



MARK OF THE MÉTIS

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE
OF NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA



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TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE OF NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA



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INTRODUCTION

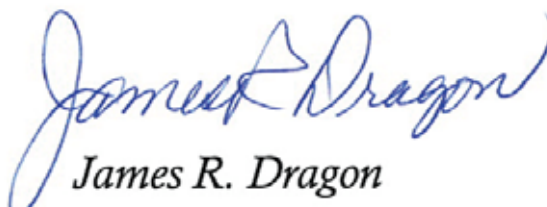
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE OF NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA



The “Mark of the Métis” was created to preserve the rich history and cultural traditions of the Métis people of northeastern Alberta. The stories of 104 elders who have lived and worked in the area are captured through interviews conducted by the Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935. The Elders tell their stories in their own terms and in their own unique meaningful ways. Storytelling is a traditional way of the Métis, passing knowledge and customs on through generations. The stories told will preserve this cultural heritage for Métis youth, providing them the opportunity to grow up confident and secure with a true sense of belonging to a strong Métis community.

While the Métis presence in northeastern Alberta extends back several centuries, it is poorly understood and is nearly invisible in historical accounts of the development of the province of Alberta. Compounding the issue is the ongoing industrial development in the area which continues to disrupt traditional livelihoods, cultural practices and traditions which are inseparably connected to the land. The Elder’s have lived on this land and have observed these changes first hand, through their stories you will witness how much these changes have impacted their lives and continues to do so. The geographic Atlas provides a reference point connecting the historical land use of the region and the current Oil Sands development.

We hope that you will enjoy following the historical journey of the Métis in northeastern Alberta as much as we have.


James R. Dragon
President

NATURAL REGIONS AND SUBREGIONS

LEGEND

- WATERCOURSE
- PROVINCIAL BOUNDARY

- CITY
- TOWN
- VILLAGE
- HAMLET

BOREAL FOREST NATURAL REGION

- ATHABASCA PLAIN
- BOREAL SUBARCTIC
- CENTRAL MIXWOOD
- DRY MIXWOOD
- LOWER BOREAL HIGHLANDS
- NORTHERN MIXEDWOOD
- PEACE-ATHABASCA DELTA
- UPPER BOREAL HIGHLANDS

CANADIAN SHIELD NATURAL REGION

- KAZAN UPLANDS

FOOTHILLS NATURAL REGION

- LOWER FOOTHILLS
- UPPER FOOTHILLS

GRASSLAND NATURAL REGION

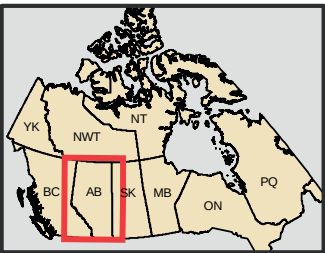
- DRY MIXEDGRASS
- FOOTHILLS FESCUE
- MIXEDGRASS
- NORTHERN FESCUE

PARKLAND NATURAL REGION

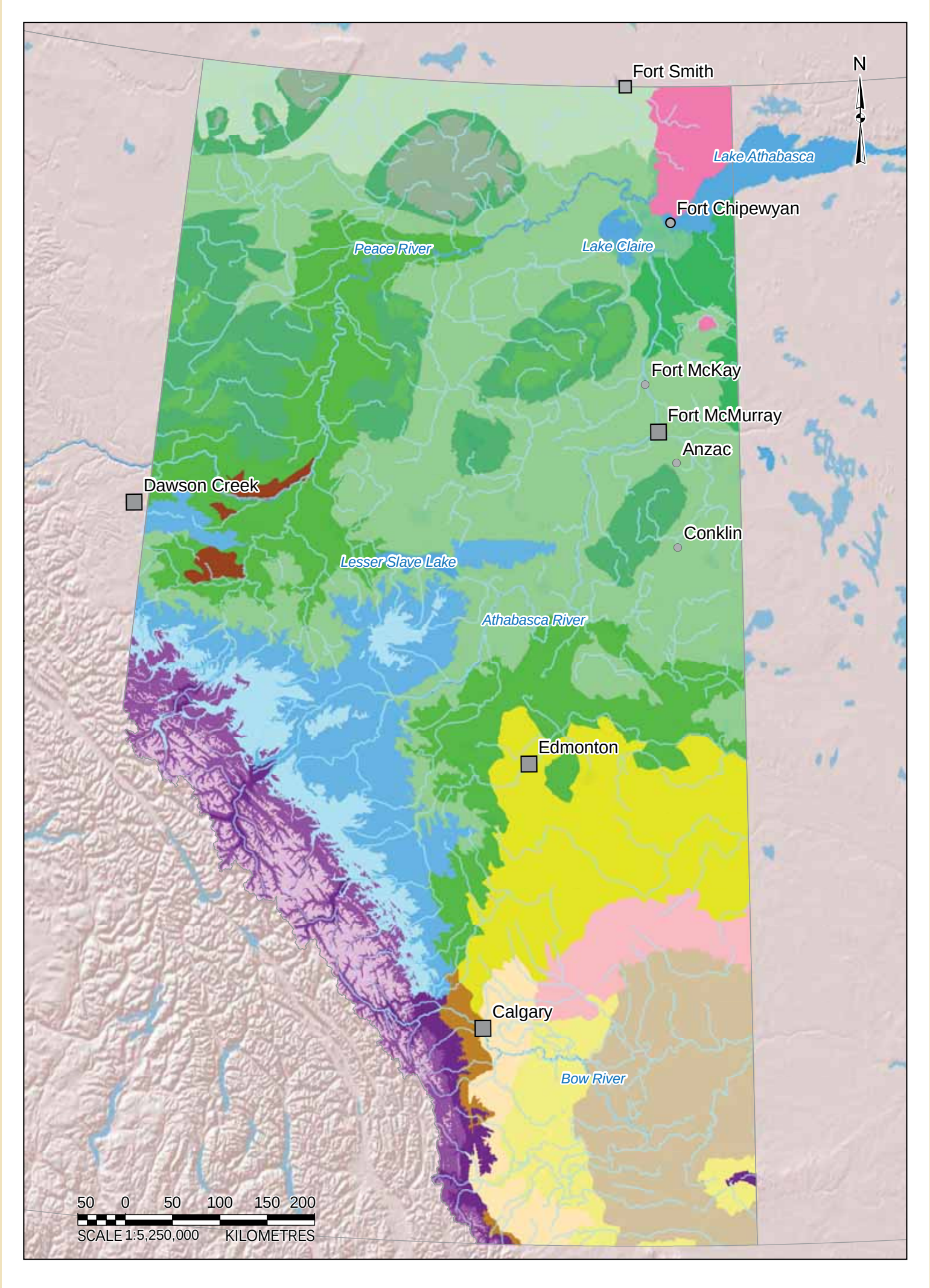
- CENTRAL PARKLAND
- FOOTHILLS PARKLAND
- PEACE RIVER PARKLAND

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATURAL REGION

- ALPINE
- MONTANE
- SUBALPINE



LEGEND NATURAL REGIONS AND SUBREGIONS OF ALBERTA



NATURAL REGIONS AND SUBREGIONS OF ALBERTA





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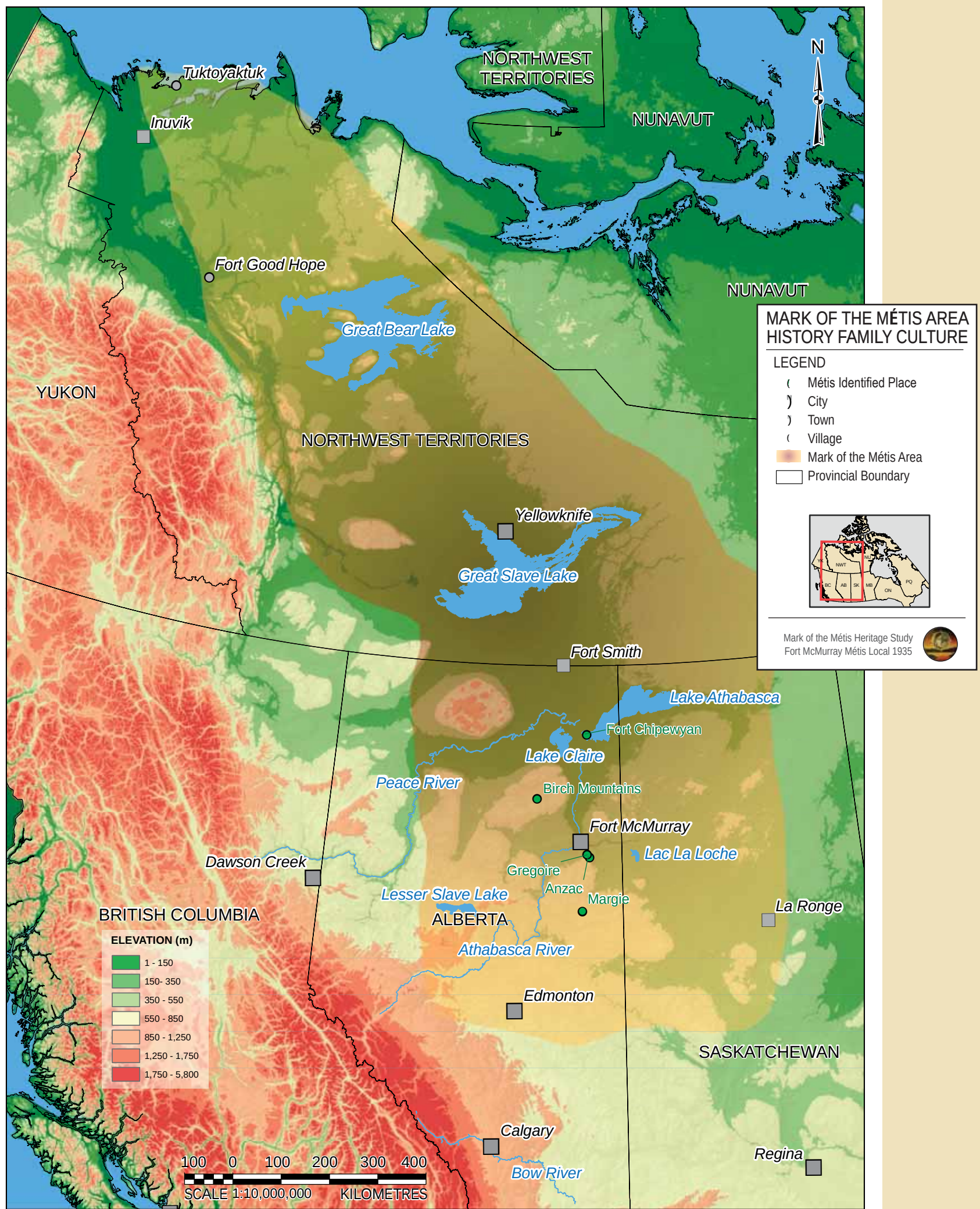
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MÉTIS REGIONAL BOUNDARY



INTRODUCTION

Métis culture is a dynamic, multicultural community with deep roots in Canada's history. In the region now known as northern Alberta, Cree and Chipewyan people have been interacting and innovating with European explorers and traders since the 18th Century, well before Canada became a country in 1867 and Alberta became a province in 1905.

Métis are people of mixed descent, and their ancestors were the major players in the European fur trade, exploration and settlement of subarctic North America. The great-grandfathers of the Métis were Orkney Scots and French traders who journeyed to the region in search of animal pelts and prosperity¹. The great-grandmothers of the Métis were Aboriginal women who married European fur traders and raised families on the land, teaching their traditional way of life to their children and husbands, and ensuring the survival of the culture².

The boreal region surrounding Lake Athabasca has traditionally been inhabited by the ancestors of the Fort McMurray Métis and other Aboriginal groups. This region includes the confluence of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers, Lake Athabasca, Winefred Lake, Christina Lake, Willow Lake (also known as Gregoire Lake), the Winefred and Christina Rivers, Lac La Biche, Lac Ste. Anne and Stony Mountain. Communities with a decidedly Métis history and predominantly Métis population today include Fort Chipewyan to the north, and Fort McMurray, Anzac, Conklin, Janvier, Philomena, Waterways and Lac La Biche to the south.

Fort McMurray and the surrounding towns have grown exponentially over the past two generations. Fort McMurray itself has mushroomed from a small community with mainly Métis inhabitants in the 1960s into the burgeoning oil and gas hub that it is today. According to Leona Anderson, "Well, when I come up in '61, if you get a map that far back, McMurray wasn't even on the map."

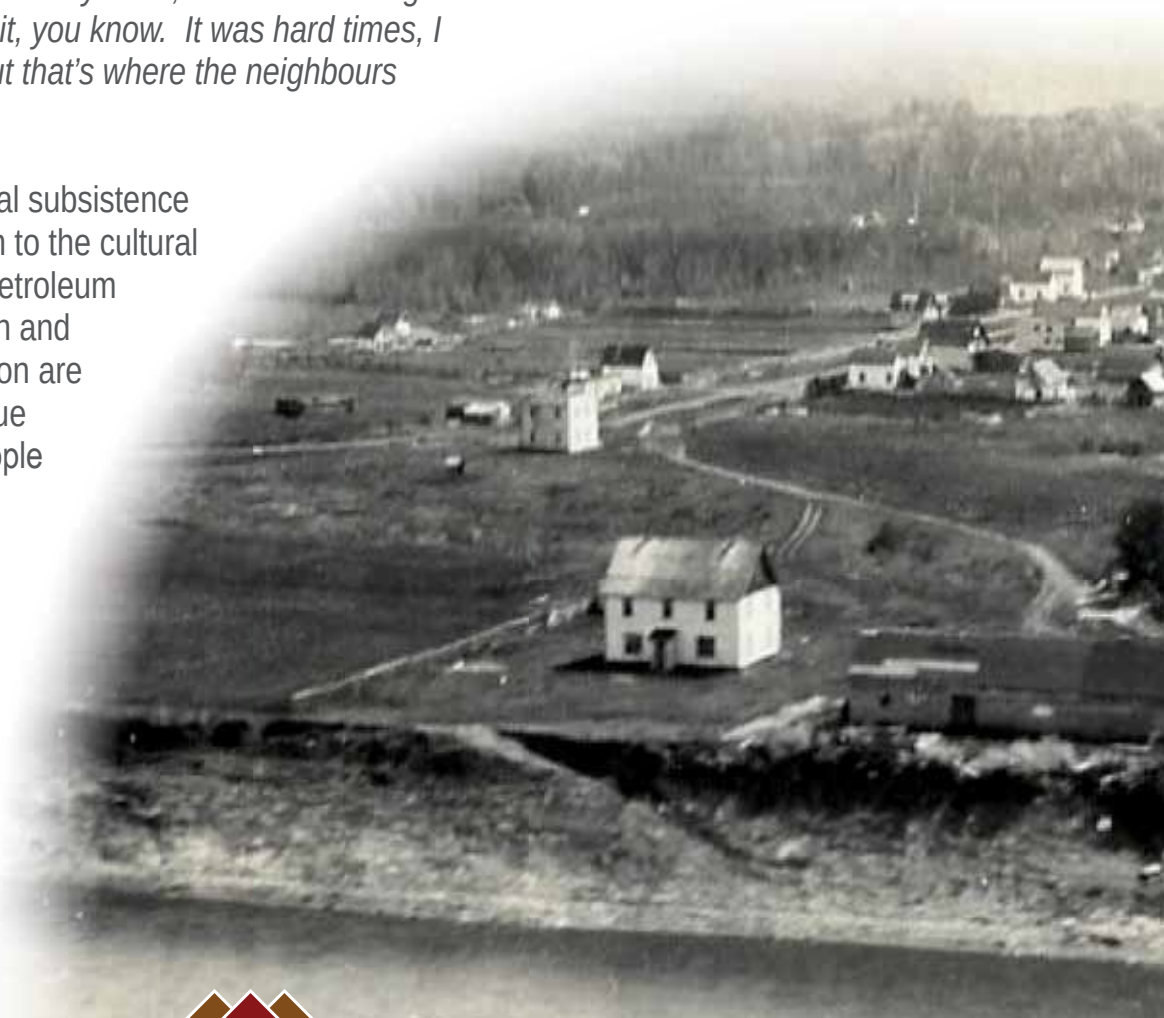
Roderick Bird describes his sense of connection to his home, "Well, yeah, I may as well say I lived in Fort McMurray all my life. I worked, left town and worked in different places for awhile, but I always ended up coming back here."

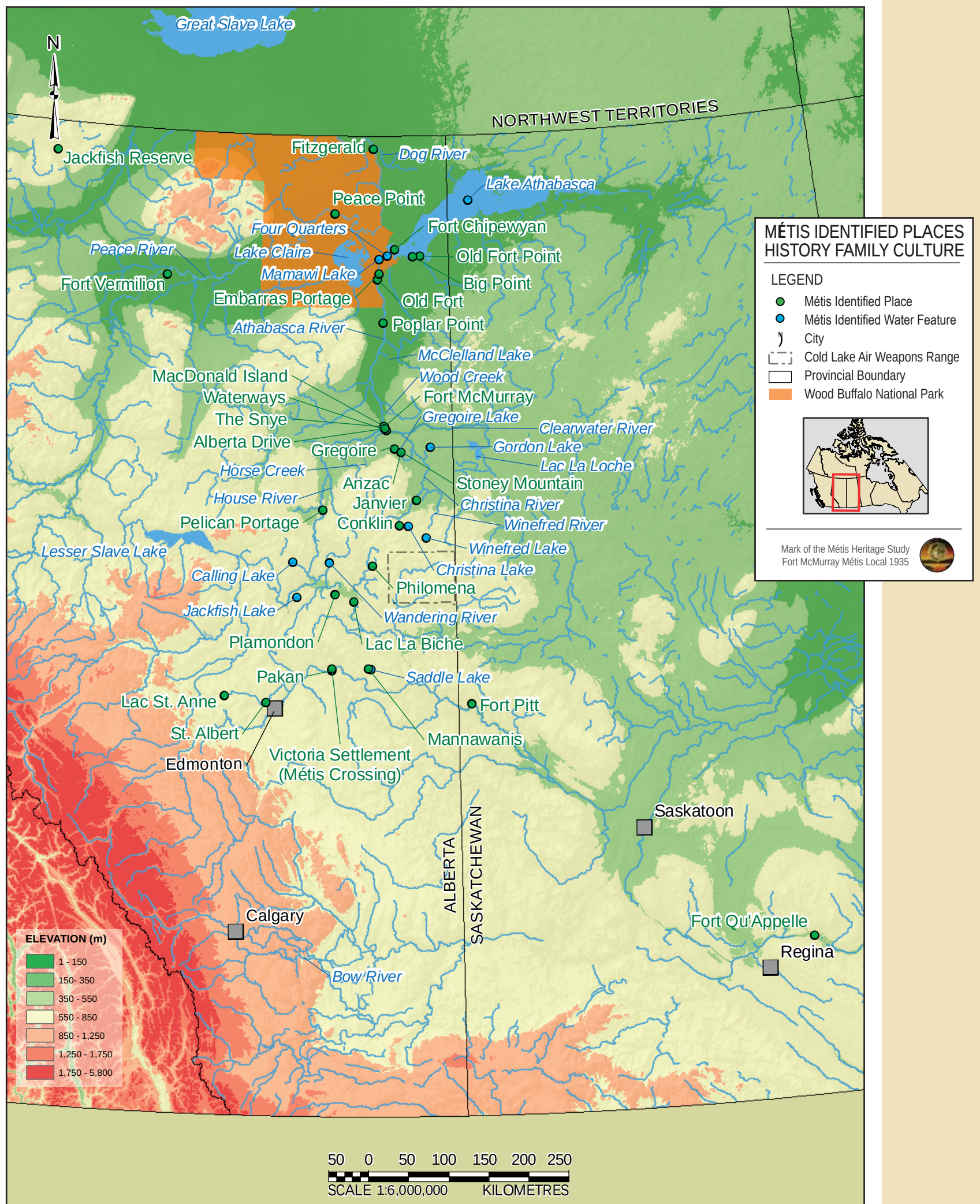
According to Helen Roy, early Fort McMurray was a small, tightly knit community:

Life in McMurray in the younger days, was so different, so, so different than what it is now, like, even — you'd never even think McMurray would ever be like it is today. It was — everybody knew everybody. Not everybody liked everybody, but everybody knew, but they all helped each other. If one was hungry and somebody else had something, they gave it to them and that was just the way, you know. Not — even if you didn't like them, you weren't going to see them go hungry or without, you know. And those were the days that, if there was a big kill of a moose or something like that, everybody got some of it, you know. It was hard times, I mean, you know, it really, really was, yeah. But that's where the neighbours come in and family comes in.

Through all the trials and tribulations of a traditional subsistence lifestyle on the northern Alberta landscape, and on to the cultural adaptation and socioeconomic transitions of the petroleum boom, the rich and vibrant Métis culture has grown and evolved. Respect for tradition and active adaptation are dual aspects of what makes Métis culture so unique and special. With firm roots in the past, Métis people look toward the future.

HUDSON BAY COMPANY BUILDINGS
ON THE WATERFRONT, CIRCA 1929





MÉTIS IDENTIFIED PLACES



HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS AND RESTING PLACES

From today's perspective, there is no denying the important role that Métis people have played in establishing settlements in northeastern Alberta, however, history books published in the past have not told the whole story, as Robert James White explains:

Whenever the history was written, it's always written by the scholars and the scholars kind of take the non-Aboriginal version and those people come out as the heroes, the founders, the driving force. And the Aboriginal people, who actually built the places, who settled those communities, they're always left out.

As Canadian history unfolded in the Fort McMurray region, First Nations and Métis who participated in the fur trade played a major role in building up many settlements which exist today as towns and hamlets. Marcel Shephard explains how present-day Conklin was actually a stopping place for Cree travelers:

Here in Conklin was a permanent settlement, eh. Like, before that name 'Conklin' was here, you know, like, they used to call it Nageewin. That's a Cree word, and it means 'stopping place'. People used to come here in the winter. Like, you could stop here for the winter, because to survive through the winter, you know, off the land, you need to be able to feed yourself. Here, there was good hunting and fishing and fur, so people from Mission and Lac La Biche, they would come and winter here.

There was intense interaction between Aboriginal people and Scottish fur traders during the settlement of northern Alberta, including marriages and the creation of new families. Oliver

Glanfield, President of the Fort Chipewyan Historical Society, and Chairman of the Board - Fort Chipewyan Bicentennial Museum, describes some of the cultural dynamics of the time:

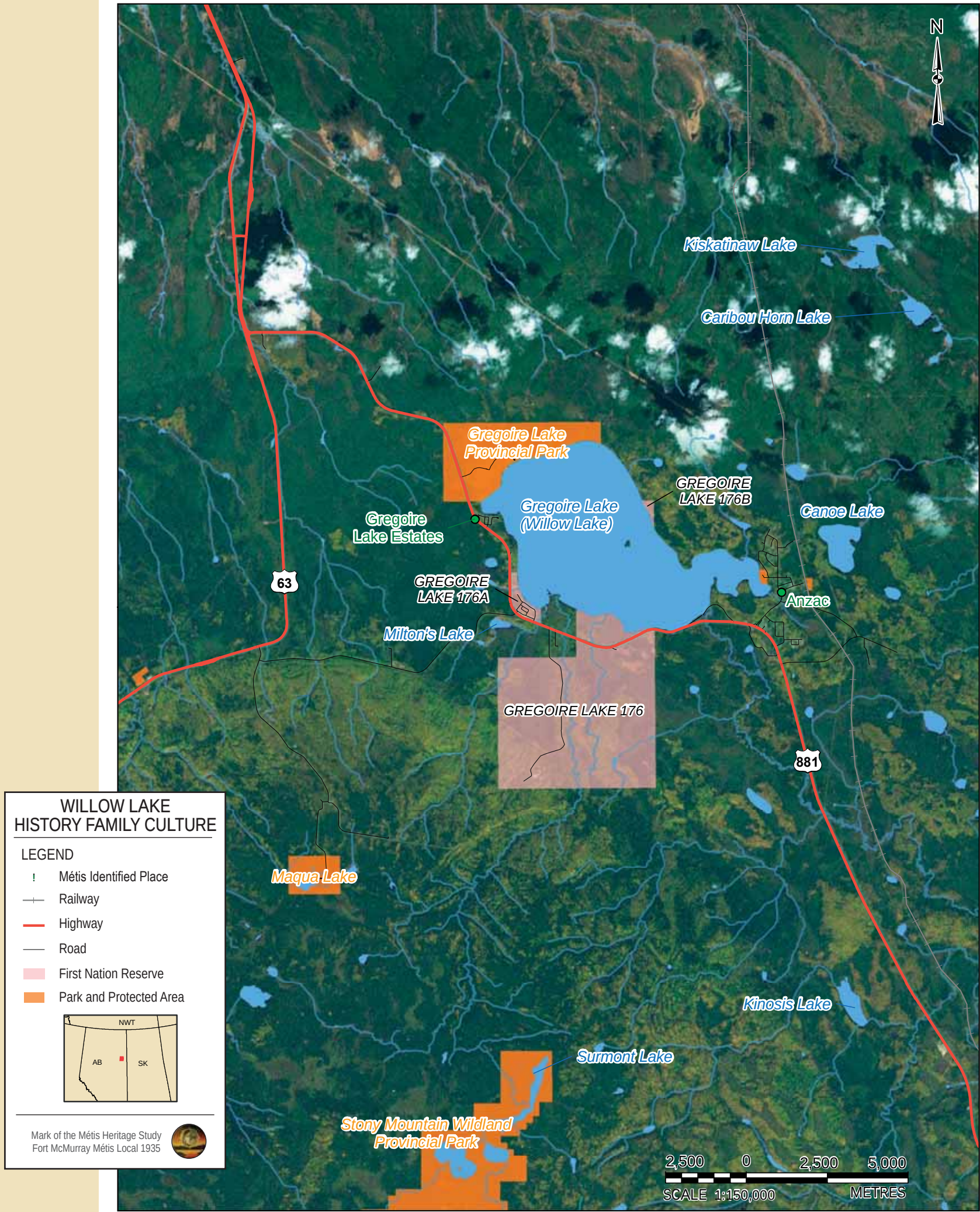
You see in the 19th century, seventy-five percent of the Hudson Bay workforce was from the Orkney Islands. And every time that you run across a name by the name of Rowland, Taite, Lavellee, Loutitt, Wylie, Fraser, that's Scotch. But they're all descendants of those early fur traders, and you have them all over the north.

Fort Chipewyan was originally a fur trading post established on the site currently known as Old Fort Point in 1788, making it the oldest Euro-Canadian community in Alberta³. Of course, it was also a settlement for Métis. In 1803 Fort Chipewyan was moved to its present-day location⁴. Fort Chipewyan was an important post for two of the major power-players in the fur trade, the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company. Oliver Glanfield elaborates on the movement of furs and goods by both companies:

In 1821, Sir George Simpson of the Hudson Bay Company moved his operation to Fort Chipewyan, because it was a much better laid-out post. It was the second most important post in Canada, for the Northwest Company and for the Hudson Bay Company, because all the furs would come to here, to Fort Chipewyan, all the trade goods would come up, they'd start here and away they'd go.

TREATY TIME AT THE NWMP BUILDING, 1916





WILLOW LAKE / GREGOIRE LAKE



Since Fort Chipewyan was the only large trading centre in the immense and rugged landscape between Lake Athabasca and what is now Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP, established 1922), Fort Chipewyan enjoyed a monopoly as the most important trading post in the region for most of the 1800s⁵. Finally, at the end of the 19th century, economic expansion reached the region surrounding Fort Chipewyan and the once mighty trading post began to decline in economic importance⁶. However, the Métis settlement of Fort Chipewyan continued to thrive culturally.

Métis Elders from the region recall that Fort Chipewyan was primarily a Métis and white settlement up until relatively modern times, and that the First Nations were their neighbours. According to Edmond Ladouceur,

Natives lived in their own areas before and the Métis and the whites stayed in Fort Chip. There was always Métis there. It was never a Reserve or anything, but they always said “the Settlement of Fort Chip”, in a lot of the books, right.

Margaret Voyageur concurs,

My husband Charlie Voyageur was born at Jackfish Lake. That's where all the Treaty Chipewyan band members stayed, not in Chip. You see long ago, Fort Chipewyan was only Métis, there was nobody else here, a few whites, you know, to do the radio stations, where they send the records out. Fort Chip was strictly a Métis town up until the time that the government wouldn't make a school at Jackfish Lake for the Chipewyan people, and there were a lot of people there. They were the Chip band members that were there. The government decided not to make a school at Jackfish Lake, so the Chipewyan people had to use the school in Fort Chipewyan. So the government promised them that if they came into Fort Chip to stay, and send their kids to school, they would all have housing. Well, that fall, they wanted them to move and they all came to town, no place to live! Government didn't abide by what they said. So what the town people did, each and every family took in a family. My father took in Ben Marcel, you know, everyone shared their homes.

A NATIVE HOME. A HAPPY HOME, CIRCA 1914



During the 1800s, Métis helped to establish settlements such as Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert, Lac La Biche and Saint Paul de Métis. Oliver Glanfield has dedicated his life to the study of Métis heritage and describes his fascination with the history of settlements in the region:

It just goes on and on and on, you know. There's just no end to it. No end to the history of the Métis and the fur traders up in this area. The history — the people, is fascinating because it ties into Lac La Biche, it ties into Fort Pitt, it ties into Fort Carleton and all these places, Fort Qu'Appelle — they're all intertwined. They're just like the webbing on a snowshoe. They're all interconnected.

The famous Red River Settlement in Manitoba had been a homeland for Métis during the height of the fur trade, but a changing political climate towards the end of the 19th century led to social unrest, two major rebellions (the Red River Rebellion from 1869 to 1870 and the North West Rebellion in 1885), and a mass exodus of Métis who travelled west in response to pressure from European settlers. As Oliver Glanfield notes, “You’ve got to remember that after 1885

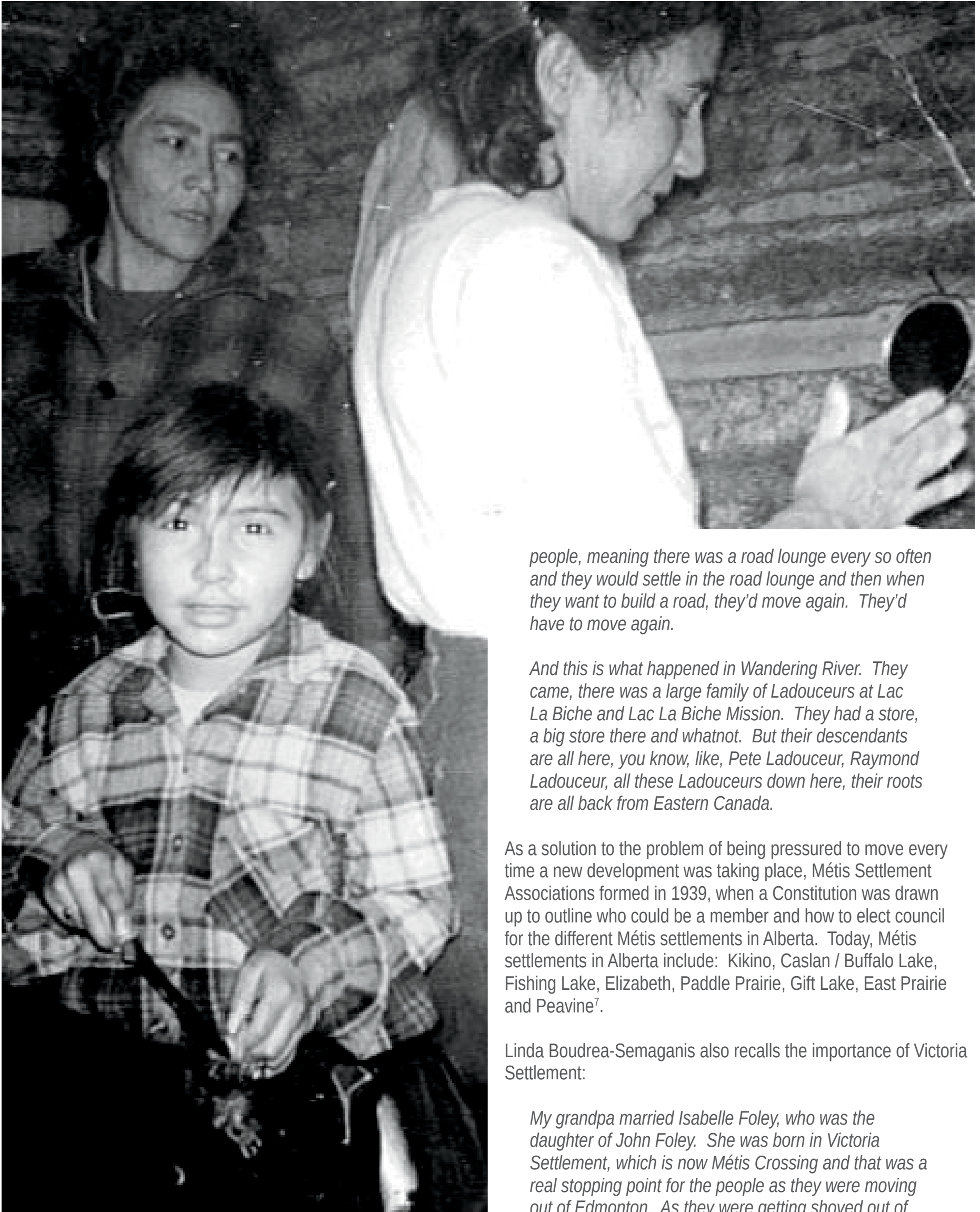
there was a huge dispersal of the Métis people because of the rebellion and they kept pushing them west, pushing them west.” Many families made their way to a place called Muskeg Prairie, today known as Wandering River, Alberta. As a young man, Oliver Glanfield lived at the Wandering River Ranger Station. He explains the history of the place:

It was called Muskeg Prairie, because apparently there had been big fires through the area that had trimmed off the timber in the main part. Early settlers in there were the Powders, John A. MacDonald, the Oakleys, the Desjarlais, and there were several other families there. When the Ukrainian and the French farmers started to move into the country, these people moved from there, to the Athabasca River and come down the Athabasca, the Oakleys settled in McMurray. Another family that was there was Shotts.

They came down the river here, the Powders came down here and the Desjarlais, of course the Ladouceurs also. They came to Victoria Settlement. They were booted off, more or less booted off some of the land that they had. They became road, or lounge,

GERTIE CASTOR STANDING BESIDE A TEPEE IN FORT McMURRAY





FRANCES DUPERRON (SANDERSON) & HER MOM KATY SANDERSON WITH CHRISTINE GLADUE AT 16 MILE CABIN

people, meaning there was a road lounge every so often and they would settle in the road lounge and then when they want to build a road, they'd move again. They'd have to move again.

And this is what happened in Wandering River. They came, there was a large family of Ladoueurs at Lac La Biche and Lac La Biche Mission. They had a store, a big store there and whatnot. But their descendants are all here, you know, like, Pete Ladouceur, Raymond Ladouceur, all these Ladoueurs down here, their roots are all back from Eastern Canada.

As a solution to the problem of being pressured to move every time a new development was taking place, Métis Settlement Associations formed in 1939, when a Constitution was drawn up to outline who could be a member and how to elect council for the different Métis settlements in Alberta. Today, Métis settlements in Alberta include: Kikino, Caslan / Buffalo Lake, Fishing Lake, Elizabeth, Paddle Prairie, Gift Lake, East Prairie and Peavine⁷.

Linda Boudrea-Semaganis also recalls the importance of Victoria Settlement:

My grandpa married Isabelle Foley, who was the daughter of John Foley. She was born in Victoria Settlement, which is now Métis Crossing and that was a real stopping point for the people as they were moving out of Edmonton. As they were getting shoved out of Edmonton, the Métis people, you know, they'd stop



MÉTIS ANCESTORS

Historian Oliver Glanfield has studied the Métis ancestors, prominent in the region's history. He relates the tales of William Wylie the blacksmith, Colin Fraser the piper, and Eleanor the Dené Peacemaker:

William Wylie came from the Orkney Islands, north of Scotland, in 1862 as a blacksmith for the Hudson Bay. He came directly to Fort Chipewyan where he worked at anything to do with metal. Wylie travelled to Fort McMurray, and up and down the Slave and Peace Rivers. Traps that he had modified have been found up in the Peace River country near an abandoned trapper's cabin. When the traps were cleaned up, you could see the initials 'W. W.', William Wylie.

Wylie also did a lot of work on the Anglican Church. It wasn't too long after he came here, that he married a girl by the name of Annie Flett and he started the Wylie clan up here. He stayed here until about 1904, when he decided to go back to the Orkneys for a visit. He got as far as Winnipeg and got sick, so he had to turn back. Wylie never made it back to Fort McMurray, he passed away in Edmonton. Today, he's buried in the 107th Ave. Cemetery in Edmonton. His wife Annie is up here in Fort Chipewyan, in the cemetery by the school.

Colin Fraser came into this country in 1892. He got into the fur trade business in a roundabout way. Colin was recruited by the Hudson Bay Company after Sir George Simpson became the head man. Simpson thought he needed a piper to pipe him into the forts. So he asked for a piper that could walk 20 miles, playing the pipes continually, turn around and walk back 20 miles again, still playing the pipes. And that's when young Colin got the job. His primary job was to pipe Sir George into the forts. They'd come to the mouth of the Embarras River, which is about six or eight miles across here, and Colin would put on his kilt and wind up the pipes, and old Simpson would put on his top hat. They'd pipe from there to the fort, pipe Simpson into the fort, pipe for the dance at night, and then pipe him out of the fort at three o'clock the next morning. And of course young Colin also had to help pack and unpack and all this.

Eventually Colin Fraser established himself as a fur trader. He was first stationed at Rocky Mountain House. Later, he was associated with the Peigan Fort on the Bow River, as well as at Jasper, Fort Assiniboine, Lesser Slave Lake and Lac Ste. Anne. When Colin was at Lac Ste. Anne, he would walk every New Year's to Edmonton to play the pipes for the big New Year's Eve celebration. Eventually,

the fur trade slowed down, and Colin got out of it. He married Levicy Fraser and the two were together until they both passed in 1941, just three months apart. They are both buried at the local cemetery here in Fort Chipewyan.

Going further back, in 1715, there was a group of Cree traders travelling to York Factory and they had a Dené woman with them that they had picked up on the trip. As the group was walking past a fort, James Knight, the man who was in charge of the fort at the time, spotted something yellow around the girl's neck, and since he was always looking for gold, he assumed it was gold. So Knight took the girl out of the group, he took her into the fort, and he bit the necklace. Sure enough, it was gold!

Knight said to the girl, "Is there more of this material where you come from?" And she said, "Yes, in my mother's country."

So the girl asked Knight, "Why aren't my people trading directly with you at York Factory, rather than going through the Cree? The Cree have got the guns and they are shooting us."

So Knight did two things. First, he said, "No more shooting people with guns, you got to take those guns away." Second, he commissioned the girl and a young Scot by the name of William Stewart to travel to the area between Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake, to find the girl's people and bring them back to trade.

Their journey took them almost a full year, and during the last ten days of the trip the girl told Stewart and the Cree to stay in camp because her people were like will 'o the wisps. They knew the Cree were there, and they were afraid of them, thinking they would probably get slaughtered. The Cree were getting antsy because they figured the Dené would come out and cut them up.

At the end of the tenth day, the girl walked back into the Cree camp and she had her people with her. She was so hoarse from talking that she could hardly make the people understand. She negotiated that uneasy peace between the Chipewyan people and the Cree. She took them back to York Factory, and that was the first time that the Dené had the guns. Eventually, Hudson Bay built Fort Churchill, Fort Churchill or Fort Prince of Wales, whatever you want to call it. Today, that girl is a national historic woman, known to us as Eleanor. There is a monument to her in Fort Churchill.



at Victoria Crossing, that was a big stopping point, gathering place. And then they'd go to Pakan and then they'd come up around Saddle Lake. This area was called Mannawanis. It's named after the egg gathering place, because there's a lot of wetlands all around here.

Although they were not formal Métis settlements, some communities were simply known for their Métis character and high Métis populations, for example, the town of Imperial Mills located along Highway 881, approximately 20 miles (29 km) south of the town of Philomena. As Joe Hamelin explains, "Imperial Mills, that's where I was from too, it's all Métis community there. It's not too many white people. It's all Métis — just about Métis." For people from Imperial Mills, Philomena was known as the site of the nearest Catholic Church and, according to Joe Hamelin:

There used to be a sawmill there at Philomena, all the trains, there was a lot of railroad work; we had a couple of logging trucks for hauling railroad ties. There used to be a lot of trapping there. They had a school there, a church, and a store. There's nothing there now.

Métis settlements have grown and adapted over the years, through changing times and across the landscape. Some settlements have faded into memory while others have become more established. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Métis fur traders and their wives travelled from Manitoba and eastern Canada, gradually making their way across the country to build a life for their families in northeastern Alberta. Fur Traders from the Orkney Islands in Scotland also continued migrating towards settlements like Fort Chipewyan, to create new families with Aboriginal wives; these children would form a group of Métis who were unique and local to Alberta. The Métis Heritage in Alberta is a mixture of French and English speaking influences, as well as Aboriginal ethnic groups. Over the generations, Métis families have worked

together to maintain a rich and dynamic culture and to perfect the art of living off the land.

