

Métis in Canadian Society

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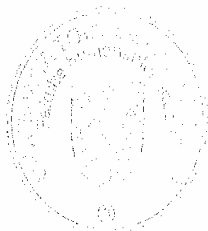
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ABSTRAKT

V této bakalářské práci se zabývám postavením Métis v kanadské společnosti. První část přibližuje Métis jako národ, jejich charakteristické znaky, které je vymezují jako národ jako jsou jazyk Michif, hymna a tradice. Další dvě části se zabývají vývojem postavení Métis v kanadské společnosti. Jsou zde zdůrazněny osoby, které měly velký vliv na již zmíněný vývoj, nebo byly nějakým způsobem významné v historii Métis a podílely se na uchování Métis jako samostatného národa.

Poslední část je zaměřena na rozbor jednoho z nejvýznamnějších literárních děl od autorky Marii Campbell, která je původem Métis, Halfbreed, na němž se snažím ukázat postavení Métis ve společnosti.

Klíčová slova: Métis, Halfbreed, Michif, osadníci, původní obyvatelé

ABSTRACT

The bachelor thesis deals with the issue of position of the Métis in Canadian society. The first part approaches Métis as the nation – their characteristic symbols like Michif language, anthem and traditions. Next two parts analyze the development of Métis position in Canadian society. People, who had big influence on the development or who were famous in Métis history and helped to preserve them as a nation, are discussed.

The last part is focused on the analysis of one of the most popular literary work by Maria Campbell, who is originally Métis, Halfbreed, on which I would like to show the position of the Métis in Canadian society.

Keywords: Métis, Halfbreed, Michif, non-Aboriginals, Natives

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and certify that any secondary material used has been acknowledged in the text and listed in the bibliography.

March 14, 2009

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INTRODUCTION

I have chosen the topic about the Métis in Canada, who are posterity of European settlers and the Natives. The Métis nation is very specific in the way how they were treated. Though they were self-dependent nation, they were outside of the Canadian society and neither of the Native community for many years.

In this bachelor thesis I would like to deal with, for many people, unknown nation, the Métis, and its development in Canadian society during the centuries.

The bachelor thesis will have four main parts. In the first one I would like to introduce the Métis nation, their origin, culture, symbols and also I would like to show that their customs and behavior were on the same level as the Natives had.

The second part should show that there were people in Métis history, who can be titled “heroes” because they helped to preserve the Métis as a nation, and there were rebellions which led to awakening of the oppressed Métis.

In the part about the development of Métis in Canadian society I want to point out that the various treaties and acts were favorable for both sides, for the Métis and also for the Canadian government.

The last part is the analysis of the most popular and important Métis book, which was written by an ordinary Métis women, whose life was full of resistances, fights for survival and also full of unforgettable memories. On her story I want to demonstrate the life and conditions under which the Métis have lived and how the life has changed over the centuries.

1 WHO ARE MÉTIS

In this part I would like to deal with origins of Métis history, then to introduce their language and what is special about it because the Métis are not part of all Native tribes which have very long history. They were and still are specific nation across Canada.

For some Canadian people, whether the non-Aboriginals or the Natives, the Métis were the most primitive people in the world. The Métis were disclaimed and isolated from the rest of the society by living in the reservations, which were made especially for them. In my view it was not so good attitude as was assumed. If they had been integrated them into the Canadian society from the early beginning, the society could have been absolutely different, without uprisings and rebellions. This integration, however, would not had been easy at all because the Métis are known to be very stubborn and they have always wanted to keep their aboriginal traditions as long as it was possible. Their way of life was influenced by many prohibitions and strange laws. They lost everything what they trusted in and some of the Métis started to drink alcohol, used drugs, gambled as the Natives did. I think that way of life was one of the reason why the Métis behaved like that. They were deprived to keep traditions, which were old-fashioned and some of the Métis preferred the European style. But to start new life was not as easy as Métis thought. Also it was the reason of easily earned money which they got from the government as a small compensation.

1.1 Origin

Métis people were also called Bois Brûlé, Half-breed, Country-born, Mixed blood, Michif, Chicot, Mountain Men or Savages. The word Métis is originally a French word. It is related to a Spanish word mestizo. Both words mean mixed blood. It is very interesting that the word Métis is used as a singular and plural and, what is even more interesting, as an adjective too.¹ The author wanted to show that the word Métis belongs to the group of words which used only one form for different word categories. I think that there are not many words which belong to this group.

The official term for people who has European and Native origin is Métis. The Métis also use the term “halfbreeds” but only when they speak about themselves and when they

¹ “Métis (people)”, Knowledgerush, [http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Metis_\(people\)/](http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Metis_(people)/).

want to emphasize how they were treated in the history. But the non-Aboriginal people should not use this term, because it is rude and impolite slur.

There is a difference between *métis* and *Métis*. “Written with a small m, *métis* is an old French word meaning "mixed," and it is used in a general sense for people of dual Indian-white ancestry. Capitalized, *Métis* is often used but not universally accepted as a generic term for all persons of this biracial descent. It may variously refer to a distinctive socio cultural heritage, a means of ethnic self-identification, and sometimes a political and legal category, more or less narrowly defined.”² From my point of view *Métis* should be used only with capitalized M, because *Métis* is not possible to decline. The word *Métis* belongs to the group of word which has ending *-is* and it is impossible to make a plural from them.

“*Métis* are people who have origin in the 17th century in the Red River area (today it is Manitoba) in Canada. They were people who were born from mixed couples. Usually they were descendants of the marriages from Scottish and French men with Cree, *Saulteaux* and *Ojibwa* women in south of *Rupert’s Land*. Later they were born from marriages of French women with men from *Ojibwa* tribe.”³ The author wanted to show that the *Métis* nation was born from two absolutely different nations and another option was not possible. So whenever there were descendants of French settlement and other Natives, they were not part of the *Métis* nation, for example if there were descendants of *Assiniboine* and French, they were not part of the *Métis* nation.

Advantage of this mixture of two nations could be easily seen in quantity of diseases. I suppose that *Métis* people could receive some genes from the European predecessors, which caused that they had better immunity system against diseases from Europe, for example small pox. This conduced to smaller mortality than Natives people had.

The *Métis* nation is also described by its own people who saw them differently than non-Aboriginal people. “The *Métis* were a prominent and independent people in the 19th century, and rose to resist the take-over of their homeland. Unfortunately, the immigration from Ontario, the United States and Europe was too strong and destructive, and the *Métis* Nation was defeated following a second resistance by *Louis Riel*. What followed was

² “*Métis*”, The Canadian Encyclopedia, <http://www.canadianencyclopedia.ca/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1SEC915049>.

³ “*Métis*”, Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9tis>.

an enduring period of dispossession, injustice and impoverishment that caused the denigration of the Métis' political and social structure.”⁴ I think that the author is not right that the Métis were a prominent and independent, because for many years they were depended on farmers who were so kind, employed them and tried to treat them as the equal; and they were dependent almost all the time, especially on the decisions of the government; they could not move to another place without government permission and they could not do almost nothing before they asked the government. The immigration was another factor why the Métis left themselves for other places to get away from immigrants who came to Canada to settle.

