauvres métis de l’Île à la Crosse, qu’il en vint à se demander pourquoi le bon Dieu n’avait pas encore infligé à cette malheureuse place le châtement de Sodome. Depuis longtemps le Père soupçonnait une partie de la vérité; mais il était loin de soupçonner la dégradation aussi générale et aussi complète. Comment nos pauvres métis en sont-ils arrivés là? C’est une question qui reste sans réponse satisfaisante pour nous. Dans les rapports de tous les Pères qui ont eu charge de l’Île à la Crosse jusqu’en 1876, nous les voyons tous donner une bonne note à cette mission, et aux chrétiens de la place en particulier. Faut-il croire qu’ils se sont trompés? Nous ne le croyons pas. De fait, les personnes qui étaient adultes en ce temps là, sont encore bien bonnes pour leur propre compte. La dégradation commence à la génération de ceux qui devaient être enfants à cette époque, c’est-à-dire aux personnes actuellement âgées de trente ans et au dessous. Et malheureusement les autres bonnes pour leur propre compte, se rendent complices, en favorisant par leur silence l’inconduite des autres. L’immoralité est publique et a pour ainsi dire droit de cité, les enfants

¹⁰⁶ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 211, 214-215; “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” pp. 2, 19-21.

¹⁰⁷ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1845-1897,” pp. 214-215.

¹⁰⁸ “Codex Historicus de l’Île-à-la-Crosse, 1898-1928,” p. 19. Pénard provided no information on the procedure according to which he conducted this “inquisition”. Nor did he cite any of the questions that he posed.

grandissent au milieu de cette pourriture et seront encore pires que leurs devanciers. Ce serait à désespérer, si l'on n'avait le droit et le devoir de compter sur le secours de Dieu.

Le jour de l'Épiphanie [i.e., January 6, 1898], le Père parla très-fort sur ce sujet, menaçant de la vengeance de Dieu si les choses ne changeaient pas. Il put voir un certain nombre de jeunes gens sourire pendant son discours ; ce qui lui prouva que la foi avait baissé au même degré que la moralité, c'est-à-dire, qu'il en restait bien peu. Et cependant pour les pratiques extérieures, il sembla qu'il y ait encore de la foi. C'est à n'y rien comprendre.¹⁰⁹

Here, then, was a community set so inexorably on a course of moral and religious degeneration that it risked incurring divine wrath in the form of fire and brimstone – “le châtiment de Sodome”.¹¹⁰ On the basis of records left by his predecessors – namely Taché, Faraud, Grandin, Moulin, Caër, Légeard and Rapet – Pénard determined that “la dégradation” had begun approximately twenty years earlier and that it was proceeding incrementally with each generational cohort. Yet while confident that he could chart the course of this degeneration, Pénard was admittedly baffled by the effects it produced: it eroded the moral and spiritual core of *les métis* while leaving their outward religious behaviours unchanged.

In their extensive commentary on the Aboriginal congregants of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Oblates constructed and ascribed categories of indigeneity on the basis of their own objectives, concerns and priorities as missionaries. For the first three decades of their apostolate (1846-1876), Oblates grouped all Aboriginal congregants into a general category – *les sauvages* – in recognition of their common neophyte status and their pressing need for the sacramental, liturgical and educational services of the institutional

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Genesis 19:24-25. See also Deuteronomy 29:23.

Catholic Church (the fount of *la civilisation chrétienne*). Oblates divided this category into two subcategories – *les Cris* and *les Montagnais* – on the basis of the linguistic considerations around which they were required to organize the local ministry. Thus, while Oblate-made categories of indigeneity reflected the presence of distinct language groups within the congregation, they did not reflect the presence of distinct ethnic, cultural, or racial groups. Families of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry were subsumed within either subcategory of *les sauvages*.

In the mid 1870s, these categories underwent revision in response to the emergence of a chasm within the congregation of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Cleaving this chasm were changes in the HBC's operational and trading strategies, which disrupted traditional patterns of mobility among Cree- and Chipewyan-speaking hunters and their families. These families became an increasingly rare presence at Île-à-la-Crosse, prompting concern among Oblates that they were evading the ministrations of the Catholic Church and entrenching themselves in the moral and spiritual space of *la sauvagerie*. By comparison, families residing within the immediate vicinity Île-à-la-Crosse appeared to remain amenable to the civilizing influence of institutional Catholicism. These families were steadily acquiring a set of shared devotional traits that differentiated them from *les sauvages* in outlying areas – notably regular fulfillment of the dominical obligation, dutiful reception of the sacraments, burial in consecrated ground and veneration of the Sacred Heart. In the course of cataloguing these devotional traits in 1876, Father Proper Légeard provided the first Oblate-authored reference to Île-à-la-Crosse as a predominantly *métis* community.