As for resting places, many Aboriginal ancestors have been buried in cemeteries and graves near Indian Reserves and settlements. Oliver Glanfield is aware of several sacred places in the Fort Chipewyan region:

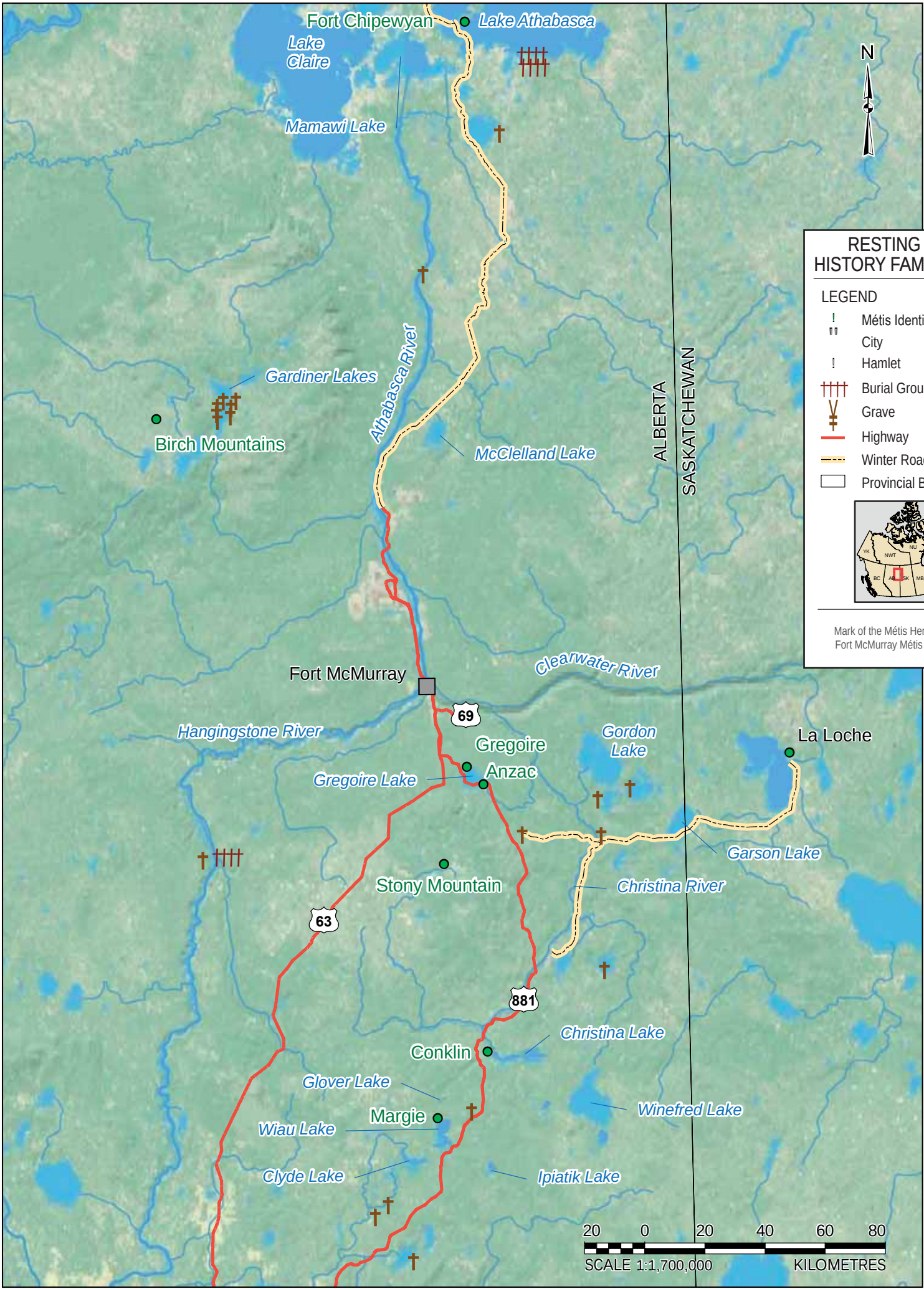
I do know that there are sites that people say are sacred, but I haven't been to them. There are some in the Wood Buffalo National Park area. I do know there are cemeteries at the mouth of the House River, and at Poplar Point. When you look at a map you'll see Indian Reserve numbers along the river. Every place that there is one of those Reserves, you'll find a cemetery.

There used to be quite a large cemetery at Embarras Portage. In 1986 when I first came up here, the river was cutting into it. And that was the place where Snowbird Martin, who was quite a prominent Cree, died up here. That is where he lived. That is where he had his cabin and whatnot. And there were quite a number of people buried there, but I don't know the state of that cemetery now. I don't know whether the dirt was all taken out of it or not.

As for the cemeteries around here in Fort Chipewyan, of course there is the big one behind the Northern Store, there is the one beside the Anglican Church. We do have the records for that one going back to 1874. There is the cemetery up here in Fort Chipewyan. I have found graves at Upper Wells, Pelican Portage, Mouth Creek, and that is going further south. A bit further south up on the Dog River, southeast of Fitzgerald, there was a great big cemetery there. I was up there doing an inspection on a gravel site and I found several little fences that had fallen down.



CHRISTINA GORDON AND ANOTHER LADY BY A HOUSE



RESTING PLACES

Edmond Ladouceur is also aware of the location of a traditional burial ground for many Métis families, as well as a burial ground for many people from the Dené, or Chipewyan, Band who had died in an epidemic during his Grandmother's childhood:

We have a graveyard in Big Point, in the back half a mile away from our cabin. This is trapline 1240, by the way. And there is a Métis burial ground there. Nobody has been buried there for years, not since I was a kid. There were families that lived along Big Point there and along the river and creek. There were Ladouceurs, Cunninghams, Cardinals, all kinds of Cardinals there, and they all lived in that place called Big Point, and people passed away. Powders, you know, the common Métis name, and they buried them there right behind our place. My brother Ray keeps that up all the time. Yeah, he cuts the grass down to the creek there and keeps it mowed.

And then there's a Chipewyan burial ground there down the creek in the timber, and that's from an epidemic, people passing away there. I remember my granny talking about years ago when people got

sick all the way down the river. I guess it was flu, when they were young. And in fact, I was working on a dredge one year, years ago when I was young, just north of Poplar Point, and we parked there for the weekend to go dredging. So we pulled over, and we started walking on shore, and we came to a graveyard. And that's where all the Dené [Chipewyan] had passed away, and some white trappers too, and this one guy had put these headstones up. I think the white trapper lost his whole family. My son was just there two weeks ago camping, and they went to that place. He says there are still a few gravestones left, but you could recognize some names like Fletts. I think there was Swedish or some kind of European name and the rest were Chipewyan people that still have the names in Fort Chip.

The deep roots of Métis in Alberta are evident in the archaeological record, in the form of burials and graveyards surrounding modern and historic settlements. Another form of evidence which places Métis in the very centre of the action during Alberta's formative years is the information available from government documents, which provide a written record of some aspects of Métis life.

MEN NAVIGATE GRAND RAPIDS



SCRIP

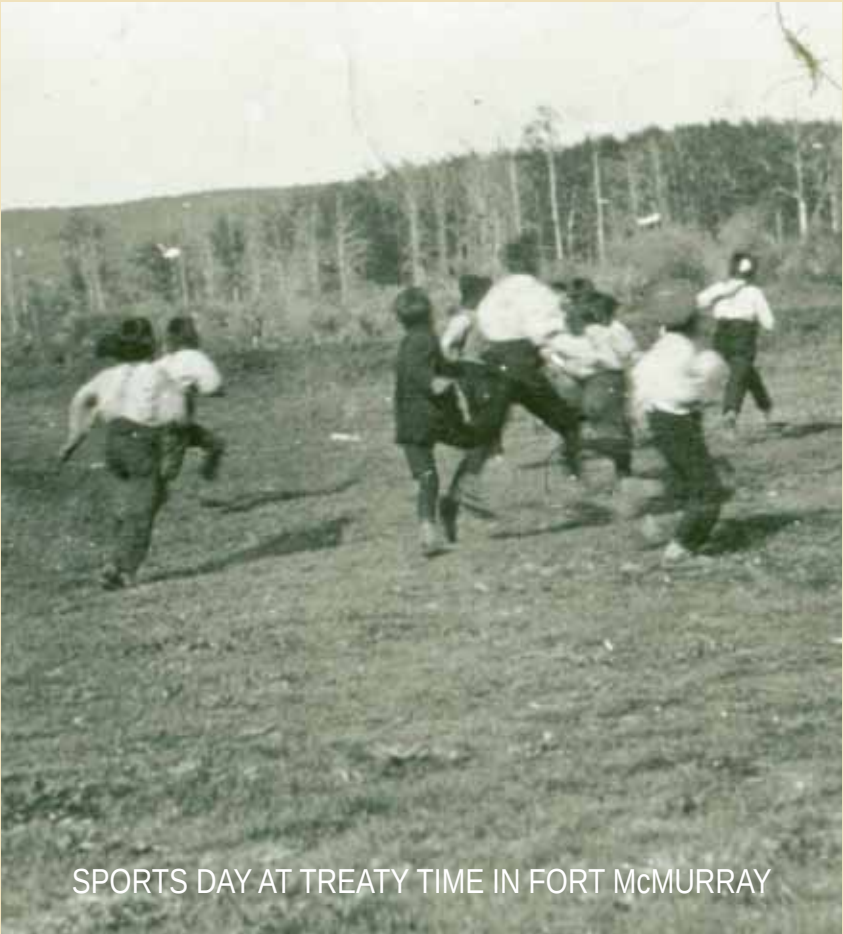
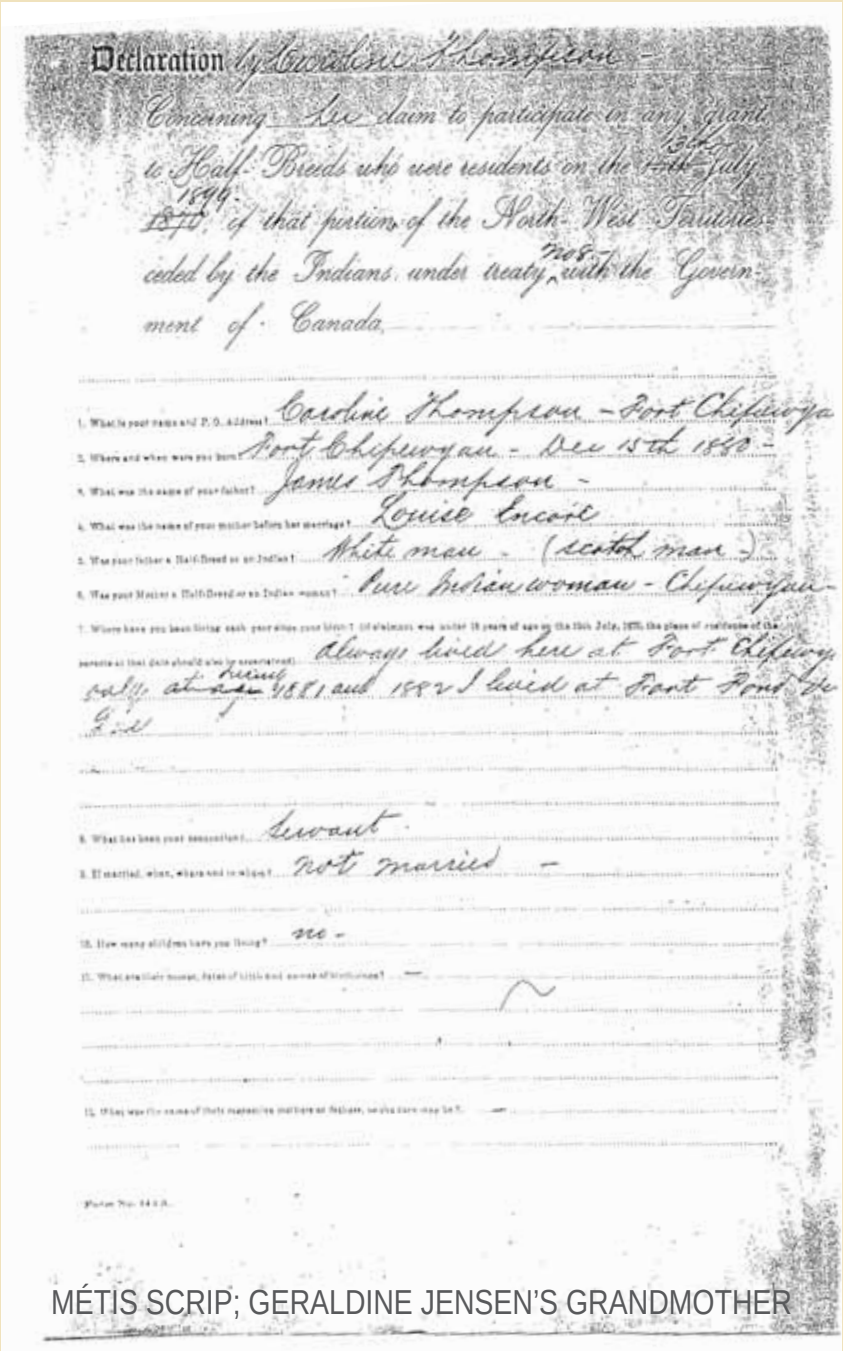
Towards the end of the 19th century, the geographic region known as the ‘Canadian Northwest’ consisted of a vast expanse of land encompassing modern day Ontario and Quebec, extending north to the Arctic Ocean and west to what is now British Colombia. As a result of the fur trade, this geographic region had come under the control of the Hudson Bay Company, which acted as a proxy for the British Government in Canada. At this time, an independent Canadian Government was also rising to power. The other major economic and political players in the Canadian Northwest at this time were the Métis and First Nations, who participated in the fur trade with the Europeans and whose ancestors had lived on the land for thousands of years.

In 1869, the Imperial Government of Britain, via the Hudson Bay Company, transferred control of the territories and populations of the Canadian Northwest to the Federal Government of Canada, and the land came to be known as ‘The North West Territories’. The transfer of control over human populations is much more complex than the simple transfer of land that this transaction was made out to be, and a cultural backlash ensued over the subsequent decades⁸.

Métis formed their own Provisional Government under Louis Riel and sparked a popular movement to defend their rights in the North West Territories, culminating in the Red River Rebellion from 1869 to 1870. In 1870, the Riel Regime went into decline and the Province of Manitoba was created. In 1885, there was further unrest when Métis, First Nations and European-descended settlers joined together to fight the Canadian Government in the North West Rebellion. It was at this time that the Canadian Government began to enter into Treaties with First Nations, and to offer Scrip to Métis⁹.

During this period in history, the Federal Government of Canada launched a campaign to extinguish the Aboriginal rights of Métis using a mechanism called ‘Scrip’. From 1870 to 1925, grants were offered to Métis people in the Province of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. The stated purpose of these grants was to carry out “the extinguishment of the Indian Title.”¹⁰ Métis children of Manitoba could receive an “allotment of 240 acres of Dominion Lands out of a 1,400,000 acre tract of land in Manitoba set apart for the purpose,” or, “Scrip for \$240 redeemable in the purchase of Dominion Lands available for sale.”¹¹ Métis heads of families in Manitoba could receive “Scrip for \$160 redeemable in the purchase of Dominion Lands available for sale.”¹²

In the Northwest Territories, a portion of which would eventually form the Province of Alberta in 1905, Métis children and heads of household were offered the same deal. Métis children could receive 240 acres or Money Scrip for \$240, and Métis heads of household could receive “Scrip for \$160 redeemable in the purchase of Dominion Lands available



for sale.”¹³ For Métis residents of acres ceded under Indian Treaties No. 6, No. 8, No. 10, or adhesion to Treaty No. 5, the deal was 240 acres or Money Scrip for \$240; and for Métis residents of the area ceded under Indian Treaty No. 11 and supplementary claims submitted by Métis who had been unable to attend the Commission Hearings, the deal was “\$240 per person, in cash.”¹⁴

Scrip was administered by the ‘Half Breed Scrip Commission’, which travelled around identifying candidates and making the exchange. Their timing was opportunistic, as many Métis and First Nations people at that time were suffering from starvation and income shortages due to fluctuations in the fur trade and local wildlife populations. The decimation of the buffalo during this time period was a devastating turn of events for Aboriginal people, who depended on the buffalo for food¹⁵. Although Scrip offered the short-term benefits of money, or a land credit that could be exchanged for money, it abolished any long-term benefits associated with Aboriginal status.

Scrip was offered to Treaty Status Indians who could prove they had Métis ancestry¹⁶. Signing scrip resulted in the loss of Treaty status, any interest in Indian Reserve land and the rights to Treaty annuities¹⁷. Many people acted out of necessity when they signed Scrip, and most of the people who signed did not know how to read or write, or they did not understand the legal jargon contained in the English-language documents they were asked to sign¹⁸. Scrip land was frequently sold to land speculators, who followed close behind the Half Breed Scrip Commission agents. Land speculators were able to accumulate fortunes in land by taking advantage of Aboriginal people, and these dishonest people became known as “Scrip-millionaires”.¹⁹

Poverty was a driving force which induced many people to exchange their land titles for cash, but there were other reasons as well. Many Aboriginal people were accustomed to their traditional lifestyle of hunting, trapping and living off the land, so they were not interested in settling down to become farmers on a plot of land regulated by the Canadian Government²⁰. Métis who selected Land Scrip were often not able to obtain the deeds to the land, and many people felt that even if they could obtain the deeds to the land, they could not trust the government; they felt that they had no guarantee the government would not one day take the land away from them again²¹. Poor relations between Aboriginal people and government officials were unfortunately a common theme of the times.

One example of a grueling legal battle between an Aboriginal band and the government is that of the Papaschase band. Papaschase is recognized as an ancestor of some of the Elders from the Fort McMurray Métis. He was the chief of the Papaschase Band at Fort Edmonton, and was induced to

take Scrip in 1886 when his people faced conditions of extreme poverty and starvation²². As Joe Hamelin sees it, “In the old days Papaschase, that’s our great, great grandfather, he had taken scrip, that’s how we lost all our rights.”

A study of Métis genealogical information and residence location for large Métis families in Alberta was completed in 1979²³. This study has confirmed that Scrip was not an effective mechanism for distributing land to Métis families and keeping that land within the family over the generations. Inheritance patterns, family histories and land transactions clearly show that Scrip land was rarely kept within the family for more than one generation. The study also showed evidence that homesteading was the only viable method for acquiring and maintaining land within family groups, in what came to be the Province of Alberta. This makes sense, given the Canadian Government’s overt campaign to push First Nations and Métis people aside, in order to settle the Canadian Northwest according to their own models of social organization, agricultural productivity and economics.

However, the Métis families of Alberta are a diverse group, and each story is unique. Alvena Strasbourg explains what her grandfather did with his Scrip land:

My grandfather took his scrip land, on the south shore of the lake and he lived there and he farmed, not like some of the people that took their scrip land and turned around and sold it. And, then his older son took land there also and they lived there and he worked for the missionaries, taking the priests north, like Father Lacombe and all those people when they went into the north country, that’s where he’d take them.

Elsie Cardinal recalls that her family was also involved with Scrip, but that the land did not remain in her family:

Apparently my great grandfather and my grandfather had a Scrip around Lac La Biche somewhere, but we never knew where.

Official records show that the Scrip Commissioners arrived in Fort Chipewyan, Fort McMurray and the surrounding communities of the region in the summer of 1899. In Fort Chipewyan, 166 money certificates were issued and only two land certificates were issued, while in Fort McMurray, 19 money certificates were issued and no land certificates were issued²⁴. Many Métis ancestors took Scrip for different reasons in the past and the outcomes of these transactions were rarely positive for Métis over the long-term. The numbers from the official records prove that Scrip was not an effective method for distributing land to Métis families in northeastern Alberta. Today, the Canadian Government is reversing the process and reinstating the Aboriginal Status of Métis people whose predecessors had taken Scrip. This has caused a renewed interest in recreating family trees and tracing the family lineage back into the not-so-distant past.

LANGUAGES

The Métis legacy has been constructed by people from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, including Aboriginal groups from northern Alberta such as Cree and Chipewyan, and French and English speakers from Canada, as well as immigrants from the United States and many European countries. The parents, spouses, friends and relatives of many Aboriginal people from the Lac La Biche and Fort Chipewyan areas included settlers from Scotland, England, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Ukraine, Denmark, Prussia, Austria and Poland. Young people of Cree and Chipewyan descent often spoke Indigenous languages with their families as they lived and worked in the bush. When they went to school they had to learn English, French, and even Latin.

Marcel Shephard's father was from Lancashire England and his mother was from Conklin. He explains how he learned English and Cree as he grew up:

Well, we lived in Margie at Mile 168 on the railroad, until we were of school age. Then we had to come here to Conklin. There was a log school here and we went to the log school here. My dad rented a little log cabin here, eh, for us to live in, and then went to school here. My mom had, what do you call, TB, so she had to go to sanatorium and usually that's, you know, a couple, two or three years. So we were pretty young. So, we had to stay with our grandparents, they didn't speak English. So we had to learn Cree. And my mom spoke Cree to us too, eh. Like, already at 168 there, my dad spoke English to us and my mom spoke

Cree. So we were already pretty well set when we moved here to Conklin, eh.

Evelyn White's father came from Ontario and was of Scottish descent, and her mother was born in Leeds, Yorkshire, England. Evelyn later married a Métis man, and their children are Métis. Evelyn remembers how her mother overcame language barriers and learned the traditional ways from the Cree women at Calling Lake:



LONG LAKE PILGRIMAGE

It was in Calling Lake, when we were growing up and we were out in the bush, where there was no help of any kind. There was no telephones, no roads, and something I've never been able to understand. My mother Alice couldn't speak any Cree at all and both the Cree ladies couldn't speak English, or very little, but they used to camp beside us in the summer and they'd come up in the afternoon and they'd join her for a cup of tea. And they'd sit and have tea and they taught her all sorts of things, how to tan hides, all the medicines, and

how they managed to communicate I don't know, but they did. These Cree people were from Wabasca, they used to come down from Wabasca and camp at Rock Island Lake for six weeks in the spring and then again in the fall. And they'd hunt and dry meat and tan hides and get all the provisions they could and then they trekked out to Lac Ste. Anne for the pilgrimage. After the pilgrimage, they'd trek back again and camp again beside us.



CONSTRUCTION OF HUDSON BAY COMPANY DWELLING, WITH CREE TEEPEES

George Bacon's great-grandmother spoke only Chipewyan. "Actually my grandmother, Ethel Bacon, her mother was a Chipewyan Indian," he says. "She never even spoke English."

Sylvia Hodgson, however, was exposed to several languages as she grew up:

I speak just English, a little bit of Cree. You know, my mom and dad, they talked French a lot, my mom talked fluently French and English and Cree, but she never taught us Cree.



SYLVIA HODGSON'S PARENTS, MADELINE AND JOHN

What I learned, it just came natural. There's not all of us in the family that can talk Cree, or even understand it, no. She only talked Cree in front of us when she didn't want us to know what she was talking about.

Edmond Ladouceur explains how his family from Fort Chipewyan knew how to speak Chipewyan because of interactions with the neighbours from Jackfish Reserve, "My dad spoke French, and my uncle and my grandfather spoke Cree and English. I mean, they all understand Chipewyan because they grew up right next door to Jackfish Reserve there, so there was a lot of involvement with the other people."

Gertie Castor used to speak Cree at home, but later in life she spoke mostly English:

I hardly ever speak Cree either, because my mother's gone and we only talked Cree to her and my grandmother. They're both gone so, you know.

Peter Ladouceur has Cree heritage, but was taught French at residential school. He explains how this played out in his life:

Well, at one time I talked French, when I was at residential school. They wouldn't let you talk your own language, Cree, just French, eh. So when I got out of there, I got home, I got nobody to talk French to. We used to learn to write Cree in school, half an hour after school, the priest used to come there and show — catechisms it was called. Used to show us how to read and write.

Language barriers were common during the boom times of oil and gas development in the region [circa 1960-1970]. Evelyn White describes how her husband, Henry White, worked to bridge the gap between Cree and English speakers in Fort McMurray:

Henry was instrumental in forming the Nistawoyou Friendship Centre and the Métis Association too. He was president for a long time. He worked a lot helping the Native people adjust to the change when the boom finally started, because they were getting shoved to one side and the government appointed Terry Garvin, an ex-Mountie, as a, what did they call them? Community Development Officer or something, and he fought for rights for the Native people to be able to take part in the actual construction, and they Terry and Henry worked together. Henry provided the Native view, I guess you'd say, and they worked together for two or three years. If somebody was getting Henry a raw deal, they'd go in and try to negotiate a better situation. Well, there



LORRIE GALLAGHER'S GRANDMOTHER AGATHE (LADOUCEUR) LOUITT AND GREAT GRANDMOTHER MARY LADOUCEUR

was one Native man they got a job unloading bags of cement, just to show how people could misunderstand, the difference in language, he had worked hard, he had worked like a dog all morning and then the foreman called, "Take five." The Native man says, "Hell I'm not taking in five!" He thought they meant take five bags of cement. Well, that would be impossible and he was afraid he was going to get fired, but they went in and pointed out that it was a misunderstanding in language. My husband, he spoke Cree and he could understand French and English.

Although he was fluent in Cree, Henry White did not teach

LORRIE GALLAGHER'S
GREAT GRANDFATHER JOE LADOUCEUR



his language to his young children, as his daughter Linda Boudreau-Semaganis explains:

I know my dad didn't teach us our Cree language, because he thought we'd mainstream better if we didn't have our language. We'd just sort of fit in and be absorbed by the rest of the world. And yet that's been one of my biggest struggles, is to gain my language back. And even the Michif language, we never heard of that word, 'Michif' – that was not a word that was used and now it's the buzz word, you know. And we have programs about Michif language and actually, I just got a Michif dictionary, and I know a lot of Michif speakers around this area.

I'm writing stories for children and I want to use the Cree language in the stories, so that even if they get a few phrases or a few words of that, they're getting that exposure and that makes you want to learn more; because stories do sound better in the language, in the mother tongue, rather than in English. They sound way better. You tell the same story, and it's not the same in Cree or in English. It's very, very different, because Cree is a very descriptive language.

Marie Agnes Herman's first language is Dene, although she also learned English at a young age. She describes the different languages that she heard growing up:

When I was growing up in La Loche, we spoke English at school. And my grandfather he used to speak French, he was French, my mom's dad. And they said that my great grandmother was a real Cree Indian. And my grandfather was speaking French. But he used to speak Dené too and English. And my mom used to talk Cree too, and I don't understand a word of it. But my great grandchildren, they don't understand Dené at all, because they were raised in McMurray.

The rich linguistic mosaic of the Fort McMurray region includes Aboriginal languages such as Cree, Chipewyan and Michif (French-Cree), as well as French, English and other European languages. As Métis settled in the region and interacted with other groups, both Aboriginal locals and European-descended newcomers, they would learn each other's languages or simply find alternative ways to communicate. Even within the same family, it is possible to find speakers of several different languages. Part of what makes Métis culture in northeastern Alberta so unique and precious to the Canadian heritage is the linguistic diversity of the local communities.



THE WHITE BOOTS

Told by Kay Loutitt

Well that was years ago. I was living in Fort McMurray at that time. We lived right across from my mother-in-law, and she used to tell us stories all the time. Dad was in Uranium working, and he would come up maybe once a month or something like that. So after I got the kids to bed I'd — see we just lived across the road, eh. So I would run across there to my mother-in-law's. Well it was her and Tanny, her daughter was there too. And they were usually sitting by the window and watching.

So we were sitting there, and all of a sudden she said, "Oh, that looks like Helen coming." But it was dark already. It had just started to snow. So this person had a flashlight and you could see her shoes. Like Helen used to always wear these little white boots, eh. So I said, "It looks like Helen."

So I got up and took a look. Sure enough I see her coming and she walked right past. Well there's a walk, then there were steps there, and there were steps all the way in the back of the house. So she just didn't come to the door. She just walked right past. You could hear her steps.

So I said, "That was Helen. I wonder what she's doing in the back." So the old lady opened the door to took a look, and already there's snow. You know, there's no tracks. But when we seen her coming, like she was carrying a baby or something. She was carrying something.

So now these guys really got all upset and everything. At that time mostly all of those guys figure it was a sign or something. So, anyway, Tanny took off, checked, but Helen never even left home. She was at home, because she stayed not too far away, eh.

So about a month after that, one of my little baby girls died, eh. But you know, that's the way people — you know if I didn't see it myself I wouldn't figure. But those guys, too, well they used to have, sometimes they had a drink with a little something. I figured well, maybe I'm just seeing things or something like that, but I wasn't drinking. I didn't drink. But I did see the white boots. But, it's so funny.



MÉTIS IDENTITY

Métis have a unique culture and identity, influenced by their mother and father cultures and by the local environment. These historical and environmental factors have created generations of people with an immense variety of skills and knowledge. Everyone is different, and together they form adaptable communities with their own regional style. Some people have learned from their Elders about the landscape, edible and medicinal plants, wildlife and other traditional resources. Some people have the ability to speak different languages, either Aboriginal or European, or both. Many people believe that a good work ethic is an essential part of the Métis identity, and that being Métis means always having a job and providing for one's family. Whether working on the trapline or in the oil sands, raising children or planting a garden, operating a steam boat or hauling railway ties, working in a local shop or tanning moose hide, Métis people have formed the backbone of life and development on Alberta's northern landscape over many generations. Mary Jean Pliska and her husband celebrate diversity and equality, showing profound respect for Métis culture:

About the Métis, I said in those days, and even yet, to me everybody is the same. You know, you've got your culture; we respect it, the culture. Because, you know, we've grown up with it, Richard and I. We've always been in the north, so we grew up with the Native and the Métis culture.

The Métis identity is more than just genetics. It also has to do with being woven into the fabric of the community. In the words of Rose Bacon:

You look at a person, you know they're Métis. It doesn't matter if they got blue eyes or blond hair. We all have the cheeks, eh. Everything was community, yeah. They never had a Friendship Centre or anything like that 'til the early '70s.

Life in the Fort McMurray region has traditionally been very community-oriented, and many people have happy memories of all the activities that brought people together. Rose Bacon remembers getting together on Canada Day and for the Blueberry Festival in September:

Well, first of July, they used to have a little gathering for the kids at the Legion grounds, you know, that's in the '60s. Then we used to have the Blueberry Fest every September. That was good. They'd have a big parade, rides and stuff, you know, for kids, cotton candy and the whole bit, BC hamburgers.

Oliver Glanfield recalls Pow-wows and Treaty Days at Lac la Biche:

You know the celebrations. They would have the Pow-wow out in Lac La Biche, we would go there, that is a mixture, you know. They would have Treaty Days, there would be tea dances and hand games and whatnot, and everybody would get involved. So that wouldn't be just for First Nations, Métis were included too. This was the whole community. It would be out in the open, you know, everybody would go out and have fun type of thing. It was a community type of thing, and I got to state this – and it is my own personal feeling, that I certainly wish that the three groups in this community would work together: the Cree and the Chipewyan, and the Métis, the others, some people call Caucasians.

Edmond Ladouceur recalls that around the mission in Fort Chipewyan during his childhood, people did not play hand games, but played other sports:

In our lifetime in Fort Chip as a kid we always had outdoor hockey, basketball, volleyball, and boxing. There was nothing in regards to hand games because most of the kids were in the mission, Catholic residential school, and people that had the kids in the Mission were from surrounding communities like

Peace Point, Amber Portage, Big Point, Old Fort, Jackfish Lake, you know, the Reserves and that, and that's where the kids would stay. There was no hand games at that time. I never seen hand games 'til I went up to the Territories in Yellowknife for the Winter Games. I think it was 1970, I was up there and we seen the hand games. Dené out of Fort Rae, yeah.

Métis living in Fort McMurray also frequently got together to play sports like baseball, basketball, bowling, boxing, hockey and curling. Sylvia Hodgson describes how she kept her ten children active:

Yeah, we did very well, all our kids were in sports, six of them playing hockey at once. Boxing yes, all those boys were in boxing. They played ball, the girls too, I played ball, oh, boy! I curled, I bowled.

Aline Hurley also found playing sports to be a great way to connect to the community when she moved to Fort McMurray from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, “You know, I met most of the Métis families when I played ball. When I was playing ball, I met a lot of the women then.”

Joe Hamelin agrees, “Everybody was ball crazy, eh. I remember, I would never miss a game, everybody was out there by the river.”

MEMBERS OF THE FIRST FORT McMURRAY BASEBALL CLUB



Being active is a key theme in Métis life. Edna Bacon is currently a volunteer for various charities and the Seniors' Centre in Fort McMurray. She describes how she always keeps busy doing good work for the community:

I belong to the Legion, the Royal Purple, I've been a member with the Ladies Auxiliary for the Legion since '53. So, you know, that's a few years and you're kept quite busy doing things there. Then I do a lot of volunteer work, you know, always something going.

Aline Hurley also recalls that the Legion in Fort McMurray was a hang-out spot for Métis, "Oh, I went to the Legion lots! The old Legion, it was the best place to go. You had to go at six o'clock or you wouldn't get in."

Ice skating on the frozen lakes and tobogganing in winter were also popular activities around Fort Chipewyan, Fort McMurray and other nearby towns. Edmond Ladouceur remembers tobogganing with the dogs from his family's dog team:

We always had dogs, a lot of dogs, sled dogs, and we used to ride around with one dog each and a little toboggan. That's how I started training dogs with my dad and my brother. And I came to Fort McMurray, and I got into dog racing. They were working dogs then.

In the summer, people liked to swim and fish in the lakes. Sometimes people invented their own pastimes. John Fraser remembers his first experience water-skiing:

In the summertime, what we did for fun was a little bit of playing ball and, you know, boating in Fort Chip. We didn't have all the good things they have today. And I remember one time, me and my friends, two guys I grew up with, Georgie and Raymond Tuccaro, we wanted to try water-skiing. The Hudson Bay manager was up there and he was rich, kind of a rich guy, you know. And he come up there and has this big fancy speedboat. He used to get out there in the middle of the afternoon, in nice calm water on the lake, and he'd be water-skiing. In the back of our mind was, "Geez, we'd love to do that too." You know, like, it would be so nice to water-ski. We had never seen water-skis before. We never had TVs and that until this guy come around, and he had water-skis.

So we wanted to water-ski one day too. So I stole my dad's boat and I told Raymond and Georgie, I said, "Let's go up and get a dog sleigh." So I was driving the boat and I made Georgie and Raymond sit on this dog sleigh and then we put them on the sand and we got a few chunks of rope and everything and I said, "You

N. SHOTT AND HENRY WHITE DOGSLEDDING, CIRCA 1930



EDMOND (MOE) LADOUCEUR

My name is Edmond Franklin Lawrence Ladouceur, but more so known as Moe Ladouceur. I grew up in a pretty unique fashion compared to most young adults my age. With strong Métis roots in my family, I was bound to be raised in a traditional manner, in the bush. Which is where Tar City Kennels comes into the picture. My father, Edmond Ladouceur Sr. was raised on a trapline with traditional working dogs but then started a racing kennel in the early 1980'S. I was born December 22, 1987, and participated in my first Dog Race at the age of two, and I have been hooked ever since. There is no such thing as hopping on the sled and going, the daily upkeep and chores of helping my father with maintaining a 70-dog kennel have made me who I am today.

I have experienced some measures of success along the way. At the age of six, I won the Alberta 2 Dog Championship and I was even more hooked after that. In 1998, in my first appearance at an Arctic Winter Games, I was a 3X Gold Medalist in Yellowknife, NWT. The next few years I did quite well in 4 & 6 dog races in small town circuit races. I participated in the 2000 and 2002 Arctic Winter Games but came just short of the podium with 4th place finishes, but in 2004, my last year to participate as an athlete due to age, the Games were held in my hometown of Fort McMurray and I was chosen to light the torch at the opening ceremonies. After the first day of racing, I had once again struck Gold! These days I now own and operate Tar City Racing Kennels and maintain a 65-dog kennel. I plan to race some larger, upscale races in years to come. It is in my blood to do what I do and I always tell people I will own at least one team of dogs until the day I die.



MOE'S FIRST RACE



MOE TRAINING SIX DOGS



MOE LADOUCEUR
WITH DOG SLED TEAM

guys hang on, 'til we get going and once we get going you guys can stand up."

So there's the Hudson Bay manager out there, just being fancy and skiing. So we take off from there and I knew it was lunchtime and my dad was in the kitchen behind the other side of the house, so I knew he wasn't watching us down at the lake, so we stole the boat. So all of a sudden, after lunch my Dad finished eating and went to the veranda to sit down and relax and that. And somebody went and told my dad, he said, "Look at these guys out there on a dog sleigh," he said, "Water-skiing." And this was my dad's boat, with Georgie and Raymond. So we water-skied in Fort Chip.

Of course, the dog sleigh was much more than just a fun pastime. The family dog team provided the essential method of transportation before the days of snowmobiles and winter roads. This importance was celebrated every year at Christmas, as Pearl Bourque describes:

At Christmastime, everybody comes in with their dog teams and they used to decorate all the harnesses. I guess you remember that too. And they'd have tassels on the back of their collars sticking straight up and they'd have bells, you could hear all the bells going. They had beadwork on shroud and stuff like that. They had all fancy harnesses and then there was one guy, his name's Mistahou, anyway,

he lived across the lake, Athabasca Lake. He had a dog team of huskies. Everyone was white, just pure white huskies and they were beautiful, about seven or eight dogs. Oh, they had all this decoration on their harness, fox tails sticking up on the back of their collar with bells on. And they used to tie their team up in front of the bay, against the fence, and everybody would go down and see them. I know, I remember running down there to see the dogs too, they were so beautiful.



LEFT - VERN'S PARENTS
JIM & DELPHINE CARDINAL

Sometimes, taking the dogs out to the cabins on the trapline could be dangerous. Vern Cardinal recalls a time when the dogs caused problems for him and his mother:

Mom and I trapped. Yeah, and we had a dog team. I remember one time the damned dogs got into our cabin and stole all of our food, way out, about 30 miles out. Now what are we going to do? Let's go set some rabbit snares, because evening had set already, so we couldn't go back, eh. So go and set rabbit snares, next morning, we never caught a damned rabbit. Now well, we got to go back, because the cabin was about probably ten, twelve miles away from the next cabin. We had a little bit of flour and stuff, so we started walking. Well, we shot a few chickens on the way, so we had something to eat, eh. So it was pretty scary.

DOG SLED TEAM AT WINTER CARNIVAL



For Métis trappers, the cabins on the family trapline were the nodes of an extended survival network across the land. People would live at the main cabin most of the year, and walk or take a dog team or snowmobile out to their other cabins during the trapping season. Amedie (Billy) Cardinal describes the cabins:

Well some of the log cabins are small, especially out on the trap line. But the main one, it was always about, probably 16 by 20 feet, with a wood stove, yeah. We had about five or six smaller cabins, eh.

Irene Gregoire remembers how the network of cabins was like a safety net:

Everybody, those days, you know, if somebody went by and they needed something, they went in your cabin and took it. You know, because you left your cabin ready all the time. If you had anything left edible you leave it and leave wood, eh.

Gary Waniandy lived most of his young life out at the trapline with his grandparents who raised him, Caroline Waniandy and Gilbert Ducharme. He remembers how his father figure Gilbert would always make sure they had enough provisions to survive out at the cabin on the trapline, “I remember before, you could go into the bush in the fall, you know, he’d make sure there was fish and chickens and rabbits, because you couldn’t go to the store and buy meat whenever you wanted to, you know, and you had all the garden stuff. So you were okay ‘til you got back.”



GERALDINE JENSEN'S PARENTS JENNY (MALCOM) AUGER AND HENRY AUGER, KAY MARTIN, ALEX AUGER

Gary also recalls how they would travel in to town and out to the trapline; he would walk back to town for the weekend while Gilbert used the dogs for transportation out at the trapline:

Me being the kid, I'd walk home from the trapline, come to town for the weekend. Twenty-three miles, I'd walk six, seven hours; done that many times. Because we only had one dog team and the old man, you know, he's old and wants the dogs. Oh, I'd use them when we were down there at the trapline, but not to go to town. And we would travel with the dogs by boat, yeah. Put them in the boat, usually the toboggan is down there and in the spring, when you come out from the trapline yeah, come out with a pack of dogs by boat.

In many cases, while the men were out hunting and trapping, the women would take care of the work at the cabin. Amedie (Billy) Cardinal cooperated with all the members of his family to sustain their livelihood. He remembers that while he and his father and brothers were hunting, the women would look after the home:

While the men are hunting, the women, well they're waiting for the meat to come in, or sometimes they move out wherever we got the meat, eh. Then make dry meat out there. They used to make parkas, mukluks, moccasins, everything, with the hides eh. Just for the family, most of them, except my mom, she used to make a lot of moccasins and sell them, eh.

For many Métis women, raising children was a full-time job. Rose Bacon and her friends all worked hard to care for their growing families. Rose explains:

All the Métis people I knew were married and most of us stayed home and raised kids, yeah. In between pregnancies, we used to go out and work for a little bit. But everybody stayed home and looked after children. I have eight children altogether.

Linda Boudreau-Semaganis would agree about the important role of the Métis woman at home:

I like to think that I come from a family of warriors, and not only the men, but us women too, because when I look at the lives of my grandmothers and my old aunties, when I used to go and sit with them and hear the stories of our family and how they raised their families, imagine, how do you raise 18 kids in the bush with no water, no power?

Elsie Cardinal also remembers how her mother looked after the family:

My mom was a really good organizer. She made our clothes and she baked, you know, we always had fresh bread, we had pies, because my dad would always buy big quantities of dry fruit, flour, sugar, you know, we always had rice, potatoes, because we lived in Mile 199, we always had a garden in the summer. So we always had potatoes, vegetables.

An important part of Métis identity has been the graceful ability to coexist with people from other cultures and to work and live together on the land. Barbara Hermansen tells the story of how she met her husband, Arne Hermansen, from Bergen, Norway, on the Athabasca River, and how her friends and loved ones came together to support their marriage:

I met him on the river, Mile 64, where my dad was trapping. And he was trapping with Bob Grant, who lived in Mile 87 further down the river. And he was going by with Bob Grant to Fort McMurray. I'd never met him but I had heard there was a young guy down the river. Before, there weren't a lot of people around. But I remember this guy – this blue-eyed guy coming in there, and sat down. And he was rolling his cigarette by the stove, sitting on the bench. He had just stopped in for tea, and then they were continuing, you know. And that was in December.

He came back down in February of '68. And I remember my dad wasn't at home at the moment. And it was still early in the day, but he still had a long ways to travel, you know. And people them days were more polite, I guess. He asked, "Can I stay overnight? I'll continue tomorrow."

You know, there goes cards games, playing at night, and the next thing you know, well that was early '68. Now it was '69. By the fall or December in '69 I had just turned fifteen. And then I had seen him off and on. And then one day he comes by and he told my dad, "I need to talk to you."

I mean, I kind of knew what he wanted to talk about. I heard my dad say in Cree, he spoke to my mom, he said, "I think he's going to ask for our daughter – I think that's what he wants to talk to me about." So anyway they sat together at the table and that's when he asked. He said, "Can I have your daughter?"