1.2 Michif

Every nation has its own language which is specific and also characteristic. In comparison with other languages which had been developed for many decades or centuries Michif is quite a young language.

As mentioned above Michif can be either a name for Métis people, but Michif or Mechif is also a mixed language which is spoken rarely in Métis communities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in Canada. “Michif is a combination of Cree and Métis French, a variety of Canadian French, with some additional borrowing from English and First Nation languages such as Ojibwe and Assiniboine. In general, Michif noun phrase phonology, lexicon, morphology, and syntax are derived from Métis French, while verb phrase phonology, lexicon, morphology, and syntax are from a southern variety of Plains Cree. Articles and adjectives are also of Métis French origin, but demonstratives are from Plains Cree.”⁵ By this brief characterization I wanted to emphasize that Michif is a combination of different languages.

“The Michif language is unusual among mixed languages, in that rather than forming a simplified grammar, it developed by incorporating complex elements of the chief languages from which it was derived. French-origin noun phrases retain lexical gender and adjective agreement; Cree-origin verbs retain much of their polysynthetic structure.

⁴ “Who are the Métis?”, Manitoba Metis Federation, http://mmf.mb.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=42.

⁵ “Michif language”, Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michif>.

This suggests that instead of haltingly using words from another's tongue, the people who gradually came to speak Michif were fully fluent in both French and Cree."⁶ There could be seen that the Michif language is very specific and borrowed different lexical and grammatical elements either from French or from Cree.

As Latin became a dead language, also Michif tends towards fade away. Miroslav Kolář writes on his website: "Nowadays there are less than 1 000 speakers who use Michif and the number is still going down. In 1890's it was probably double or triple this number."⁷ To increase the number of Michif speakers, there is a chance to learn this language in on-line courses or exactly in Canada where is taught by Métis lecturers.

There are some examples of the Michif language, after that people can easily imagine how their language looks like. For a better example I would like to show also Cree words, after that it could be seen if the word is originally more French or more Cree. (The words are used from Wikipedia.)

English	French	Michif	Cree
Three	Trois	Trwaa	Nisto
Sun	Soleil	Saley	Pîsim
The rock	la roche	la rosh	

1.3 Métis culture

This part of the thesis should approach the culture of Métis people, mainly their style of life, living and clothing. We know that they were influenced mainly by non-Aboriginal and also by Native culture. These influences can be seen in different parts of Métis life. From my point of view adult Métis are influenced rather by traditions of the Natives, on the other hand, small and young Métis are influenced more by non-Aboriginal culture – in style of education, style of clothing and in other things. But it was not always like this, it usually depended if man was originally European or the Native. If man was European his Métis family lived according to the European habits, but if man was a descendant

⁶ "Michif language", Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michif>.

⁷ "Mičif – jazyk, který udivuje lingvisty", Zajímavosti z Kanady, <http://zzk.mkolar.org/br98/15e.html>.

from the Natives his family had to live according to the Native customs. A trend to live according to the European settlers was popular later.

Métis people lived in various kinds of houses. The less developed Métis, who were more influenced by the Natives, lived in accordance with the nature and did not have a tendency to improve something, lived in tipis. That ones who wanted to achieve for example better life for their children, education opportunities for children, housing opportunities etc. lived in log houses which were built by the father of the family with the cooperation of relatives. These log houses were situated near water supply – like river or lake; and had a garden for growing some vegetables. Some Métis owned horses, which were used for hunting, farming or they were out at grass. The log house had usually two or three rooms; one of them was the kitchen and second one was the bedroom where all family slept, even the relatives when they came to visit them. It was usual when grandparents came and spent one or two months with the family.

The roles in Métis society were that the men's typical work was buffalos hunting, which was the basis of Métis economy. Men were farmers and some of them helped non-Aboriginal people on their farms – to earn certain money. Whereas women took care of small children and house, prepared meals and tried to grow up some vegetables for winter reserve. The growing the vegetable was not so easy because the Métis lived on very heavy ground. Sometimes it happened that Métis people had to travel by carts to find better conditions for both living and also hunting – it was not so easy to go to the forest and to hunt, because many national parks had arose and hunting was banned there. Métis people tried to be a good salesman, because they usually needed horses (for hunting, traveling and farming), so they went to the city with the buffalo which they hunted and then sold it, with earned money they bought horses and food, but later they were able to spend all these money for alcohol.

In terms of the education – “French or English fathers regularly sent their Métis sons to New France or New England to receive a formal education. Girls were often educated in local missionary schools. Both learned the traditions and skills of their mother's tribe. Their religion was a blend of tribal practices and Christianity.”⁸ I am convinced that sending sons to the another part of Canada was not so usual and popular. Métis children,

⁸ “Fort Union Trading Post: The Métis”, National Park Service,
<http://www.nps.gov/fous/planyourvisit/upload/M%C3%A9tis%20site%20bulletin-3.pdf>.

boys and girls, were sent to the local schools together with Native and non-Aboriginal children. The teacher taught all children writing, reading and English. But not all of them were treated equally. The non-Aboriginal teacher and pupils still made a fun from Métis children and Natives schoolmates thought that their Métis schoolmates did not meant anything.

It is known that Métis people generally worn moccasins, leggings and other accessories as their Native ancestors. Métis also adopted Euro-American style in clothing, so it could happen that you met women who wore typical English dress with cap. However, Métis people, mainly women, were very creative; they manufactured different parts of the clothes for children and their husbands, which had colorful and floral beadwork design. On the Fort Union Trading Post site can be read that Métis were creators of the Red River coat and the Métis sash.⁹ This example should show that the Métis tried to make up something original, which represented them as a nation. I can say that the Red River coat meant for Métis same as the costume for other nations.

Nowadays religion is not so important part of life as used to be. In the past people trusted in God because they thought that he was the reason why supernatural things happened. As well as many other nations during the centuries also the Métis were influenced by Christianity, which came with the settlements from Europe and because of the fact that the Métis were half European, they had relation with it. It is hard to say how many Métis were Catholics and how many of them believed in the spirit, as Natives did. But building up the churches and opportunity to visit Sunday priers caused that Métis became Roman Catholics and also the Métis were heavily influenced by French settlements. The proof can be found in the book *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations*, where the author writes: "If the mixed-blood children were baptized, the French community accepted them."¹⁰ Maria Campbell in her book, *Halfbreed*, mentioned that she and her mother went to the church every Sunday to make a prayer, but when her mother died the pastor did not want to lead the prayer for her in the church. And from that time she

⁹ "Fort Union Trading Post: The Métis", National Park Service,

<http://www.nps.gov/fous/planyourvisit/upload/M%C3%A9tis%20site%20bulletin-3.pdf>.

¹⁰ Olive Patricia Dickason, *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations: Towards Confederation for Canada, Towards Wardship for Amerindians* (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2006), 67.

did not like church, Catholics and everything what was in connection with it.¹¹ I think that I would have behaved the same way as young Maria did; during reading her lines disappointment and aversion are felt. The proof, that the Métis did not resist to accept the Christianity, is the existence of Indian Metis Christian Fellowship. It is an aboriginal ministry, which was established in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1978. IMCF offers its service to Aboriginal people who have the spiritual and social needs.¹² The date of the establishment is very important, according to me, because it shows that the Métis could not found any institutions, neither like this one.