Yet while they persisted in categorizing the residents of Île-à-la-Crosse as *des métis* over the following decades, Oblates began reconstructing the category and shifting the criteria for inclusion within it. Prompting this reconceptualization was the Oblates' perception of moral and spiritual degeneration in *métis* communities on the prairies. In the aftermath of the Northwest Rebellion, Oblates attributed the apostasy of these communities to the corrupting influence of *la civilisation moderne* imported by Euro-Canadian and European settlers. *La civilisation moderne* spread steadily and relentlessly northward, reaching Île-à-la-Crosse in the late 1880s and early 1890s through the conduit of free traders and agents of the HBC. Despite their efforts to stem the contagion, Oblates found that their ability to do so had been hindered by reductions in their manpower and increases in their travel obligations. They sought to compensate for their much reduced pastoral and supervisory capacity by introducing coercive measures designed to deter *les métis* from indulging in immoral and irreligious behaviour – notably drinking and dancing. These measures had little effect, however, as Oblates reported throughout the 1890s that *les métis* committed *désordres* with increasing frequency and that they were deviating from their former path of piety, morality and modesty.

By the time of Father Jean-Marie Pénard's appointment as resident superior of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in January 1898, Oblates had integrated the inhabitants of Île-à-la-Crosse into a newly revised category of indigeneity. Those subsumed within this category had once been pious and promising Catholics, but they were now being corrupted by the encroachment of *la civilisation moderne*.

CONCLUSION

La civilisation moderne: The world came seeping in

In haranguing his congregation with threats of fire and brimstone, Father Jean-Marie Pénard lent his voice to a growing Oblate chorus. By January 1898, the Oblate prelates of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories had united in calling for spiritual and moral reform among *les métis*. The prelates had even formed a syndicate to implement “l’œuvre de la rédemption des métis” – a project developed by Father Albert Lacombe and Father Adéodat Thérien (an ordained Oblate from Sainte-Anne-Des-Plaines, Quebec) in the early 1890s.¹ Lacombe and Thérien envisaged “un refuge” that would draw Métis families from across Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Montana and North Dakota. These families would settle on contiguous tracts of land that they would cultivate under the watchful eye of a resident Oblate. According to Thérien, each family would create

un foyer près du clocher de l’église qui s’élèvera magnifique sur ses bases, et près de l’école où l’enfant du métis aujourd’hui méprisé, trompé, recevra les bienfaits de *la civilisation chrétienne*. Et puis escomptant l’avenir, je crois voir là sur ce rivage solitaire une population catholique, active, industrielle, cultivant avec avantage, élevant des bestiaux domestiques, jouissant des bienfaits de l’industrie ; une population régénérée, ennoblie par

¹ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6533, Box 156, Albert Lacombe to Oblate Superior General Cassien Augier, November 12, 1896; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6522, Box 156, Lacombe to Augier, December 1896. Historians have commonly acknowledged Lacombe as the sole architect of the project, but in fact he and Thérien designed it together between 1893 and 1895. See especially: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6555, Box 157, Adéodat Thérien to Lacombe, Calgary, November 22, 1893; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6533, Box 156, Lacombe to “Père Antoine”, Prince Albert, November 22, 1895; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6555, Box 157, Thérien to Lacombe, Onion Lake, January 14, 1896; Hughes, *Father Lacombe*, pp. 351-358; Legal, *Short Sketches*, p. 71; MacGregor, *Father Lacombe*, pp. 304-308; Sœur de la Providence, *Le Père Lacombe*, pp. 423-440; 137-141. On Adéodat Thérien, see especially: Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique*, 3:p. 224.

les salutaires influences du travail et sanctifiée par les pratiques de notre sainte religion.²