He had an engagement ring, and he put it on my hand. The following September, September 14, 1970, we got married. So getting married I was fifteen years old. I

moved from Mile 64, seven miles north, to Mile 72. We didn't have a trapline because Arne was not a Canadian citizen, so couldn't get a trapline. So the people who lived there told us we could live in that cabin. Oakleys weren't there – they were in town. And there was another trapper that had Henry Oakley's line, Ken Pratt. He said, "Yeah, live at the main cabin."

So we stayed there our first winter. And I remember my mom giving me everything. My mom didn't have too much, but now I'm being married so I had dishtowels, and I had blankets, and I had some dishes. You know, she gave me a little bit of everything to start off with, right. My dad gave me four dogs. I had Rex, Tiger, Sponge and Mink – four dogs I came with. Where my husband had one dog, and one of his friends gave him one, so he had two. So we had a team. And that's how we had to travel!

Marcel Shephard remembers how the men and women would work together:

I helped my grandpa out with the fishing, you know, because all the food, most of everything we got was from the land here, eh. So that's what we more or less were raised on, fish and chickens and rabbits. We had to go and check rabbit snares every day, you know. Yeah, and moose, you know. So it was, like, steady work for a person to live off the land. I remember that was my grandpa's job, everything outside, and then the old lady would prepare it eh, looked after, you know, making dry meat and making the hide. I remember my grandma used to make hide in them days, everybody did.

Métis culture in the Fort McMurray region has been a colourful, community-oriented adaptation to a beautiful yet challenging landscape. Men and women cooperated to raise strong families and to obtain and process the resources they needed from the land. People worked together to survive, but they also came together to celebrate and have fun.



LENORA MULAWKA MOOSE HIDE

RECREATION
HISTORY FAMILY CULTURE

LEGEND

●

 Métis Identified Place

—+—

 Railway

—

 Highway

—

 Local Road

■

 Cree Flats

■

 The Prairie

■

 Waterways

⋮

 Army Camp

A

 Beacon Hill

⋮

 Church

⋮

 Graveyard

k

 Hanging Stone Creek

1

 Hotel

🎓

 Keyano College

○

 Moccasin Flats

⋮

 Round Dance

H

 St. Gabriel's Hospital

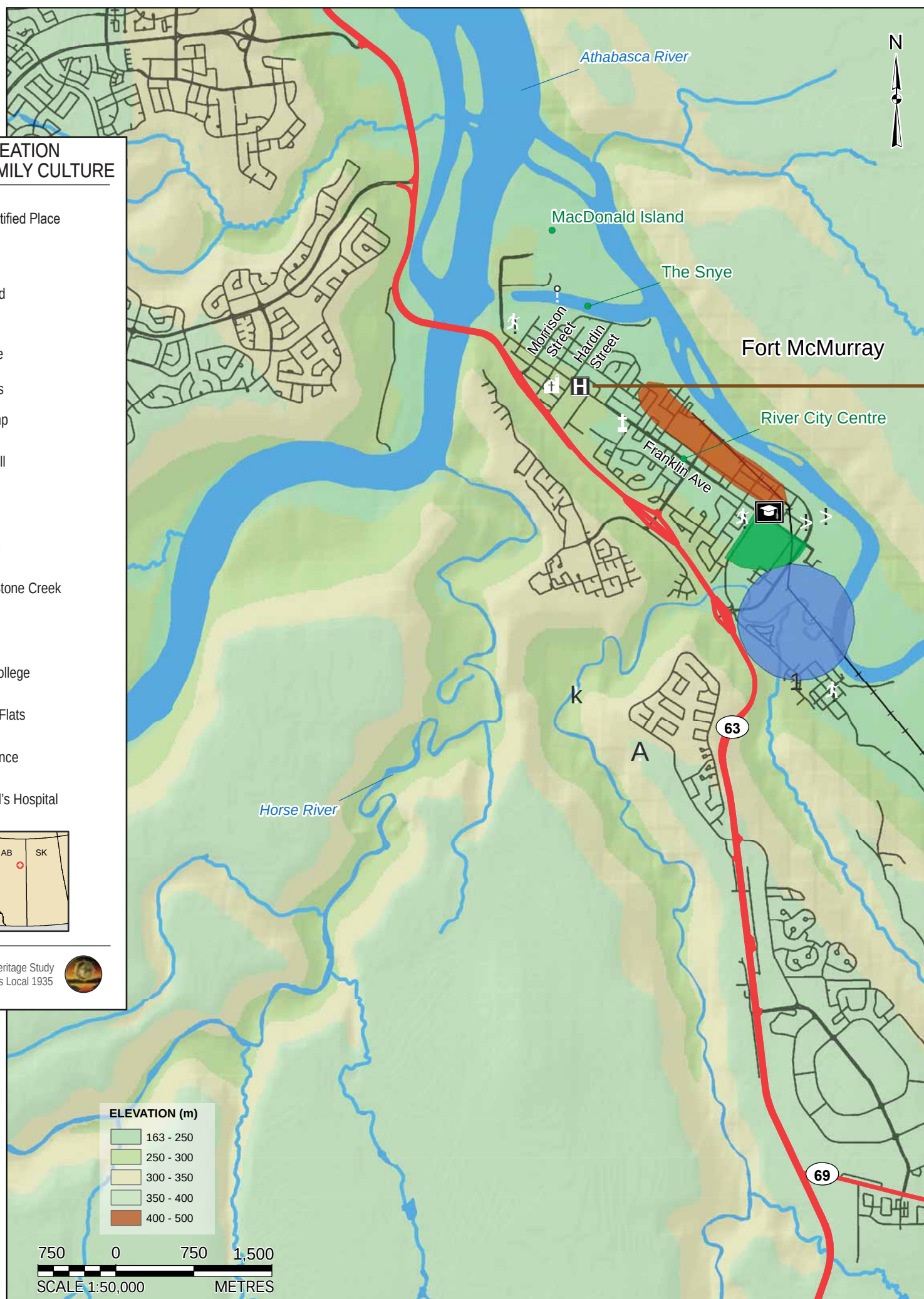
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Mark of the Métis Heritage Study

Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935



RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND AMENITIES - 1950s





ST. GABRIEL'S HOSPITAL DURING CORPUS CHRISTI



PETER POND HIGH SCHOOL



STUDENTS IN FRONT OF FORT McMURRAY PUBLIC SCHOOL



DOMINION TAR AND CHEMICAL SALT PLANT
FROM WATERWAYS



MÉTIS MUSIC AND DANCE

The Métis groups of northern Alberta have long enjoyed rich and lively traditions of music and dance, which flourished in the context of small communities and large families coming together to celebrate. In the days before the highway, when Métis communities were still relatively isolated and radios were not very common, the people would make their own music and children would learn the dances from their parents or other community members. Violet Hansen recalls happy times at the square dances in Fort Chipewyan:

Oh, there was a lot of dances in Chip, that's where I learned how to do all my dancing! Square dance, round dance – not like they do now. Oh yeah, my dad learned me how to call a square dance too. Oh, we used to have fun! "Come on Violet, call the square dance." I know the fiddler and I had to listen to see what he was playing before I could call, you got to watch what they play.

Common dance styles included the round dance, the square dance, the waltz, the foxtrot, the two-step and the jig. Drops of Brandy is a famous old traditional Métis dance. The Red River Jig is also considered to be a classic Métis dance, and jigging competitions are still held at festivals and on special occasions in local communities. Leona Anderson has fond memories of music and dancing:

Yeah, dancing, yeah, going to dances or weddings or whatever. Other than that — well, if you all got together or whatever, if you partied, there was always fiddles and jigging and that type of — you know, music and stuff like that.

The musical instruments essential to Métis music include the fiddle, the guitar, the banjo, the spoons, the drums and the accordion.

GEORGE AND KATY SANDERSON



VIOLET HANSEN'S PARENTS
JENNY AND EDWARD FLETT

Some people were known for their beautiful singing voices. Many people knew how to play musical instruments, so the musicians would work together and trade off throughout the night, so that the music would last for the entire celebration and everyone got a turn to dance. As a young boy, Robert James White was impressed by his father's friends:

Fiddles, guitars, banjos, accordions, you name it. It must have made a big impression on me because the two I remember the most are Ambrose Laboucane and his fiddle and Eddie Hopegood and his banjo. I can remember just sitting there and I was young, I was really young, and just be amazed that they could play all weekend. Like, start on a Friday and go 'til they have to go back to work Sunday morning, Monday morning; just singing and everybody having a good time.

Dances would take place in people's homes, or in the local school house. There was also a dance hall at Fort Chipewyan. Many people describe how they used to dance and play music all night long until the early hours of the morning. According to Linda Boudreau-Semaganis, it was an event for the entire family to enjoy:

I'm talking about Métis people, yeah, they used to have tea dances in Fort McMurray too. Well, they'd

STORYTELLING

just gather and they'd have a feast and people would sing and drum and then they started bringing in, like, the fiddles and stuff too. And it became sort of a... like a gathering, like a celebration. And when the kids got tired, they would lay their coats out or a blanket on the ground and the kids would sleep and the people would visit and gather together. You don't hear about that too much anymore.

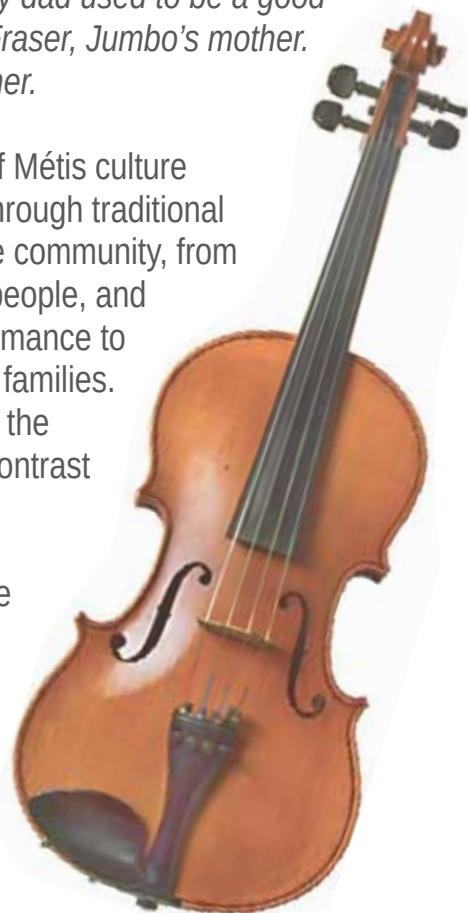
Amedie (Billy) Cardinal was one of the local musicians in Conklin. He remembers having dances almost every weekend, and that most of the people he knew would participate:

We played the fiddle at dances quite a bit before. Every weekend most of them, most of the times, sometimes at the school, sometimes at one of the friend's house, lots of square dances and everything. Them days everybody used to dance, I think.

Agnes Harpe got together with her husband Emile when he invited her to a dance in Fort Chipewyan. She remembers dancing all night and enjoying the musical talent in her community:

Dance, oh we could dance all night. We'd start eight, nine o'clock at night. We could dance late, until nine o'clock in the morning. And we had a ball! Oh square dances, you name it, polkas. We had Frank Ladouceur and Pete Ladouceur on the guitar, and Frank played the violin. We had a good time! Well my jigging was no good but my dad used to be a good jigger. And so did Mable Fraser, Jumbo's mother. They used to dance together.

The creative and lively spirit of Métis culture has always been expressed through traditional music and dance for the entire community, from the young children to the old people, and from single folks looking for romance to longtime married couples and families. The warmth and brightness of the dance hall was a comforting contrast to the chilly winter landscape blanketed by snow, so people made the effort to go out to the dances all year round. Even to this day, people recall the musicians they used to admire as children, and cherish the lessons they learned from their parents about celebrating with their friends in the Métis way.



Storytelling has long been a favourite pastime of Métis people. Linda Boudreau-Semaganis from Fort McMurray remembers the hilarious tales told in Cree that she used to hear as a child:

Métis were the best storytellers of them all, because they used to have lying contests, eh. They used to have a contest to see who was the biggest liar. And they'd tell outrageous stories about when they were out in the bush and this and that, you know. And people would laugh and most of the time they were in Cree and people would be just crying, because they were laughing so hard.

Edmond Ladouceur has also witnessed the Métis storytellers in action:

Oh, there was always storytelling amongst the men and all that. In Fort Chip at the Hudson's Bay, there used to be a seat in the front. They had a bench the length of the store. And they'd sit there and they'd eat ice cream and tell stories and you know. You always try to beat one another at his own game, tell stories.

The principle protagonists in Métis storytelling may include supernatural beings, such as Wesakijack, the traveling prankster who went on wild and magical journeys with his brother. One such trip was to visit The Princess, but along the way, Wesakijack and his brother fell victim to a comical series of mishaps and calamities, and even had run-ins with bandits and policemen.

There were also mythical creatures who could teach people lessons. When Marcel Shephard was a young boy he was warned about the monster in the lake:

Oh, there was a lot of stuff, them days, even swimming. You know, like, even today, I'm not sure, you know, the way they used to scare you, "Don't do this, don't do that." Even — well, a lot of the stuff, like, "Don't wear your shoes backwards." They were all old learning stuff, eh, "or you're going to meet a bear," you know. Even here, I remember — and that's why they say there's a monster in this lake. Most of us here were all taught, you know, don't go in the lake there, because of that big Moostuss, there's an underwater buffalo there that'll get you if you go deep. But it's not true. Don't go deep or you're going to drown. If they said that, you'd go there, right. But they scare you and then you ain't going to go there.

The Métis world of stories is a vivid and playful realm of supernatural proportions. Whether gathered around a fire or wood stove in the winter, or sitting in the sun with a cool breeze and the melody of birds singing in the summer, Métis storytellers have captivated their audience's imaginations and hearts for generations.



JENNY FLETT²⁵

Jenny Flett was born Ellen Elizabeth Frazer on December 5th, 1908, in Fort Chipewyan. Jenny Flett lived her whole life in the Wood Buffalo area. It was there that, in 1927, she met her husband Edward, to whom she was married for 63 years until his passing. The Fletts had a large family, with a total of 17 children, both biological and adopted. Her children remember Jenny as a warm, kind Mother. Indeed, Jenny Flett was known throughout the community to many as “Mom” because of her warm and welcoming nature, and the fact that she had delivered many of the children in the area.

Jenny Flett’s career as a midwife spanned half a century. Throughout this time, she delivered 487 children, up until her retirement at the age of 75. Jenny Flett was known both for the sheer number of children she delivered throughout the years, and for the skill with which she delivered them. In her many years as a midwife, Jenny never lost a single child, or mother, in the birthing process. Jenny also never charged for her services, treating midwifery as her duty.

Jenny began learning midwifery from her mother at an early age. In the years to come, Jenny taught herself about midwifery, human anatomy, and medicines through a mail-order medical instruction book used by doctors, called The Doctor’s Medical Manual. Back in the early 20th century, there were no vehicles for Jenny to use on her journeys to deliver babies. She would arrive by dogsled, and see the expecting mother through labour, massaging them and administering home remedies to aid in the delivery. And, when all was ready, Jenny’s skilled hands would guide the newborn child from their mother into the wide, open world.

Just as we must enter the world, so too must we leave it. Jenny Flett passed away March 2, 2010, at the age of 101. She was the oldest Métis woman in the Wood Buffalo region. Jenny left the world with a large extended family, including over 100 grandchildren. She also left us with a legend: The Midwife of Wood Buffalo.

MacDONALD ISLAND, FORT McMURRAY

MacDonald Island today is a recreation destination for Fort McMurray residents, which includes an aquatic park, ice rinks, sports facilities, a community art gallery and a public library. MacDonald Island was first inhabited by Métis after the rebellions at the end of the 19th Century. Oliver Glanfield has done some investigating into the history of MacDonald Island, and explains:

There were three brothers who came west after the Red River upset. One of them was Kenneth, the other one was John, and the other one was Don. Kenneth and John were at Fort McMurray. Kenneth was a federal forestry person for a period of time and he came down the river with his family and established at Jackfish Lake – Richardson Lake as it is known on the maps, and subsequently they came up here to Fort Chipewyan and that was my present wife Marjorie Glanfield’s grandfather. The island in Fort McMurray, the first time I was on that island was in the summer of 1957. John Booker, who was the assistant superintendant of the Lac La Biche Forest, he and I were on that island. We saw that there was a long, low building constructed there. I had seen pictures of these types of buildings. There was a kind of porch in between and a roof overhead, and I said to John, “Whose house is that?” And he said, “Oh, that is old John McDonalds, M-c, not M-a-c. John got involved with the people in Fort McKay.” So the spelling was changed over the years.



MacDONALD ISLAND

Apparently John MacDonald had a ninety-nine year lease on that island from the Federal Government, but when the Federal Government turned over the administration of all the land and the timber and the resources to the Provincial Government, that lease went by the board. Just recently, in the last couple of years, I met a lady who went by the name of Elizabeth Mercredi, an elderly lady, who died

in Fort McMurray in the hospital, and she was the last baby to be born on that island and that was her dad.

The woman Oliver is referring to was Métis Elder Margaret Voyageur’s mother, Elizabeth. Margaret explains:

John MacDonald was my mother Elizabeth’s father. He owned MacDonald Island and when we inquired about it, we found out that the old courthouse where they used to keep all their important papers had burned down. So we have no proof of anything, the whole bunch of us. My mother was the last baby to be born on MacDonald Island.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Before the oil and gas boom of the 1960s, the towns of northern Alberta had a very different character. People lived in simple log cabins with minimal luxuries and worked hard to make a living off the land. There was no electricity, no telephones, and no running water. People had to maximize their activities during the daylight hours, because at night there were only candles and coal oil lamps to illuminate the darkness. People went to visit their friends and relatives in person, and often traveled over great distances with dogsleds or horses with sleighs to speak to each other. In the summer they would walk or take the train. Before the public water system, everyone had to fetch water from a well, a spring, or some other natural source. In the early days, one had to be tough and creative to meet the basic needs of the household. Violet Hansen recalls that it was her responsibility to fetch water and wood with her own dog team when she was a teenager:

I was outside most of the time. I was the tomboy, because Dad wasn't making that much when he was working for the Park and he had to go out there, three kids sick at home, who's going to do the work? I did. That's why I had my own dogs. Go in the bush and cut my wood, haul it in. Yeah, wintertime, go cut a water hole out in the lake out here, bring your water in.

Aline Hurley also had to do chores outside. Her recollections of life on the farm are happy ones, as she explains, "Oh, I enjoyed the farm. Yeah, when we were on the farm, well, I did anyway, because I was kind of a cowboy. I was on horseback every day, because we had chores to do."

There was no refrigeration in those days either, and this was during a time when a hunter would kill a moose to feed the family over several weeks. Aline Hurley describes what her father did to preserve moose meat in the winter:

We didn't have no power. So, what Dad did to keep the meat was, we had a shed behind the house and he made a great big hole and then filled it up in the wintertime with snow and sawdust. Yeah, and that's the way we kept our milk and meat. When dad and them went hunting, we used everything, the antlers, we used everything, eh. There was no waste. We took the hindquarter and hung it out and lay it in the snow and when we needed some, we just cut it off.

Food cellars, smoke and ice were essential for food conservation in the Métis household before modern

amenities such as electricity and refrigeration arrived to the region, as Edmond Ladouceur describes:

My grandfather had a house in Fort Chip, had a big cellar. And out on the trap line, we had a cellar at Big Point there. And he also had a smokehouse and an icehouse. In the winter they'd take the ice and store it in this old log house they built down on the beach, and put straw to cover it up so the ice would stay for the whole summer.

Yeah, and the cellar, it was beneath the house, and it was all boards in there and a sand floor. And then they always had sand in there to cover the carrots and turnips and whatever, and vegetables would stay like that through the winter. There was no waste.

Milk was kept on the ice. We had milk because my grandfather came down from Plamondon with cows and they had milk and, you know, he brought them down on a scow, right. They brought the cows down the first winter they spent in Fort Chip there; my dad was just a little kid. The following year he came up, got more stuff, and then he built a scow and brought these cows down. A scow is a flat river boat, like a barge.

And to feed the cows, well, out in the Delta there's miles and miles of grass and whatever. We used to cut it and store it up through winter, you know, and for dog bedding and all that. Yeah, a farm and just a way of life, survival it is. Yeah.

MAIL LEAVING FORT McMURRAY
ON A SLED, 1925



Before the days of indoor heating and running water, people relied on wood stoves to heat the water and to stay warm. Sylvia Hodgson remembers getting ready in the morning:

Yeah, it's a good thing mom used to have a reservoir on her stove at the end there, and that was warm water in there. She always made sure that was full of water, for us to wash our faces in the morning. Oh, my God! Oh, yes, we had to huddle up, all of us, around the stove, to dress in the morning. If we left the stove, we were freezing.

In the days before people had electricity in their homes, people were happy to have a coal oil lamp for light. Sylvia Hodgson's family got their first coal oil lamp when she was a young girl, and she explains how it changed their lives:

Oh, coal oil lamps, I remember the first time we got a gas lamp, my dad went to work for the doctor there and did some carpenter work for the doctor. The doctor gave him this gas lamp and we thought we were in heaven! He brought this gas lamp home and then we had to buy mantles and the pump there, fill it up with gas, you know, and pump it and oh, it was so bright! My mom and my oldest sister Liza, they used to work 'til four o'clock in the morning with just a coal oil lamp, beading, and silk work, working moose hide, making moccasins.

Electricity arrived to the communities of the Fort McMurray



SYLVIA AND DAN HODGSON'S HOUSE

region before running water. The need for running water was less critical than the need for electricity, because clean drinking water was abundant from natural sources in those days. According to Clara Bourque, things have changed since the times when she used to fetch water from the creek near Anzac:

There was no running water. We had power, but no running water. We went, picked water, actually, we had a well, but drinking water, we used to get it at Halfway Camp over here. There was beautiful, clear water from a creek, it come from a mountain, yeah. That's where we used to get water, by barrels now, for drinking and that, eh. Yeah, not far here, down that old Anzac road there. Everybody got their water from that creek, come from the mountain, nice clear water. Now you see that creek today, it's all mud and dirty. Oh, hardly anything now running.

Linda Boudreau-Semaganis remembers the set-up of her family home:

We had a dirt basement in our little house. It was cut in four quarters and there was a bedroom here, my mom and dad's bedroom here, living room here and the kitchen here. No plumbing, we had a pump on the cupboard by the window, in the kitchen, where you could pump a pail of water, like, while you're cooking and if you needed a drink. We also had one outside.

Laundry was usually washed by the women using a scrub-



NORTHERN LIGHTS CAFÉ IN ANZAC OWNED & OPERATED BY LENORA & JAMES MULAWKA (THEY CUT & PEELED THE LOGS THEMSELVES TO BUILD IT)

board, but after electricity and running water arrived in the region, some women obtained agitated washers with a wringer. Dorothy Christensen remembers her mother's washing machine:

I think we had running water and mom, then she did have a washing machine. But she still had the thing on the top of it, you know, the wringer thing. It was just an agitated washer. Then we had to do the wringer, because I remember my daughter saying, "And I used to go to Grandma's and pull the clothes through the wringer and hang them on the line outside." And then one of the cats got into the washing machine. There was a cat agitated, yeah.

Lena Couture moved to Fort McMurray in the 1960s to work, and she has noticed the changes that have taken place since then:

In the 60's there was nothing here in McMurray. It was Waterways that was a big town. We didn't even have the radio here. No nothing. No radio. We used to buy water from the waterman in a water barrel. The waterman just hauled the water to sell it, going house-to-house and selling his water, and everybody bought water because otherwise we had to go with a pail to Wood River. For heat, we used wood, but finally we had gas, propane. And it was colder then than it is now. Well, then and now, it is just like black and white. Those times it was hard. Oh, it's getting better,

naturally, you know, getting better and better. Now we have the radio. We have the running water and, you know, we didn't have that when I first moved in here. There was nothing. But now it's got everything.

When one looks at the busy downtown core of Fort McMurray today, packed with hotels, restaurants, businesses and traffic, it is hard to envision the quiet landscape of trappers' cabins lit by candles and heated by wood stoves, which existed only one generation ago.



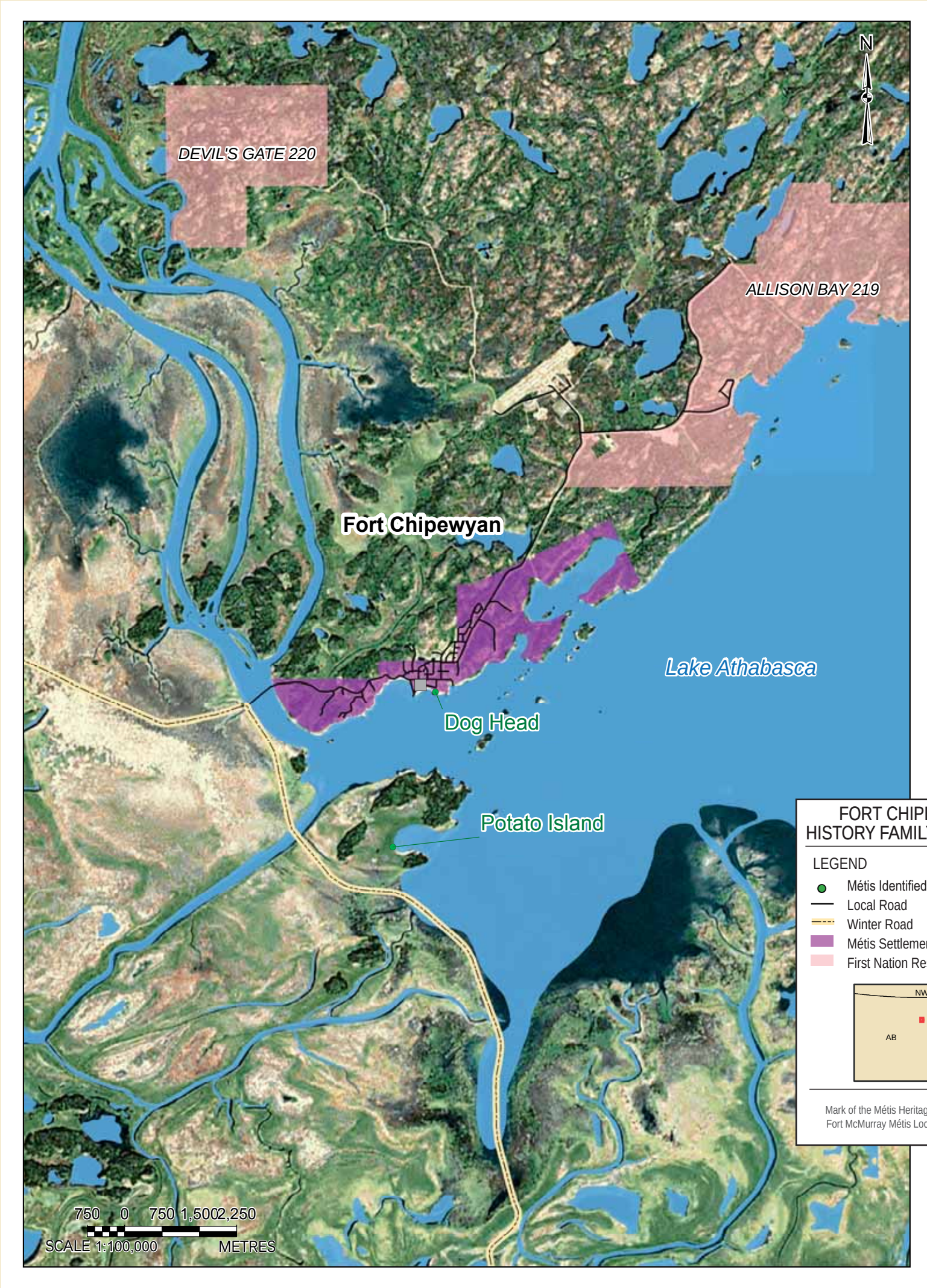
THE TOWN OF WATERWAYS TOWNSCAPE
FACING THE CLEARWATER RIVER



GEORGINA FLOBERT'S BROTHER
CHARLIE COOPER'S CABIN



FORT McMURRAY, FALL 2011



FORT CHIPEWYAN





FIRST SCHOOLHOUSE IN FORT McMURRAY WITH MRS. MCTAVISH

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The school system has a long and complex history in the region of Fort Chipewyan and Fort McMurray. During the 1800s, Fort Chipewyan was an important but geographically isolated trading post; first the fur traders arrived and then came the missionaries³⁵. In 1851, the Roman Catholic (R. C.) Father Faraud founded the Nativity Mission at Fort Chipewyan, and in 1874, the first Anglicans arrived, Reverend and Mrs. Shaw³⁶. In 1874, the first Anglican school was opened in Fort Chipewyan, and later that same year the R. C. Sisters of Charity (also known as the Grey Nuns) established the first Catholic school, Holy Angels Residential School, which included an orphanage and a hospital³⁷. The Catholics and the Anglicans maintained control over education in the region until the Department of Indian Affairs established a secular school in Fort Chipewyan 1954³⁸.

Residential school students usually attended classes throughout the year while living in residence and returned home to their families in summer. Public school students would often attend school through the summer and work with their families on the trapline during winter.

Many Aboriginal children and youth had to go to residential school. One such school was located at Fort Vermilion. Wayne Hodgson's father spent most of his young life there:

My father Daniel Hodgson was raised in the mission residential school there in Fort Vermilion. He was more or less thrown in there when he was a baby, eh, you know. My dad was in the mission there for 18 years.

For many people, living at residential school was not a positive experience, in part due to the large amount of hard labour jobs the students had to do while living and studying at the school. Robert James White's father, Henry White, attended residential school and Robert James recalls what his father used to say:

Like my dad used to say, he spent twelve years in residential school and he said, "I can sign my name and I got about a grade two education, but I can farm with the best of them!" It was slave labour in those residential schools.

There was a residential school known as "The Convent" located at Fort Chipewyan Mission. John Fraser recalls how the school-aged children would camp with their parents through the summer and return to school in the fall:

There was a big hill there where we kept the dogs from the Wood Buffalo National Park dog teams. And there was a lot of people in the summertime from Fort Chip



INSET PHOTO - ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL, FORT McMURRAY, ALBERTA



VENERABLE CHURCHES

The Catholic and Anglican churches were the major religious organizations in the Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan region during the early days. They were responsible for constructing not only churches, but also hospitals, schools and cemeteries.

In Fort Chipewyan the Catholic and Anglican churches and the school are some of the oldest buildings at the settlement, which was established in 1788 and enjoyed over 100 years as the major trading hub of the Athabasca fur trade²⁶. The first Roman Catholic and Anglican churches were constructed in Fort Chipewyan from the 1850s to the 1870s²⁷. According to Oliver Glanfield, “The Hudson Bay men worked equally on the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church.”

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church was designated a Provincial Historic Resource in 1998; and three years later in 2001, St. Paul the Apostle Anglican Church, day school, and cemetery received the same designation, which confers Alberta’s highest level of protection²⁸. The historic churches are important to the heritage of Fort Chipewyan because most of the other historic buildings have been demolished. For example, Oliver Glanfield has pointed out that the last of the Hudson Bay Company buildings was torn down in 1964²⁹.

The first Catholic churches were built in Fort McMurray in the early 1900s, starting with a two-storey log chapel in 1914³⁰. All Saints’ Anglican Church was founded in Fort McMurray in 1931³¹. At that time, it was called St. John’s Church, and it shared ministry with its sister parish, St. Aidan’s Church, in Waterways³². As the population and economy of Fort McMurray transformed over the years, the churches changed as well. The congregation in Waterways was united with St. John’s and became All Saints’ Anglican Church, and a new building was constructed³³. In the 1980s, All Saints’ daughter congregation, St. Thomas’ Anglican Church, was established in Thickwood³⁴.

Oliver Glanfield has a personal connection to the Anglican Church in Fort McMurray, as he describes:

I came back to Fort McMurray in 1973, I was associated with the Anglican Church and I was organizing a bunch of stuff in the office and I found a time capsule. And in that time capsule, there were minutes of the meeting when they decided that they would build the first little St. John’s Anglican Church, and John James Loutitt’s name was on the minutes... And that was the church that my first wife, Betty, and I were married in.

ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN FORT CHIPEWYAN



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN FORT CHIPEWYAN



who took their children out of the convent and come summertime they used to camp around there. And that's why it was called the Four Quarters, where the four rivers met, right, and it was a river this way, river this way, one this way and another one there. But anyway, all around there, everybody used to put tents for the summer and they used to stay there and a lot of the people would go out hunting and they'd make their dry meat and make moose hides and smoke fish and whatever. Like, you know, and that's where they stayed all summer. They'd leave Fort Chip and then go back in the fall, put their kids back in The Convent.

Many children would have rather been at home with their parents than living in the dormitories of residential school. Peter Ladouceur explains how there was no replacement for his mother's care:

I went to residential school for five years in Fort Chipewyan. That's how come I could read a little, read and write a little. I stayed there five years and I was twelve years old when I got out, I must have been seven I guess when I got there. I was sick, so I had to quit school, I had pneumonia. They couldn't keep me there anymore. So they told my mother, "Take

him home to Big Point," eh. They didn't want me to die there, I guess. So my mother took me and my mother was good at healing people, you know, the Indians. By Christmas, I was all right, she cured me, eh.

During the 1930s the town of Fort McMurray only had one public school and no hospital, so the local residents petitioned Bishop Emile Grouard for a hospital like the one run by the Grey Nuns in Edmonton³⁹. In 1935, Bishop Gabriel Breynat approved the hospital for Fort McMurray under the condition that a Catholic school would also be constructed⁴⁰. The construction of Saint Gabriel's Hospital and Saint John's School began in 1936; the school was opened that same year and the hospital opened the following year⁴¹. Robert James White attended Saint John's School and remembers its development, "I started Saint John's Catholic School in 1953, just after my fifth birthday. And then it got to be a real big school, they made it into four rooms and then they added a gym after that."

As the town grew, the need for children's educational facilities increased as well. St. Gabriel Elementary and Junior High School opened for classes in the fall of 1981⁴². Today, eight Catholic elementary schools and two Catholic high schools serve the Fort McMurray Catholic School District⁴³. Catholic

MRS. McTAVISH WITH HER CLASS IN FRONT OF A ONE-ROOM SCHOOL



THE FIRST SCHOOL TEACHER IN FORT McMURRAY



schools today are no longer residential schools and operate in a similar fashion to public schools. Father Mercredi High School is named after a charismatic and kindly-remembered Catholic priest who used to travel up and down the railway line to hold mass, perform baptisms, weddings and funerals.

During the 1950s, the public school system grew alongside the Catholic school system in Fort McMurray. Myrtle Graham attended both public and Catholic school:

Oh, yeah. I went to the old school by Peter Pond. That's where I started school. We went to school from September to June. And I waited while they were building the Catholic school then. And I was in grade five when I started in the new school there. Two rooms, yeah. Oh, yeah, I went to both schools. I passed to grade nine. I didn't take my grade nine. Mom couldn't afford it, eh, buying books. And so, I had to quit and go to work.



FATHER MERCREDI WITH CHILDREN AT HIS RESIDENCE IN PHILOMENA

Gordon Lepine is one of many Fort McMurray Métis Elders who attended Peter Pond Junior/Senior High School, which was torn down to make way for a strip-mall in the mid-1990s⁴⁴. Gordon explains how he made a point of completing his education during a time when it was not very common to do so:

I studied grade ten and eleven in St. John's and then I finished my grade twelve at Peter Pond. So, I left McMurray in '74 or '75, and then I went travelling. I'm the only one that finished grade twelve in our whole family, and I told dad that I'd finish school before he died and I paid my way through school. I was the only one that graduated.

Today, the Fort McMurray Public School District consists of twelve schools: nine elementary schools and three high schools, including the Fort McMurray Islamic School, the Fort McMurray Christian School and Frank Spragins High School, which is an outreach program⁴⁵. Education has changed significantly in the region since the times of one-room school houses, which were the norm before the boom times, circa 1960. Lila Thompson describes her progress at the local schools in Waterways and Fort McMurray:

But, then there was no high school in Waterways. I went from grade one to grade nine in the one-room school in Waterways and would have had to go to Fort McMurray to Peter Pond High School anyway.

So, when we moved, I just went to the high school, Peter Pond High School in McMurray.

There was also a school in Conklin. Margaret Quintal remembers how her family had to move from their home at Mile 199 of the railroad track to Conklin, so her sister could go to school. Margaret explains that the school was there even before she was born:

Well, apparently there was a school way before me. My mother went to school there in Conklin when she was a little girl and my uncles too. I'm not sure what year that was. Robert Martin was the first teacher here in Conklin. And then in, oh, maybe 1960, a school was built, the first one. And then in later years, 1980 I think, the new school was built.

Elsie Cardinal comes from a large family with four brothers and five sisters. Although Elsie did not get the chance to go to school, her siblings and friends did go to school, and she remembers the old school at Conklin and The Convent:

Yes, the kids went to school, but the thing was, they only had a building that was only good for summer. There was no insulation or heat, just one wood stove. So the teacher that was here, Robert Martin, he trapped in wintertime, and he taught in the summer. We had a log building there, and that was the school – where Lena's Bed and Breakfast is now. There's not one building that's still the same as when I was young. Everything is gone. Anyway, Martin taught in the summer, so then we lived between Fort McMurray and Conklin, back and forth, and at Mile 199 on the railroad track. When my dad would go to work, he took us all to Fort McMurray. My oldest sister and my oldest brother went to school here in Conklin, but from me down, my younger brothers and sisters, they went to school in McMurray. Four brothers, five sisters, there was six girls, with me. None of us went to residential school. You think my parents would part with us? No, and we weren't Treaty. There were some kids that I grew up with, they went to residential school from here. I think Lac La Biche Mission or Blue Quill. Well, I remember, because the girls that went to residential school from here were my age. Yeah, Dahlia Cardinal and Joan went away to go to The Convent to live with the Grey Nuns, yeah.

Marcel Shephard also went to school in Conklin, and has happy memories of the one-room log school house:

The school in Conklin was a one-room school, one teacher and there was all grades, about 20, 25 students. I remember they used to have dances in that school building. You know, you used to pile up all those wooden desks. They were all connected, the chair was connected to the desk, yeah, and there'll be two desks and two chairs, and that's one piece, eh. And then they'd stack them against the wall and then you had the dance.

Linda Boudreau-Semaganis attended Saint John's Catholic School in Fort McMurray. She used to get up early so she could go fishing with the cargo pilots who worked in the area before school:

I used to go fishing with the pilots too, when I was around ten, eleven years old. They used to fly out to Christina Lake and Gordon Lake, all these lakes, to go fishing at five o'clock in the morning. And they said, "If you can get up and be here, pack a lunch!" We fished for jack and pickerel and whatever, fished 'til seven, eight in the morning and then we'd fly back into the Snye, dock up, and I'd go home and then go to school.

Gordon Lepine also used to coordinate his traditional harvesting with his school routine, "I had a little trap line, and I used to trap. I'd hide my gun in the snow, just before I got to school, and I'd check my trap on the way home."

Although there were many types of school, religious and secular, residential and local, Robert James White feels that it was really the community itself and especially the Elders who provided education to the young people:

Well, really, when I think back to my young days, the days that I was growing up and going to school and getting my formal education – that was the education from the Elders, the old people in the community, I suppose we accepted it as just a way of life: the hunting, the fishing, the gathering, community coming together and the community really looking after each other. Like, if you got yourself in trouble and you got caught, the person that caught you would kick your ass. I mean, discipline you, not necessarily kick you, but that's just a terminology. Then when you went home, and you either told or they'd heard already, well you got it again. And the same thing would happen at school, if you got in trouble at school. By the time you got home, they already knew, and we didn't have phones, you know, you got to remember that, we didn't have phones. And when you got home, you got it again. But the whole community used to look after the whole community.



RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL FORT VERMILION



ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL EXTERIOR IN THE 1950s

FATHER MERCREDI

Father Mercredi was a well-known Catholic priest who used to travel up and down the railway line, recording births, performing marriages and funerals for local communities, and keeping records for the church. He was an Aboriginal man born in Fort Chipewyan⁴⁶, where he completed his studies at the Holy Angels Residential School⁴⁷. In 1934, Father Mercredi was ordained a priest of the Catholic Church in Fort Chipewyan⁴⁸. Father Mercredi spent his life serving communities from Fort Chipewyan to Lac La Biche⁴⁹. He was known for his philanthropic deeds, but he was also an artist. He painted the Stations of the Cross in the mission churches of St. Vincent in Conklin, and St. Gabriel in Janvier⁵⁰. He was a friendly face to many, and would visit people in their homes. As Joe Hamelin recalls, "Well, he travelled this railroad line, Father Mercredi. Even at Philomena, he used to do mass right in our house."

Clara Bourque and her fiancé took the train to meet Father Mercredi at the church in Philomena for their wedding ceremony:

We lived at Imperial Mills. There was a church at Philomena at the time, that was the closest, yeah. Then we had to go by train to go and get married, to Philomena. Father Mercredi was there at the time, yeah.

A major outbreak of tuberculosis (TB) swept across northern Alberta from the 1920s to the 1940s, killing great numbers of

Aboriginal people⁵¹. Many Métis from around Fort McMurray became infected with TB and had to be sent to Aberhart Memorial, a sanatorium in Edmonton, to recover from their illness. Many Métis Elders had family members who spent several years in the sanatorium before they were well enough to come home. Travel was difficult, so parents would be separated from their children for long periods of time. Father Mercredi had a radio program so that the Aberhart patients could say hello to their families back home. Marcel Shephard's mother had to spend two or three years at Aberhart when he was a young boy, and he remembers Father Mercredi's program:

Father Mercredi used to have that radio program. I know when I was a kid, we used to listen to the radio, because he would take this tape recorder to the hospital — you know, for people that came from up north, just so they could say hello to people at home. Yeah, boy, it'd be interesting to get those old tapes. I remember he used to say, "Hello Conklin, hello Conklin" you know. And we'd listen to the radio, just to hear our mom say hello once in awhile, and that was, you know, this was from Aberhart Hospital.

Father Patrick Mercredi Community High School in Fort McMurray was named after Father Mercredi to honour his life of work for the local communities; it was dedicated on November 1, 1982, the day after Father Mercredi passed away⁵².