Nowadays, many different newspapers and magazines are part of Métis everyday life. Some of them are published in Alberta, Winnipeg or at other places where Métis live. The register of Aboriginal Newspapers mentions all Native newspaper, but I would like to name only Métis one, for example Alliance : la voix des Métis et Indiens sans statut du Québec (the voice of the Métis and non-status Indians of Quebec), Dauphin Métis newspaper, Le Métis, The Métis monitor, The Métis newspaper, News - Manitoba Métis Federation.¹³ Métis magazine is for example Métis Youth Gazette, where young Métis journalists published articles. These articles are full of their “fresh” ideas about everyday, today Métis problems, life, about their history, institutions and the bonus is crosswords which is in Michif language. But not only crosswords are written in Michif, there are also lessons of Michif language which try to attract more people to learn little bit “exotic” language and subsequently there are articles to practice what you learn in the lesson.

1.4 Métis flag

As all the countries and almost all the nations all over the world also Métis has their own flag. In the history it could demonstrate that the Métis wanted to be a part of the Canadian society and wanted to be treated as somebody who meant something. But from Métis point of view it could mean – We are here, new nation and we do not feel ashamed of being mixture of two nations, we are proud of who we are.

¹¹ Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1973).

¹² “IMCF”, Indian Metis Christian Fellowship, <http://metfel.sasktelwebsite.net/>.

¹³ “Aboriginal Newspapers”, Library and Archives Canada, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/8/16/r16-207-e.html>.

The flag has a blue color with the symbol of infinite. The blue color symbolized the freedom and progress of soul and mind, which was important for Métis people. We can express the symbol of infinite differently. From my point of view the symbol means that Métis people will live forever. “According to the Métis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc. the infinity symbol represents the connection of two absolutely different cultures, one European and indigenous North America, resulting in creation of a new culture and nation, the Métis. The Métis flag is the oldest patriotic flag in Canada; surprisingly it was used 150 years before the Canada's Maple Leaf flag.”¹⁴ According to me it is unbelievable that the Métis flag much older than the Canadian flag. After this information I can easily imagine that the Métis are part of Canada longer than I expected. The Métis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc. explains the meaning of the flag in this way: “The flag bears a horizontal figure eight, or infinity symbol. The flag symbolizes the creation of a new society with roots in both Aboriginal and European cultures and traditions. The sky blue background of the flag emphasizes the infinity symbol and suggests that the Métis people will exist forever.”¹⁵

Flags are usually used during the most important events in the history, during battles. Perhaps the most important reason was to improve recognition of people who fought among each other and to avoid killing own soldiers. So it was in the Métis history. “The flag was first used by Métis resistance fighters prior to the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816.”¹⁶ In contrast to some nations, which re-arranged their flags to today's form the Métis use the flag without any change from the year 1816.

“Fact that the Métis use two variants of the flag is not so known, but as Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. writes on its website Métis have the more popular blue flag and red flag. Nobody knows why the early Métis chose these two color patterns for their flags. However, conjecture seems to indicate that the Métis created the blue and white infinity flag because these were the colors of the North West Company, the fur trading firm which employed most of the French Michif speaking Métis. The blue and white colors of

¹⁴ “Métis flag”, Metis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc., <http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/history/flag.htm>.

¹⁵ “Métis flag”, Metis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc., <http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/history/flag.htm>.

¹⁶ “Métis flag”, Metis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc., <http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/history/flag.htm>.

the Métis flag are also the traditional colors of French Canada, as seen on the provincial of Quebec. However, the flag was uniquely Métis and was recognized as such. The red Métis flag may have been created by Métis employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. The traditional colors of the fur trade giant were red and white. Neither the blue and white, nor the red and white flag was used by the Métis during the two great resistance movements of 1869-70 and 1885. During this period the Métis used flags which contained French Canadian and Catholic religious symbols. The Métis infinity flag was temporarily forgotten, and remembered only in oral tradition. With the rebirth of Métis pride and consciousness the flag was brought back. Today the flag remains a potent symbol of Métis heritage.”¹⁷

Blue and red, these two colors are typical for many nations from all over the world. They are usually used in combination with white, but using them separately is not very usual, only on flags for competitions. I think that the Métis are specific by using them. Though they prefer blue one, which is more common and when you see it, the flag reminds you St. Andrew's flag which is national flag of Scotland. The only difference is symbol, Métis use the symbol of infinity and Scotland has white cross. However, there it can be seen that although it is one nation, the Métis, they are influenced where and for whom they worked in the history.

1.5 Métis national anthem

Every nation from all over the world has own national anthem, so it is the same for the Métis. When person hears the anthem, heart starts to thump, eyes are full of tears and inside the body is sense of pride. The Métis have the same feelings; and even more, they are proud of being part of Canadian society and Canada as a whole. People who are not Métis cannot imagine what they feel and why they are so proud. But I understand them well, because after they had to overcome many distressful situations and vindicated the position which they have now, I would feel and behave in the same way.

¹⁷ “Métis flag”, Manitoba Métis Federation Inc., http://www.mmf.mb.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=117&Itemid=135.

I would like to include the words of national Métis anthem, to confront the words with other national anthems. The Métis anthem is originally in the Michif language, but to understand what the anthem is about, I feature it in the English language.

“In the forest, on the river, and across the western plain, as the white man journeyed westward, to the land of the Indian, a new race was created, a new nation rose up strong, hardship as its destiny, and its curse to not belong.

Chorus:

We are proud to be Métis, watch a nation rise again, never more forgotten people, we are the true Canadian. From across the plains they traveled, from Red River to the Peace, searching for their own homeland, that would help them to replace, all the land that had been taken, and the dreams that had been dashed, their brave heroes, now called traitors, and courageous deeds now people.

We are proud to be Métis, watch a nation rise again, never more forgotten people, we are the true Canadian.

For this newest generation, and the future ones to come, with the past to motivate us, it will help to keep us strong, as we build the Métis Nation, as we watch it rise again, our past lost is motivation, to inspire our future gain.

We are proud to be Métis, watch a nation rise again, never more forgotten people, we are the true Canadian.

We are proud to be Métis, watch a nation rise again, never more forgotten people, we are the true Canadian.”¹⁸

The author of the anthem, Ray St. Germain, is proud that he is the one from the Métis, and he also mentions that they will never more be forgotten people. By this he wanted to emphasize that all the time they never be treated as equal people nation. How time was going, everything changed to better and they became the part of Canada, the true Canadian. I see this rhyme as the most important part of the anthem, as the message to all Métis to not forget that they are Canadian. But what is specific about the anthem is the first paragraph

¹⁸ “Metis National Anthem Lyrics by All Star United”, TSRocks, http://www.tsrocks.com/a/all_star_united_texts/metis_national_anthem.html.

describes beginning of the Métis nation, I think that not many national anthem involve this kind of topic.

Inasmuch as I had a chance to listen to the Métis national anthem, I would like to point out that Native roots are part of it - the melody of typical Native ritual and musical instruments such as drums and flute. The understanding of the text was complicated because the anthem was sung in Michif language, even somebody could recognized some words from the French language.