Through application to the federal government, the Oblate syndicate obtained a twenty-one-year-lease on four townships of Dominion Lands in 1895.³ Located approximately 160 kilometres north-east of Saint-Albert, the land under lease was christened Saint-Paul-des-Métis and received its first settler families in 1896.⁴ Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin of Saint-Albert dedicated the final years of his life to developing this settlement and commending it to private benefactors in France and central Canada. He assured these benefactors that Saint-Paul-des-Métis would be a sanctuary from the evils of *la civilisation moderne*, which had wrought such havoc on the faith and the morals of *les métis* scattered throughout Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. “Ces pauvres

² PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6555, Box 157, Thérien to Lacombe, Calgary, November 22, 1893 (my italics). In his history of Saint-Paul-des-Métis, Émile Legal (Grandin’s successor as Bishop of Saint-Albert) suggested that the inspiration behind this vision came from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit *reducciones* in Paraguay: “[Lacombe] had conceived the plan of withdrawing his beloved Half-breed population from the pernicious influences of vice, not indeed by force, but solely by persuasion, of gathering them together, far away from the White men and of placing them under the paternal direction of their priests, and in a colony of their own; to train them to regular work and industry by means of which there could come... some good and consoling results, such as had been brought about in the reductions of Paraguay, under the direction of the Jesuits.” See: Legal, *Short Sketches*, p. 71.

³ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6555, Box 157, “Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency on the 28th December, 1895”, Ottawa; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6542, Box 156, “Mémoire et pétition à l’Honorable Laurier, premier ministre et aux autres membres du ministère, en faveur de la nation métisse du Manitoba et du Nord-Ouest”, submitted by Lacombe on behalf of Archbishop Adélard Langevin of Saint-Boniface, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin of Saint-Albert and Vicar Apostolic Albert Pascal of Saskatchewan; Legal, *Short Sketches*, p. 71; Smith, “A History of French-Speaking Albertans,” pp. 87-88; George F.G. Stanley, “Alberta’s Half-breed Reserve Saint-Paul-des-Métis, 1896-1909,” in A.S. Lussier and D.B. Sealey eds., *The Other Natives: The Métis*, Vol. 2 (Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press, 1978), pp. 75-107.

⁴ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6555, Box 157, Johnny Chartrand to Lacombe, Willow Bunch (Northwest Territories), February 1896; “Lacombe’s Land of Grub,” *Saskatchewan Herald*, Friday, March 6, 1896; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 6556, Box 157, Thérien to Théodule Nèpreu, curé, Saint-Paul-des-Métis, March 19, 1897; Legal, *Short Sketches*, pp. 71-72.

Métis[.]” sighed Grandin while soliciting charity in 1898. “[Ils] nous ont donné autrefois tant de consolations, [ils] ont été les instruments de la Providence pour la conversion des sauvages, le trait d’union entre la civilisation et la barbarie. Ce sont eux qui aidés de leurs missionnaires... ont battu le chemin à la civilisation et ont rendu possible la colonisation du pays... Ils n’étaient pas suffisamment préparés à cette civilisation moderne qui tout-à-coup, est venue fondre sur eux avec tous les abus qui aujourd’hui l’accompagnent...”⁵

Beyond its prima facie commentary on the sufferings of “ces pauvre Métis”, Grandin’s appeal contained a self-referential admission: the Oblate apostolate itself had been beleaguered and overwhelmed by social, economic and political changes in northern and western Canada during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the process, Oblates had lost much of their former spiritual and moral influence among Aboriginal peoples. Grandin attributed this loss to *la civilisation moderne* which he conceptualized as the antithesis of *la civilisation chrétienne* and the negation of the primacy of institutional Roman Catholicism.⁶ Since the transfer of Rupertsland and the North Western Territory to the Dominion of Canada (1870), Grandin and his confrères

⁵ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 970, Box 33, Grandin to “Nos Seigneurs les Archevêques et Evêques du Canada qui pourront voir ces lignes,” Saint-Albert, August 22, 1898. See also: PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 960, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” pp. 216, 218; Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 184-185; Champagne, “Mission et civilisation dans l’Ouest canadien,” pp. 347-348; Huel, “The Oblates, the Métis, and 1885,” pp. 23-25, 29; Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*, pp. 213-214.