FIRST FEMALE FIRE FIGHTER IN FORT McMURRAY



Strong Métis women taking care of the community is a proud tradition that continues today. Leona Anderson's daughter, Cheryl Golosky, made history in 1991 when she became the first female fire fighter in Fort McMurray⁵³. For her first five years of service, Cheryl was the only woman within the Fort McMurray Fire Department⁵⁴. Although Cheryl has faced many

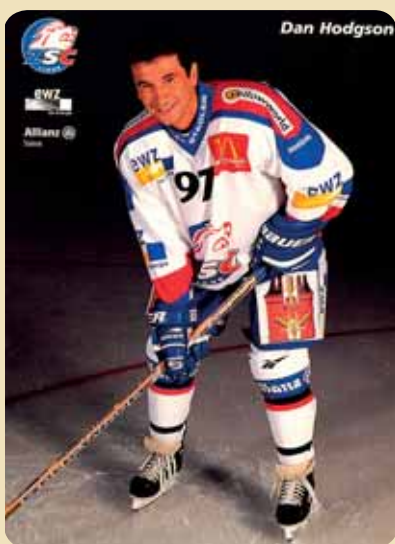
challenges during her career, she has been quoted as saying that she has no regrets about choosing her line of work, and she hopes that she has broken down some of the barriers for women who aspire to build careers as professional fire fighters⁵⁵. Today many women work at different levels of the Fire Department in Fort McMurray⁵⁶. Cheryl has described the Fire Department as an “even playing field” for men and women, and has experienced a great sense of solidarity amongst the fire fighters, regardless of gender, because many of them grew up in the same community and went to school together⁵⁷.

During her early years with the Fire Department, Cheryl was diagnosed with breast cancer and although it took years to

overcome the illness, she finally triumphed after two bouts with cancer. Cheryl became known in the community as a cancer survivor and people began to seek her advice⁵⁸. Motivated by her new role, Cheryl began working as a door-to-door canvasser for cancer awareness and took peer support training through the Canadian Cancer Society in Calgary, to help others to fight cancer, and win! She has also been actively involved with the annual Relay for Life event, bringing people together for a good cause in her hometown. During her struggle with cancer, Cheryl's fellow fire fighters formed a support network for Cheryl and her family. They did fundraising and even shaved their heads to show their camaraderie⁵⁹.

Cheryl became captain at the Fire Department after 17 years of service⁶⁰. Now, in addition to working emergency response on the fire and ladder trucks, she is also responsible for scheduling, training and maintenance of the fire hall and vehicles⁶¹. To deal with the stress of work, Cheryl stays fit by working out and playing sports, including competitive volleyball⁶². Cheryl has three children with her husband, who is also a captain at the Fire Department. Even though she has achieved so much in a rewarding career outside the home, Cheryl still believes that raising her three children has been the greatest accomplishment of her life, and enjoys travelling with her family⁶³.

DANIEL HODGSON'S HOCKEY CAREER



Sylvia and Daniel Hodgson senior lived almost all of their lives in Fort McMurray where they both worked hard to support their ten children and keep them active in sports as they grew up. While Daniel senior was hard at work as a fire chief in the oil sands region, Sylvia was at home – and out on the sports field or at the hockey rink – with the children. Their efforts paid off as the community knows, because they managed to bring

up a healthy family. One of the results of the Hodgson's hard work and dedication was the success of their son, Daniel Hodgson junior, who became the first Fort McMurray hockey player in Canadian history to make it to the NHL. Sylvia describes her son's career, and his tenacity to keep playing professional hockey even after an injury:

Danny was in the NHL. He played for Toronto and Vancouver. Then he broke his leg in Vancouver and

they were a little leery about signing him up again. They thought he wouldn't be able to play. They were going to pay him out his insurance, like, money, but he couldn't play again. He said, "You keep your money, I'm coming back, I'm going to play." So his agent got him a job in Switzerland. He went over there and he played over there, for 17, 18 years.

Wayne Hodgson recalls the early years of his brother's training:

We lived in a cul-de-sac and they had a big play area in the middle there. Well, I remember kids come from all over town there to play hockey. I'm telling you, there was kids there steady! That's where my youngest brother Dan started playing hockey and then eventually made it to the NHL. Actually, he was the first kid to ever get drafted and play in the NHL from Fort McMurray.

Daniel Hodgson junior has made his community and his family proud, and set a positive example for young Métis people in Fort McMurray today by showing that anything is possible with hard work, perseverance and a winning attitude.

IMPORTANT EVENTS IN LOCAL HISTORY

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

A few people can still recall the difficult times they faced during the Great Depression, an economic downturn preceding World War II, lasting approximately from 1929 to the early 1940s. This major event in world history was so widespread that it even impacted the isolated rural communities of northeastern Alberta. Evelyn White remembers how her family had to struggle to get by during those lean times:

Well, it wasn't easy, it was at the worst part of the Great Depression. My brothers got jobs in lumber camps or whatever they could get and by that time, my dad's health was bad and he wasn't able to work. Mom took in washing and sewing and anything and everything that could produce a few pennies. She did laundry and mending for all the old bachelors around town. And my husband Henry White, he was the same. He did everything he could do, after he left the army, he was discharged in the spring of 1945 and he worked as a bartender and a ditch digger, sometimes he worked as a security guard.

NISTAWOYOU

Nistawoyou is an organization that has manifested the Métis desire to improve on the quality of life in many ways since its inception. It first took shape as a housing co-operative in the 1960s. Later it became the Nistawoyou Association. Currently, it is known as the Nistawoyou Friendship Centre. During the 1960s, many people obtained housing through the

centre. Linda Boudreau-Semaganis explains how her father, Henry White, was able to provide a new home for the family through Nistawoyou:

We didn't have running water or anything in that old house, so he got the opportunity. And I think that was that Nistawoyou housing that helped him to get that house and he was doing it for us. It was a three bedroom house with a bathroom and running water and a shower and, oh wow! It was really something. Not by today's standards, but back then, we thought that was like a castle.

The Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre (NAFC) was incorporated on September 17, 1964; and became part of the Native Friendship Centre Association in February of 1972⁶⁴. The NAFC was incorporated as a not-for-profit society in 1974⁶⁵. The stated intention of the Centre is to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, and the NAFC is still seen as the Community Centre for people of all ethnic backgrounds in the vicinity of Fort McMurray⁶⁶. The NAFC is committed to preserving Aboriginal culture, and offers programs and services for all ages and genders based on a solid foundation of traditional values⁶⁷.

According to the NAFC, "We envision the Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre as a respected, active and empowered organization with adequate, culturally attractive

McINNES SAWMILL IN DRAPER, CIRCA 1930s



WOOD BUFFALO NATIONAL PARK

The Wood Buffalo National Park was established in 1922, as a conservation area for the diminished buffalo herds in northern Alberta. The park authorities sought to control the land, the wildlife, and even the human populations who inhabited the region. As Oliver Glanfield explains in further detail:

In 1922, they established Wood Buffalo Park. The Peace River was the south boundary and they drew a line on a map that showed the north boundary. They declared the north boundary and the area north of the Peace River as a traditional Cree area, which was not correct, because traditionally, it was Chipewyan, Beaver and Slavey.

In 1926, they decided they needed more bison, so they brought them in from Wainwright. The bison had tuberculosis and brucellosis, so they kicked them off north of the Hay Camp on the Slave River. They thought the Peace River would adopt them, but of course the bison went “toot-a-loo fellows,” and they went across the Peace River to the area south, which included Lake Claire, Mamawi and into the Birch Mountains.

That was full of traditional Chipewyan hunters and trappers. So the park authorities said to these people, you have two choices. One, if you want to remain Chipewyan, you have to leave the park but you lose your hunting and trapping area. Two, if you want to remain in the park and retain your hunting and trapping area, you must become Cree. So the Simpsons, the Vermillions, the Piches, the Ratfats and the Shortmen families, all became Cree by the stroke of a pen. And that was only — I’ve only named five out of 116 people.

infrastructure - providing leadership as an integral component of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The Aboriginal people of this region are equal partners in Canada to become self-sufficient while strengthening their distinct culture and awareness”⁶⁸.

BILL C-31

Government policy has evolved alongside Aboriginal communities since European settlers reached the northern latitudes of North America during the 1700s and Canada became a country in 1867. It seems that the Canadian Government is still struggling to perfect a technique for negotiating with Canada’s First Nations and Métis groups. One strategy the government has employed over the generations is to classify and categorize people for administrative purposes. Aboriginal status is a multi-faceted issue with many implications, and is therefore not always easy to define according to a government-regulated system.

Robert James White explains his perspective on this issue:

When you talk about rights, they should apply to all Aboriginal people. It just doesn’t make any sense to me. In 1985, they took 100,000 Métis and gave them all Indian Status, that’s through Bill C-31. Now they have Bill C-03, and they’re going to take another 50,000, 60,000 Métis, I still call them ‘half-breeds’, and they’re going to make them Status Indians. Now what’s wrong with the rest of us? We chopped liver?



WOOD BISON

And a lot of it is in the same family and they just keep dividing our families. Like, you can go through that tree, where you can see where she was Treaty, she was Treaty, he is unknown, but Bluears was my great grandmother and she was from Papaschase. Then when they disbanded Papaschase, my grandmother Isabelle Foley, the daughter of Bluears, my kookum, she became attached to the Enoch Band. And then my dad was born and raised there and we can't find out whether he was ever on the registry or not, because they won't release that information, even though my kids are all members of that Band. Now I'm a Métis, my kids are all Status, my granddaughter is Status, my two grandsons are Métis and when they change the law they'll become Status and it just makes no sense. Even when my kids were born, first few years of their life, they were Métis. Then all of a sudden they became Status. You know, I hear these politicians just talk about the importance of family and how it's the most important thing. But it only applies

to the descendants of immigrants, because Aboriginal people, they just keep dividing our families further and further and further. It doesn't make any sense! The children received their status through their mother, through that Bill C-31, and my brothers all got their status back through that. So there we had family divided again. I mean, you look at the people that you used to hang around with when you were kids, and it was a mix. Nobody seemed to care, we were just a community.

SUMMARY

The sense of community felt by the Métis has changed over the past half-century as people have adapted to new circumstances in their homeland. The truth remains that Métis culture is a vibrant, living and evolving force in northeastern Alberta. The history of the Métis is an essential part of Canada's history, and part of what gives the Province of Alberta its character today.

GEORGE, KATY AND FRANCES SANDERSON NEAR LYNTON SIDING



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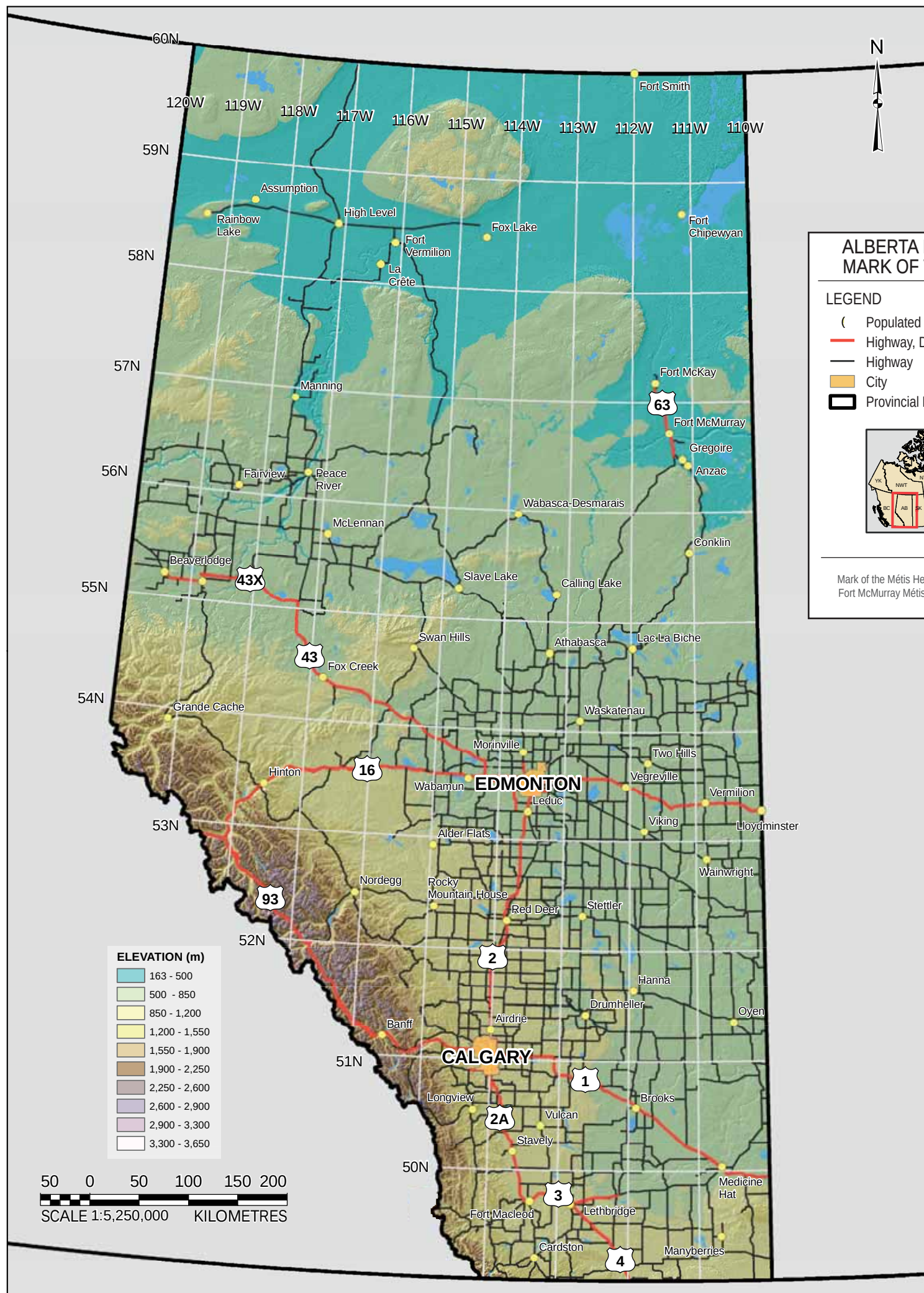
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ALBERTA HIGHWAYS - 2010



MARK OF THE MÉTIS

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE
OF NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA

TRAVEL AND ACCESS



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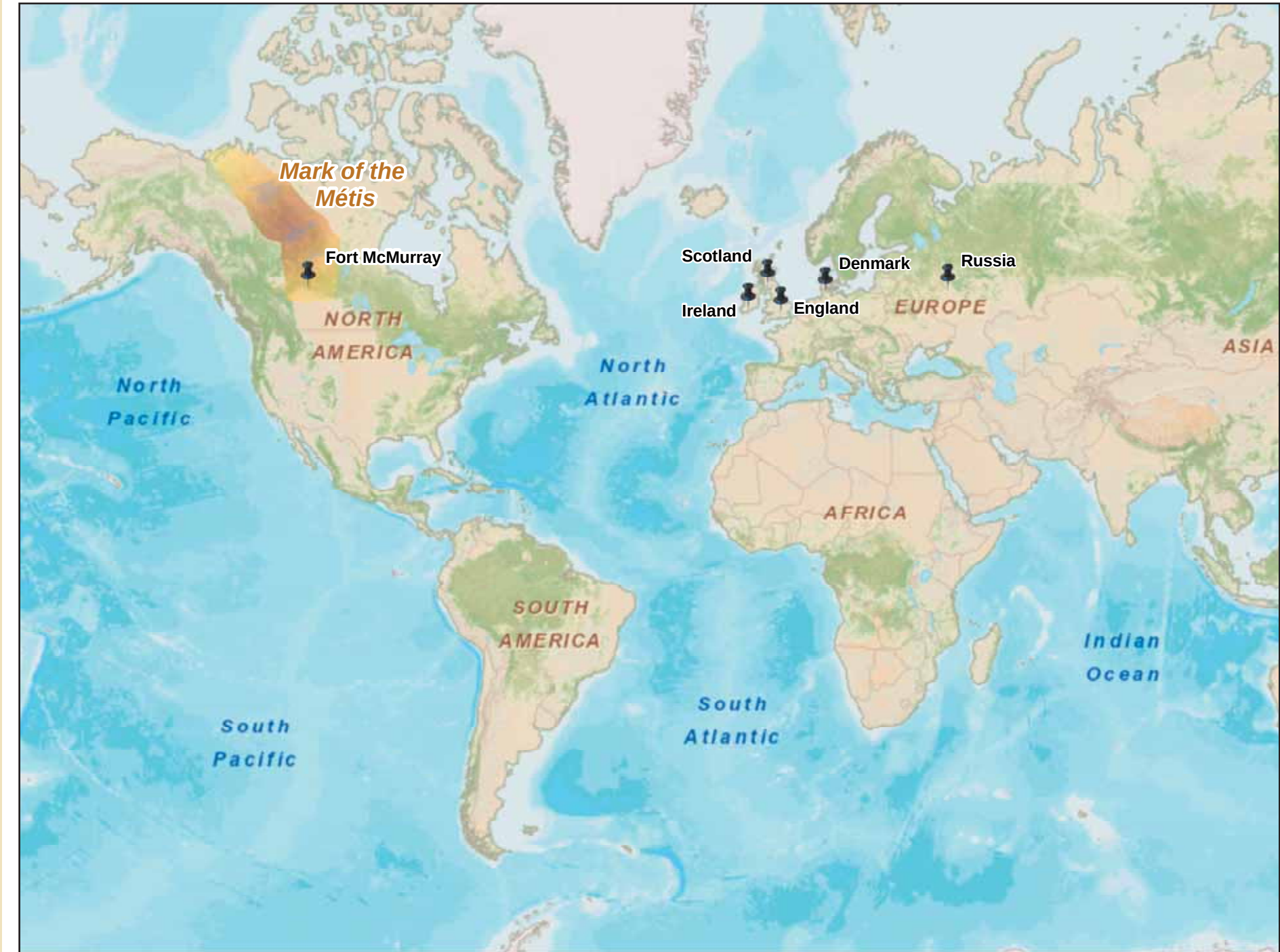
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MIGRATION FROM NORTHERN EUROPE TO CANADA

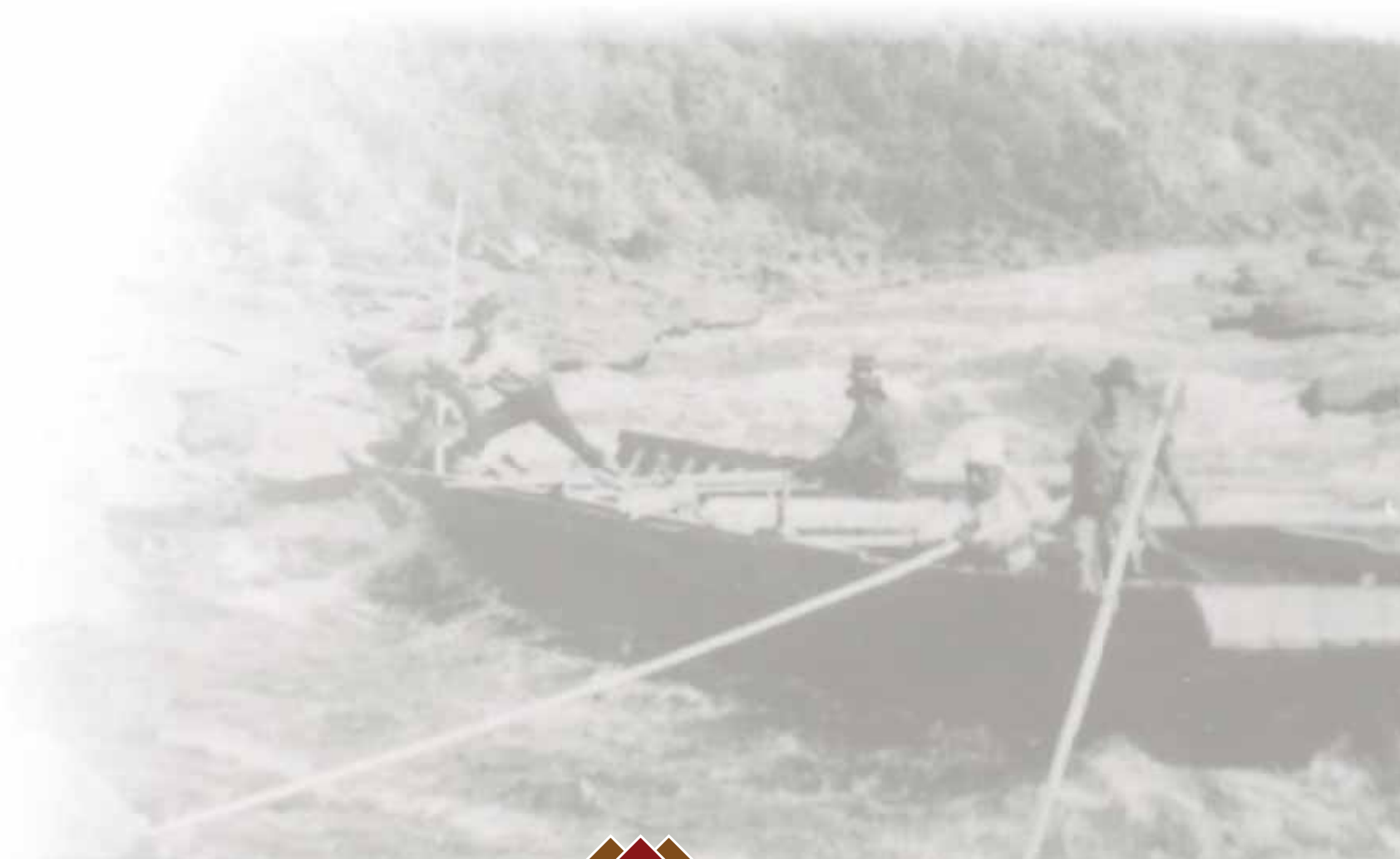


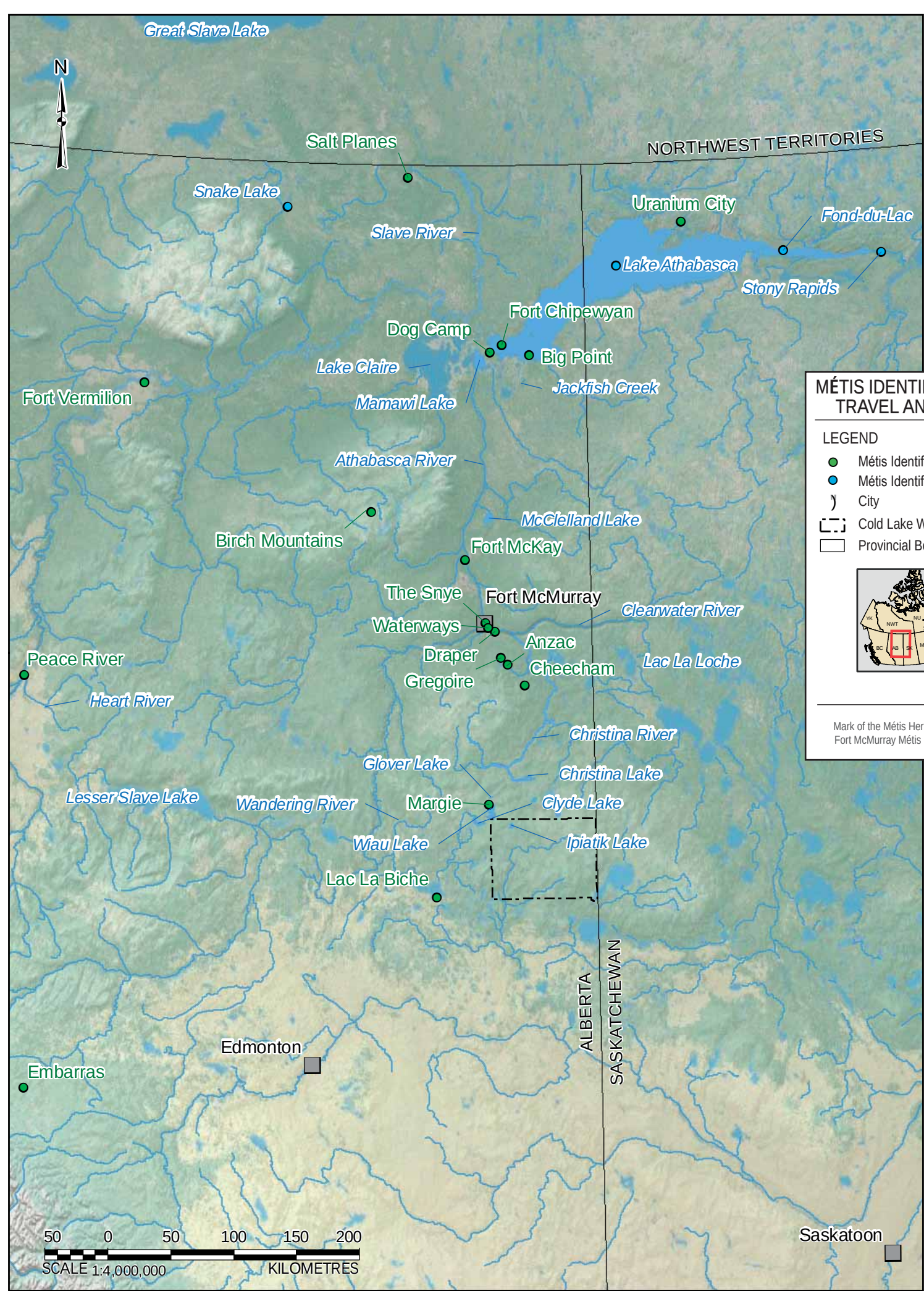
INTRODUCTION

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, settlers, traders and other immigrants moved to Canada from places such as Scotland, Ireland, England, France, Germany, Denmark, and Russia (to name a few). Some of these people settled in the Fort McMurray area, where they joined with the Aboriginal peoples of the region. The result of these unions was the Métis people of Alberta, a vast and diverse community firmly grounded on the local landscape. Métis worked together in family groups and displayed fantastic mobility in the times before mechanized transport, as they travelled the region in search of resources such as plants, fish and wildlife, in search of work and new opportunities, or simply to visit family and friends. With families comprised of people from across the globe, Métis are a people with a long history of movement, and a predisposition towards mobility within the bounds of their land. Lila Thompson explains:

In a lifetime, you know, people would move all over and especially Métis people. Because you're not tied to a Reserve like Treaty people might be. And, people's families come from so many places, like your own, like, Lac La Biche and Fort Chipewyan.

Given the far-reaching, dispersed nature of Métis settlements in northern Alberta, travel was necessary to link people and resources across the great expanse of the Métis traditional lands. In order to traverse these expansive lands, Métis travelled across the earth, over the water, and through the air by many means.





MÉTIS IDENTIFIED PLACES



MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVEL

SEASONAL ROUND AND TRAVEL FOR WORK

The traditional Métis lifestyle was one of seasonal travelling. Many families would split their time between winter trapping on the trapline, and living in town during the summer months. As trapping was a large source of income for many Métis, this traditional way of life motivated the move out of town in the fall. Augustine Armit remembers just such a lifestyle.

Well, the springtime, when the trapping's over, we'd go home to Lac La Biche. We'd stay the whole summer and then when fall comes, again grandpa would go back to the trapline.

Winter on the trapline was not, however, an unbroken stay. Christmas was an important time of year for Métis. Many families would come into town from their trapline by dogsled (or, later, Bombardier) to socialize with friends and family, attend midnight mass, and partake in Christmas festivities. As she recalls below, Eva Ladouceur's family would leave the trapline for town in December to get ready for Christmas, and then return to their winter trapping activities in January.

We used to go to Snake Lake in September to trap. Then we'd come back in December, get ready for Christmas and go back in January, and didn't come back to town 'til the end of April.

Families would also travel to populated centres from the trapline in order to sell furs. Peter Ladouceur describes the annual trips he would take with his family using a horse and sleigh:

With furs we'd go to town, every Christmas, my dad had a bobsleigh with a tent pulled over it, the stove inside, you know, just about 25 miles to go to town. We went with horses, in the bobsleigh with a tent over it. The trip was about three hours, three, four hours, maybe. It was cold, but not inside the tent there. We had a fire going steady, yeah.

As time passed, and wage-base work became more important to Métis, many people travelled to find work, often living in many different communities, doing many different jobs. John C. Gladue, as quoted below, worked all throughout the region, from Fort McMurray down to Lac La Biche.

Well, I started working in Waterways, and then I started moving around. I ended up in Peace River. And then back to Lac La Biche. I quit from Lac La Biche, and went to work for Bechtel near Fort McMurray. They were building that plant site, the Great Canadian Oil Sands.

HUDSON CAR LOADED FOR TRIP FROM FORT McMURRAY



Wilber Graham is also someone who travelled around for work, as he moved between different projects in the oil sands region. After working on a dredge for one summer, he began to explore his possibilities working with heavy industry. Wilber explains the different jobs he had, the dangers he faced and his mandatory medical visits to Edmonton:

I worked at the Abasand tearing it down, demolishing the thing. It caught on fire and burned, eh. So, we demolished it. That was in 1948, yeah. Then I worked at Bitumount in '49. Yeah, that thing blew up once. Yeah. I was climbing up the side of the tank, and the thing had — when it blew, it was just like somebody picked me up and set me back on the floor again. A welder, though, he got badly burned. There was gyproc coming down all over the place — blew half the roof off that separation deal down there. The welder just had the cuffs on his shirt and that left. And they were burning, and I pulled them off him, eh, and got him out of there.

Then I worked for Canadian Engineers. Then GCOS started. Great Canadian Oil Sands, Great Clouds of Steam we used to call it, but I never worked there. Oh, they wanted me to. They called up a couple times and offered jobs there. But I never went. I started with Canadian Engineers and then Royal Light. And then City Service, yeah. I went to City Services and from there to Syncrude. Well, again, to start with there, when I was with Canadian Engineers and Royal Light, we had three crews. There was one there working, and one going, and one coming.

Actually, when I started there, there was, oh, people mostly that had grown up and, you know, just going out trapping in the spring and in the fall. If they want to continue that type of life, then they couldn't do it and hold a job down. I still hunt, but I don't think I'd even bother shooting a moose nowadays. Now, there's

only the two of us, my wife Myrtle and I. What are you going to do with it, eh, you know?

I went out to Edmonton there one time for — well, we used to have to go out for a medical every four years or something or other. I forget what else — company policy. And I ran into Ken Driver out there. He says, "I just bought a new car," he says. "How about you come driving back with me?"

"Well," I said, "I guess I could do it." Instead of flying, I came back with him. Holy Jesus, what a road! It had ruts that deep in that road. People were stuck right in the middle of the road, eh.

Emile Harpe explains how his father came from Lac La Biche Mission to live in Fort McMurray, and how his grandparents used to travel from Lac La Biche by train to sell the products from their farm:

My dad came to Fort McMurray in 1930. He had a sawmill up in Draper, he was working there for McInnes Fisheries. McInnes used to fish Lake Athabasca and bring their fish here and load it on the train, eh. And he stayed here and worked at the salt plant for many years.

My grandfather on my dad's side, and my grandmother, they used to make their own wool. They had sheep on the farm in Lac La Biche. And they used to make wool. I used to stand there all day with my arms like this and granny would wrap the wool around my arms. Oh yeah. I remember them working the wool, you know, coal oil and two steel brushers, eh, cleaning the wool. And they'd knit woolen mitts and woolen socks. Even grandpa could knit, eh? And they used to bring all their socks and mitts to Fort McMurray. Grandpa used to come by train. Sell them up here, yeah.



ABASAND OIL STAFF HOUSING AND PLANT, CIRCA 1945

FAMILY

During the 20th century, many people came to the Fort McMurray area from other places. It was common for people to arrive from Europe, and, during World War II, many American soldiers were stationed in the area of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line. Many Métis women married foreigners during this time. With a long history of being comfortable with movement, it was not uncommon for Métis who married Americans or Europeans to relocate to their spouse's homeland. Geraldine Jensen and Eva Ladouceur relay tales from their early days of marriage, about travelling during marriage:

I met my husband when I was quite young. We got married and we went to Denmark, where he was from. We flew from Canada to Denmark and then we sailed back to Montreal, just for the experience. Then we took a train all the way from Montreal, right to Fort McMurray. - Geraldine Jensen

I travelled a lot, all over the States, oh, my goodness. My husband and I, we went to New York, I couldn't name the states all over, Texas, you know. I was allowed to travel with the soldiers. I was a war bride, you see. - Eva Ladouceur

At times, entire families moved. As formal education became an increasingly important supplement to the traditional education obtained in the bush, some families moved from smaller communities to larger ones with more amenities such as schools. Olive Pente recalls that, while her family had a good life in Embarras, it was important that her children go to school.

We moved to Fort McMurray because the kids had to go to school. It was nice down in Embarras, and we had a good life there and that. But they had to leave for school.

Failing health is a challenge that many people, be they Métis, Treaty Status Aboriginals, or other ethnicities, must face in their lifetime. With limited healthcare facilities in the Fort McMurray area in the early-to-mid 1900s, many people travelled to larger centres such as Edmonton for treatment. In some cases, the families of people receiving treatment would also travel to the city to provide support. Even people of advanced age would travel to see ailing loved ones, as Sara Finch points out, "I came through Edmonton when my sister Delphine was dying then in the hospital." Family was a powerful motivator, but it was not the only factor that inspired people to move.



GERALDINE JENSEN AND HER DAUGHTER MAY-BRITT



CHILDREN RUNNING UP THE CENTER OF FRANKLIN AVENUE

WAR

For many Métis children in the 1930s and 1940s, having parents travel overseas to fight in World War II was a reality. Equally real was the fact that many children, with one or more parents involved in the war effort, were sent away from their homes to live in residential schools. Linda Boudreau-Semaganis explains just such a situation:

My dad was overseas in the Second World War. He went to England and did active duty over there. He was gone from '41 until late in '44 and he had four sons from his first marriage and they were put into residential school in St. Albert. And when he came home, my dad got them out of residential school in probably '46 or '45, just not long after he married my mom. He got a little grant from the Department of Veteran Affairs and he was supposed to open up a restaurant in Waterways. But other things kind of sidetracked him, my mother being one. They got married and had Gordy in '45.

For some, their involvement in the military resulted in a lifetime of travel. Moving away for training or being relocated

to different military bases had some Métis people travelling around the country for decades, gaining many experiences and stories. Eva Ladouceur led just such a lifestyle.

When I joined the Air Force I went to basic training to Centralia, Ontario. Then from Centralia, I went to Trenton for my meteorology course and then I got transferred right back to Namao, just outside of Edmonton. That's where I met my husband. Then we went from Namao to Ottawa, we were in Ottawa for eleven years and then from Ottawa we went to Gimli, Manitoba, and then from Gimli, Manitoba we went to Toronto and Brampton.

It should be noted, however, that many of those people who travelled through their involvement in the military eventually came home to the Fort McMurray area. This was the case for Ms. Ladouceur, "And, then from Brampton, we moved back to Fort McMurray in 1978. We moved back to Fort McMurray in 1978, to get out of Toronto really." Whether it was for family, the seasons, work or war, Métis were a people that were motivated to move.



TRANSPORT CREW WHICH WAS LED BY CAPTAIN E. B. HAIGHT
ON GRAND RAPID ISLAND, 1914

MODES OF TRAVEL

EARTH

Before planes, trains and automobiles were commonplace in the Fort McMurray area, Métis travelled extensively on foot. It was not uncommon to walk to a neighbour's cabin, or to a nearby trading post. Journeys were at times lengthy, lasting for several days. This was, however, the accepted way of travel early in the 20th century. Joe Hamelin recalls a time when walking was more commonplace, "I remember those days where people in Waterways used to walk to McMurray and McMurray used to walk to Waterways. This is way, way back, everybody chatting, on the weekends especially, eh."

Oliver Glanfield knows that, according to historical accounts of Métis, whole families might travel for miles upon miles by foot to reach neighbouring fur traders:

When you start reading about the way these people walked around, it just is mind boggling. And you also find out that the old fur traders moved the forts, I always say, as often as we now change our shorts. They'd move it from here to here and they would think nothing of packing up the family and hiking off for a couple of hundred miles to go and visit a neighbouring fur trader, you know. It was — that was life then.



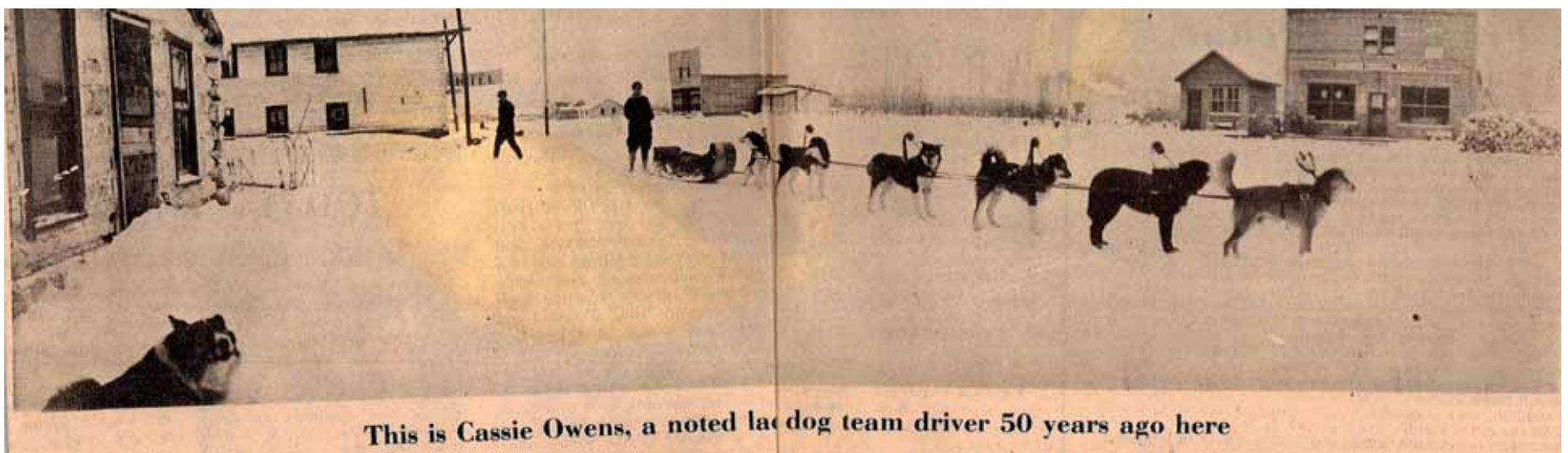
GERTIE SANDERSON POSES FOR A PHOTOGRAPH WITH HER SISTERS AND SOME DOGS

An important form of transportation in the time before roads was the dog team. Dogs were relied upon for warmth, their sense of direction, and their ability to transport both people and goods in some of the coldest winter conditions. Betty Kobbero remembers the refuge that warm dogs offered on cold nights, "Dogs were really important in the old days. You could sleep with your dogs, and they were warm."

Dorothy Hansen remembers that dogs, unlike snowmobiles, could keep a traveller on track, “If you were lost those dogs also knew how to get home or where there was somebody else that would help you.”

Lila Thompson recalls stories told to her by her father about the importance of a dog team in navigating even the fiercest of snow storms, and the role that a particularly clever lead dog could play in guiding the pack:

My dad had this dog team and the lead dog was Queenie and he said, “She saved my life.” Because they were in a snow storm and he had no idea how to get back to his cabin. And, so he said, “I just said, ‘Queenie, you better take us home.’” And she did! She found the way to the cabin. It was a white-out, he said, there was no way he would ever have made it if it wasn’t for his dog team. Queenie was the smartest lead dog my Dad ever had. He said, “We’d come to a fork in the road and, I wouldn’t have to say anything, they just knew which way I wanted to go. I’d either point or look that way and we’d go.” The dogs are really smart.



This is Cassie Owens, a noted lead dog team driver 50 years ago here



ALEX CHEECHAM DOGSLEDDING AT BILLY BIGGS' FARM



MEN WITH THEIR DOGS, CIRCA 1920

Dogs could rescue human beings in times of trouble, but sometimes it worked the other way around, as Peter Ladouceur recalls:

I got a story there. Once when I was trapping, at about ten miles away from Big Point, Chipewyan Indians used to go there and fish, the fish were spawning there. So I'd go from my place, go there and get a load of fish. So this one day I went there, I camped there, left my blankets, I was going to go set traps. I brought some traps, my rifle, my axe and I started going. Good sized lake. There's one place was the narrowest, the narrows, so I hated like hell to go around, it was too far.

So I started going across. About halfway, down I went. That was 40 feet of water. Well, I couldn't do nothing. I had five dogs. The dogs got on the ice, but that damned sleigh took over now. The thing went under, yeah. Holy gee boy, you get a funny feeling when you know you're going to die, "I'm going to drown." Well, every little prayer, I said every little prayer I know, plus I invented a couple I think.

Boy, finally I got on top of the ice. Well, the dogs were over there and the ice was sagging, they were in the water. I couldn't do nothing, and it was a warm day anyway. I guess I kicked my one set of my rubber boots off, but it was a good thing my sock was still on. I got on the ice and about a couple of miles anyway to walk, to my camp. I got over there, I left my dogs. "The hell with it, as long as I got out," I thought. I got over there, there was one little crippled guy, small guy, all humped up, you know, and he was there fishing with another guy. Bacheese, his name was Bacheese Mercel. He asked me what happened. I said, "I pretty near drowned over there, I left my dogs over there."

"Oh, I'll go and get them," he says.

So they went. They had a big fire there, I took all my clothes off and dried them there for a long time. Finally it was twelve o'clock, holy geez, I was worried. Supposing the poor bugger had drowned, just instead of me, you know. When I was good and dry, now I started walking that way. I come to the first lake there, I listened, there was — all at once I can hear sleigh on the ice, oh, boy I was happy!

Yeah, that humpback there, he was driving my dogs, he was in the lead. They took my dogs, my sleigh out of there, I don't know how they did it, but I'm always thankful for them guys, you know.