2 MÉTIS IN CANADIAN HISTORY

This part I would like to turn to the famous Métis people and to the most important events in the Métis history. As every nation also Métis have history full of famous people who tried to improve their situation or who fought for better position in Canadian society. From all of these people I would like to include Cuthbert Grant, Louis Riel and also Gabriel Dumont, I see them as unavoidable parts of the Métis and also the Canadian history. I have chosen two very early events which changed attitude of all Métis people to life, of course these events are in connection with Louis Riel. I know that I could choose other events as for example some policies or treaties which were far more meaningful. But rebellions where a small nation as Métis fought are more attractive for me.

2.1 Cuthbert Grant

Cuthbert Grant is not very famous person for non-Aboriginal people. On the other hand, he was and still is the symbol of the Métis history, because he was Métis leader at the beginning of nineteenth century. He was there when the Métis nation was born and he was also one of them, descendant of two absolutely different nations, European and Native. I think that his origin had to be reflected on style of living, thinking and behavior. He had to inherit brightness and intelligence after his European ancestors and his determination to fight he inherited after Native grandfathers.

As Olive Patricia Dickason writes in *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations* Cuthbert Grant became so popular because at that time, when the Métis were oppressed and neglected, he took around 60 buffalo hunters and attacked a Hudson's Bay Company brigade. Later, when he and his men participated in different battles, he got more and more recognition. The reason was simple; while only one Métis died, tens on men who were on the side of the Canadian government were killed. Among the Métis he became so popular that they selected him as their leader.¹⁹ I think that the Métis were and still are very grateful. For a long time they fought for equality of rights. So when somebody came and did one step near to the equality, they glorified that person and as gratitude they chose him as a leader or a chief. From my point of view Métis behaved like that for many

¹⁹ See Dickason, *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations*, 163.

centuries, because they have many chiefs, leaders, and heroes who fought for improvements.

2.2 Louis Riel

Louis Riel is the most popular person in Métis history. For Métis he was and still is the hero who died for them. But for non-aboriginal people he was a “politician” who made many problems – starting with rebellions, new rights for Métis and many others. In my view he has to be included in this part because he was the Métis icon in Canadian history. He was the kind of person whom Métis loved but at the same time they hated him; because he left them in the time, when they were executed after the first rebellion. Love and positive things in Métis hearts won, so he is treated as the national Métis hero, whose name is used for many institutions and schools.

“He was born in the Red River Settlement (in what is now Manitoba) in 1844. A promising student, he was sent to Montreal to train for the priesthood, but he never graduated. An attempt at training as a lawyer ended similarly, and by 1868 Riel was back in the Red River area. Ambitious, well educated and bilingual, Riel quickly emerged as a leader among the Métis of the Red River. In 1869-1870 he headed a provisional government, which would eventually negotiate the Manitoba Act with the Canadian government. The Act established Manitoba as a province and provided some protection for French language rights.”²⁰ The author of the article wanted to introduce Louis Riel and few important points from the Métis history, which were fundamental in his life.

Louis Riel is depicted on the website Knowledgerush as the most famous, little bit controversial person in Métis history who had a nickname Father of Manitoba. Riel led two rebellions which did not end very well, they both failed. One of those rebellions was the Red River Rebellion in 1869 which took place in today’s Manitoba. The reason why the rebellions were led was that the government in Ottawa did not take seriously the requests of Métis, non-Aboriginal and Native people concerning the plots’ distribution the land. People did not know how to arise their notice so they decided to realize

²⁰ “Louis Riel”, The University of Saskatchewan Libraries, <http://library2.usask.ca/northwest/background/riel.htm>.

the rebellion. After that Ottawa started to take care of Métis and issued land scripts, but the problem was that they did it only for a few Métis. Riel went to the exile between these two rebellions, however he was three times elected to the Canadian parliament, but he never took the seat. In 1883 he became an American citizen. The second rebellion was the North-West Rebellion in 1885 in today's Saskatchewan. Riel was caught and later he was executed for treason. During the process Louis had two long speeches where he mentioned that he fought for the right things which were rights for Métis people. But the jury found him guilty and he was on 16th November 1885 hanged for treason. The thing for which Riel fought was fulfilled in 1938 when the province of Alberta distributed land to Métis, but Saskatchewan and Manitoba have not followed Alberta's lead.²¹ I would like to introduce facts which are based on what I think about Louis Riel. I have very inconsistent ideas if it is good to call Riel a hero. Though he fought for a good thing, to get land back to the Métis, he immigrated to America and left the Métis in the time which was pivotal for them. But it is only my point of view on that situation; maybe if I were Métis, I would feel it differently.

2.3 Gabriel Dumont

Gabriel Dumont was other important person in Métis history who was known as a buffalo hunt captain. "He was clever because it is said that although he could not read and write, he spoke many aboriginal languages, French and English."²² From my point of view, the author wanted to point out that though Dumont has those disabilities, he was so clever and he did many for Métis, but he is not as popular as Louis Riel.

"Gabriel Dumont was a leader of the Métis people of the area what is now western Canada. In 1873 Dumont was elected to the presidency of the short-lived commune of St-Laurent; afterward he continued to play a leading role among the Métis of the South Saskatchewan River. He was adjutant general in the provisional Métis government declared in Manitoba in 1885, and commanded the Métis forces in the North-West Rebellion or North West Resistance of 1885."²³ This article should demonstrate that

²¹ "Métis (people)", Knowledgerush, [http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Metis_\(people\)/](http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Metis_(people)/).

²² "Gabriel Dumont", BambooWeb Dictionary, http://www.bambooweb.com/articles/g/a/Gabriel_Dumont.html.

²³ "Gabriel Dumont", BambooWeb Dictionary, http://www.bambooweb.com/articles/g/a/Gabriel_Dumont.html.

Gabriel Dumont played significant role in the history of Métis nation; and he participated weighty moments which made him so famous. To show that the Métis treasure him, they gave his name to the institute in Saskatchewan.

2.4 Red River Rebellion in 1869

Red River Rebellion was leaded as many other rebellions in the history. Rebels, in this case the Métis, fought for things which had a root in racial and social concerns.

I think that main reason why the Métis rose up against the Canadian government was that they believed they were pushed out of their own land; the land which belonged to them from the time when they settled there, the land where unique culture was developed. The Métis felt that they had to make a space to a new settlers whom was the land distributed by the government. I am sure that the Métis saw this as a treason against their nation. So this could have been the main reason why the Métis, innocent and gentle people, took the weapons and under the direction of Louis Riel rose up against the Canadian government. But when I take this rebellion from the other side, some people saw it as - “A misguided adventure that provoked needless ill will, made Manitoba a province before it was ready for self-government, and led to the massive migration of Métis out of Manitoba.”²⁴ In other words the rebellion lead to the establishment of the province of Manitoba which was self-governing and other aim was to cause the migration of the Métis to other parts of Canada. “Thomas E. Flanagan wrote in Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2009 that it caused that Louis Riel with a group of French-speaking Métis formed the Métis National Council; later he proclaimed provisional government, where Riel later appointed himself as the president, which could be another reason for rebellion.”²⁵

Robert Bothwell wrote in his book *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories* that the execution of a disruptive Anglophone, Thomas Scott, who had moved to Manitoba from Ontario, was one of the last actions which were the cause of the rebellion. In the summer of 1870 when Manitoba was occupied by Canadian troops, Riel escaped.²⁶

²⁴ “Red River Rebellion”, Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2009, http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761588467_2/Red_River_Rebellion.html.