⁶ PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 71.220, Item 76, Box 2, Grandin, “Extrait du Rapport sur le Vicariat de St. Albert au Chapitre Général de la Congrégation des O.M.I. à Rome,” April 28, 1887, pp. 1-3, 11; PAA, O.M.I. Collection, Accession 84.400, Item 960, Box 33, “Notes et souvenirs de Mgr Grandin, (Repris à la demande de Mgr Langevin par lettre du 28 nov. 1897, rédaction commencée en mars 1898),” p. 218; Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest Canadien*, pp. 181, 184, 194, 197, 199, 204; Claude Champagne, “Mission et civilisation dans l’Ouest canadien,” p. 347.

had grown increasingly sensitive to the encroachment of *la civilisation moderne*. Agents of this virulent force lurked at every turn and assumed a variety of guises: the Euro-Canadian or European migrant who settled on Aboriginal lands and exhausted the natural resource base; the Protestant HBC officer who sabotaged the Catholic mission network; the federal bureaucrat who schemed against Catholic educational interests; the French anticlerical republican who persecuted the Church in its European heartland; the grasping fur trader who worshipped none but Mammon. Out of this increasing sensitivity there emerged a profound ambivalence toward European and Euro-Canadian society. On the one hand, Oblates continued to insist that membership in *la civilisation chrétienne* required conformity to particular European habits of thought and behaviour. On the other, they identified Europeans and Euro-Canadians as agents of *la civilisation moderne*, and therefore as corrupting influences on Aboriginal peoples.

While growing ever warier of the encroachment of *la civilisation moderne* into their mission field, Oblates revised the meaning and scope of the term *métis* within the context of their apostolate. Before the 1870s, they had employed the term in reference to an Aboriginal collectivity defined by its common use of French and by its common profession of Catholicism. These characteristics had distinguished *les métis* as eminently suited to integration into *la civilisation chrétienne*. In the decades after 1870, however, Oblates began to perceive *les métis* as the segment of their flock that was most vulnerable to *la civilisation moderne*. Two considerations underlay this perceived vulnerability. The first was the Dominion government's exclusion of "half-breeds" from the treaty and reserve system, which left them exposed to the corrupting influence of settlers, speculators and traders. The second was an administrative crisis in the

Catholic mission network: white settlement placed increasing strain on the Oblates' diminishing resources, prompting a redeployment of personnel and finances from long-established Aboriginal missions to nascent Euro-Canadian parishes. Under these circumstances, Oblates feared that they were losing the ability to countervail the influence of *la civilisation moderne* on *les métis*. This fear impelled a reconceptualization of *les métis* as an Aboriginal collectivity requiring extraordinary ministrations – including closer supervision, harsher ecclesiastical discipline and exemplary punishment. Thus, the Oblates' revision of the term *métis* was as much a product of disruption in their apostolate as it was a reflection of objective change in an historical Métis population.

This evolutionary trajectory of the term *métis* is discernible in Oblate commentary on the Aboriginal inhabitants of Île-à-la-Crosse. From the founding of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in 1846, Oblates were undoubtedly conscious of a large mixed-blood contingent in the community given the prevalence of European surnames and the historical role of Île-à-la-Crosse as a contact zone between distinct ethno-linguistic groups. Yet, they ascribed no intrinsic meaning to mixed-bloodedness, and referred to members of the community collectively as *des sauvages* on the basis of linguistic and religious considerations. Oblates did not begin differentiating between a local *métis* population and an outlying *sauvage* population until the mid 1870s, by which time some residents of Île-à-la-Crosse had acquired a degree of proficiency in French (through the convent boarding school) and virtually all had been incorporated into the institutional Catholic Church (through the reception of the sacraments and the regular ministration of a resident priest). During the latter half of the 1870s, Oblates

represented *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse as pious and promising Catholics and as models of civilized thought and behaviour for *les sauvages* in surrounding areas. *Les métis* were thus conceptualized as both beneficiaries and as agents of *la civilisation chrétienne*.

Within a decade of re-labelling the community, however, Oblates began investing it with characteristics of vulnerability to *la civilisation moderne*. This development paralleled the erosion of the Oblates' pastoral and supervisory capacity. As Saint-Jean-Baptiste experienced drastic reductions in personnel and funding over the course of the 1880s and 1890s, Oblates sensed a weakening of their moral and religious influence over *les métis* of Île-à-la-Crosse. Concomitantly, they expressed mounting apprehension about the influence of free traders and agents of the HBC, whom they began to perceive as sources of vice and corruption. By the late 1890s, Oblates had reconceptualised Île-à-la-Crosse as a community gripped by the same moral and spiritual crisis that pervaded all *métis* communities in western and northern Canada.

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