Dog teams were a primary means by which people travelled from their traplines to visit friends and family in towns like Fort McMurray during the winter months. For the trip, Métis would pack bedrolls, food (such as bannock or dry meat), a hunting rifle and at times young children, into the dogsled before setting off on their journey. Alvena Strasbourg remembers a winter in 1939 when the only thing allowing her to see her family at Christmas was a reliable team of dogs, knowledge of the land, and determination:

I was lonesome to go home for Christmas in 1939 and it was cold, you know, the 22nd of December is cold. So, I said to myself, I'm going to town, to McMurray and I'm going to go visit my mother. So, I got ready and I got my baby ready in the morning. When the sun was coming up, I hooked up my dogs and then I put a bedroll in there. Got the baby's bottles for him and put them underneath there, made a lunch for myself, stuck him in there, took my .22, put it in the back of the carry-all and took some chains and I took off across the lake.

When the sun was coming up, I left here. I got to Salt Prairie and I knew that was half way, so they used to have a trail. You know, they used to go with horses too from here in the wintertime. So, I followed that and I stopped there and I made a little fire and I had a tea pail, I made tea for myself and I had my lunch and I fed the baby. He never made a sound, not a sound, and then we took off again.

Métis dogsledders were the experts at this mode of travel. Myrtle Graham remembers that during World War II, when American soldiers were stationed near Fort McMurray, they attempted travel using dogsleds with less than perfect results:

In the wintertime, the American soldiers had the dog teams. Well, I'm telling you those soldiers, I guess a lot of them came from a hot climate, you know. You should see though when they were dressed in the wintertime! Well, I guess we just had it too good, eh? That's a nice warm parka. But my God, those soldiers looked like mummies when they went down to town. And their dogs, you know how the dog teams

used to be straight, eh? Well, they had them all... that's the first I've ever seen a dog team like that when the Americans were there. They had them all over!

The wardens of the Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP, founded in 1922) also relied upon dogsleds as their primary method of transport in winter. During the summer, the dogs were kept at a camp, where John Fraser and his family took care of them, as John recalls:

Until the Bombardier came into the world, before then they had dogs. And my dad used to look after the dogs for all the wardens in the park, in the summertime. They used to bring all the dogs in this one place, which we used to call Dog Camp. It was about seven miles out of Fort Chip, yeah, which I think now is my brother's trap line, Jumbo's. And that's where we were raised. Most of my summer life was at the Dog Camp, because that's where my parents would take us after school, like, when school was out in September. And we spent two months out in Dog Camp and cooked for them, we cooked the fish, we had a big cooker and everything and we used to make wheelbarrow loads of it. All day we'd cook, and put it in wheelbarrows 'til it cooled off, then we'd feed them in the evening, eh, when it's all cooled. And we had shovel-fulls, like, you only got so much per dog, eh. 250 dogs, and we fed them pickerel and goldeyes and whitefish and northern pike and we lived off the fish

too. So yeah, we used to cook for these dogs and it was lots and lots of work, lots of work. Watered them every second day. Wash, yeah, clean up everything, wash their pans, every second day we had to wash out and give them fresh water. Had to haul water, there was no pumps, no hoses, there was no running water and everything was hauled from the river.

Although dogsleds fell out of fashion after the introduction of Bombardiers and other motorized vehicles, the legacy of dogsledding continues to be an important part of Métis culture and heritage.



TWO MEN FEED DRY FISH TO DOGS

The introduction of snowmobiles was useful in the region, but even so, the isolated location of population centres like Fort Chipewyan still posed many challenges for the inhabitants. Before winter roads and highways, Métis relied on other methods of transportation to traverse the frequently unforgiving landscape of the north, and to procure supplies from the south. John Fraser recalls a time when winter travel was difficult, and the people of the Fort Chipewyan area depended on the assistance of Indian Affairs and their Bombardiers for fresh produce:

No winter roads in those days no, no... in the wintertime, down in Fort Chip, around Christmastime, Indian Affairs used to take two of their Bombardiers and sleighs and they used to come to Fort McMurray and come and get fresh fruit. They hauled quite a bit of stuff, like, you know, most of the produce was kept inside and then the frozen stuff on the outside, on sleighs. Yeah, I'll never forget those years because I remember when they used to come in, we used to watch for them at night.



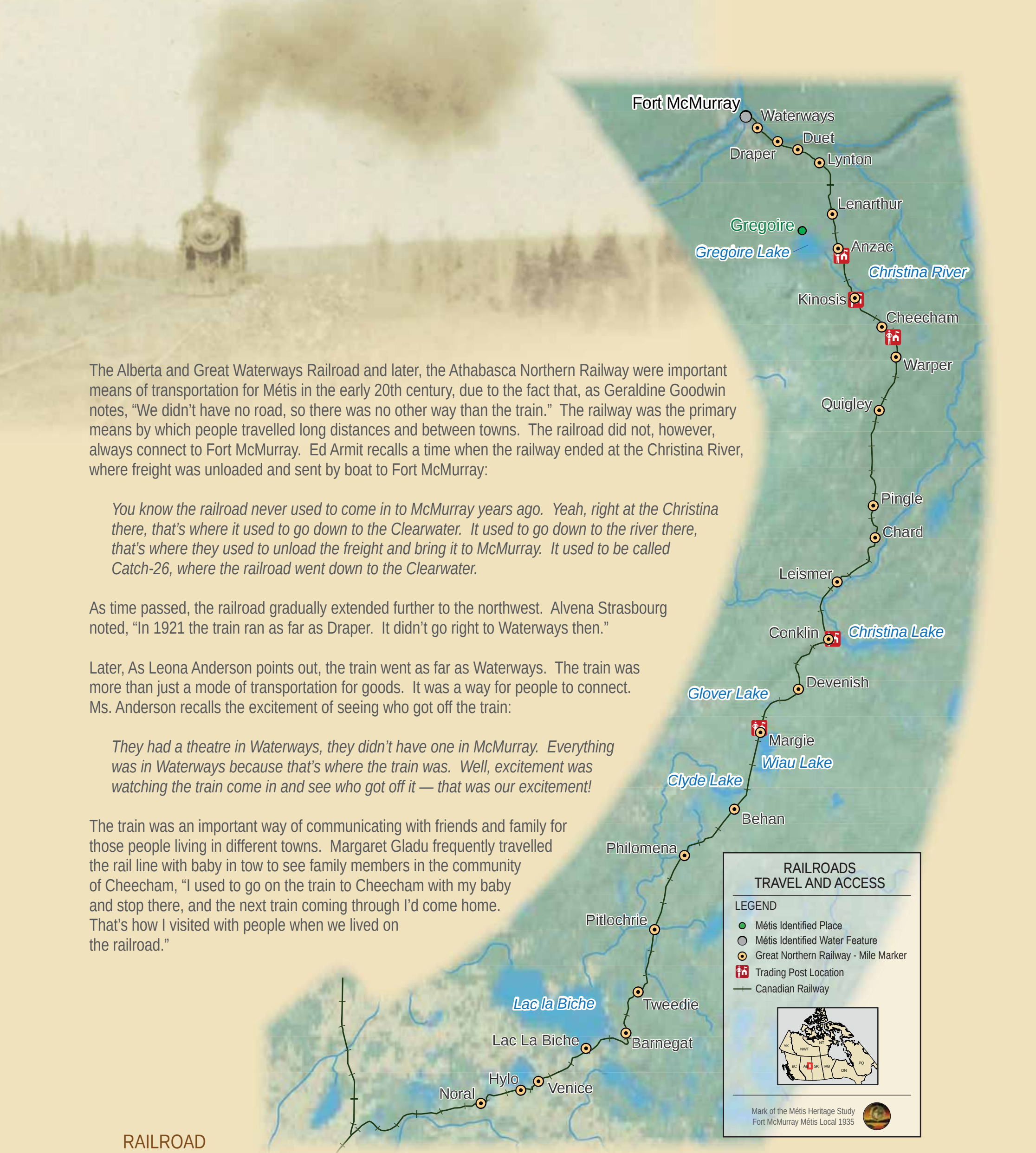
KATY SANDERSON IN NEW DOG SLED

BOMBARDIERS

Bombardier Recreational Products (or BRP) is a Canadian manufacturer of snowmobiles and other recreational vehicles. The company traces its roots to 1942¹. Snowmobiles, or 'Bombardiers' as they were commonly known, were an important mode of transportation for Métis in the mid-to-late 20th century.



TRAPPER'S CABIN WITH SNOWMOBILES



The Alberta and Great Waterways Railroad and later, the Athabasca Northern Railway were important means of transportation for Métis in the early 20th century, due to the fact that, as Geraldine Goodwin notes, “We didn’t have no road, so there was no other way than the train.” The railway was the primary means by which people travelled long distances and between towns. The railroad did not, however, always connect to Fort McMurray. Ed Armit recalls a time when the railway ended at the Christina River, where freight was unloaded and sent by boat to Fort McMurray:

You know the railroad never used to come in to McMurray years ago. Yeah, right at the Christina there, that’s where it used to go down to the Clearwater. It used to go down to the river there, that’s where they used to unload the freight and bring it to McMurray. It used to be called Catch-26, where the railroad went down to the Clearwater.

As time passed, the railroad gradually extended further to the northwest. Alvena Strasbourg noted, “In 1921 the train ran as far as Draper. It didn’t go right to Waterways then.”

Later, As Leona Anderson points out, the train went as far as Waterways. The train was more than just a mode of transportation for goods. It was a way for people to connect. Ms. Anderson recalls the excitement of seeing who got off the train:

They had a theatre in Waterways, they didn’t have one in McMurray. Everything was in Waterways because that’s where the train was. Well, excitement was watching the train come in and see who got off it — that was our excitement!

The train was an important way of communicating with friends and family for those people living in different towns. Margaret Gladu frequently travelled the rail line with baby in tow to see family members in the community of Cheecham, “I used to go on the train to Cheecham with my baby and stop there, and the next train coming through I’d come home. That’s how I visited with people when we lived on the railroad.”



THE TRAIN STATION AT WATERWAYS

Métis from the Fort McMurray area did not let distance deter them from visiting friends and family. While day trips on the train were more common, some people also travelled across the country on the rail line to see loved ones. Sarah Finch remembers a train ride that took her all the way from Fort Chipewyan to Ontario:

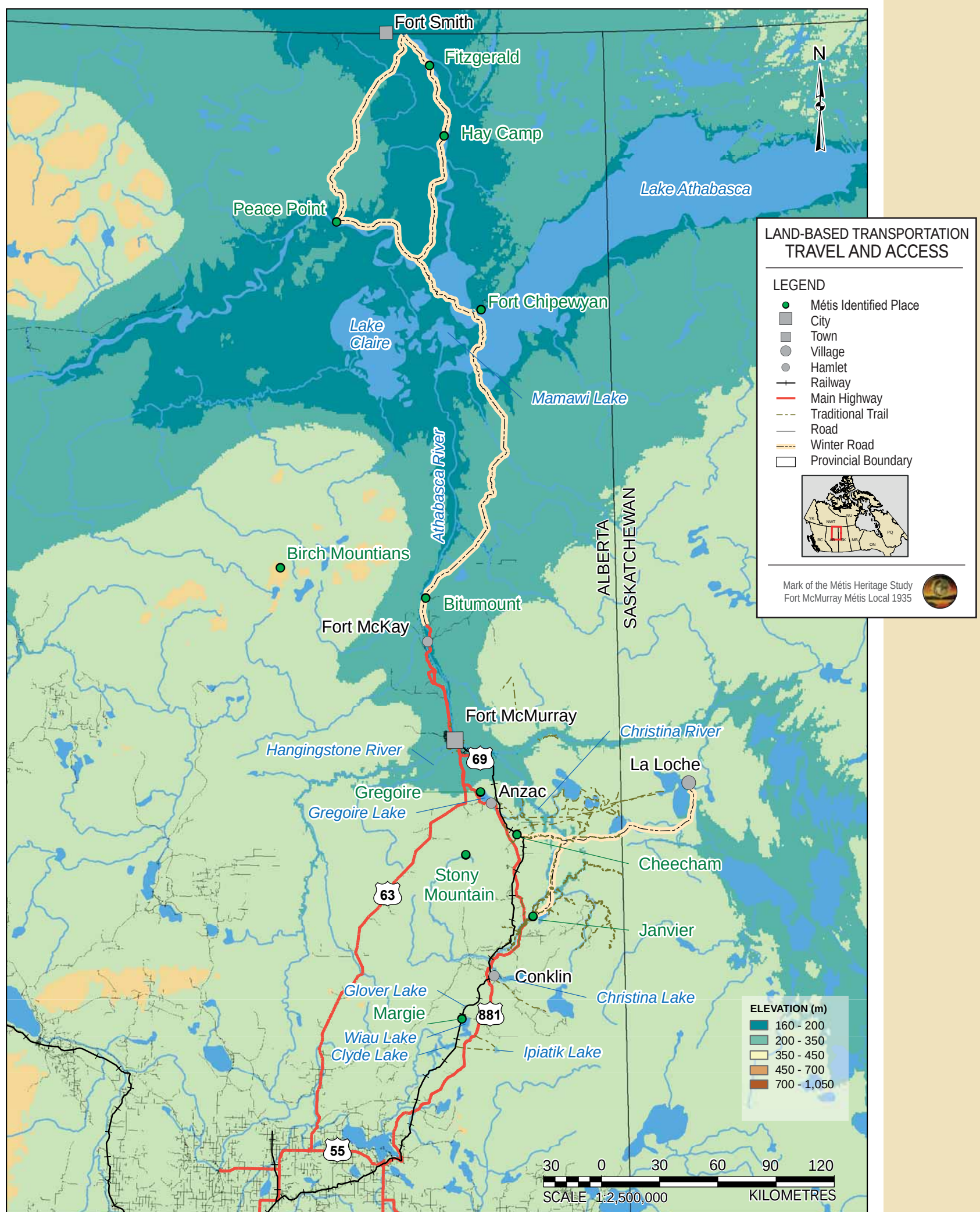
The only time I went away was when I was six and went and lived in Ontario with my sister. I went there and I travelled on the train by myself, you know, with these nuns from Fort Chipewyan, and they thought I was so smart and my sister had me dressed to the nines, you know, and they thought I was so cute.

ALBERTA AND GREAT WATERWAYS RAILROAD

By November 10, 1921, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railroad had reached the site of Waterways. From here, freight was unloaded and shipped on barges and steamboats to Fort McMurray. In 1929, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railroad became part of the newly formed Northern Alberta Railways². Both railroads were important means of connecting the Métis people in the Fort McMurray region.

STEAM LOCOMOTIVE ON THE RAILWAY TRACK





LAND-BASED MODES OF TRANSPORTATION



The railway was not the only means by which Métis travelled in the early 20th century. Before highways, winter roads (used when the muskeg was frozen) were the primary routes along which people could travel to distant communities. Travel on these roads was not swift, as Geraldine Goodwin points out:

The first trip I made from Fort McMurray to Edmonton was in 1965 on that old winter road. My husband wanted to go to Edmonton to trade in the car and bring back another one. So I went with him, it took us 14 hours to Edmonton.

The mid-20th century saw the expansion of transportation in northern Alberta. The train, while still an important method of transporting goods, was no longer the only way to travel between distant communities. As Lawrence A. H. Laboucane recalls, in the early 1960s, the road that would one day become Highway 63 was constructed between Fort McMurray and Edmonton, “Transportation started opening up when they built the road there in the ‘60s to Edmonton. Prior to that in the ‘50s, train was the only access.”

The gravel road was treacherous, and the going was slow. Many Elders recall long drives which rivalled the train for travel time, and often involved treacherous road conditions with deep mud and high ruts.

I remember travelling on the highway when it was still a gravel road. I think it opened in about 1965. It was just as bad as the train, when it was gravel! Very long trip. - Leona Anderson

We travelled here to Fort McMurray from Fort Vermilion in two cars when my husband got a job at Suncor. Six of us in each car... it took us 14 hours from Wandering River to here. We had to get pulled through the muck, the car was high centred, ruts. We had to get Cats to pull us through. I didn't know where I was going, I didn't have a clue. - Sylvia Hodgson

I remember days where there used to be vehicles stuck right in the middle of the highway and they'd just leave them there, catch a ride and next time you were going out, you'd have to go around them because they're parked — they're stuck right in the middle of the road. - Joe Hamelin

By 1970, the treacherous gravel road had been transformed into Highway 63³. With a reliable, paved road in place connecting the communities in the Fort McMurray area, travel between towns became more common. Taxi services began running between the major settlements in the region. Richard Pliska recalls a time when he ran a taxi service in the Fort McMurray area:

We would go from Fort McMurray to Waterways. We'd load everybody in the cab, and you'd get a quarter a piece and head'er down to Waterways. There'd be about twenty of them piled in! And we also went to Fort McKay for 20 bucks.

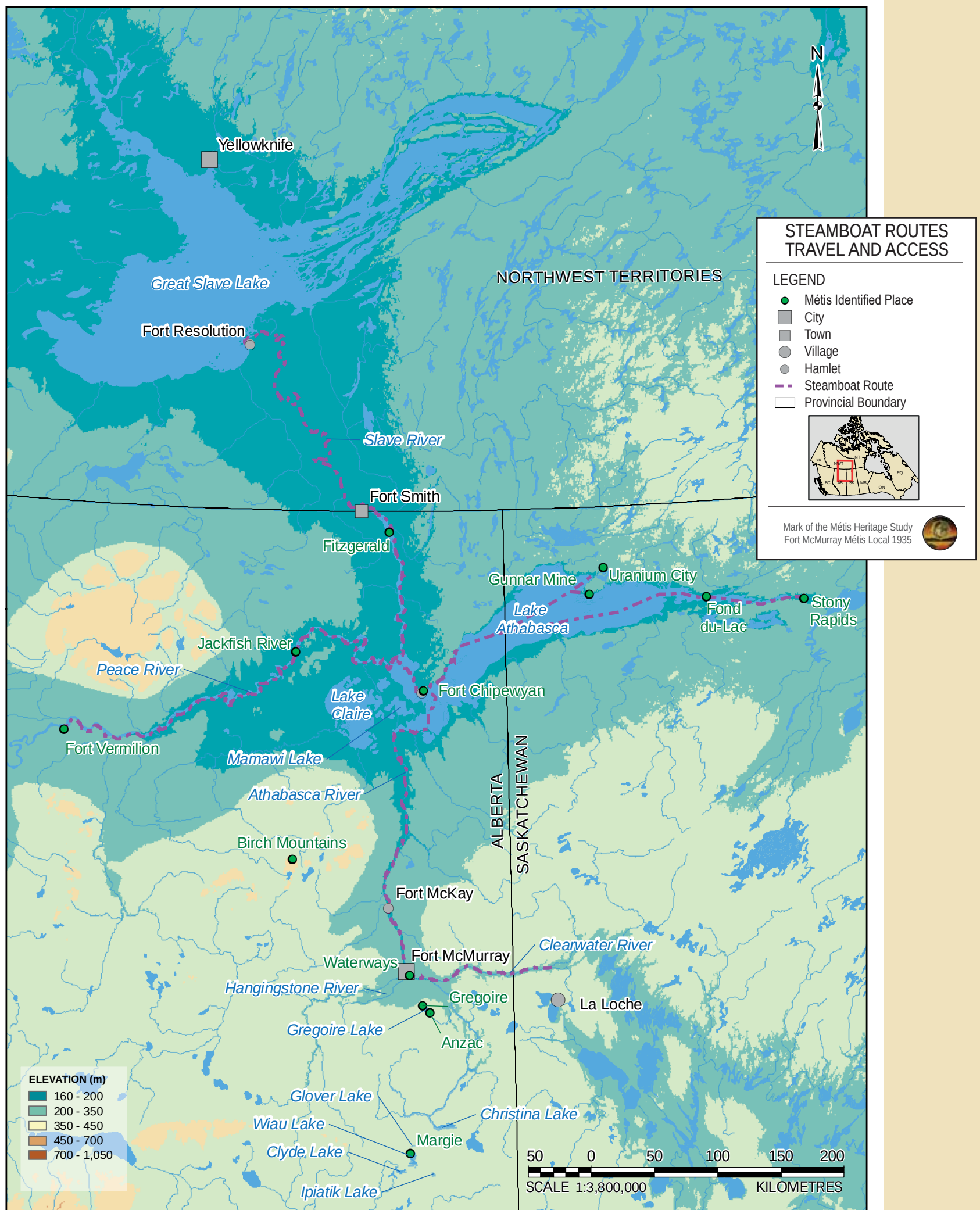
Transportation across the earth evolved in the Fort McMurray area, from foot, to dogsled, to railways and roads. There were, however, other routes by which Métis were able to traverse the landscape.



GRAVEL ROAD

WINTER ROADS

Winter roads are typically constructed in areas where the construction of year-round roads is unfeasible due to river crossings, or, as is the case in the Fort McMurray region, winter roads are a viable access method in areas with a prevalence of muskeg-rich land that freezes solid in winter. During the freeze-up period, winter roads can be constructed on frozen muskeg or bodies of water⁴. These roads, while not as common as in the pre-highway days, still play an important role in transportation in northern Alberta.



STEAMBOATS



CANOES

The canoes of the Métis were constructed of a frame of wooden ribs covered with the lightweight bark of birch trees. Birch bark was the perfect choice to build canoes, due to its light weight, water resistance and smoothness. These boats, which have remained virtually unchanged in design for centuries, proved to be ideal for travelling the numerous streams, rivers and lakes of the northern Alberta landscape⁵.

WATER

Much like their European pioneer and Aboriginal ancestors, the early Métis people of the Fort McMurray area utilized canoes to navigate the many rivers, creeks and lakes in the area, as pointed out by Alvena Strasbourg, “Before Syncrude came and built the bridge, everybody travelled by canoe, you know, going down the Athabasca River.”

In addition to being an important method of travelling from one place to another, canoes served some people by facilitating traditional land use pursuits. Fishing from canoes was a common Métis practice. Some, as Charles Fraser points out, used their canoes to set traps for aquatic species such as beaver and muskrat, “I used to trap and then in the summertime, I fished. I used to go out in my canoe to trap muskrats.”

THE SIMPLE LIFE ON THE ATHABASCA RIVER





YORK BOAT WITH NINE MEN RIDING IN IT
INSET - SCOW WITH SEVEN MEN ON LAKE ATHABASCA



FOUR SCOWS LINED UP ON A ROCKY SHORE

Other small watercraft such as scows and York boats were also commonly used, and expert river travellers often had to contend with treacherous waters.



A BOAT GOES OVER THE CASCADE RAPIDS, CIRCA 1912



SOME TRACKERS REST ON THE ATHABASCA RIVER

As transportation needs grew in the area, so too did the size and capacity of the water vessels used by Métis. While canoes were still important for many people for day-to-day travel, or for fishing and trapping, barges and steamboats became important modes for the transportation of goods and people. Andy Flett and Ed Armit make mention of the barges and tugboats that once ran on the Athabasca River and Lake Athabasca. These boats often carried lumber, equipment, or workers to and from work camps associated with the growing timber industry in the Fort McMurray area.

The old 'D' barges used to go up and down the Peace River into Lake Athabasca, and then you would take the steamers down. - Andy Flett

We used to run the barges to Fort Chip and Fort Fitzgerald, and up to the sawmill. And then we'd go to camps in Le Portage, Uranium City, Gunnar Mines and right up to Fond du Lac, Stony Rapids and the other end of Lake Athabasca. We used to run tugboats on the Peace River, up to Duncan. - Ed Armit

Lena Couture recalls that in the 1960s, Waterways was a larger population centre than Fort McMurray and the boats coming from the river were one of the principle modes of transport:

Well, there was a boat that used to come every fall from the river. There was nothing here in McMurray. It was Waterways that was a big town. They had a bridge there, yeah, across the track. They had a salt plant out there. My Auntie Jean worked there for a long time.

A BUSY VIEW OF THE RIVERFRONT AT WATERWAYS, ON THE CLEARWATER RIVER: IN THE FOREGROUND IS THE HUDSON BAY CO. DOCK, AND IN THE BACKGROUND TWO BOATS, THE RADIUM QUEEN AND MABEL D&C, ARE SEEN AT THE NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION CO. LTD. DOCK (LEFT). S.S. ATHABASCA IS SEEN SAILING UP THE RIVER, WHILE THE BEAVER LAKE RESTS ON THE OPPOSITE SHORE (RIGHT).



Roderick Bird's father, William James Bird, was a river captain and Roderick describes the whole family as "river people". William Bird worked for most of his career on the Radium Miner, according to Roderick:

There were three sister ships they call them, the Prospector, the Trader and the Miner. When my father retired, he was on the Radium Miner. It was built up here in 1956, brand new, and he was on it until he retired. He used to always say, "There's nothing finer than the Miner." I worked with him. My brother and I used to take turns as boys, out on summer holiday – that was our holiday. We'd go for about two weeks with him, hey. Only one at a time, we wouldn't get along if it was the both of us. When we were that young, we just sat in the wheelhouse with him, and he'd tell us old stories. Ate lots down in the galley. I worked on the boats for my dad for four years, four seasons. Then in the fifth season I went up to Great Bear Lake. Actually it was just a fun trip when we were kids. Like it was, you know, we could just about get anything we wanted on the boat, as far as food, and we figured that was a real treat. You know, apples, any kind of apples, and oranges, and juices. And, you know, it was a real treat.

When they were land-bound, Roderick and his brother would listen to their Hallicrafter ship-to-shore radio for news of their father's return:

We used to listen to, when we were kids, we used to listen and we'd know when dad was coming in. Because we had, I actually have the radio at home, it still works. It's a little radio, a Hallicrafter it's called. And, dad would give his ETA, you know, when he's getting close to McMurray. So, we'd know exactly when he was going to be in, within 15 minutes anyway.

Boats were big business. Roderick Bird also recalls that the major players who owned freight barges on the regional lakes and rivers were the Hudson Bay Co., Northern Transportation Co. Ltd., the McInnes Sawmill and McInnis Fisheries:

Yeah. Like, one time I think they had about seven tugs running up and down here, NT alone. And then McInnes lumber had a couple, and the fish, McInnes Fisheries had one of their own too. And, Hudson Bay had their own.

HUDSON BAY COMPANY YARDING BOAT USED FOR TRIPS



While the barges were important for servicing the growing industrial needs of the region, the steamboats (commonly referred to as paddle-wheelers or steam-wheelers) were more commonly used for passenger travel. As Alvena Strasbourg recollects, some trips were long, and passengers stayed in rooms on the boats, “Those big paddle-wheelers had rooms on the boats, eh, and they’d take the people down to Fort Fitzgerald and then the distributor from there would take them down to the Arctic.”

People would travel on the steamboats to visit family and friends, to go for work in the lumber camps, or to attend school outside of their home communities. Some of the boats would also carry freight to general stores in communities along the river. Two of the largest and most well known boats travelling

the Athabasca River in the early-to-mid 20th century were the Athabasca and the Echo. Betty Kobbero and Pearl Bourque remember trips on both boats.

We came up on the [Athabasca] paddleboat. That’s how we came up to McMurray to go to school. - Betty Kobbero

Well, this big boat, the Echo, I’m talking about a big paddle steamboat, they’d stop at the corner of the river, Jackfish Creek, at the corner there and they’d let off all their freight and there was a store down the river too. So we’d just go down there and buy our groceries and get all our freight down there. - Pearl Bourque

PADDLE WHEELER



Edna Bacon's summer job was making food for the passengers on the Echo, as she describes:

The Echo, that's the Hudson Bay paddle-wheeler boat. Well, it's a passenger boat and it carried quite a few. I worked on the boat. I worked as a cook when I was about 18, I guess. Well, there were two cooks, there was me and a Chinese man, we were the cooks. I used to do all the bread and the pastries and stuff like that, used to make big tubs of bread I was making to feed the crew and the passengers, oh, yeah. I got lots of compliments on my bread. I worked for the summer, up and down the river. We ran right past Chip and all down to the Slave River.

As the Fort McMurray area grew in the mid-to-late 20th century, so too did the local economy. Many Métis were successful business owners or employees, and were able to use the money earned working to purchase amenities

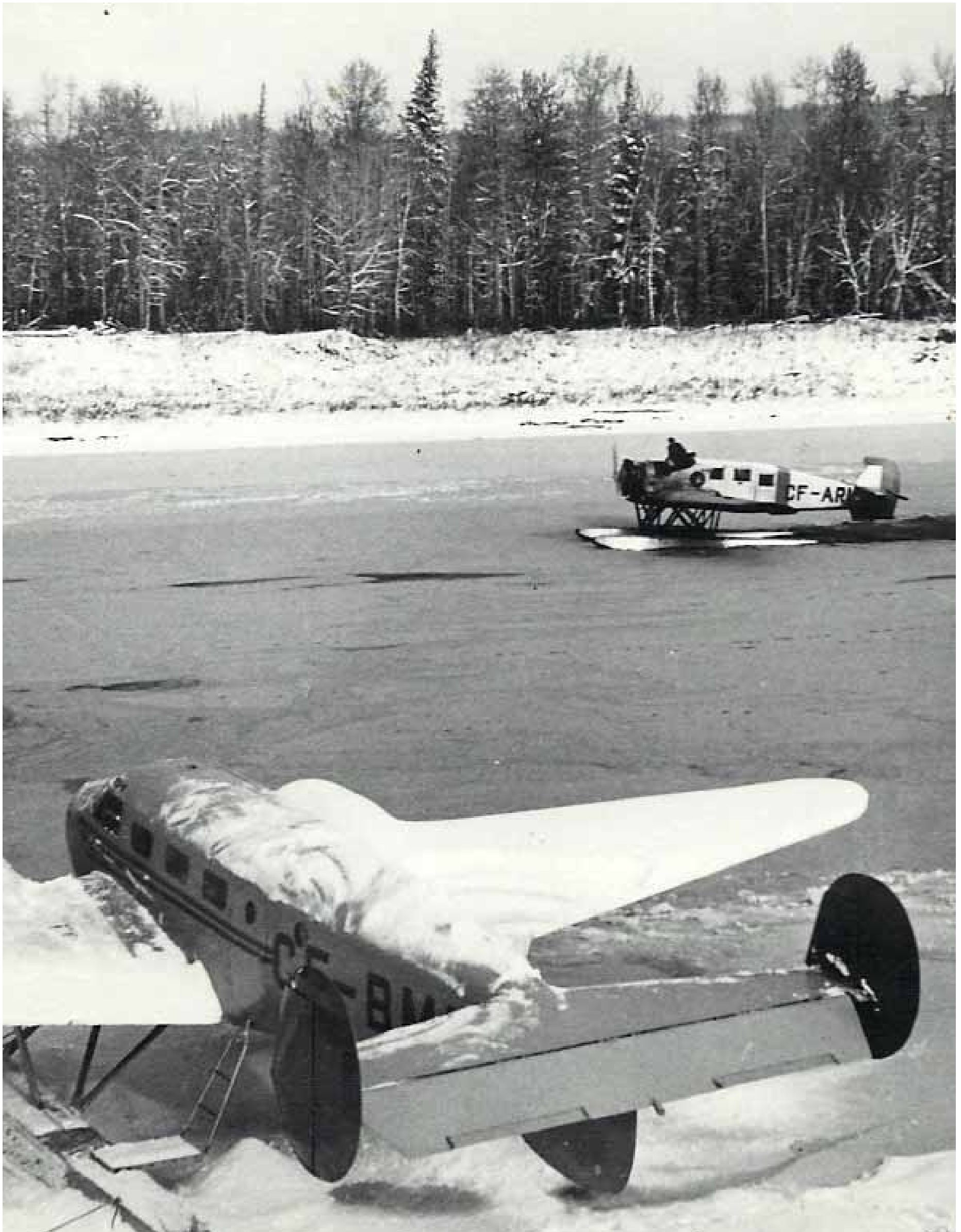
that made traditional pursuits such as fishing, camping, and travelling possible in a time of working families. One such advance was the speed boat. While canoes were, and continue to be, important to the Métis people, motorized boats allowed for quick travel up the rivers of the area. Lila Thompson fondly remembers trips up the Clearwater River:

We had a jet boat when we lived in Fort McMurray. We bought it and so we used to go up the Clearwater River all the time, just about every weekend up to Whitemud Falls. We made one trip on our jet boat all the way to Fitzgerald. It was nice to see all the spots that my dad used to go to as we travelled down the Athabasca.

When travelling over the earth or on the water was not an option, Métis people were not deterred. Instead, they looked to the sky.

NORTHLAND ECHO AND THE ATHABASCA RIVER PADDLE BOATS





AIR

Even by the early 1900s, airplanes were not a commonly-known vehicle in the Fort McMurray area. With no exposure to air travel, it was no wonder that, as John C. Gladu notes, Métis and other Aboriginal people in the area had some interesting theories as to what airplanes were, “A long time ago the Indians never knew anything about a plane. They figured it was some kind of creature with the noise and the bright eyes like that – shiny eyes.”

Marcel Shephard also remembers the first time an airplane flew over his community:

One time, when the first jet came over, this must be about '56, it was cloudy and we could hear that jet, it was circling, but it's just like thunder that never stopped. And boy, everybody just screaming, "Where's all the kids?" You know, screaming all their names out and everybody piled in the church over that. And Rosie, she was a storekeeper's wife there, and she come across, I guess someone had told them, eh, go tell those people it's only a jet plane.

By the early 1930s, air travel was a real, viable means of transportation for Métis travellers. Sarah Finch recollects that “some of those airplane trips started in 1930”. Bush planes would transport doctors, nurses, supplies, and occasionally passengers into northern Alberta communities. However, Lawrence A. H. Laboucane points out, that even though air travel was available at this time, it was not necessarily the most practical method of getting from point A to point B.

Not very many people could afford a plane ticket in them days. I'm talking about Aboriginal people. I think it cost you 9 dollars or something to go to Edmonton by car, so that's the way they went. Whereas it cost you 30 dollars by plane. So common sense tells you that you better sit down for a while and save a few bucks.

Airplanes replaced dogsleds for delivering mail to remote locations such as Fort Chipewyan. John Fraser recalls taking a trip on one of the mail planes from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan as a teenager:

So all the planes in the month of December, any time going to Fort Chip, was pretty well loaded because of the mail. Everything was mailed, eh. It was getting close to Christmas and stuff. So all the gifts, everybody was ordering through catalogues, it's lots and lots of mail. Well, I remember, I'll never forget it, because I got on the plane and the plane was just loaded with mail and a little bit of freight or whatever. And it was an old Norseman plane and it had little square windows in it. So at the back door, I was the last person to—last thing to get on. They shoved me inside there and there was a few more other bags, so I had to hang on to them, so they could close the door. And I couldn't even see the pilot. But they give me a window to look out anyway, so—I'll never forget that anyway.

PLANES WAITING FOR FUEL AT THE SNYE



As the early 1930s transitioned into the 1960s, air travel became more affordable for the average person. Some people travelled between remote communities by bush plane rather than car or rail in an effort to save time. Violet Hansen describes how she moved out to the trapline with her husband via bush plane in the 1950s:

We got married in '57, and then I moved to the trap line with my husband Lloyd. He was on the boats with Northern Transportation, stayed there one year and then, in the spring of '58 we decided to move. So we just got the old Norseman bush plane loaded up, kitchen sink and everything and moved up here.

These trips by plane were not, however, without their unforeseen problems. Alvena Strasbourg remembers a particularly snowy trip that was anything but quick:

One year, we were going by plane to High Level in March and it was snowing. It was only two of us in

the back and the pilot. We got up in the air and there was a complete white-out, you know, you couldn't see nothing, just white. We just sat and it seemed the pilot was lost, see. He took a different direction. And, all of a sudden I heard Keg River coming in on the radio. Keg River isn't too far from High Level, I knew. I said, "It won't be long now".

So, all of a sudden we went down! When I saw ground, I'll tell you, I was happy, but we were seventy-five miles out of course at one time. But, it wasn't a bumpy ride, it was just steady, eh. We were up there too long. So, we came back on a big plane.

The modes by which the Métis people of the Fort McMurray area traversed the landscape were many. Be it on earth, over water, or through air, the Métis people travelled extensively.

ONE OF THE FIRST MAIL TRIPS OUT OF FORT McMURRAY





SUMMARY

Early in Canadian history, the Métis of the Fort McMurray area walked the land, pursuing traditional land use activities. Canoes and dog sleds allowed them to traverse landscapes at distances that would otherwise be unreachable. As time went on and technology advanced, so too did the modes of transportation used by Métis. Trains, steamboats, and barges became more commonly used during the 1920s onward. By the 1960s, paved roads had been constructed connecting major communities, and air travel became more accessible.

The motivations prompting these movements were varied. For some, they moved to be closer to family members, or to partake in cultural activities. For others, the war and subsequent military activities resulted in the opportunity to see the country and the world. For many people, lifeways – both those based on traditional resources as well as the wage-based economy – were a major propulsive force in their decision to travel. Whatever the mode or motivation, it is evident based on the accounts of the Elders interviewed, that Métis of the Fort McMurray region were a travelling people.

Mobility is an integral part of Métis identity, facilitating their interaction with one another, the land and its resources. Distance and time were not issues for Métis, as travel was as commonplace as any other day-to-day activity. Métis would use the modes of travel available to them, and would live off the land while in transit, hunting, fishing and gathering as they made their way to their end destination. Not tied to one physical location, Métis of the Fort McMurray region made northeastern Alberta their expansive home.



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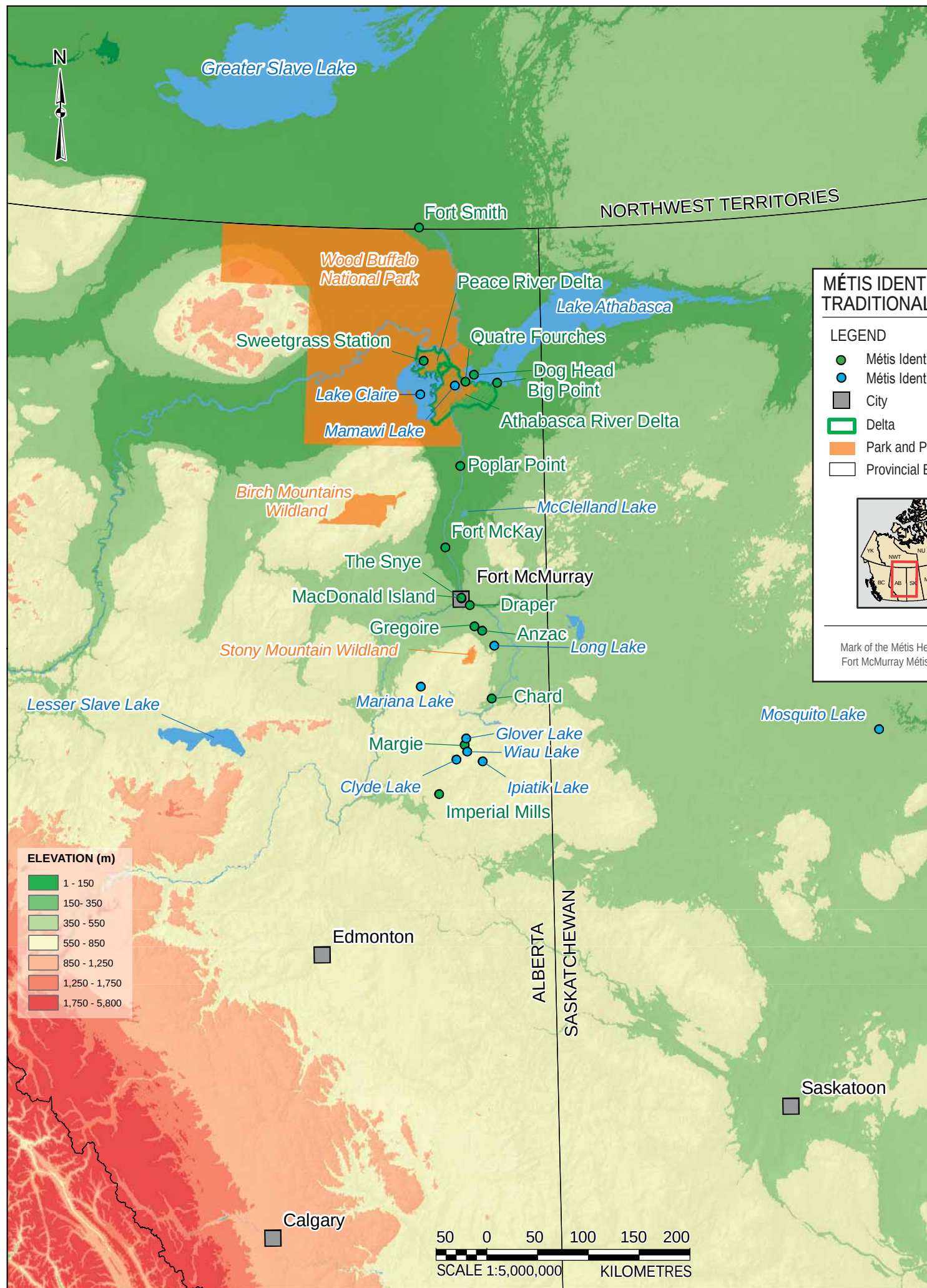
MARK OF THE MÉTIS

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE
OF NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA

TRADITIONAL RESOURCES AND LAND USE



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MÉTIS IDENTIFIED PLACES



INTRODUCTION

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, settlers, traders and other immigrants moved to northeastern Alberta to create a livelihood and form families. The descendents of these historical families represent Métis culture today. Métis identity is tied to the traditional economy and cultural wealth of the land and its resources. Passed on from one generation to the next, the Métis have a deep connection to these roots. Despite changes through time, this connection forms an intrinsic link between the past, present and the future of Métis society.

While Métis people have historically relied on local resources to meet their needs, Métis today continue to take great pride in these activities as a fundamental part of their heritage and the essence of their Métis culture. Maria Vermillon shares this pride when she describes life on the land:

We hardly stayed in town. It was always bush life. And if anybody got sick, then my mom would go look for some medicine from the Earth. And that's how we were living. We really loved it in the bush because we had lots of dry meat, dry fish, you name it. Berries and everything like that. My mom would teach me how to put all the food away to keep it to last the winter because they weren't living in town. We would make grease out of bear grease and moose grease. That would be our lard. I had a good life. I hope the children nowadays, I hope they don't lose their culture. I want them to know how to live in the bush.

To William Castor, a life maintained and connected to the local environment is the way things are meant to be:

Everybody, or mostly everybody, live off the land, like ducks, chickens, rabbits, moose, bear, whatever is on their land. People ate it. That's why that guy, put those animals on Earth, for people to survive.