²⁵ “Red River Rebellion”, Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2009, http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761588467_2/Red_River_Rebellion.html.

²⁶ Robert Bothwell, *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories* (Vancouver: VBC Press 1995), 45.

From my point of view, I would see his escape as a treason, because firstly he fought for the Métis rights but suddenly he broke the Canadian law, betrayed his nation and escaped. When I imagine what the Métis had thought about him, in his shoes I would have never come back.

2.5 North-West Rebellion in 1885

When almost nothing happened after the first uprising, it usually followed the second one which should remind the action which was agreed. Or there could be another reason why the second rebellion was held. From my point of view the reason of the second rebellion was little bit different from the previous one; because parts of this rebellion were not only the Métis, but also the Natives and other nations which were laid by the government or by its troops.

According to the authors, Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, of the article about North-West Rebellion in the Canadian Encyclopedia, many battles went before the rebellion itself. "The battles were Battle of Duck Lake, Frog Lake Massacre, Battle of Fish Creek, Battle of Cut Knife, Battle of Batoche, Battle of Frenchman's Butte, and Battle of Loon Lake. All these battles had some in connection, firstly they took place in the area of Saskatchewan and secondly it was fight between troops, which were sent by the Canadian government, against unsatisfied Aboriginal people - the Cree and the Métis. The Métis and the Cree won some of the battles and these victories supported their appenctcy. But the final victory of the Canadian government was caused by fast transportation, which was provided by the Canadian Pacific Railway, of the troops where the battles took places. In the end, the Métis lost their national hero, Louis Riel, who was hanged."²⁷ This is a good example to see that the Natives took the Métis as equal people, but only in some cases. In everyday life the Natives could not stand the Métis, they did not accept them, the Métis meant nothing for them. But the situation was absolutely different when these two nations fought for the same thing. The Natives forgot about their prejudices and fought side by side with the Métis. I can say that in that situations they behaved like the best friends.

²⁷ "North-West Rebellion", The Canadian Encyclopedia,
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1SEC825304>.

I think that the North-West Rebellion was wasted. Many people whether they were the Métis, the Cree, the Natives or non-Aboriginals paid their own life. I know that lots of them are still heroes for their nations, but at the same time they are, for the opposite side, outlaws. I have to say that both sides had good faith on mind, which later changed into absolutely different thing.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF MÉTIS IN CANADIAN SOCIETY

This part of the thesis should show how hard and how long it took for the Métis to achieve the rank in the Canadian society like they have now.

Never in the history was it not piece of cake to become the part of the society. It usually took few centuries for different nations to have a little bit authority at least. But to achieve the authority had to be supported by uprisings, rebellions, battles and actions like that. It means that during processes of to be understood had to die many people of both sides before changes were made. When the change came, it had a form of acts or treaties. These were identified for different nations. They prescribed to the non-Aboriginals or to the Aboriginal what they had to do or what they were allowed to do or not. When they were intended to the non-Aboriginals, they were partly followed and inapposite to respect them there were no hard penalties. But on the other hand, if they were intended to the Aboriginals and they were not respect, the penalty could have been also the death penalty. This is an example that the injustice was, is and will be and from my point of view though all nations want equality there will be somebody who will commit racism against these small nations again and again.

3.1 Beginning of the Métis nation

Beginnings of every small nation were very difficult, especially when this new nation became from two different nations, one European and one Native. Hatred for everything, what had something in connection with the Natives, was typical thing for non-Aboriginal people. This hatred was caused at the time when the non-Aboriginals came to the continent of America and wanted to own everything what belonged to the Natives. At the beginning they tried to do a business with the Natives, which were more profitable for newcomers than to the Natives, but later they did not hesitate to use guns against the Natives to get what they wanted. Because the Natives were not able to protect themselves against guns, put up a resistance, so they conformed to the non-Aboriginals and it was clear that the non-Aboriginals saw the Natives as the primitive people; such it was in the case with the Métis.

“Unlike G.F.G. Stanley, who saw the Métis as a semi-primitive society doomed to national extinction in its struggle with civilization, W.L. Morton demonstrated that the Métis and the Sioux had played a major role in shaping the development of western Canada. In his treatment of relations between the Indians and the French, W.J. Eccles

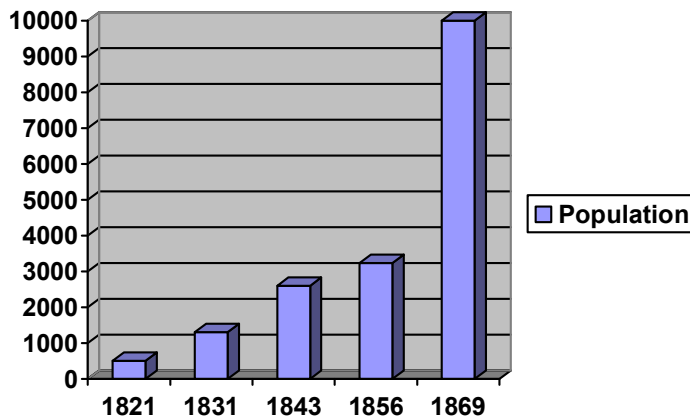
returned to the imagery of the noble savage. He observes that the Indians found the French way of life inferior to their own, had a religion adequate to their needs, and were better nourished than the European settlers were.”²⁸ The author wants to show that there was not only one point of view how to see the Métis, there were many of them and the ideas and the opinions about them were absolutely different. Some saw the Métis as the most primitive people in Canada, also the Natives meant more than they, but other saw them as the most important part of the development of Canada. I think that the Métis were not as primitive as some writers wrote, because they had basics of education which they got from their European ancestors.

3.2 Growing population

During the centuries, when non-Aboriginal people discovered new places on the Earth, was dying out or decreasing of many nations, part of everyday life. This was caused by using weapons against the Aboriginals, or giving gifts like blankets which were infected by typical European diseases against which the Aboriginals neither were nor protected. In the case of the Métis, they had a big advantage because they were posterity of European settlers who had a produced stamina against these diseases; so the Métis inherited some specific genes which carried immunity against the European diseases. This advantage led to growing Métis population while the Native population was declining.

I have chosen an area around the Red River, when the first and more popular rebellion took place, to show rapid increase of Métis population during 48 years.

²⁸ Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 46.



Graph number 1

The graph number one shows the number of the Métis which was growing rapidly. In 1821 there were 500 Métis in the area of Red River. While between 1821 and 1856 there was a gradual increase in Métis population, the population increased from 500 people to 3,230. So between 1865 and 1869 there was a steep increase in Métis population, when the population grew over 6,770 people. It means that in 1869 there lived 10,000 Métis people.²⁹ From my point of view the reason of the increasing number of Métis population was caused by the rebellion which took place there at same time. Also a big wave of immigration from Europe and subsequent migration of the Métis was the cause of population growth in the area of Red River.

“In 2001 there were 292,310 Métis people in Canada, which is around 30% of Aboriginal people (including the Natives and the Inuit). As an interest thing could be seen the fact that the Métis population is younger than the Aboriginal. While the Métis median age is 27 years, Aboriginal median age is 38 years.”³⁰ Based on my research I see the number of Métis people as quite high and I suppose that the number will be increase in the case of growing pride in being the Métis.

“In Northwest Territories of Canada live around 9.6% Métis people, what are around 3,580 people from total population. According to me the number is not so high, thought

²⁹ Brett McGillivray, *Canada – A nation of regions: The Prairie Provinces* (Ontario: Oxford University Press Canada, 2006), 273.

³⁰ “A profile of Canada’s Métis population”, *Aboriginal Round Table*, http://www.aboriginalroundtable.ca/sect/stscan/Metis_e.pdf.

the concentration is the highest. Alberta, a territory bordered with the previous one, has the largest Métis population which has 66,060 Métis people.”³¹ However, in Canada there are some more provinces like Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia which have thousands of Métis citizens. These provinces were very well known not only in the Métis history, but also in the Canadian history too, because the Métis migrated and grouped into the communities there.

3.3 Treaties and acts

Publishing acts, treaties and policies were part of changes which were expected from the government at the beginning. Though it took some centuries, the Métis finally achieved what they wanted and for what they fought for a long time.

I would like to introduce how the Métis were treated during the centuries till the year 2003. “From the 17th century the Métis had not been treated as a First Nation by the Canadian government and had not received the benefits granted to other aboriginal groups. They were nobody, they were not part of white society neither Natives. Everything have changed with coming of the new Canadian constitution of 1982, however, it has recognized the Métis as an aboriginal group and has enabled individual Métis to sue successfully for recognition of their traditional rights, such as rights to hunt and trap. Six years ago, in 2003, a court ruling in Ontario found that the Métis deserve the same rights as other Aboriginal communities in Canada.”³² From my point of view it took really long time to find that the Métis were also people, part of Canada. I know that the Métis were really excited when they achieved at least that recognition, which they wanted centuries ago. But I also think that it was enough from the government, because the rights to hunt and trap, they should have had from the beginning and not from year 1982. Also the recognition from 2003 could have come earlier. It is important to point out that in 1938 the province of Alberta distributed the land to the Métis; I take this as the second important step, which has been done by the government. To be treated as nobody could not have been so easy, in this way I really admire the Métis and I hope that one day the Canadian government come with the fully recognition of these people.

³¹ “A profile of Canada’s Métis population”, Aboriginal Round Table, http://www.aboriginalroundtable.ca/sect/stscan/Metis_e.pdf.

³² “Métis (people)”, Knowledgerush, [http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Metis_\(people\)/](http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Metis_(people)/).

3.3.1 Manitoba Act

The acts as well as the treaties were the most important parts of the history which kept hope of all people, or which helped to change history little bit. The acts also formed the provinces or the states together and on the other hand they separated individual lands.

In Métis history was the act which was very famous and at that time indispensable, I would like to introduce Manitoba Act from year 1870. As the Canadian Encyclopedia presents, it was the result of the action when Louis Riel with armed Métis took control of the Red River. The Manitoba Act created a fifth province in Canada, Manitoba, and included equality for the English and French languages. It contained most of the rights which were demanded by the Métis. Some of those rights were for example responsible government, provincial status, bilingual institutions, guarantees of land title, and respect for Indian title. Some were fulfilled and some not.³³ It is hard to say why the government behaved in that way, but according to me they could have offered equivalent compensation. Even though the Métis were little bit young nation, they had absolutely same rights as the Aboriginals and the non-Aboriginals and it was unethical behavior not to realize agreed conditions.

3.3.2 Treaties

The history is full of the treaties; anyway they were important or unimportant, popular or unpopular and successful or unsuccessful. But they were made to improve friendships between different nations, to negotiate terms and conditions or to support oppressed nations.

“Between 1871 and 1921 were issued eleven treaties. All of them were Canadian government’s agreements with the Aboriginals. These treaties were signed by most of the Prairie Provinces, Northwest Territories, and northern Ontario. The Canadian government wanted to be sure, that the Aboriginals gave all their land to the government, at the compensation the government offered them money, annual payments, assistance with education, medical care, agricultural machinery etc. The treaties promised reserve lands, hunting and fishing rights for Aboriginal people, but not all promises which

³³ “Manitoba Act”, The Canadian Encyclopedia,
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0005070>.

the government gave were realized.”³⁴ From my point of view the government had different plan, it wanted to supervise all over the country, from ocean to ocean. Their aim was to build the railway, on the land which was confiscated, and the rest of the land should have been changed to the farmlands which were offered to immigrants who came from Europe. Land was undiscovered and full of minerals and other deposits, which was secret information which the government did not want to be leak. Everything led to the fact that Aboriginal people became more dependent on food rations from the government. Maybe the Aboriginals were satisfied but how time went on, they realized the mistake which they made. Later, when the government tried to rewrite the treaties, came the conflicts. Aboriginal people had argued because when they agreed with the treaties, they were made in verbal way not in written one. I understand why the Aboriginals behaved in that way, because with the rewriting the government could have done changes which were detrimental of Aboriginal people. From my point of view there was a problem with the movement. Before it depended on the Métis where they wanted to live they moved on the place concerned, but after signing of the treaties they agreed to live in the reservations which were absolutely new for Aboriginal people and were made for these special purposes. The Métis were included later when their position in the society was better, because at the time when the treaties were made the Métis people were not approached by the government. But at the same time when the treaties were signed, the government offered scrip certificated to the Métis. “These scrip certificates entitled their owners to claim specified quantities of land. Later this was changed to allow scrip owners the option of either claiming land or cash to purchase land.”³⁵ The Métis were firstly mentioned in the Treaty 10 from 1906, where the scrip certificates were added and in the Treaty 11 from 1921. The scripts are facts, where we can see that the Canadian government started to notice the Métis as the part of the society not until the beginning of 20th century.

³⁴ “First Nations and Métis: Treaties – Overview”, Heritage Community Foundation Presents, http://www.abheritage.ca/alberta/fn_metis/treaties.html.

³⁵ “First Nations and Métis: Treaties – Overview”, Heritage Community Foundation Presents, http://www.abheritage.ca/alberta/fn_metis/treaties.html.

4 MÉTIS AND LITERATURE

This part of the thesis will deal with the connection among non-Aboriginal writers and Métis writers in Canadian literature. Though there will be a problem with Métis literature, because it is based on an oral tradition which is typical for Aboriginal culture.

From my point of view we can distinguish two types of literature where the Métis have something to do with. First one is literature about the Métis, which is written by the non-Aboriginals and second one is literature written by the Métis themselves.

I think that not many people have ever had a chance to read a book written by the Métis outside of Canada. The main reason is that Métis books are published only in Canada and not even in every city. Many Métis writers have a chance to publish their books in co-operation with universities, for example in Nebraska, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, or with organizations for Métis people in Canada, which try to support them in different activities, like arts, literature and dancing courses. On the other hand, Non-Aboriginal people have better and bigger chance to publish their books, maybe the reason is money or another one could be that they easily find a sponsor who will support them to publish their books. The Métis were not for a long time treated equally so they had no so many opportunities to take part in the Canadian culture life.