Activities on the land bring families and friends together, and in doing so have great social significance beyond the practical aspects of harvesting resources for livelihood. Younger generations learn skills of the bush from their parents and Elders, often cultivating a sense of awe and respect for the ingenuity and skills demonstrated by their parents and Elders. Looking back, many still cherish the memories of time spent on the land with their families and friends. Elsie Yanik was always happy in her environment, “That a wonderful life, I enjoyed my life on the farm. And I enjoyed it in the barrens too.”

Anne Michalko remembers that the traditional life was fun:

Those were the fun times when the whole family would go fishing, and we'd have fish fry by the river. You know, my mom would clean fish like nobody's business. And then we went blueberry picking as a family, too. I mean, those were the fun times. We were poor, but we didn't know it. Everybody would speak Cree, and we would just have a wonderful time.

Maria Vermillon watched carefully what her parents were doing:

When I was in the bush with my parents, they taught me everything. That's why everything was simple for me. They taught me how to make moose hide, how to cut meat and how to make dried meat. You have to cut the dried meat in the right way. My mom taught me all that.



SASKATOON SHRUB IN BLOOM



ANNUAL CYCLE

Métis resource use followed an annual cycle based on the seasonal availability of resources. While hunting occurred throughout the year, the fall brought increased hunting activity of large game such as moose, caribou and deer to prepare for winter months spent on the trapline. Families busied themselves in the summer and fall with stocking supplies for winter by canning and making drymeat and dryfish. The long winter months from November to March were commonly spent on the trapline, where animals such as muskrat (“rats”), weasel, fox, coyote, rabbits, squirrel and lynx were trapped for both food and fur for clothing and trade. Aquatic animals such as beaver and muskrat were hunted during the spring, a time when families also focused on bringing in fish. Fishing in the spring and summer carried through to the late summer, which was prime berry picking season. Medicinal and nutritional

plants were also harvested at this time. This annual cycle meant that when one resource diminished, another became available. William (Bill) Woodward describes this rhythm of seasonal abundance:

From March you’ve got your spring hunt, you’ve got your muskrats, you’ve got your beaver. And then the streams were getting fish in them. After the fish quit running, the ducks were in from the south. Then they lay eggs. Then you pick the eggs and you eat ducks and eggs. By that time the sap on the trees was good, you’d eat the sap off the trees. Then the berries start getting ripe. Then after the berries the moose start getting fat, kill three or four moose and dry that meat for the winter. And that’s the way you survived.

TRAPPERS CABIN, ATHABASCA RIVER, 1920s



LAND STEWARDSHIP AND TRADITION

Land management strategies, derived from generations of interacting with the local environment, were a foundational part of Métis land use. The dynamic practice of harvesting resources was structured around the maintenance of diverse and healthy ecosystems to sustain and guide resource use into the future.

Roland Woodward remembers the intricate knowledge Métis trappers held of methods for sustainable stewardship, which include the use of fire:

You know, at one time, you could tell which trappers were coming home. When I lived in the community of Anzac, we could see a long ways to Stony Mountain. And my grandfather had a trapline, and over there Joe Crutcher had a trapline, and over here, Eddie Pulpwood. But all of these guys, before they left in the spring, would set off a ridge. They'd burn off a ridge, 50, 60 acres would burn off. You could tell who was coming home or who's left the trapline just by where the smoke was coming from.

We controlled our environment by fire. We didn't have the great big wild fires they have nowadays because we didn't have the underbrush. There was no underbrush because each year, they'd burn off a different area. What that did was provide new growth so that the rabbits could eat, and a couple of years later the moose could come and browse, you know, lynx would come back. The marten would come back. The chickens would come back. It provided a total environment. And if you do that continuously, you have good hunting within your area.

See, the people were managers. They didn't go in and kill all the beaver off, because there'd be nothing left next spring. They didn't kill all the moose off. They didn't kill cow moose certain times of the year because if you kill one cow moose, you kill five moose, because they could produce that many before their children would start producing.

FRANCES DUPERRON (SANDERSON) & HER DAD GEORGE SANDERSON DRYING A BEAVER PELT ON A WILLOW FRAME



FOOD

Traditional food is a fundamental means by which the land is tied to cultural traditions. Métis cuisine enjoys a strong history of culinary innovation based on techniques and dishes from European, French-Canadian and First Nations traditions. Traditionally, these recipes and meals were prepared from ingredients obtained through gathering, hunting, trading and farming. When talking about traditional foods, many people can easily name their favourite meals. For Agnes Herman, it is a simple delicacy, collected at the right time and place: “People really lived off the moose meat and they enjoyed eating duck eggs, back in the days.”

Alcide (Massey) Boucher shares what makes him hungry:

About muskrat, they're good. When they're fat, you fix them good with onion in the oven, oh man. Boy, smoked beaver is good, but the quarter's good. Mom used to can them. You burn it up and you wash it up, then you just slice it, you put vinegar and can it. It's like pork hock. Very good, boy, beaver tail.

When children were too small to bring along the trapline, women would need to stay behind with them. Harvey Sykes conjures memories of his early childhood when he thinks about food during these times:

When my dad was on the trapline, the Elder ladies would come over and visit my mom for three, four days. They'd make bannock and cook up rabbits and stuff like that. They liked beaver tails. They loved it. That's a delicacy for them. And they'd talk Cree. They never—there wasn't a word of English spoken here. They'd talk Cree and drink tea and make bannock and stuff like that.

Disclosing a special ingredient for pie, Alcide (Massey) Boucher recalls his Aunt Eva's technique for making pie crust:

Aunt Eva was telling me, said, “Massey, if you kill a bear in the spring or in the fall, give me that grease.”

“Why?” I said.

“The best pie you can make, that pie crust, the best thing for grease is bear grease for pie crust.”

Métis hunters place emphasis on leaving no part of the animal to waste, even a beaver's paws.



BLUEBERRIES AND BUNCHBERRIES

As Alcide (Massey) Boucher testifies, “Nothing was wasted. Mom used to take their little paws, burn them up and can them. It's just like pork hock, that's true.”

James R. (Dickie) Dragon remembers that his father had a preference for caribou tongue:

In the wintertime my father, he used to shoot caribou for the mission. You know, to supply the meat, for something to do. He used to keep the tongue of caribou and, once the priest came up to him and said, “How about shooting us some caribou with tongues?”

You never threw anything away, like with the bones even, eh, like the leg bones. Used to put them in the fire and break it up and eat the marrow.

Demonstrating great faith in the resourcefulness of her family, Elsie Yanik knew she did not have to settle for going without an oven in her house:

My first year on the trapline with my husband Lawrence, there was just a big box stove with a pipe right through. And I said to him, “It would be nice if I had a little oven here.” And so he saw another trapper that lives out there too, an older man, and he said, “We can make one out of a ten gallon barrel,” because it was a big box stove.



BLACK BEAR

We went earlier that year, into the barrens and he came over and they built me an oven out of a little ten gallon barrel and they put a little space inside. We had these three pound lard pails. I'd take three of them and grease them and put my bread in. There was three loafs of bread. And I even made a Christmas cake in there. I made lots of bread and lots of bannock and stuff in there. Yeah, and then you baked meat, and roasts.

FOOD PRESERVATION

Marie Agnes Herman had 21 children with her husband Alexander, and has always relied on country foods and natural sources of water from her trapline to sustain the family. Marie explains:

Harvesting, we really need it because in winter, like now a days we can go to the store and by food and anything we want. But in those days there was no stores, couldn't get anything like that so we needed berries and lots of things like that. That's why we used to do harvesting and planting vegetables and things. Yeah, we just lived off the land, us. I never buy meat from the store. Never. Even my children they don't like eating meat from the store. My grandchildren. We just live off the land. They like going in the bush, they like staying in the cabin with me and they like cooking outside on the fire. That's the way I brought them up and they like this, they do like that. Anytime we wanna go someplace we just go to my cabin and then they do trapping, hunting, things like that. Yeah, I don't drink from the tap water. No way! I won't even drink tea from the tap water. I get water from the creek, way up I go for water every summer, way up. Up I go to these two little creeks there, nice ones. My children go there with me. To drink water. And in wintertime I make snow water and that's what I use for my tea. I still use a wood stove too. In the winter, all winter.

The preparation and preservation of meat, fish and berries was a large and time consuming part of harvesting activities. As James R. (Dickie) Dragon states, “There was no fridge, nothing. So they had to dry it.” Drying meat and fish enabled families to build the necessary surplus to sustain them and their hunting and trapping economy, as well as make food portable for travel.

Roland Woodward on dry meat and a balanced diet:

See, out of one moose, you get about maybe 400 pounds of meat. When you dry it, you only got 150 pounds of meat. And, you know, you add grease to it, it increases the amount of protein in it, I guess, because you put berries and stuff.

Elsie Yanik describes preparing for winter:

We killed caribou in the fall, because we didn't think we'd see any for the winter. And the ones that Lawrence killed in the fall were so fat, I just had to take and just slice the fat off the caribou meat and I put it in bags for the winter for the dogs. You know, a little bit of fat with the fish and we'd go about four miles from the cabin, to Mosquito Lake, a big lake, big lake. We'd go there and we'd put up dry fish, for the winter. Let them hang and dry for the winter, for the dogs, thousands of them. I'd make holes in the tail and string them up ten at a time. We spent four days there, putting dry fish up.



WHITE BIRCH

TAPPING SYRUP

Helen Bishop was born in 1922 on MacDonald Island and her father worked at the Hudson Bay store at Poplar Point. She recalls how her mother made syrup when she was young:

It's made out of birch wood. She'd cut birch in a square like, you know, and hang a pail there and the juice runs out. She had a big pot outside. And she got a great big pot. And she boiled that juice. And she kept on adding the juice into the pot. Pretty soon, about three days after, it started getting thick. And then you got a bottle of Maple Syrup and poured that in there. And then she put it all in gallon jugs for us to use in the house on pancakes.

CLOTHING AND SUPPLIES

In addition to hunting, trapping and harvesting resources, Métis traditional resource use involved the work of women to make clothing and supplies as needed for the family, as well as a means to supplement family income. Métis women today continue to cultivate a diverse skill set over their lifetimes, passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. Therese Michael explains that she made a variety of clothing items, “I did lots of sewing. Lots of sewing. I made parkas, mukluks, moccasins, gloves.”

Therese describes the important role of making clothing and the amount of labour involved in her craft:

Us women, not only me, but there's quite a few of them that could sew. That's how they help out to provide with their man, for the children, by sewing. You make moccasins and you sell them, parkas, things like that. I've been always sewing.

Yes, make socks, wool socks for the winter. I don't know, where was my time? You ask me when I had time to do that when I had nine kids to look after and still sewing, besides cooking and cleaning. I never used to sleep very much. I used to stay up 'til two in the morning.

To this her husband Ernie Ray Michael adds:

Longer than that sometimes, I think. We used to go to bed about ten o'clock, everybody go to bed. She'd clean the table. Put her tea kettle on the stove and clean the table, bring out her moose hide, her wool and stuff. And I'd get up in the morning, six o'clock, there'd be a pair of high-top mukluks hanging on the chair for sale, fifteen dollars. Fifteen dollars.

The sewing of clothing and supplies was just one step of a multistep process, as Elsie Yanik describes:

I did all the skinning of the fur. Not all of it, I shouldn't say all, but I skinned a lot of the fur. Fleshed it and put them on stretchers. I did about ten white foxes a night when I had them, after the kids went to bed. And I did tanning of all the caribou hair. You get the caribou in the fall, they lose all that winter hair, so they're not the same. So it makes nice parkas, nice pants and mukluks and mitts. And the leftover pieces I'd sew together and I made a nice big blanket.

We had “eiderdown” blankets, homemade ones to keep warm. I made all mine. I got the feathers from the chickens. And when I was on the farm, I made my kid's “eiderdowns” with the chicken feathers. We have 450 chickens.

THERESE MICHAEL'S BEADWORK ON HIDE



Métis women look to their mothers with admiration for the technical skills and principles of ingenuity and creativity shown over their lifetimes.

Anne Michalko recalls:

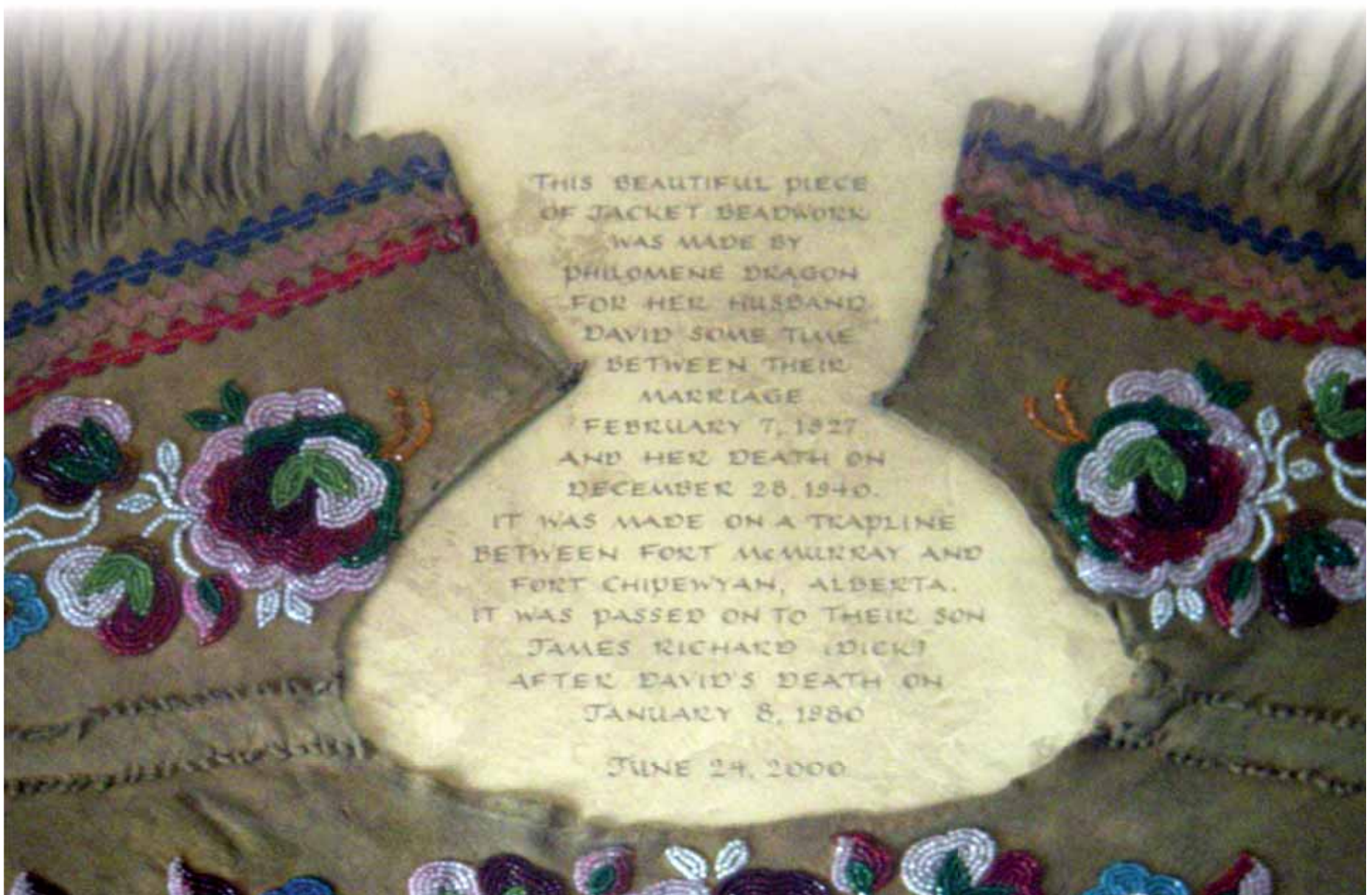
My mother could sew anything. She was a great sewer. I mean, I don't think that any of us ever had any bought clothing. Everything was made. Absolutely everything. I mean, they used to have these flour sacks. They would buy a big bag of flour, and the cloth would be flowers, patterns. I mean, that's where we got our clothes from. I mean, we never bought anything, you know. Whatever we had was made.

I remember my brother Louie and my brother Jimmy would make boats, and my mother would do the canvas, you know. I don't think there was anything that my mother could not sew.

Georgina Flobert remembers the way that she learned to sew and knit:

The beadwork and stuff, the knitting and stuff, all that I know is through my mom. When I was small she'd be setting the table and I would go there and she would say, "Get out of here, I'll poke a needle in your eyes by accident." Then I would go sneak in there again, finally she was tired of me going in there, she was scared. Then she'd draw a little flower in the moose hide. "Here," she gave me some beads, "Go somewhere now. Go and sew it. Get outta here."

I wanted to learn, you know, that's where I got it from. And then as I was getting bigger then she showed me good - the right way. She said, "If that flower don't turn out good, the greens or anything don't turn out good, you take it apart. You redo it again before you can sell it. You can't sell it like that." And it's true. Every time I make something here if I think, "it's not right", then okay, here it comes apart. It's gotta be the same exactly, then I'm happy. That's the way she taught us.



Passing down traditional skills and knowledge from one generation to the next is viewed as a privilege and a key part of the legacy of Métis cultural heritage. The memories and stories of learning these skills are cherished among families. Elsie Yanik shares her experiences learning skills taught by her mother:

My mom, she's the one that really encouraged me to sew and I learned to knit with my mom. I couldn't knit nothing big, but I'd knit little doll scarves, with maybe six on a needle. Oh, I'd lost a lot of stitches and she'd pick them up for me, you know, and I would go some more. I think the turning point of my sewing was, one day she was sewing—she was a beautiful sewer, and she did porcupine work and she had some saucers with porcupine all ready to sew and she said to me, "Elsie, would you like to learn to sew porcupine?" I said, "Yeah, I'd love to."

She gave me some that she couldn't use in the saucer. So she put it on the floor and there was a little mat on the floor she made herself. And she told me to sit there because the floor was cold and she showed me, she gave me a little piece of moose hide and drew a kind of a little circle. And she put the needle through, she made a knot in it and pulled it through and then she pushed it down again and made a loop. Then she took the porcupine, put the end in there and she pulled it tight, turned it over and put a knot. Put the needle back up, another one, and then she brought the porcupine over and you double the stitch and over, double the stitch, over.

And I said, "Oh, I know, I know, now I know!" I was just little. I must have been about seven. So she put me on the floor with this porcupine and this piece of moose hide. It wasn't very big. So I'm making loops and porcupine and just a pulling it and when I got done, I couldn't sew no more, it was all puckered up into a big lump, with porcupines sticking all over.

And I said, "Ma, I'm done, I can't sew no more, I got no room, I'm finished." So she bent over and said, "My goodness that's beautiful!" "What beautiful work." And she picked it up and she said, "I don't think even my work could be as good as that," she said to me.

And I said to her, "Can I keep it? Can I show it to my friends?"

And she said, "No, I have to show it to Daddy tonight, he'd be so proud of you." "Oh, you're going to be a good sewer when you get big."

I was so proud, you couldn't believe. And I think if she'd have said, "Oh, Elsie, that's not good", you know, "Go take it and throw it in the garbage," that would have been it.

And with knitting too. I'd say, "Oh, I don't want to knit no more, it's all falling, the stitches."

She said, "No, no, no, you'll be all right, everybody has to learn, you don't cry and give up just because something goes wrong."

I remember my bannock too, "Mom, my bannock's no good! It's hard like a rock!"

Mom would say, "Oh, it's going to be all right, we can eat it."



VIOLET HANSEN'S HUSBAND, LLOYD HANSEN



GEORGINA FLOBERT WEARING TRADITIONAL MUKLUKS

MOOSE



TANNING HIDE

“My granny and my mom made moose-hide. We do it, we make moose hide.” – Georgina Flobert

Making moose-hide is revered as a very time consuming, skilled process, as Georgina Flobert and her husband Jules attest:

Jules Flobert:

It's a lot of work. Fleshing it, getting it dry, getting the hair off, thinning it, put the brains on it, a little bit of lard to go with it, and then smoke it a little bit, then soak it, ring it out, now you gotta dry it, work it, work it, stretch it one way and the other to get it to dry eh.

I've had guys ask me, can you do it in two or three days? It takes two or three days to dry it, never mind getting it done, so you can take the hair off, eh.

Georgina Flobert:

If you put it away damp, you put it in a plastic bag, like if you want to have a meal, like you gotta eat, and stop and have a rest too, you put it right away, you put it in a plastic bag and you put it in a fridge or a deep freeze for a few minutes so that it doesn't get dry. And then you take it out right away again and work on it. You gotta keep on and work on it 'til it's dry.

My mom used to say, my granny used to make a moose hide, big bull moose, they'd kill it in September, in three days she was finished with that moose hide and smoke ...

“I don't know how she does it,” mom said. How my step-grandmother could do it, I don't know, but she did.

SMOKING A MOOSE HIDE, LENORA MULAWKA



MEDICINAL PLANTS

Women Elders and midwives commonly collected medicines. Demonstrating their multicultural knowledge and relationships, people in the region today recall that access to traditional medical treatment and medicinal knowledge often came from their Cree neighbours and relatives. Elders note that the practices of European doctors were not as trusted as those of Cree or Métis medicine people, and there was often great difficulty in locating and travelling to visit doctors when an individual needed attention. Elders identify medicinal plants as rat root, willow fungus, spruce gum, muskeg and muskeg water for tea, balsam and mint. Traditional medicines were used to maintain overall health, heal wounds, fight colds, infections, pain and assist with childbirth.

Jenny Flett describes medicinal resources and her experience with traditional medical practices and the European medical establishment:

Rat root, yeah, I used a lot of rat root from the Indian people. But you couldn't get nothing in the stores either. You could get Vicks and liniment, like that, but no pills just aspirins.

RAT ROOT



I had an abscess on my breast and oh, was it ever sore, about 11 days I had to sit up in bed. So I went to the doctor, the doctor was there already in Chip so I went to see him and I said I've got an abscess on my breast here I was wondering what you're going to do with it. Just a minute he said and he goes and makes a fire in the woodstove you know and his hand was all wet with wood, dirty, and I said you're not putting your dirty hand on my breast. He just looked at me. I said, I need to have something clean on there not that, and I got off the chair and I walked out. I went and got this old lady so she come up right away and put a poultice on it.

Niatchem they used to call her. And that's what she used to do, Cree medicine you see. And there was lard tea and something else, a few different things, in cheesecloth and I put it on my breast. She said, "Don't take that off tomorrow, I'll be up in the morning to do it again." The third time she put that she said, "Okay, tonight it will bust." My sister was still alive then, she

SMALL BOG CRANBERRY



WILD MINT



was sleeping in the next bed. So I said, “Jessie, I think that thing bust. I can feel something running down.” So she got up and sure enough, it had bust and it was all running down. So I had to get her dressed, she had to go and get that old lady at night. Towards morning the old lady came up and oh, she was all tickled because it was so nice, that was her third one, the stuff that she drained out, a whole cupful easy. Without a word of a lie! After, she cleaned it all inside, she had her own stuff.

She cleaned it with her own medicine yes. And that hole was so big and I was so tired. She said, “I’ll give you something to drink.” I guess they boil this root you see. “I’ll give you something to drink and you’ll go right to sleep.” So she gave me a cupful of stuff to drink and away I went to sleep. I didn’t see the doctor after that.

CHOCKECHERRY



WILD ONION



ROSEHIP



COMMON YARROW



LABRADOR TEA



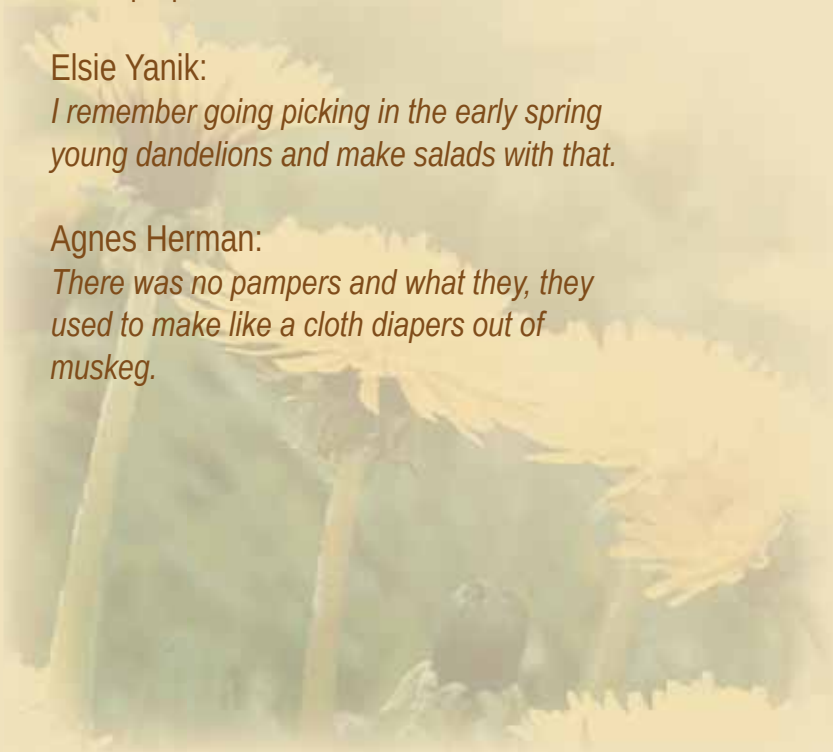


PLANTS

Besides medicine, Métis harvested plants for food and other purposes.

Elsie Yanik:
I remember going picking in the early spring young dandelions and make salads with that.

Agnes Herman:
There was no pampers and what they, they used to make like a cloth diapers out of muskeg.



COMMON DANDELIONS

Agnes Herman adds:

What we had in the olden days, what we knew was from the Cree people. When there was someone sick or anything like that, what I was taught or told when I was a little girl, it all came from the Cree people.

Looking to their Cree neighbours for help was not only a preference, but also at times a necessity. Elsie Yanik explains:

It was a must then, they had to! They were good, those women from the bush. They were very good. The rat root is good, I still have spruce gum to chew and it's good for the throat and the lungs, because there's balsam in that gum and the tree. The stuff that grows on the diamond willows, they're like mushrooms and you burn it with the sweetgrass and it smells so nice. It's just like incense.

Sharing a special technique for wound care, Alcide (Massey) Boucher testifies to the benefits of traditional medicine:

For cuts, you break that cattail with grease or with lard, you freeze it and then you wrap it. Two days, three, you take it off and not even a scar, nothing.

Harvesting rat root requires special knowledge, explains Alcide:

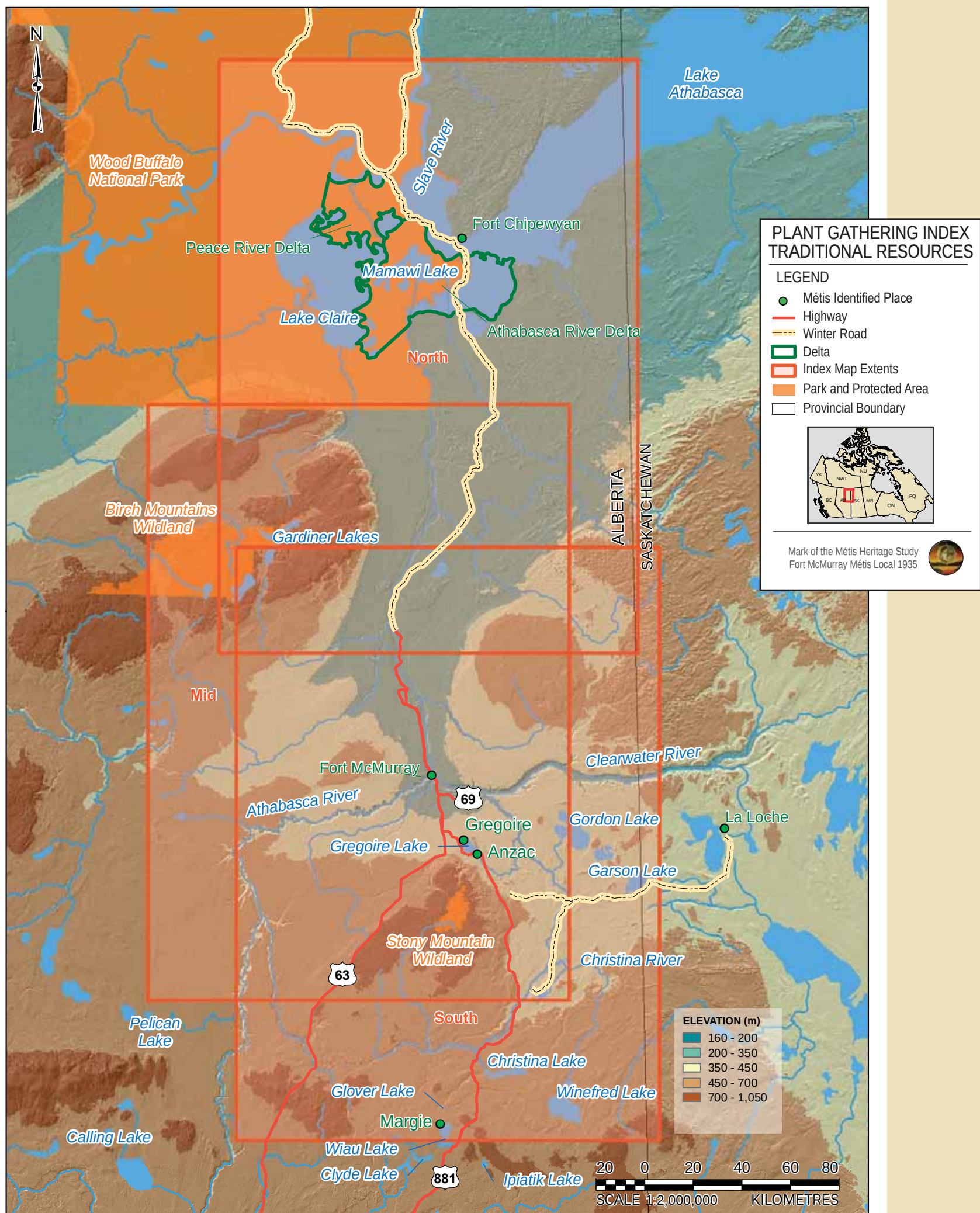
There's two-of-a-kind roots, you know, you got to take the right one. Could be found in the creeks or in the little river, little lake, you know, muskeg, lake, meadows, you know. You can see them, but you got to dry them because they're watery. You got to dry them, dry, dry, dry. The sun will dry it out.

Ron Huppie learned about medicinal plants from his mother, "My mother still picks rat root but you got to go to different places for that, but she still sets out every fall. You know she is 78."

Therese Michael comments on muskeg plants, "My mother used to call a certain plant from the muskeg plant *Le baume sauvage* in French. It's for headaches or colds. And the rat root. That was their medicine."

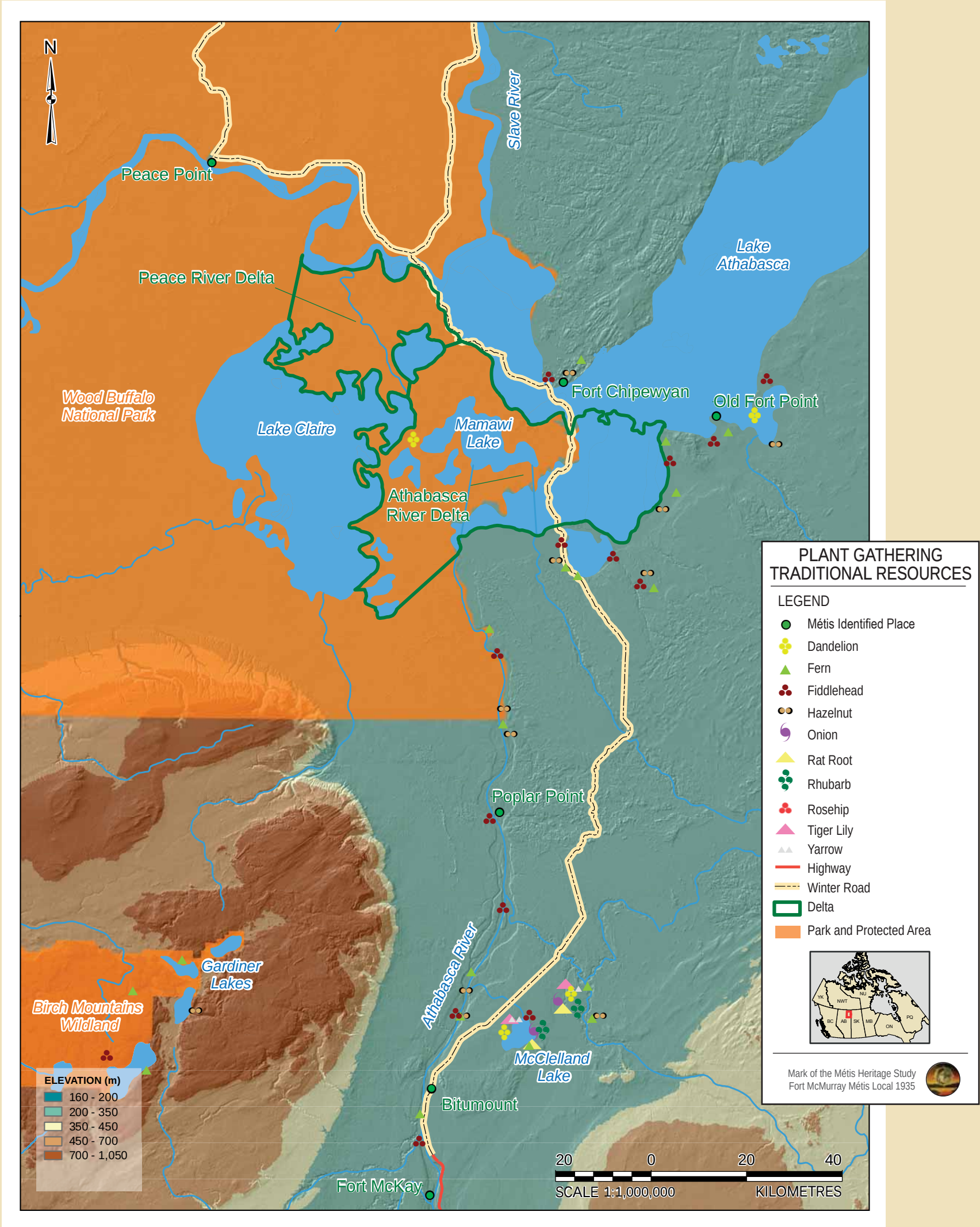


COMMON DANDELION
SEED HEAD

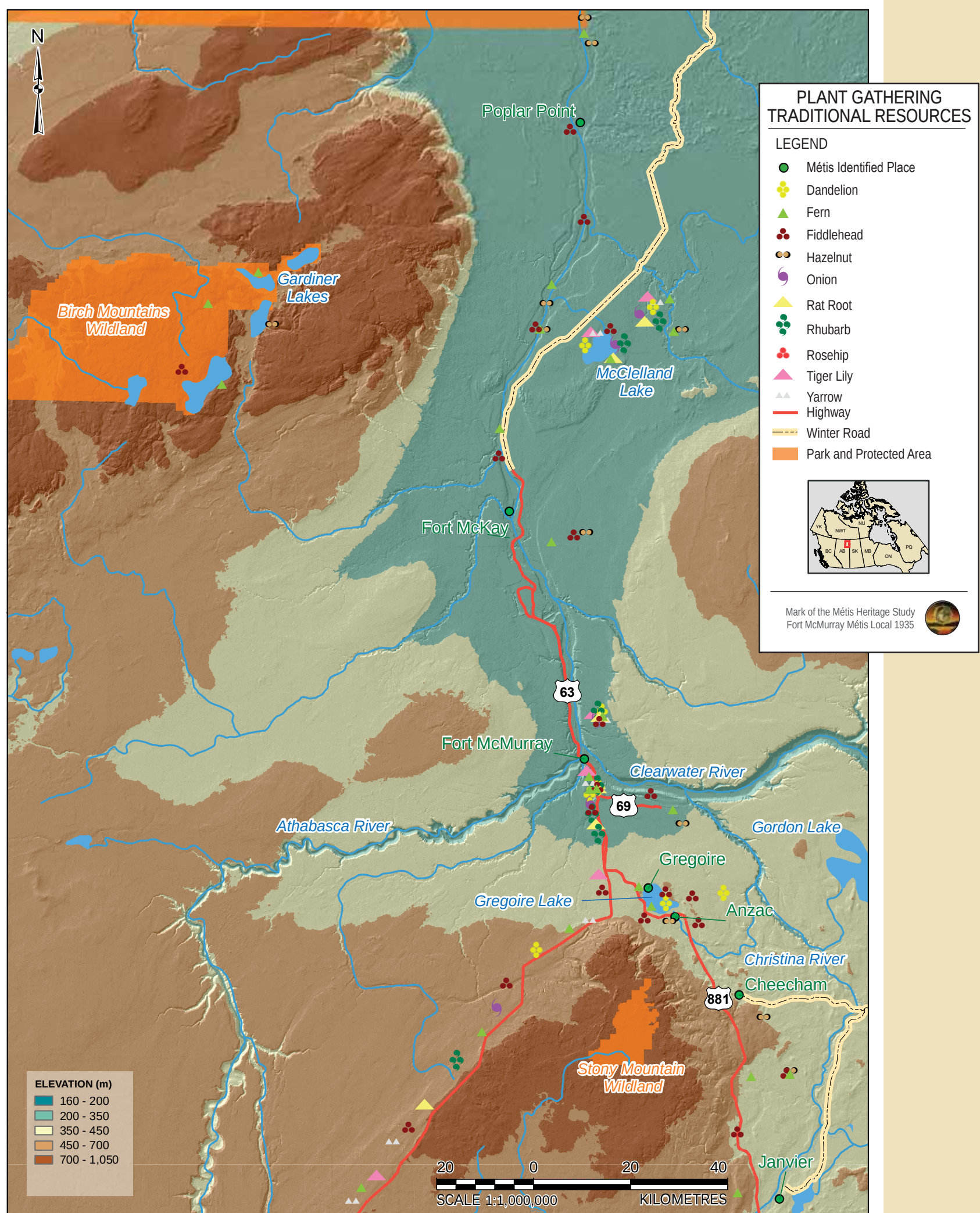


PLANT GATHERING AREAS INDEX





PLANT GATHERING PLACES - NORTH



PLANT GATHERING PLACES - MID



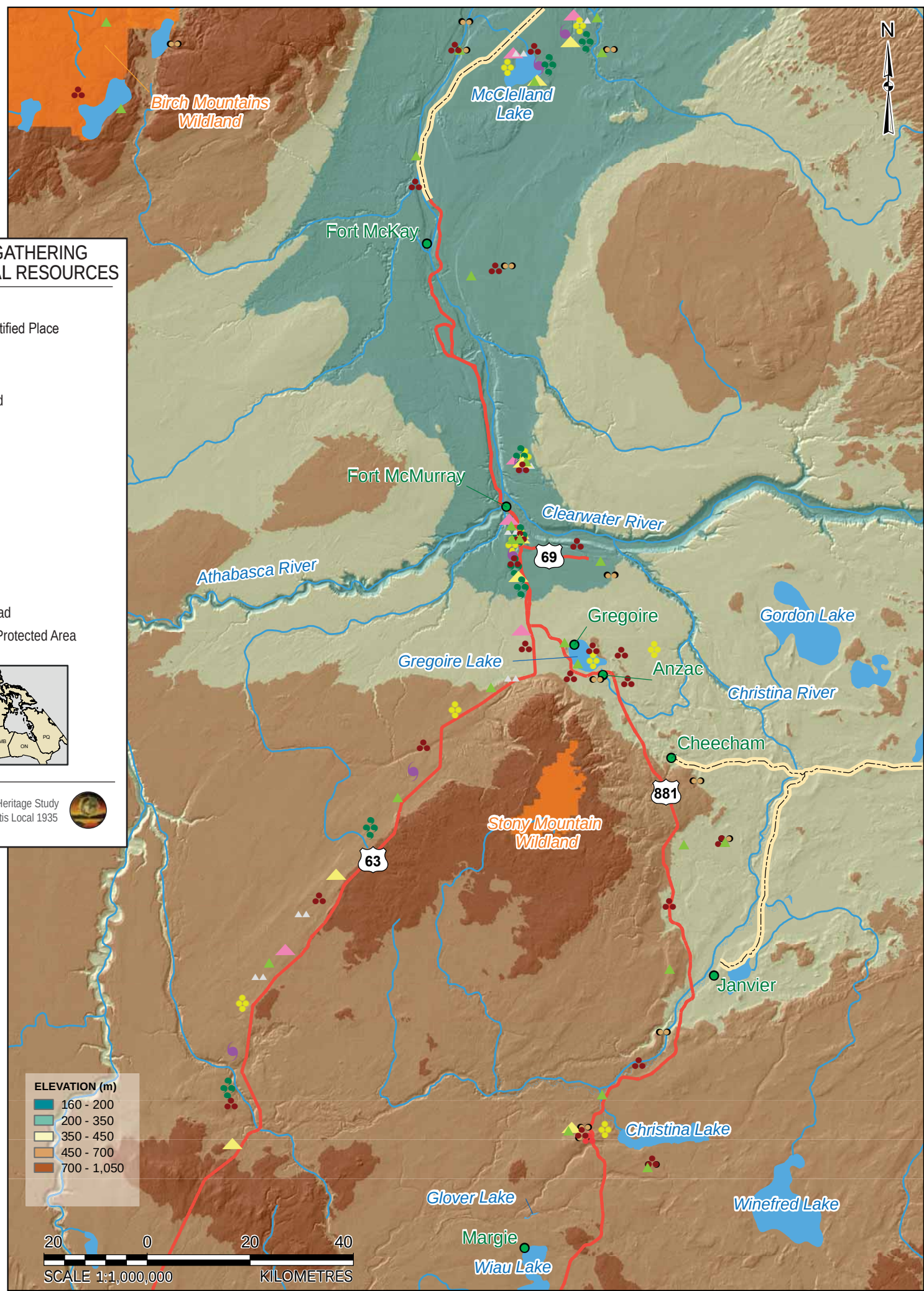
**PLANT GATHERING
TRADITIONAL RESOURCES**

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- ✿ Dandelion
- ▲ Fern
- Fiddlehead
- Hazelnut
- Onion
- ▲ Rat Root
- Rhubarb
- Rosehip
- ▲ Tiger Lily
- ▲ Yarrow
- Highway
- Winter Road
- Park and Protected Area



Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935



PLANT GATHERING PLACES - SOUTH



SUBSISTENCE VERSUS LABOUR ECONOMY

The Métis incorporated wage labour and the schooling system into the annual harvesting schedule. Nonetheless, hunting and fishing often kept their central position in Métis life, at times providing a necessary supplement to the limitations of a wage labour economy. Dorothy Squire and Ron Huppie describe this meaningful integration:

Dorothy Squire:

When we were younger, that was our main source of food, like hunting off the land, eating off the land. If you couldn't afford groceries, that's what you had to eat was fish. Dad used to bring home a lot of ducks and wild chickens.

And mom used to cook rabbits, she fried them, with vegetables, and it was so good. It was tasty. She made everything taste so good! Like, she could make a meal out of anything. She just did what she thought that she had to do to make meals for us.

I think we should have our harvesting rights. We should be able to go out and hunt and fish just as well as they do, the Treaty—the First Nations.

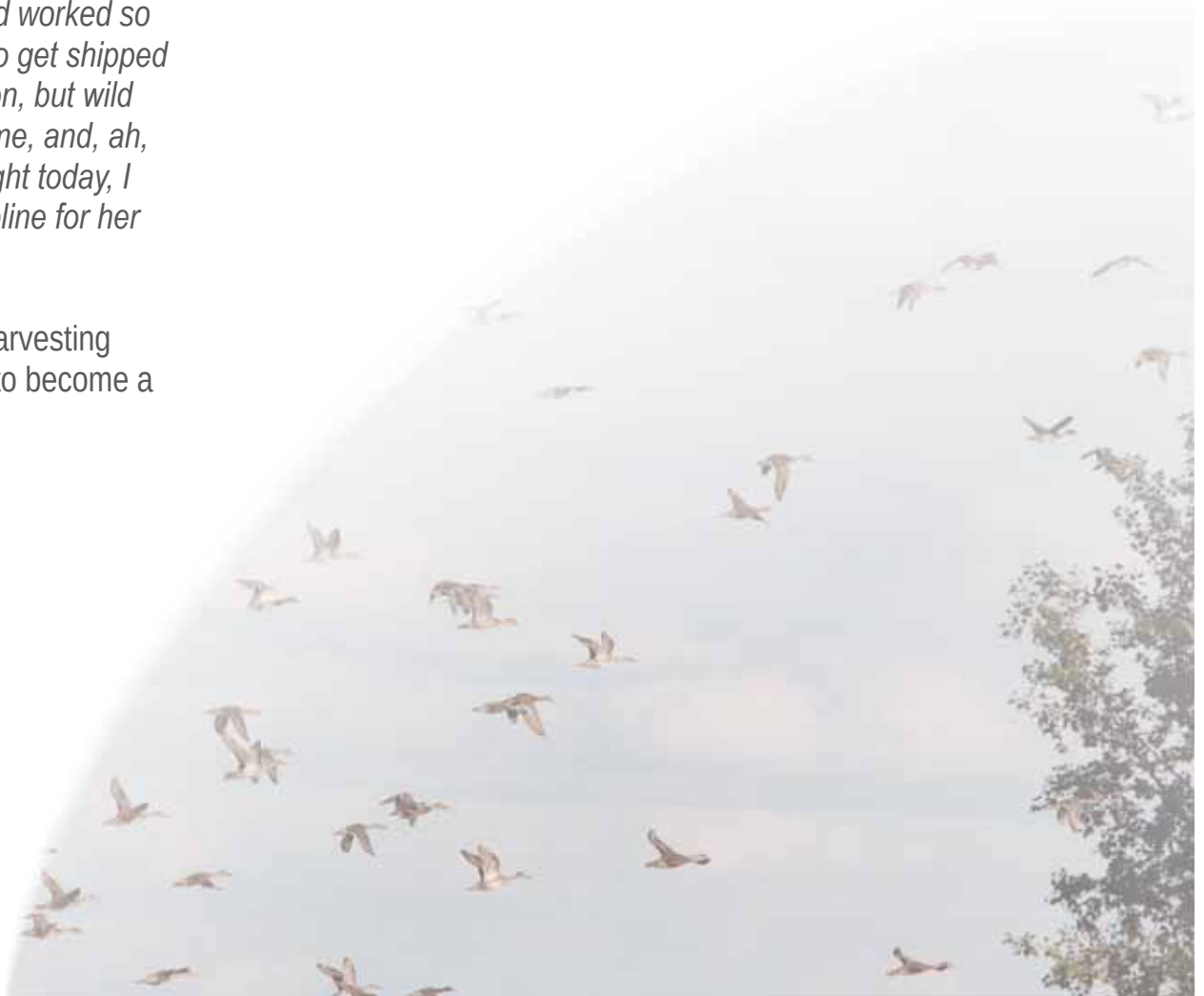
Ron Huppie:

We went and got a moose whenever we wanted. We went and got caribou. We had a combination. We lived off a lot of wild stuff but also my dad worked so we could buy stuff from town that used to get shipped up on the train. So we had a combination, but wild meat was big: fish, ducks in the springtime, and, ah, my mother's birthday is April 21st and right today, I still go shoot her a few ducks on the trapline for her birthday.

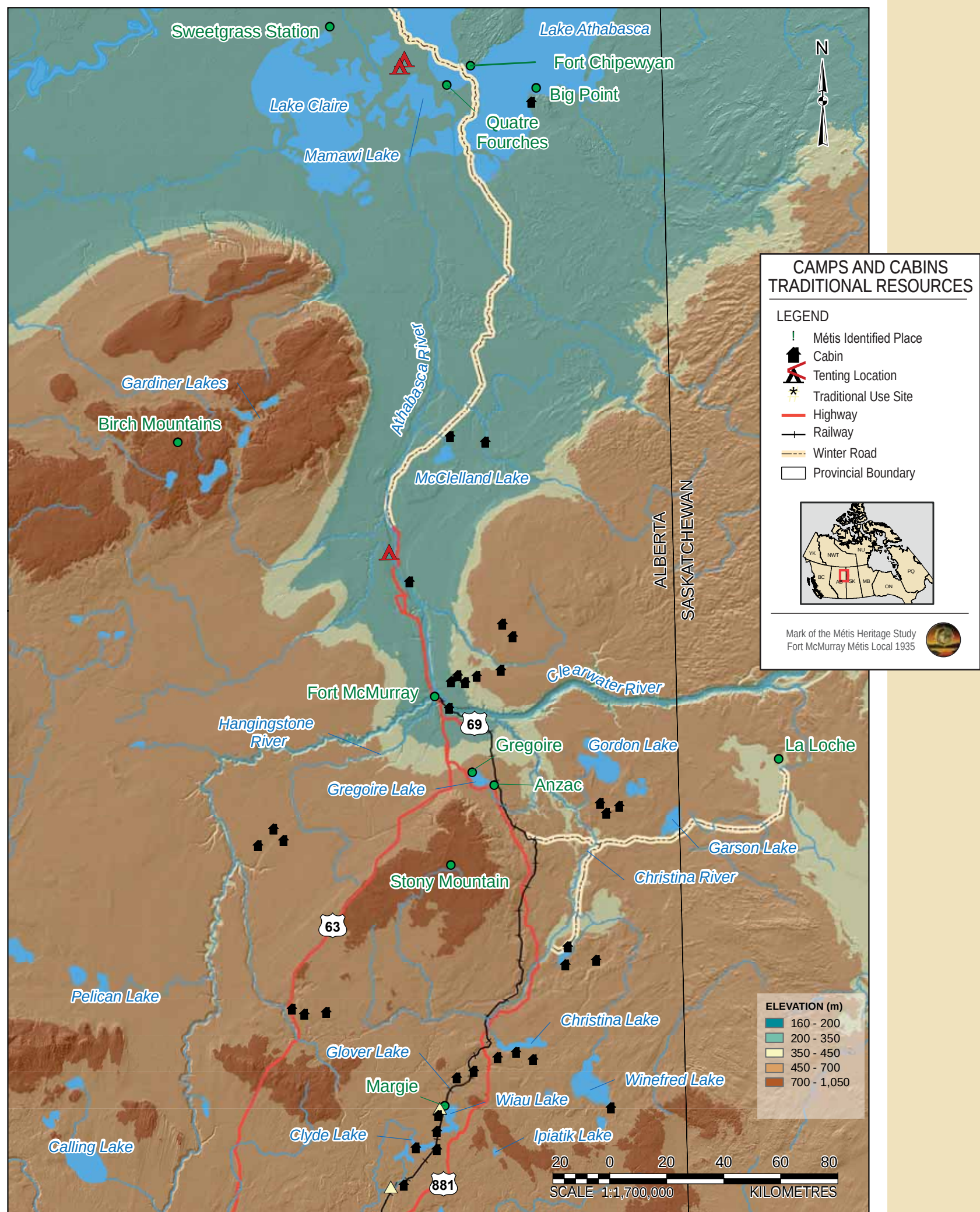
As Arthur Harpe demonstrates, traditional harvesting practices often moved beyond subsistence to become a dynamic, opportunistic, local economy:

My mother used to can 600 to 700 quarts every fall, blueberries, vegetables and all that - 600 or 700 quarts at least. And my dad would make sure we got wood in the yard. My dad used to sell wood in this country. My dad had four head of horses and we'd go up here and get wood, haul it downtown, buck it up and people would come and say, "I need a load of wood. I need a load of wood." Sometimes we used to deliver wood, 10:00 at night. We done that for years, until propane come in. When the propane come in it killed us. My dad said, "That's good. I'm tired."

There was a lot of wood too. Let's say from here where I am to that trailer, it was nothing to have six or seven feet high of wood in our yard, all dry. The old man was a hard cuss, boy, he was hard. He survived for his family. Couldn't read or write though. My dad's side, the parents, they done good. They used to knit and they used to ship it on the train. They'd knit wool socks and mitts and ship it on the train, and I'd go round and sell it to the storekeepers. One storekeeper, he'll buy the whole works and sell it to the trappers and double his money, the crook. He doubled his money, but my grandparents were so happy to see \$150 worth of knitting.



FLOCK OF DUCKS



CAMPS AND CABINS



THE FUR TRADE

The fur trade played a central role in Métis identity. Not only were the Métis raised to understand and communicate between both European and Aboriginal belief systems, the Métis were also skilled hunters and survivalists. This ability to understand the customs of both societies meant the Métis played an important role in the development of the fur trade, acting as a bridge between an Aboriginal subsistence system and the commercial market enterprise, thus securing trading relationships. Trapping was a key livelihood for Métis families, and, as a tribute to their multicultural knowledge, individuals were involved in all facets of the fur trade beyond trapping. Many Métis worked as boatmen, guides and transporters of goods.

Jenny Flett's father, Roderick Fraser ran a trading post and outfit out of Quatre Fourches. Born in 1909 in Fort Chipewyan, Jenny Flett describes the common exchange of furs for goods prior to adopting a cash economy:

Oh they had all kinds for fur, rat and beaver and mink and foxes and you name it.

In them days they never had cash or anything on hand you know. They go out and they kill rats or beaver and then they pile them up one on top of the other, then

they count how many and that's what they get paid with. No cash. That's how they got their money, by trapping and fishing.

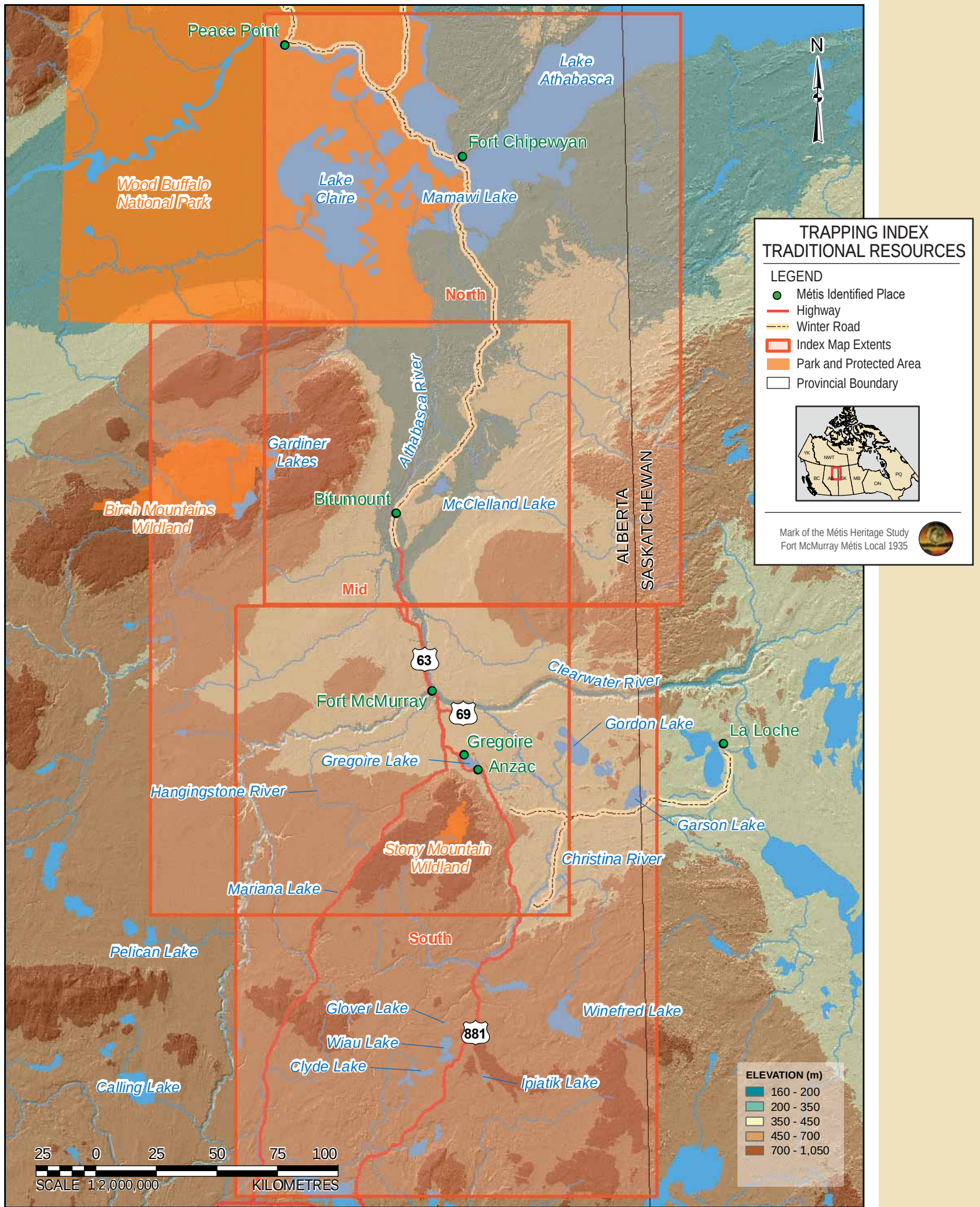
They had a place where you pull the lever and it would press them right down you see. You pile them all up, one on top of the other like they want them, then you get so much for that, but then you don't get cash, you've got to buy groceries or clothing, you don't get cash.

Fur buyers would travel to the region by railroad, buying up the products of a winter spent on the trapline. Arthur Harpe remembers this flurry of activity:

They'd be busy skinning, you better believe it. Some of those guys come out of there with four or five thousand muskrats. And that's a lot of work. That's spring hunting. That's a lot of work. Some guys would come out with hides... eight thousand rats. I seen them in Waterways when the fur buyers used to come in by railroad. Come here and buy the fur in the spring every year. What the trappers would do is they'd lay it all down in the big warehouse there and the buyers would put in their bid. Silent bid. On the paper. Highest bidder takes it all.

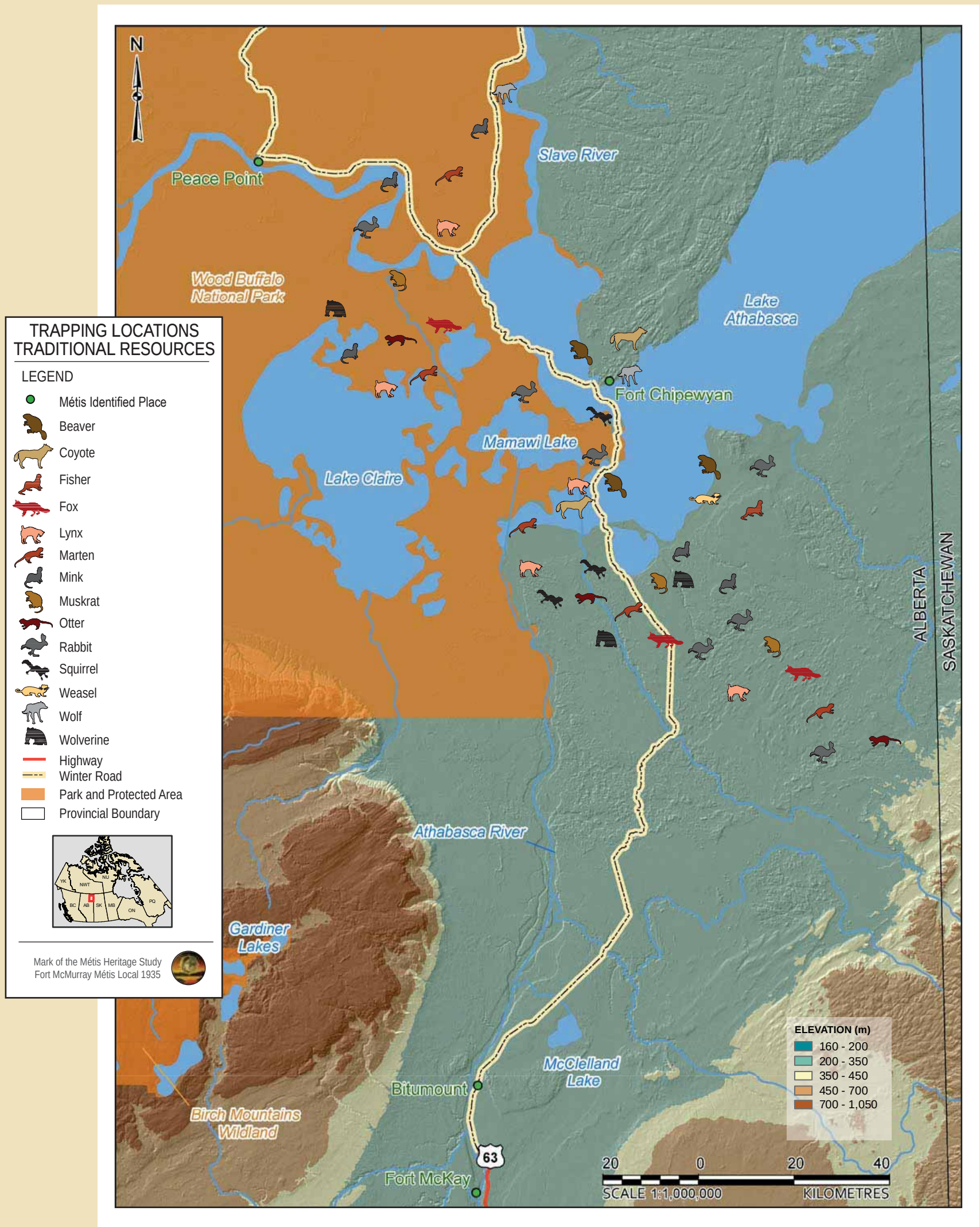
MUSKRAT





TRAPPING LOCATIONS INDEX





TRAPPING LOCATIONS - NORTH



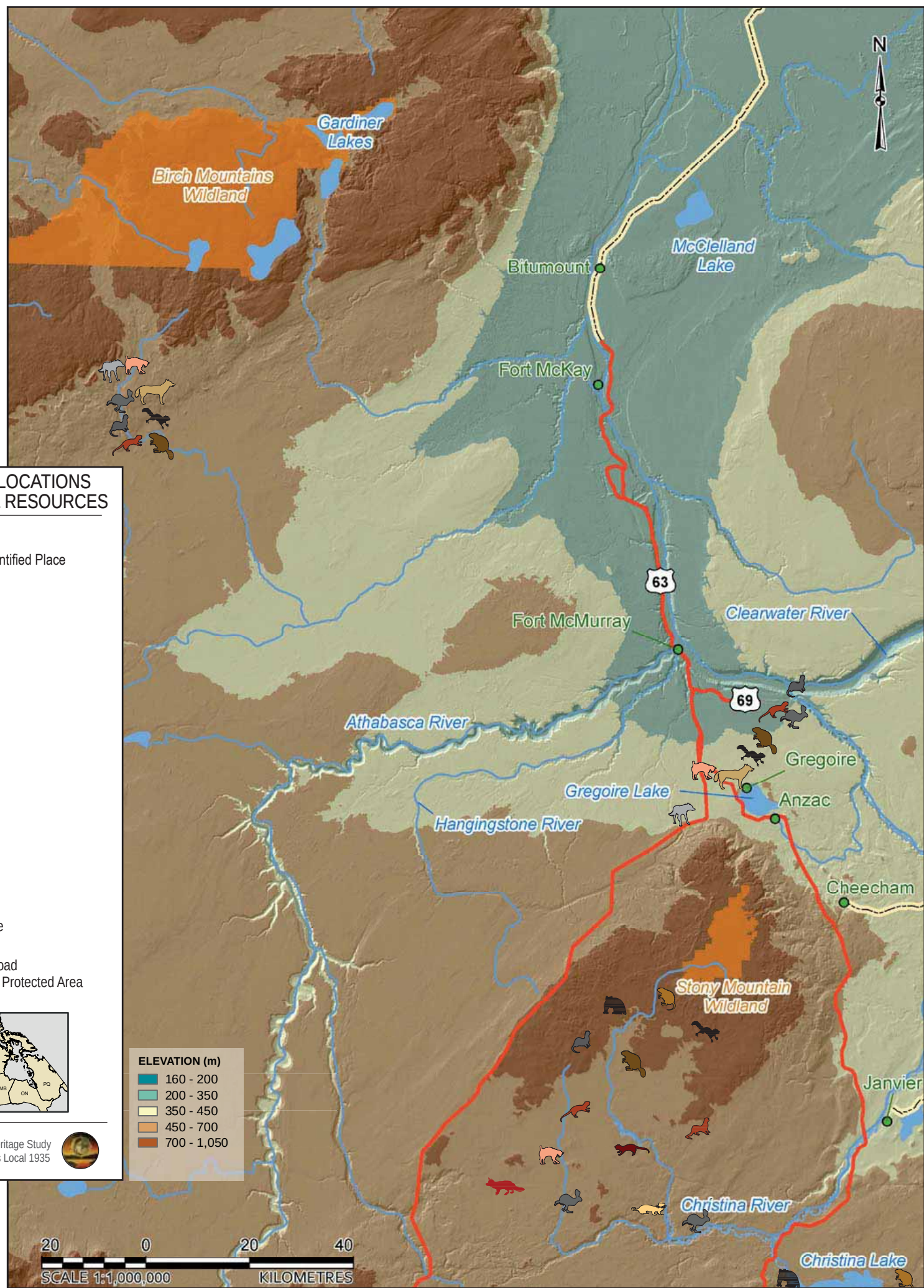
**TRAPPING LOCATIONS
TRADITIONAL RESOURCES**

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- Beaver
- Coyote
- Fisher
- Fox
- Lynx
- Marten
- Mink
- Muskrat
- Otter
- Rabbit
- Squirrel
- Weasel
- Wolf
- Wolverine
- Highway
- Winter Road
- Park and Protected Area

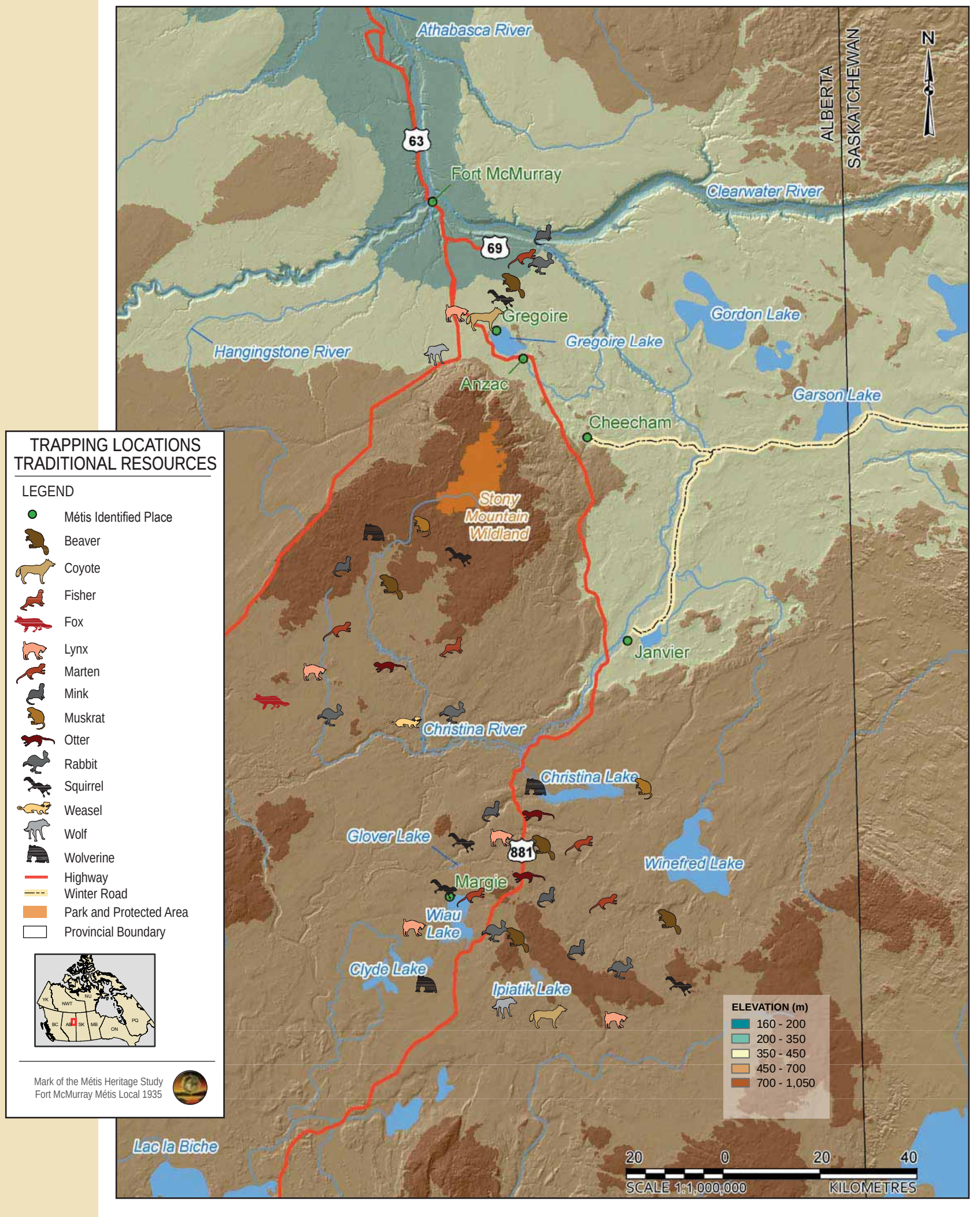


Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935

TRAPPING LOCATIONS - MID





TRAPPING LOCATIONS - SOUTH

TRAPLINE LIFE

GROWING UP ON THE TRAPLINE

As trapping played a central role and continues to do so in the livelihood of so many Métis families, being raised on the trapline is an experience that many Métis share. Growing up, many individuals found their time divided between attending school and living on the trapline. With life expanding in these two different worlds, Métis families continued to pass on trapping techniques and bush skills to their children. Here, people share their memories of growing up in a trapping family:

Bertha Clark-Jones remembers how her father and uncles would return home from the trapline before Christmas:

Yeah, my dad went with horses in the fall to set up his trapper camps, him and my uncles, a couple of uncles, and they'd set up their camps in different intervals right up to their last part of their trap line. And then they'd

leave so much grub, as they called it in those days, in these little camps. And then just before Christmas, they'd come home. They'd set their traps on the way, and then on their way back, they would pick up their furs from the traps and come home just before Christmas.

Maria Vermillon remembers, "I'd go in the bush with my dad wearing snowshoes, and would follow him to go and visit the traps so I'd know next time if I went on my own. Every time I would go in the bush I'd carry a little .22 so I can kill a rabbit or something."

James R. (Dickie) Dragon's great grandparents, the Cardinals, lived at Big Point. Trapping was a large part of their livelihood and life on the trapline was sustained by local resources. "The only thing you brought from the stores was flour and lard and sugar and the rest was all deer, moose, rabbits, muskrats, beaver, whatever, duck, you know."



FRANCES DUPERRON (SANDERSON) PRAIRIE CREEK TRAPLINE

Sometimes living out at the cabins would mean facing dangerous situations, accidents and close encounters with wild animals. Frances Duperron recalls that when she was a young girl her father suffered a hunting accident, and later in life, after their family had moved from a cabin at Horse Creek to another location, he was attacked by a bear and miraculously survived. In the words of Frances Duperron:

Well, my dad only had one leg. So in the wintertime he trapped, and occasionally he would work for Hughie Stroud, who had a sawmill. Mhmm, he lost his leg in a hunting accident. He was out early in the morning, and he was on his way home. He was probably hunting for partridges or something. And he said a shot rang out and it hit the tree beside him. And he hollered out, "Hey, watch where you're shooting!"

And another shot rang out, and it hit him just below the knee in the calf of his leg. And it just blew it apart I guess. So they had him in the hospital for quite some time, and then they sent him to Edmonton. And they amputated his leg just above the knee. And after a recovery time they sent him home, and gangrene set in. So they had to take him back to Edmonton and remove probably about eight inches of his leg then, yeah, and left him just a little short stump of a leg.

Then there was the bear attack. Yes, that was in nineteen sixty... I'm pretty sure it was '63, yeah. He overcame that, but his hand and his leg were severely chewed up. But he managed to survive. Well, all I know is it was in the month of June. And I remember my Dad saying to Mom, "You know Katy, I have to go to the Horse Creek and get those guns." He said, "I don't want to leave them there. You know, the young boys might go there and find it."

And so anyway, he went early in the morning, Mom and I were still sleeping. And all of a sudden I could hear my Dad calling for my mom, "Katy, Katy – get up! I need help!"

And when she got up, like, oh, mom was running around. The Leitners lived across the street – Diane's parents. So mom ran across there and woke them up. Mr. Leitner owned a cab – taxi service – so they took my dad to the hospital. And he was admitted, and treated. And I guess the local priest, the Catholic priest, heard the news. And of course, at that time news travelled fast. The hospital was in the same yard as the priest rectory. So the priest went up there with someone else and said when he got there, the bear was just coming too. So he shot it, and they



GEORGE SANDERSON AND FRANCES SANDERSON 1961

skinned it and everything. And he said the bear had been wounded previously with probably a shotgun or something.

But anyway, when my dad picked up the gun I think there was only two shells in it. And he said he was about halfway up the hill and a bear came out of the bush onto the path. And he said – dad said, “I knew right away it was going to attack me,” he said, “Because it put its ears back, and it charged me.”

And being my dad with only one leg, he had no balance to take his gun off, yeah. So he said he dropped his crutches and he fired off a shot, but he was unsteady. And the second shot he said it didn’t even hit the bear at all. And when the bear got to him he said the bear lay down on its back and started chewing on his leg. So my dad sat down with his good leg over the bear, and he said he grabbed the tongue. He said, “I just held onto the tongue. It was chewing and chewing”

But he took his rifle then and he started hitting it, and beating it, and beating it until there was only the barrel left of his gun. But he knocked the bear out. And he was able to take the one crutch – because the bear

had fallen on the other crutch. So he got to the top of the hill and he broke a poplar – a poplar tree, a small one with, like, a Y, and he used that for his other crutch. And when he got home he was just covered in blood. And his leg was all chewed up. But I think he was only in the hospital for about five days, yeah.

Of course, daily life was usually not so extreme for a family of trappers, although it certainly was dangerous and one always had to be prepared.



BLACK BEAR



WILLIAM AUGER, GILBERT DUCHARME, EDDIE AUGER WITH FOX PELTS

Arthur Harpe remembers visiting the trapline on the weekend with his father:

My dad had a trapline, we had dogs, just for weekends to go up to our trapline. My dad had a trapline behind the Hog's Back, on this side of the river, this side of the Athabasca River. Straight back. Spring hunt and fall beaver hunt. My dad used to take me out of school on Friday. Friday, Saturday, Sunday. We'd come back Sunday night.

Many Métis women worked as trappers in the early days. Lenora Mulawka's earliest childhood memories revolve around living on the land with her family, as she explains:

When I was about four years old, I remember – I barely remember – my grandmother. We lived in a tepee, I remember, and we used to have a fire in the middle and then she had a little stick and she'd be hitting that little fire, saying, "I'm going to hit you with this." I remember that and I was only four then.

Lenora also remembers lean times on the trapline with her mother:

When I was young, my mom moved us all to Cheecham. She raised us through trapping. There wasn't much to trap, it was just squirrels, weasels, mink. There were no beavers in those days. No foxes or coyotes. There was no lynx either.

Children learned to move between life at school and life on the trapline, facing the challenge of balancing traditional lifeways with the requirements of the government.

Georgina Flobert remembers going to school and trapping:

Oh, my dad trapped beaver, lynx, red fox, silver fox. Even squirrels, weasels, we used to go out and set snares for them. We would set a pole in a tree and in the morning we'd go see the sets and everything, the three of us kids. Because the other ones were small, my sisters. I used to skin the animals and put them on a stretcher. Once my brother Charlie - I still have the scar here where he cut me with a knife. He told



MRS. KATY SANDERSON OUTSIDE THE SANDERSON CABIN

me, hold one leg of that squirrel. I said, "You're gonna cut my finger. "No I won't. I'll watch," he said. He did watch all right, but it slipped. I've still got that scare here.

Then we moved downtown towards the Snye and we'd go to school, from over there across the river we'd have to walk, 50 below, ooooh. It wasn't very good. Then I would go to school and then mom would take us out. We'd have to go to the trapline, take us out of school and go back to the trapline. So I didn't go to school very much.

But it's so nice out on the trapline and it's so peaceful. Oooh, I love it.

Trapping was, therefore, a family affair. Therese Michael describes the important contributions each family member made, and the pre-trapline-registration system of claiming a line in the Sweetgrass-Lake Claire area:

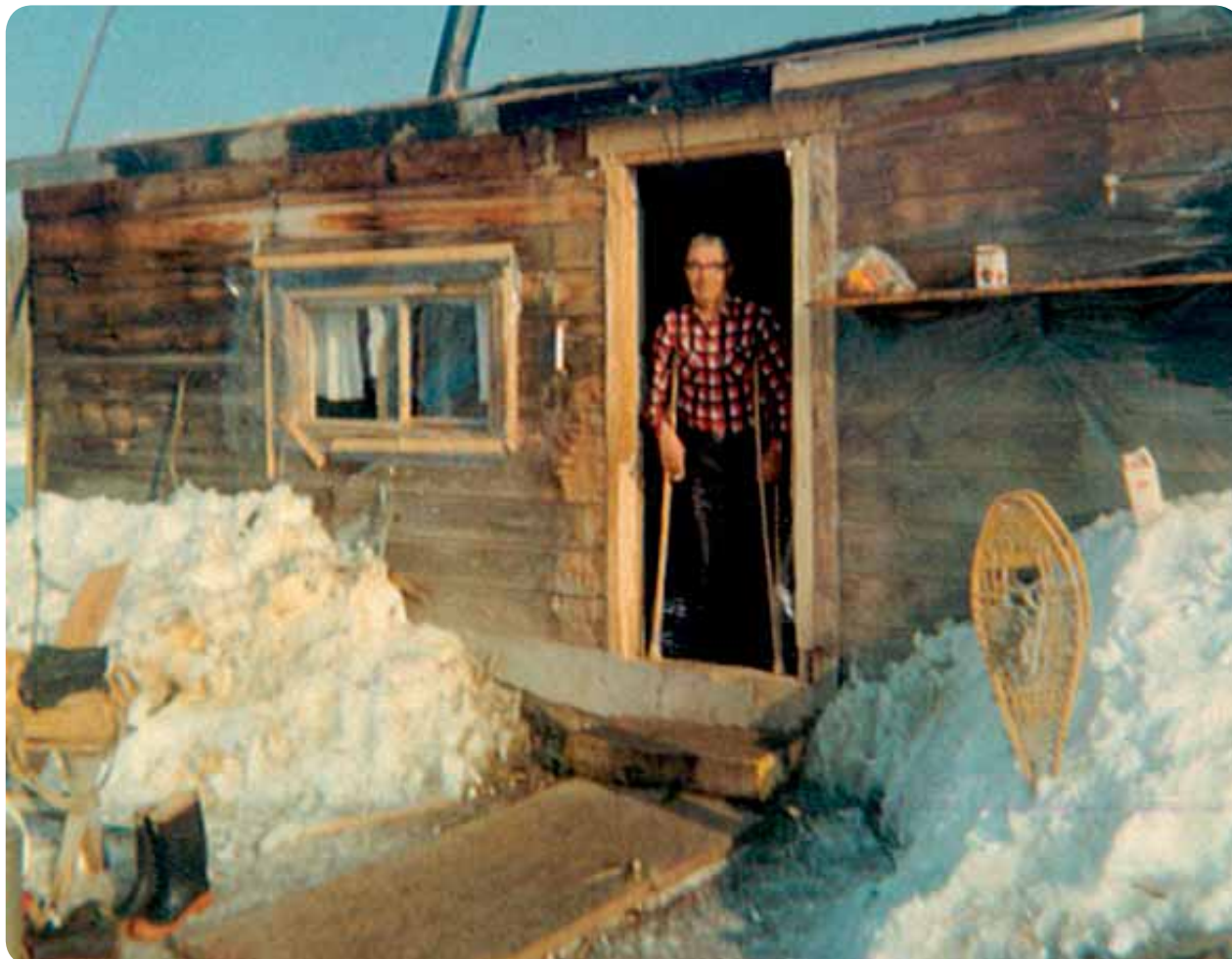
My dad went out to trap, but my mother would only trap in the spring, during rat (muskrat) season. She used to go then, we used to go, the whole family would stay in a tent. The land to trap in there, whoever gets there first, you set traps. If another one comes, set beside you. That's the way it was.

There was a lot of rats. That's why he has to take the family because they can't come back and forth after the snow goes. So the woman has to stay home to fix those rats, skin them and stretch them. The family has to go and help. So they could get more rats. The boys they were quite big to go and trap with their dad. But the girls they do the chores.

Often, however, as Ron Huppie describes through his own family history, families found ways to expand productivity, employing each able-bodied member to be involved in trapping activities:

Muskrats, beaver, mink was a big one. Lynx, fox, coyotes, weasel. We had the trapline at Clyde Lake. We had that trapline since I was a kid. The cabin I believe is still standing there. One had burned down on the east end, where it's almost at the Highway 81 now. But the one at Clyde Lake, I believe, is still standing today. My grandfather, Dumas Huppie, had a trapline at Mile 174. It'd be known as Margie, he lived just north of Margie. His cabin was along the railroad but he lived right on his trapline. If you look at Arthur Huppie, Dumas Huppie, they lived on their traplines as long as I can remember. I don't think they ever "owned" land. Over a period of time we trapped all those areas at Glover Lake and Wiau Lake.

MR. GEORGE SANDERSON INSIDE THE SANDERSON CABIN



I can remember one year, my mom catching something like 300 rats. And she figured she hit the train because you got 300 rats times about four dollars a rat. Well that was big bucks in those days.

We used to sneak into the bombing range. I would have been 15 or 16. So you're talking about '65, '66. Used to sneak into the bombing range and Charlie Tom had a tipi made out of peeled bark off trees in there. One Easter I can remember I killed ten beaver, and a few rats. I was just starting high school, and I sold them. I got 223 bucks!

Traplines are an important part of Métis family heritage because, Ron Huppie adds, they are a place for families to consistently gather over the years and take part in a variety of traditional activities:

My Dad, he loved, he loved trapping, and he loved getting up in the bush, that's how he grew up. That's all he knew. Right now it's still where everybody in the family goes, everybody goes picking blueberries. Go shoot ducks every spring, pick cranberries. At gatherings, there could be ten trailers beside the three cabins. If we want to smoke meat that's where we go and do it. We have a drying rack there. You could say we go out there for living the traditional lifestyle.

While women maintained traps alongside their male partners, they were also responsible for skinning the animals in preparation for trading them. From his own experience, Ernie Ray Michael describes the division of labour between a husband and wife that maximized fur production. According to him, there is a clear advantage to having a wife as a partner to provide support while out on the line:

My wife worked too. You know, in the springtime, you go out to trap rats, you can leave Fort Chipewyan in the spring, all by yourself. Lots of rats, there's lots of rats. Now a person can be gone maybe three weeks, maybe between three weeks and a month. And he comes back with seven hundred rats, all dried and boxed and, you know, ready for sale. Well you know something? He never slept much. That's when there's lots of rats. There's lots of rats, you spend all your time in camp. But if there's no rats, you spend all your time out there hunting and running. And maybe you only got a hundred.

But if you got somebody sitting home, you just took your fur and you threw it on the floor and you had a big meal and you went to sleep, the hell with it. You come back tomorrow, and all that is done and looked after and you stow the rest. Well geez, yeah, you'll end up with fourteen, fifteen hundred. But if you got to do it

HOW TO TRAP MUSKRATS:

Eva Huppie:

See they have little nests where they sit. In the push-up, you just put the trap by there. In open water you make kind of a little cushion on the lake shore some place, with rushes. Little, little cushion there or something, they come up and sit on it. Put a little trap in there, put weight on it when they jump in.