It is hard to examine which literature is more expanded because in Europe we do not have a chance to prove it, in the Czech Republic where we have no chance to be in touch with this kind of literature. In Canada there could be many writers who have written many books, which are full of incredible stories, but they have never been published. These writers are ordinary Métis who usually write about their life experiences or they describe their imaginations about better live. If you want to find Métis in connection with literature and search on the internet, usually you have a list of non-Aboriginal authors, who wrote mainly about Métis history and Maria Campbell, who is the most famous representative of Métis writers, although she was never a professional writer.

4.1 Non-Aboriginal literature

Non-Aboriginal writers influenced many nations either in positive or negative ways; just like it was in Métis literature. I think it is necessary and useful for development of all literatures. Almost everywhere, where non-Aboriginal people came as the second nation and wrote about the Natives or the Aboriginals, were the same reactions – the non-Aboriginals wrote usually negative things about the Natives. Thanks to one man

who had been taken by the non-Aboriginals and taught their language, the Natives were able to understand what the newcomers wrote about them and tried to react on their writings and also attempted to show their true situation.

In the past a lot of non-Aboriginal writers were affected by public opinion which described the Métis as the primitives. Advantages for these writers were education, ability to write and read; these tended to the high-flown descriptions of the Métis. On one hand, these descriptions were true, because the Métis were not educated and in comparison with non-Aboriginal people they were primitive. On the other hand, these descriptions were not true, because the Métis had more in common with the non-Aboriginals than the Natives had.

Literature about the Métis contains many works which describe them as non-Native Canadians who are combinations of civilization and savagery. The civilization is presented by their half French origin, the second half, savagery, is the Native origin. “We can see what writers thought from the article “The Canadian Métis” from 1950 written by W.L. Morton it is stated that in Red River colony civilization and barbarism met and mingled. And this mixture of settled and roving ways appear in every half-breed person of Red River and the West. That new society was unique and queer, and it was the combination of the savagery of the Indian and the culture of Europe.”³⁶ This article proves my hypothesis about the origin of the Métis. They inherited something from the Native and something from European ancestors.

4.2 Métis literature

Métis literature is not as old as some people can think. It is true that Métis people have many stories but they used to be handed them down from one generation to another one, from father to son by oral form. Traditional songs, dances, stories or ceremonies which had been used for centuries, these are the bases of Métis and Native literature. As Maria Campbell writes in her book, *Halfbreed*, storytelling was the main occasion for a whole settlement or whole family spent evenings together.³⁷ The author of the book gathered

³⁶ W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Métis: The Beaver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), 3.

³⁷ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 25.

information from her own experiences. According to me experiences are the best proof to show how it looked.

The Métis literature could show you different sight on the situation, which was described by the non-Aboriginal author. It is true that they have another sense in descriptions and depictions – they are more natural, spontaneous, and perspicuous; they perceive all details which are usually all around them. These descriptions were important in storytelling because it was one of the opportunities for children how to learn difficulties of their language – when they had no chance to attend a school it was the main way how to teach them.

Some authors use Michif language, so it is hard to understand what they are writing about. So it leads to the situation that their books are read only by the Métis; and it is a pity for the rest of the readers who do know Michif. But Métis writers mainly use English or French language; this increases a number of potential readers. The reason why they use these three languages is that English and French are languages of nations from which the Métis were born; and the last one, Michif, is their own language which they created as a new nation.

The best-known Métis authors are Maria Campbell, Rita Bouvier, Joanne Arnett, Kim Anderson and many others, they publish novels, poetry, stage plays and stories for children. And there are also writers as George R.D. Goulet and his wife Terry Goulet, who write books from Métis history; their books are recommended to people who are interested in Métis, but also to the Métis who want to know more about their own history, culture, language, famous personalities, heritage and institutions.

4.3 Halfbreed

I have chosen the book, *Halfbreed*, because its title caught my eye. The discovery that the book is the most important literary work in the history of Métis people caused that I include the book to show the position of the Métis in Canadian society in 20th century and as the example of the Métis literature. What is more, the term *Halfbreed* is another reason to include this book to my thesis; nowadays, when the Métis is official name for one of the Aboriginal community.

Halfbreed was written in 1973 by Maria Campbell.³⁸ The author described really moving autobiographical story from her life. In some situations the reader wants to laugh, but few lines later the feeling are absolutely different, reader wants to cry. From my point of view the story effect on all people, it does not matter if they are the Natives, the Métis or the non-Aboriginals. But the book was written especially for the Métis to show all of them true picture of an ordinary Métis woman life.

4.3.1 Maria Campbell

“For the History/Women's Studies 389 course Susan M. Gorman depicted Maria Campbell as the Métis author, filmmaker, playwright and professor, who was born in April 1940 in Pak Valley, Saskatchewan, Canada. Her parents were mix of Scottish, Indian and French origin and she was the oldest daughter from seven children. The discrimination was the thing which she had to deal with every day and it came from the non-Aboriginals and from full-blooded Indian neighbors. The reason of the discrimination was the Métis, the half-breed heritage. Campbell’s first thirty three years are noted in the book. Moreover she depicts the discrimination and the racism which her people had to suffer.”³⁹ In her book the author says about herself that she has never been the writer; she only tried to put down her “ordinary” life. “Her first book Halfbreed, which became the bestseller in Canada, encouraged many First Nation people to become writers.”⁴⁰ “Today Campbell continues to write and teaches at the University of Saskatchewan. She has received many awards for her writing, including Honorary Doctorate degrees from the University of Regina and York University. The Métis nation also honored her for her community work, especially with women and children, with the Gabriel Dumont Medal for Merit. Her role as a political activist for Native American rights is still something she takes seriously.”⁴¹ I personally admire Maria Campbell whose life was not walk-away, maybe because she is

³⁸ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 4.

³⁹ “Maria Campbell: Halfbreed”, Western Women's Autobiographies Database, <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/389/gorman.html>.

⁴⁰ “Campbell, Maria”, The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/campbell_maria_1940-.html.

⁴¹ “Maria Campbell: Halfbreed”, Western Women's Autobiographies Database, <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/389/gorman.html>.

woman and even, one of the Métis. To achieve such a recognition she had to exert lots of energy, power and persistence - not every person is able to do it.

4.3.2 Analysis of the book

In the introduction of the book is described how the author felt when she came back home after some years. Campbell describes what changed during the time when she saw her home town for the last time. At the beginning she notes down only things which were the most visible for her when she came - dirty city, almost no Métis because they went away and no old people who were important part of her childhood.⁴² I feel from the introduction that Maria after coming back realized changed time, though some things stayed the same. Also I see there that the author had safety feeling, which she had not had from the time when she left her home. In the last paragraph in the introduction Campbell says: "I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustration and the dreams.... I am not bitter. I have passed that stage. I only want to say: this is what it was like, this is what it is still like."⁴³ Campbell's highlighting of the book's topic which is mainly recommended for Métis women to read it. I think that this introduction has also second meaning which is realization of Métis women position in Canadian society. Métis women had not had easy life. They were educated to respect old traditions, to give birth and to educate children, to take care of house, garden and food.

Previously Métis women took care of children and taught them, because not in every village they had opportunity to attend the school, so it was women's task to teach children basic things. Girls had to learn how to take care of household, to cook, to make clothes and many other activities. Métis women also produced different kind of clothes which later tried to sell and earned money which they usually used for buying food. Whereas men spent their time with hunting, trapping, fishing or they worked for non-Aboriginal farmers to whom they helped with different things on their farms. But how time changed, people changed behaviour to Métis. In time when the Métis were treated worse than the rest of the people, in time when the most important things for Métis men were alcohol and

⁴² See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 7.

⁴³ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 8.

spending all day in pubs or bars, the Métis women became diversification for non-Aboriginal men. Raping Métis women was everyday non-Aboriginal activity, but what I see really disgusting was that small children were witnesses of these perverse acts. At the beginning men tried to protect their wives but usually they were mauled and in some cases killed. So they gave it up and not only to see what happened, they began their internal struggle drown in alcohol. Money for that they got from the Canadian government, but it was only a small amount of it. So instead of to ensure children, men and women preferred to spend it in a pub. While parents spent all days in bars or pubs, children were roaming or the smallest one were sitting in front of the pub and crying.

When time went on and they had no money, women went to the cities and earned money as prostitutes. Maria Campbell herself had the same experiences, when her husband kicked her up and she had no money, no friends and she was afraid of going back home, she found opportunity, how to earn money, as a prostitute for rich and upper-class Canadians. When she moved in that society, she also tried drugs and later she became drug addict, especially on heroine. Heroine was very expensive drug at that time, so it meant to earn more money which was impossible for her because she was a ruin.⁴⁴ On this example I would like to show how easy was for Métis woman to sink on the nadir. Many of these women never went back home because they were shamed.

I would like to show how important was childhood for Métis children and how they were affected by many for adults unimportant things. From the Campbell's description I could easily imagine how she, as a small girl, registered behaviors between her father and non-Aboriginal people who lived around. She remembered: "I never saw my father talk back to a white man unless he was drunk. I never saw him or any of our men walk with their heads held high before white people."⁴⁵ This is an example how the author, as the Métis children, noticed attitudes between two nations which were in some things absolutely different. Alcohol, as I wrote before, was an inseparable part of Métis life. Drinking alcohol led to the make-believe mate ship between the Métis and the non-Aboriginals. I think that this behavior had to affect small children a lot, because they see only the better side of life and they cannot imagine something bad, so what Métis

⁴⁴ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 118.

⁴⁵ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 13-14.

children should have thought when they saw their nation how it fought against the non-Aboriginals and after that they saw their friendship.

Education was part of every non-Aboriginal children life, but for Métis children it was unknown, new thing about which they heard from their grandparents or parents storytelling. Later when Métis children started to attend the school not lot of them liked that but the author, Maria Campbell, wrote in her book that she loved school as a child because she knew that if she wanted to get something in her life, she would have to study a lot, that recognition was not made by all small children and what was more, by Métis children.⁴⁶ Every Métis children firstly came in touch with the discrimination when they started to attend the school. Also Campbell described this experience in the book. She wrote that it was when white children taunted her and other Métis with an old clothes and poor snacks during breaks at school. I was really indignant to read that the teacher was the one, who discriminated children too. Every time the teacher made fun from them, she called them in front of the board and showed other children how dirty and unwise they were.⁴⁷ I can imagine what small Maria felt and I am disgust that the rest of the children were laughing and not helping them. But it was usual to behave to the Métis, concretely to children, as bad as they could.

The fight between yearnings for education and taking care of her siblings is very nice example of keeping an old tradition that the family is everything. The author found herself in that situation when she was twelve years old and her mother died. She had to make decision what was more important. At the beginning she tried to joint both things together, but later she recognized that it was impossible so she stayed at home.⁴⁸ It is really hard to say if her decision was good or not. I think that it had to be very exhausting to take care of household and younger siblings. At father's leaving I would like to show that the Métis men did not care about almost anything, only about themselves and sometimes they tried to provide some food for family. But Campbell's father did not care if family had enough food, he left home and two months was away.⁴⁹

Tradition and adherence to Natives customs were the most important things for old generation of the Métis. Example of this was Campbell's great grandmother, Cheechum.

⁴⁶ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 46.

⁴⁷ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 47.

⁴⁸ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 72.

⁴⁹ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 78.

She was an old woman who kept all traditions and did not like anything new – for example she had never worn shoes or moccasins, never eaten on the table and never used cutlery. All her life she believed that the situation for Métis people would be improved. Every time she told to Maria that she should behave and think only in the best way. Cheechum was the best friend and confidante for Maria – this relationship has not been seen very often, concretely between young girl and much older woman.⁵⁰ I see that in Métis population had absolutely different behaviors - grandparents had better relations with their grandchildren than parents had.

To see that Louis Riel was a real hero is unforgotten mentioning him by the author. I was pleasantly surprised to find little bit historical part at the book. I think that Campbell is too young to participate in the most famous Métis rebellions, but if she took them from view of her ancestors, it is spontaneous fusion with other facts.

To improve the Métis position in society, it was the main aim of many centuries. But not until at the beginning of 20th century things began to change. Campbell herself participated in that fights for better treatment and rights for the Métis. She wanted to put through better position of Métis women, she proposed halfway houses.⁵¹ I can say that I absolutely agree with the author, because the position of Métis men was much better – soap kitchens, flop houses and hostels for men were established through all Canada.

The author, Maria Campbell, wrote at the end of the book. “I have brothers and sisters, all over the country, I no longer need my blanket to survive.”⁵² I think that it should be a kind of message for her nation, for the Métis. It is unimportant that they are spread around Canada and she does not know them, but they have something in common, they are the Métis, and they are one nation which achieved very important thing, they are treated equally. But from my point of view they will never be treated as non-Aboriginal people at all.

⁵⁰ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 15.

⁵¹ See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 145.

⁵² See Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 157.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis has showed that the Métis experienced enormous changes during the centuries. Even though they were a mixture of the two nations that were at the roots of Canadian nation, they were abandoned by both of them for a long time. They were not equal to the non-Aboriginal people. Even the Natives did not treat them as equal. As I supposed the Métis customs were on the same level as the Natives ones, though the Natives were not able to admit this and treated the Métis as inferiors. The situation changed after a treaty giving the Métis the same rights as the Aboriginal people had, was issued in 1982. Based on my research I think that some Métis behaved better than the Natives, because they tried to keep habits which were typical for their European ancestors.

The first changes in the development of Métis position came with the Manitoba Act in 1870. It was for the first time when the Canadian government offered actions as a compensation for leaving the land for national purposes. Other treaties and acts said that the Métis had to move to the reservations which were established by the government. The government gave different reasons why they had to do it, but there was only one clear explanation: to hold the control over Métis movements. The biggest change came in 2003, when the government gave the Métis the same rights as other Aboriginal communities in Canada.

The analysis of the book demonstrated changes taking place during one life. The turning point was done when the Métis started to establish institutions which supported all Métis people in Canada.

Development of Métis position in Canadian society was extremely slow process, which ended only few years ago. Nowadays the Métis position is absolutely different than it was before. Today Métis have many institutions, associations, and communities in Canada. They participate in Canadian government. And one change is more visible than before, they are proud that they are Métis, it means that in Canada more and more people belong to the Métis nation.

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