MUSKRAT





KATY SANDERSON'S CABIN IN THE HORSE CREEK AREA

James R. (Dickie) Dragon shares a story where instead of going on a journey to find the animals, the animals would simply come to him:

I used to trap with my brother, Ron. We didn't have a trapline, we just, like everybody just went out and, you know, set traps wherever. Used to catch squirrels, minks. My dad had the mink ranch. He had it all fenced in and he told us any mink we caught out of the yard we could keep, eh. So one winter there, we were getting a mink two or three times a week. Catching them to beat heck and my dad was like, "Holy smokes, those guys are doing good". And then he's checking his pens and his minks are going down, you know. So he looks around through the grass and saw a nice trail through there where the minks were going through the fence. Our traps were on the other side. So he took all our minks back.

yourself, you're all alone, you got to cut your wood, you got to cook for yourself, you got to skin and stretch those things, take them off the stretcher, put them in a bag. Boy, you don't sleep too much. If you got four hours a day, boy you were flying. I know, I did it. I know.

Jean Paul Coutu describes how he educated tourists about bush life:

I would bring the tourists into the bush and teach them about survival. I would teach them about the dream catcher, and to use the animals. I would show them the beaver tail, the claws, and how they had little sacks on each hoof that had oil in them. I'd take the beaver's oil gland, and put it on the coats so they didn't get waterlogged. I'd teach them how to make a fire with flint, and start a fire to boil tea.

In the early 1940s, the Government of Alberta imposed a trapline registration system. Similar to British Columbia's registration system introduced in 1926, the goal of Alberta's registration system was to provide individual trappers with exclusive trapping rights within set, designated areas, or "traplines". Where before, trapping areas were maintained through a flexible, responsive and locally maintained system of setting a line, the registration system meant the introduction of a regime based on stationary, restrictive and exclusive principles.

Roland Woodward describes traditional trapping and the impact of the registration system:

Now, the understanding back then, you see, you could use a guy's trail but you couldn't set a snare or a trap on his trail. If you crossed his trail, you could set your snares. But while you're on his trail, that was his trail, and it was his trapline.

In 1939, they came out with the maps and all of a sudden told people they could only trap in certain areas. The people in the Anzac/Fort McMurray area were accustomed to travelling north to drop at the Delta.

When they started setting up traplines—you'll go through the records, and you'll find a lot of names that later identified themselves as Métis, and who had traplines. But with those traplines came another migration of white trappers. They bought up traplines—robbed people out of their traplines, and all of a sudden became trapline holders in this whole area in the '40s, '50s, '60s. It becomes a private hunting area. And they got guiding licences.

Alcide (Massey) Boucher adds:

See that's how it went. If you didn't trap, they just took it away from you automatically.

Well, now, one year you don't have to trap, as long as you got proof you make trails. If you don't trap one year, well, you can do some work on it. But, you got to trap, if you don't trap next year, it'll be gone, it'll be back to green zone.

A second wave of change to trapline practices came in the 1960s with new pressure from oil companies in the region. Oil companies purchased traplines from Métis families as the expansion of oil development continued. "All their traplines are gone, the companies have got it all. At one time it was good traplines, damn good traplines," recalls Alcide (Massey) Boucher.

Arthur Harpe describes the loss that resulted from exchanges between industry and trapline holders:

They said, you know what they said? "When we're all done they can have their traplines back." But it's not the same. You replant the bush, the trees, the grass, it's not the same.

Some trappers figured it was worth more and some were satisfied. So what do you do? You've got to take it or lose it, either one eh. So grab the money.

Jules Flobert elaborates:

It's like everything else now, something gets built and that's the end of it, same with my trapline now. This is clearing, and two berry patches are gone.

I've been trapping on my line since 1966. Over, forty years I've been on that line.

We got compensation for the drilling they done this winter and last winter. My partner got told that, "In five years you won't have a line." Because it's going to be brushed off, 'cause it's tar on the ground there. They run into some pretty good tar this winter.

For many Métis who continue to trap, changes in the environment and animal populations, as well as the price of fur, have had their effect. As Jules Flobert and Therese Michael attest:

Jules Flobert:

For a winter's work, when my fur sells, I'd be lucky if I see \$2,000 possibly for the fur I've got. Maybe better, but not much. That's just for the winter, eh. The animals are just not there anymore. Some areas are not too bad. If you go towards Mariana Lake.



WILLIAM AND ED CARDINAL SHOWING LYNX FURS

Therese Michael:

All those wardens used to have dogs that they used to take out to check on the trappers. Nowadays they got one guy flying around with a chopper because there's no trappers. There's nothing to trap. You try and tell the people that, that don't go in the bush. There's nothing there. People years ago trapping fox and stuff, everybody in the country was trapping. Everybody. Now my brother says he's going out for a while and sometimes I see one fox track. I never got a fox all winter. He goes all over the place and never got a fox. There should be foxes in the sloughs all over. There's nothing, nothing, nothing. All that is out there is grass and in the spring lots of mosquitoes.



RED FOX



MUSKRAT

William (Bill) Woodward had a lot of success as a trapper, but decided to retire from trapping later in life. Bill describes some of the experiences that motivated his decisions:

So my brother and I were down at the creek and we seen these otter tracks. So I went down and I spent all day watching how they played around. I took four traps with me and that night I caught three otter. I never missed one because I watched exactly where they went. You've got to have really a lot of patience to learn from the animal. I used to be able to sneak up on robins and pet them, when it was raining heavy. They'd just tilt their head and look at you while they were sitting in the nest. That's what I mean, you've got to have a lot of patience and learn from the animals and learn all their behaviours. Then you can catch them.



OTTER



BEAVER



AMERICAN ROBIN

Then one day I was trapping beaver. I went at 2:00 in the afternoon to go down to the creek and usually I didn't get home till 10:00 or 11:00 at night. This time I watched the beaver for two hours. A little wee beaver like this [illustrates size with hands]; pulling little limbs and diving down and catching a little, not even a teaspoon full of mud helping the mother getting the house ready. I quit trapping right there. I said, "You guys are working too hard to make a living, I don't have to work that hard."

I wouldn't trap. So I sit along the lakeshore and I watch them. And when they cut the tree down, the little beaver, he pulls these limbs just as hard as he can pull. And I'm sure he can't pull two pounds. But he was helping his mother. Yeah, these days a person doesn't take enough time to study the animals.



COYOTE

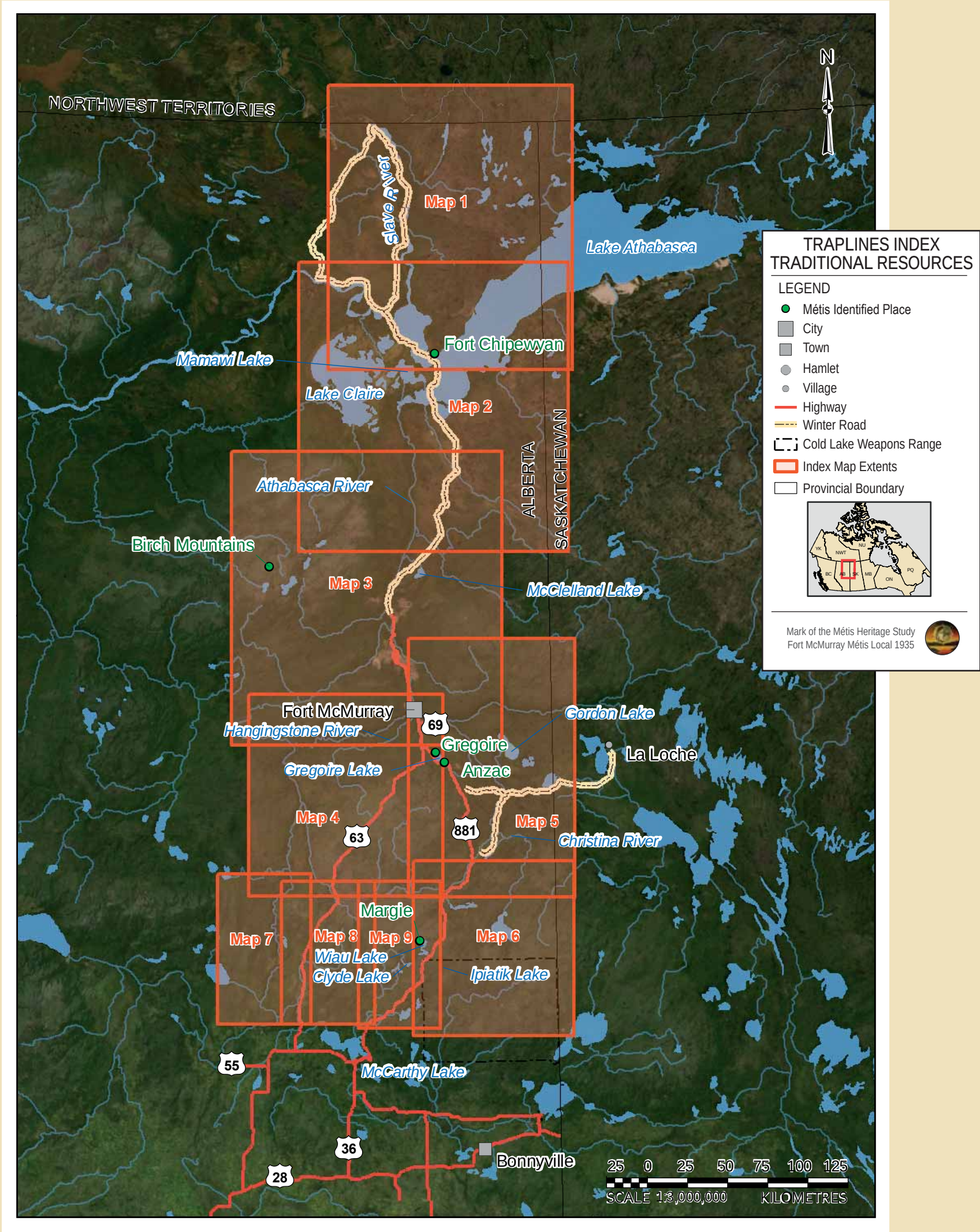
If I go fishing in the summer here I'll set a net and the minute I go out in the morning them bald eagles are there, they're right there in the morning. Yeah, they know exactly when to come because I throw the fish in the water, eh. And you know the eagles can dive from a half a mile up. They would go about six feet underneath the water and come out with a fish. You have to sit and watch. I spend all day sometimes watching what they do. And I walk underneath the tree where they've got their nest and I say, "I didn't come here to hurt you, I'm just passing by."



BALD EAGLE



MOOSE CALF



TRAPLINES INDEX



TRAPLINES MAP 1 - LAKE ATHABASCA REGION





TRAPLINES MAP 2 - LAKE CLAIRE REGION



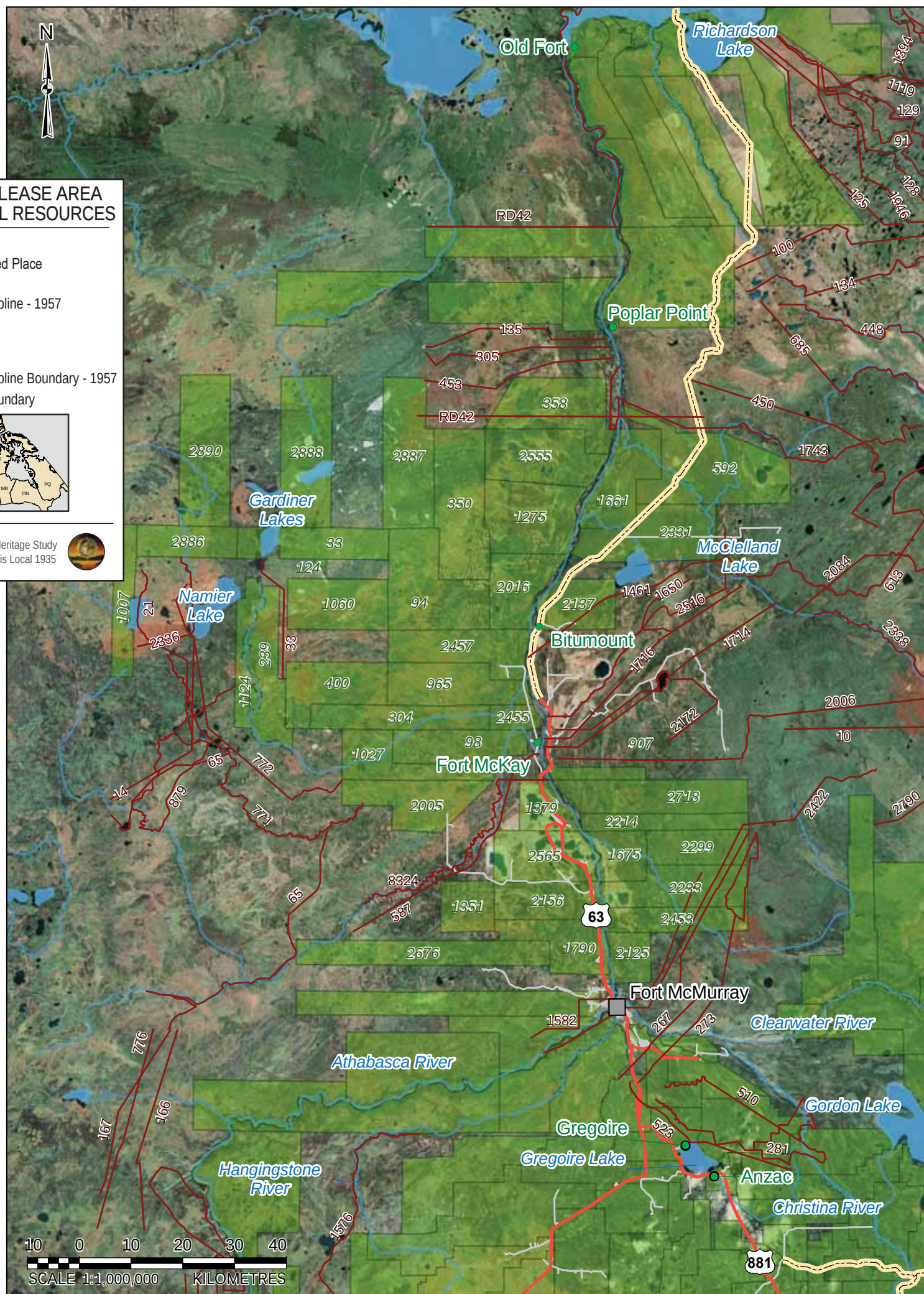
TRAPLINE LEASE AREA TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- City
- Historical Trapline - 1957
- Highway
- Road
- Winter Road
- Historical Trapline Boundary - 1957
- Provincial Boundary



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Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935



TRAPLINES MAP 3 - FORT McMURRAY REGION



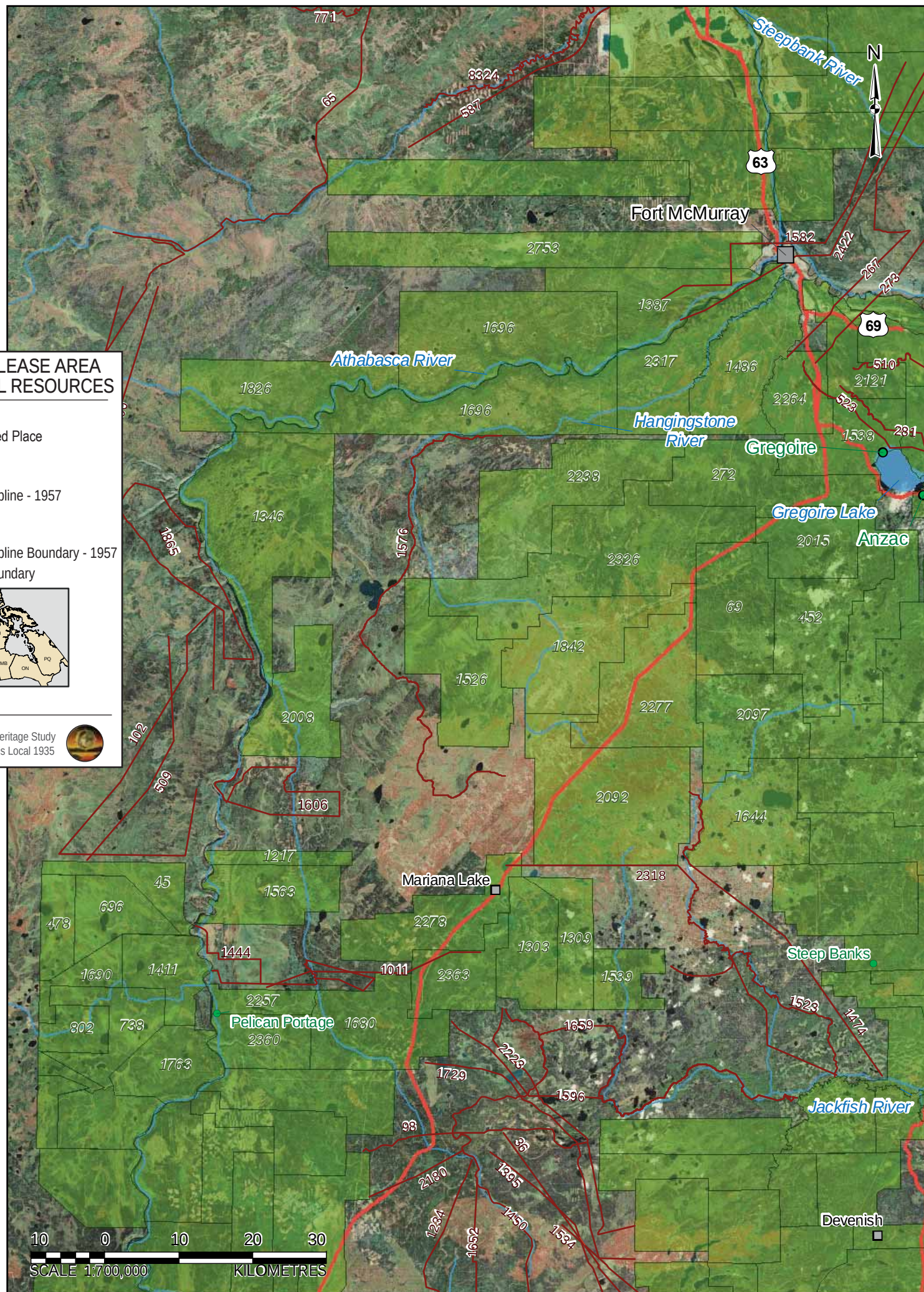
**TRAPLINE LEASE AREA
TRADITIONAL RESOURCES**

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- City
- Town
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- Highway
- Winter Road
- Historical Trapline Boundary - 1957
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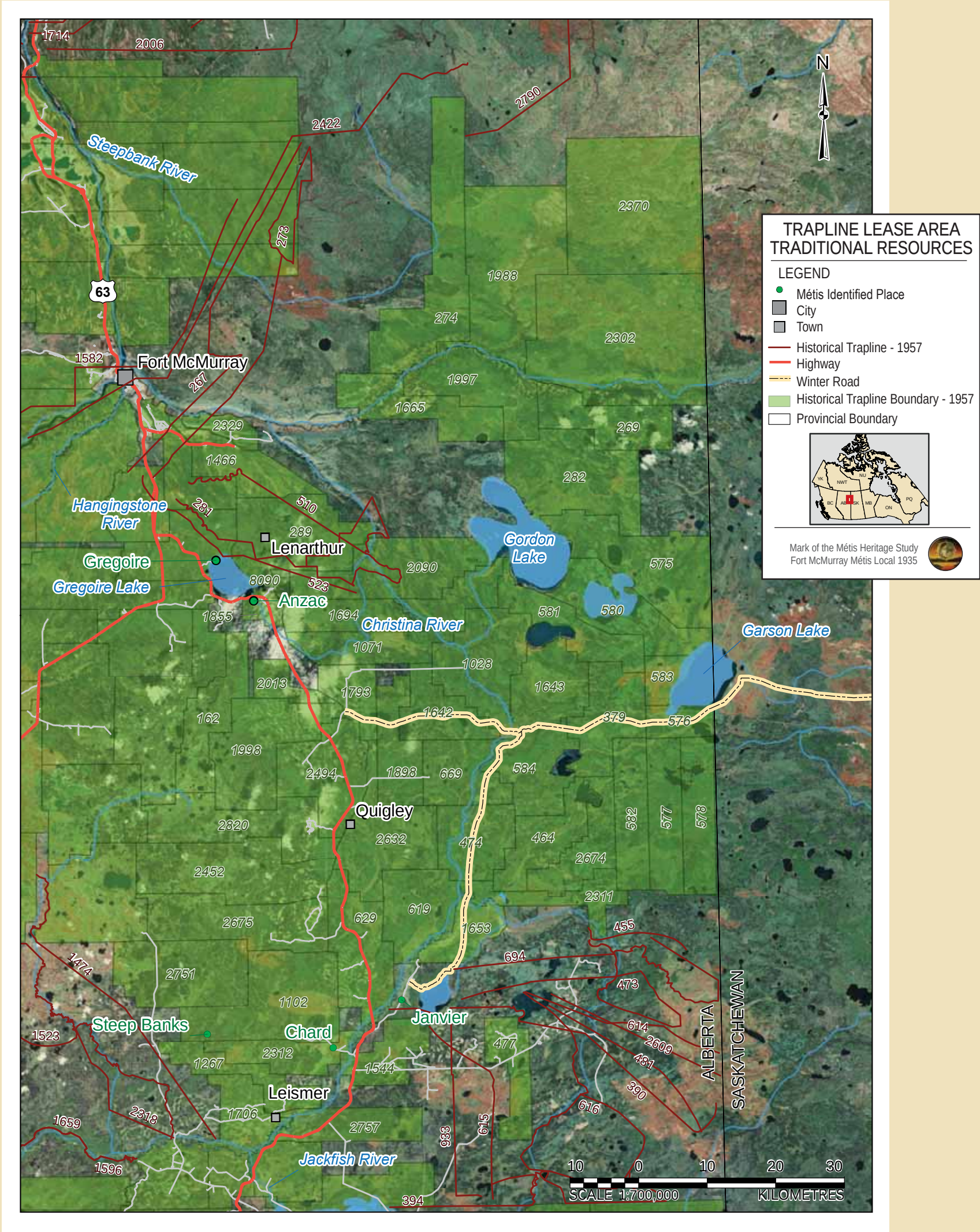


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Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935

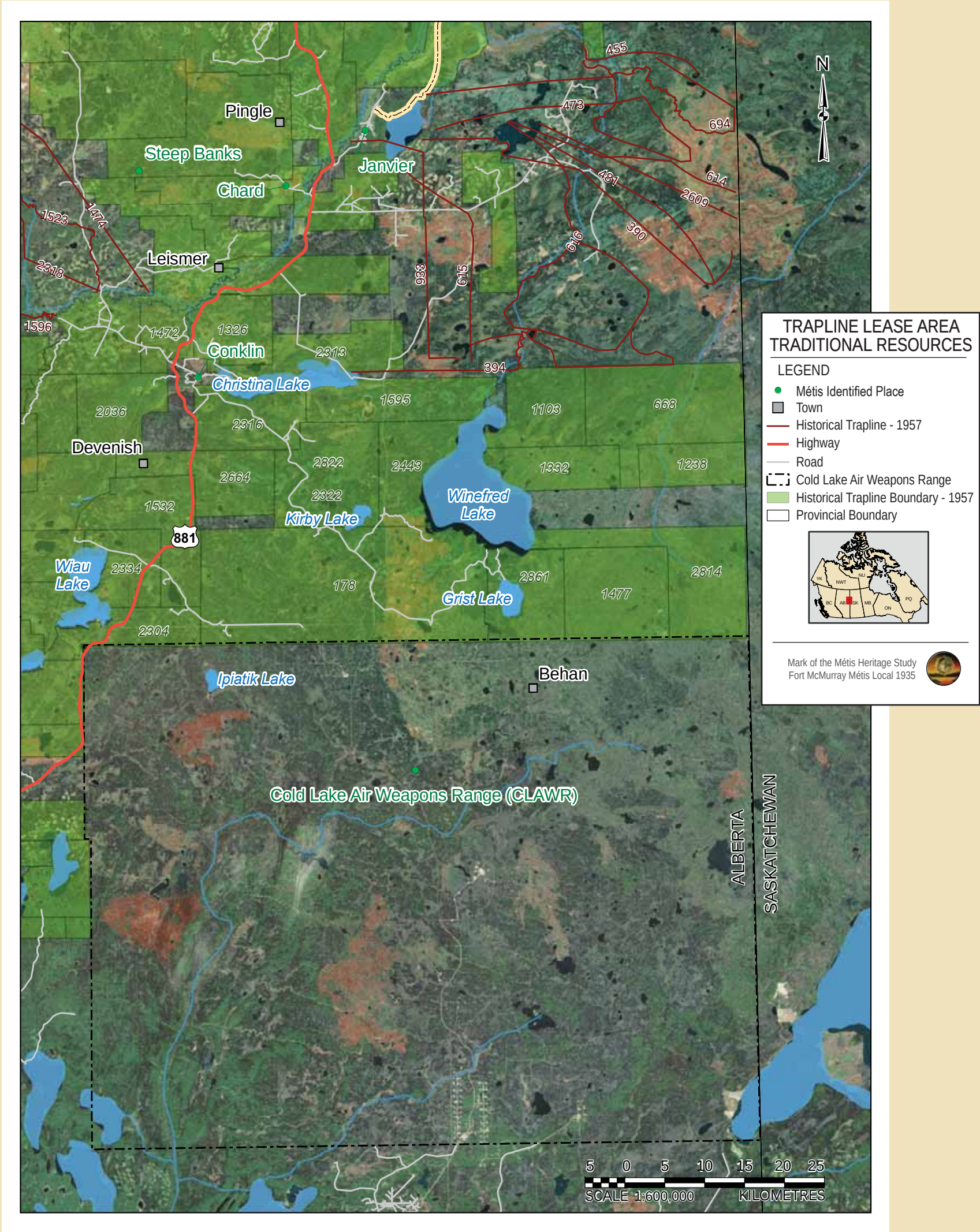
TRAPLINES MAP 4 - ATHABASCA RIVER



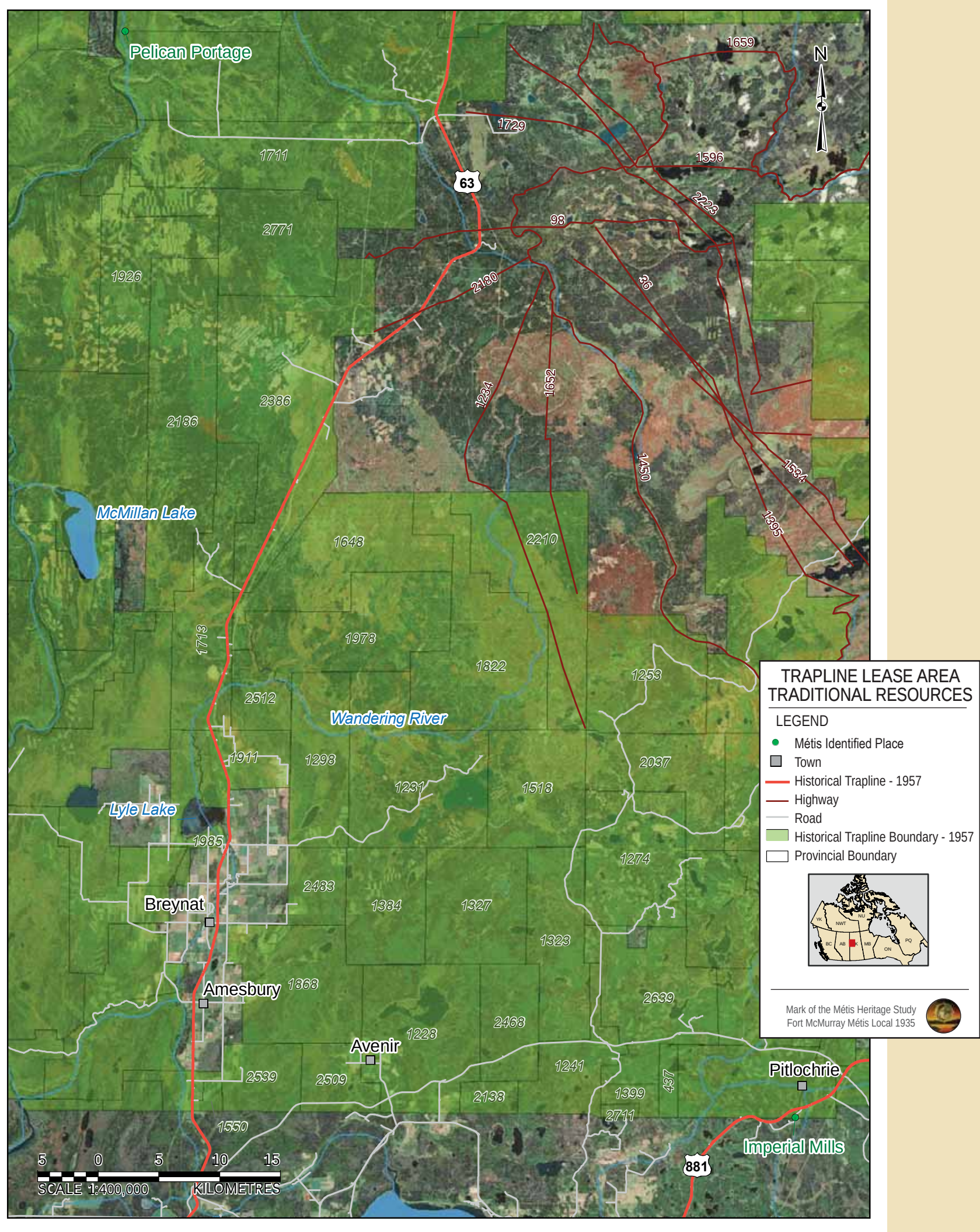


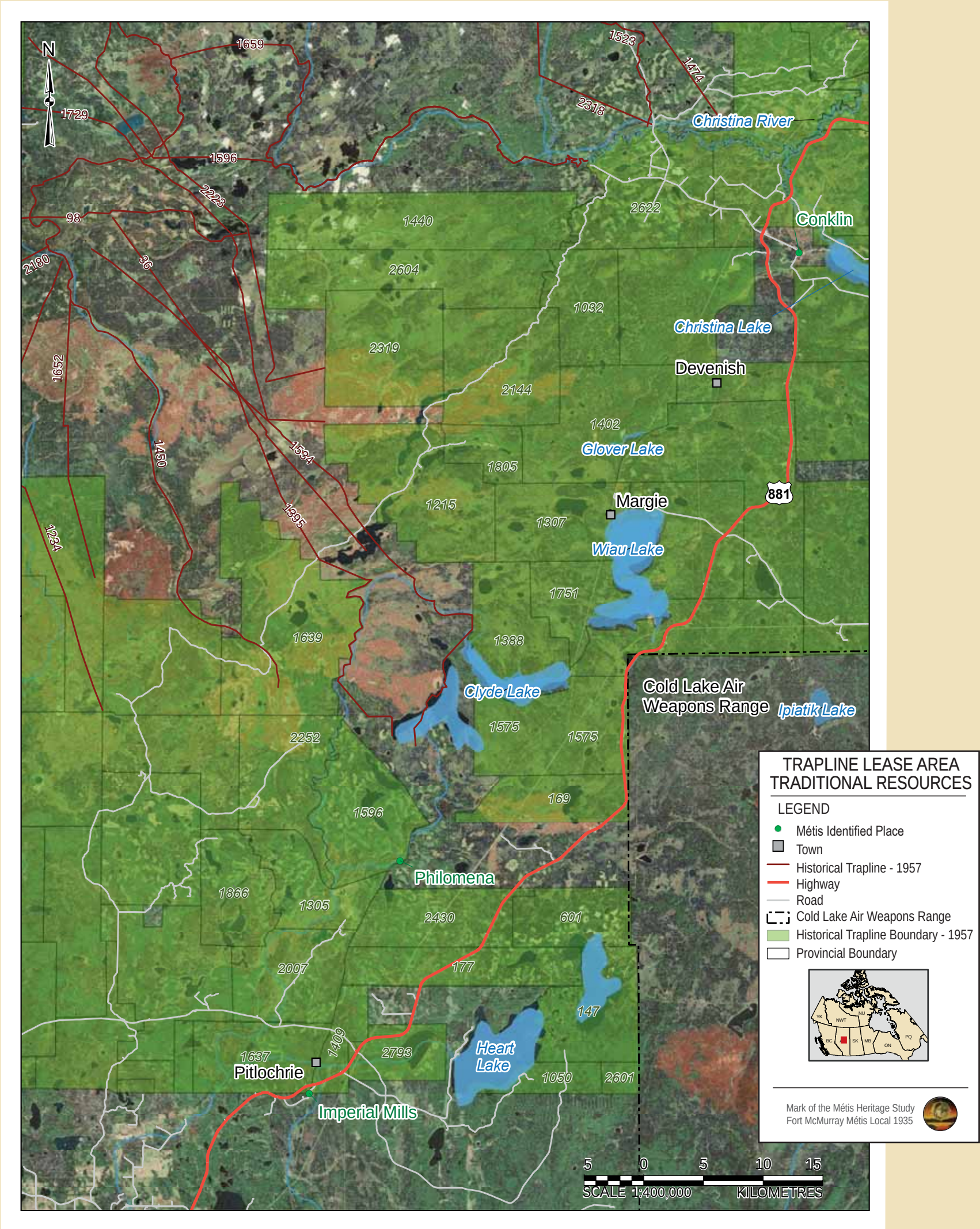
TRAPLINES MAP 5 - GORDON LAKE AREA





TRAPLINES MAP 6 - WINEFRED LAKE REGION





TRAPLINES MAP 9 - HEART LAKE REGION





TRAPLINE LEASE NUMBER	NAME	TRAPLINE LEASE NUMBER	NAME	TRAPLINE LEASE NUMBER	NAME
10	Joe Boucher	615	Julian Janvier and Authur Janvier	1743	R.V. Grane, R. Ferguson
14	Joseph Yessew	616	John Janvier	1751	Dumas Huppie
21	Ayesse	685	Rudolph Flett	1790	Jean Paulin
33	Philip McDonald	694	Roderich Janvier	1865	George Bouskyous
36	Peter Blood	771	Albert Ayesso and Adolph Ayesso	1946	Patrice Marcel
65	Paul Gabriel Ayesso	772	Gabriel Oar	1998	Walter Cardinal
65	Paul Ahya	776	Michel Bigston	2005	Richard Loutitt
91	Daniel Marcel	879	Edward Rolland, Harvy Rolland	2006	Jonas Boucher
98	Lyman	933	Simon Lepouse	2084	Alex Boucher
100	Edward Cyprean	1011	Paul Choko	2123	Charlie Cooper
102	Alphonse Beaver	1119	Archie Marcel	2155	Zac Powder
125	Rene Bruno	1234	Fred Weibel	2172	L. and Ed Torengeau
128	Bentamin Marcel	1364	William Malcolm	2180	Walter Golosky
129	F. Marcel	1394	Peter Ladsouoeur	2214	Fred McDonald
134	Willie Bouchier	1395	Jim Cardinal	2223	E. Cardinal
135	Willie Bouchier	1402	Sam Huppie	2233	Billy MacDonald
166	Soloman Beaver	1417	Frank Brund	2234	George Lavallie
167	Daniel Beaver	1444	Carl Rahle	2317	James Powder
267	John Cree	1450	Leon Desjarlais	2318	Sordon Cardinal
273	James Cree, Jullian Cree	1461	Felix Beaver	2329	George Sanderson
281	Rose Cheecham	1466	William Castor	2336	Archie Ayesso
305	Joseph Hyran and R.E. Bouchier	1474	George S. Cardinal	2338	Freddy Boucher
390	Simon Janvier	1507	Bob Armit	2408	George Latourneau
394	Simon Nest	1523	M. Cardinal	2422	Walter Golosky
448	Alphonse Piche	1534	Madoline Boucher, Henry Boucher	2422	William Golosky and Walter Golosky
450	P. Piche	1576	Billy Cardinal	2494	T.A. Sykes
453	Morbert L. Hommecourt	1582	Joe Shott and Michael	2516	Henry Shott
455	Pierre M. Janvier	1596	August Tremblay	2526	Gilbert Ducharme
473	Antoine Janvier	1606	Ernest Revereisen	2609	Baptiste Janvier and Joe Heymen
481	Phillip Black and Harry Black	1650	Isadore Lacorde	2645	No Name Listed
509	Michel Bigstone	1652	Albert Laroce	2790	Benny White
510	Raephal Cree	1659	Robert Doonanco	8324	Alphonse Powder
523	Victor Cree	1675	Walter Loutitt	RD42	No Name Listed
587	Francis Orr, William W.	1714	M. Powder and W. Podwer	RD42	No Name Listed
613	Wilfred Grandcamb	1716	Henry Shott		
614	Fred Janvier	1729	A. Huppie		

Note: Names and numbers are captured from digital data of historic record and may not be accurate.

TRAPPING LEASE HOLDERS - 1957



HUNTING

Following the annual harvesting cycle, Métis hunted large game such as moose, caribou, wood buffalo and deer, and small game such as beaver, muskrat and rabbits for food and clothing.

Arthur Harpe comes from a hunting family:

My dad used to go hunting. My dad would hunt for whatever you get, moose or deer, because in those days lots of deer or lots of moose went good with our vegetables eh. We had lots of vegetables.

Elsie Yanik remembers what the abundance of food that hunting brought was like when she was growing up:

We got lots of moose meat and we had lots of fish and the caribou were plentiful, I guess, them days. There were deer, there were lots of rabbits, lots of chickens. My younger brothers, Joe, Archie and Frankie, used to go hunting with a 22 and bring home prairie chickens every day.

Therese Michael used to work with caribou hide:

There was lots of caribou. Only in the winter they used to go and hunt caribou and they'd bring the hide. Many times I used to sit there scrapping the hide, trying to make leather out of it. Everybody got moccasins. That's all you have to wear.

Roland Woodward talks about hunting to feed his friends and relatives in Anzac:

We'd go hunt – cutting wood and we'd see a moose and they'd unload all our wood, look for that moose. We'd drive home and we'd give it away. We were feeding the community. The community was hungry, we were the only ones that had a vehicle. You know, when we got home, we didn't have a chunk of meat bigger than we could put in one pot, because we gave it away.



RUFFED GROUSE

BARREN GROUND CARIBOU

CARIBOU COMING TO TOWN

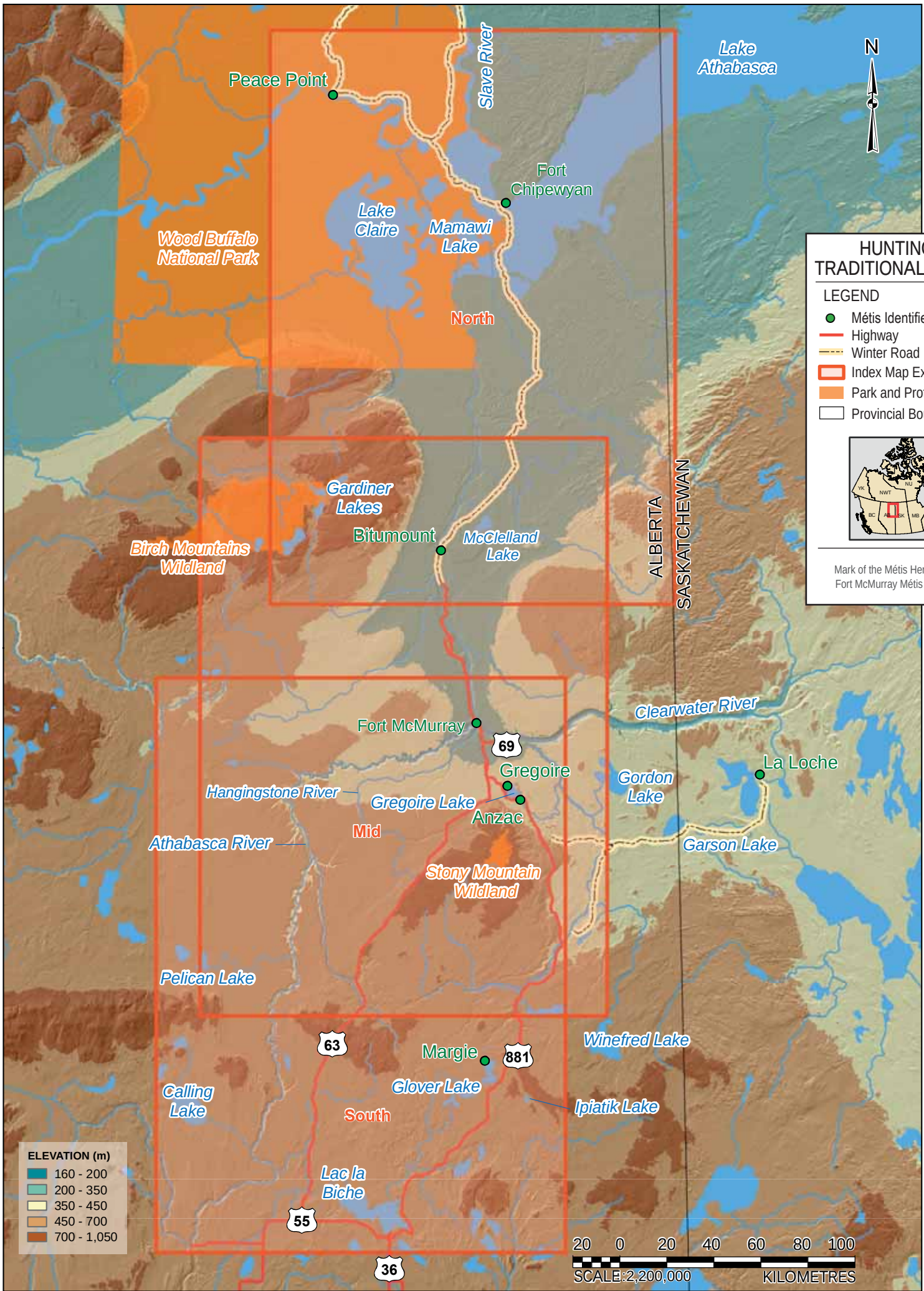
Sometimes, rather than having to leave on a journey to find animals to hunt, the animals would come to them. Elsie Yanik and Dorothy Squire recall a period when a herd of caribou came into the town of Fort Chipewyan:

Dorothy Squire:

There used to be herds of caribou that used to come into town, right into town. I remember what's called the Oil Sands Hotel now. They used to come—it was called The Franklin, then. And they used to come right up to the steps there and around Hill's Drugs.

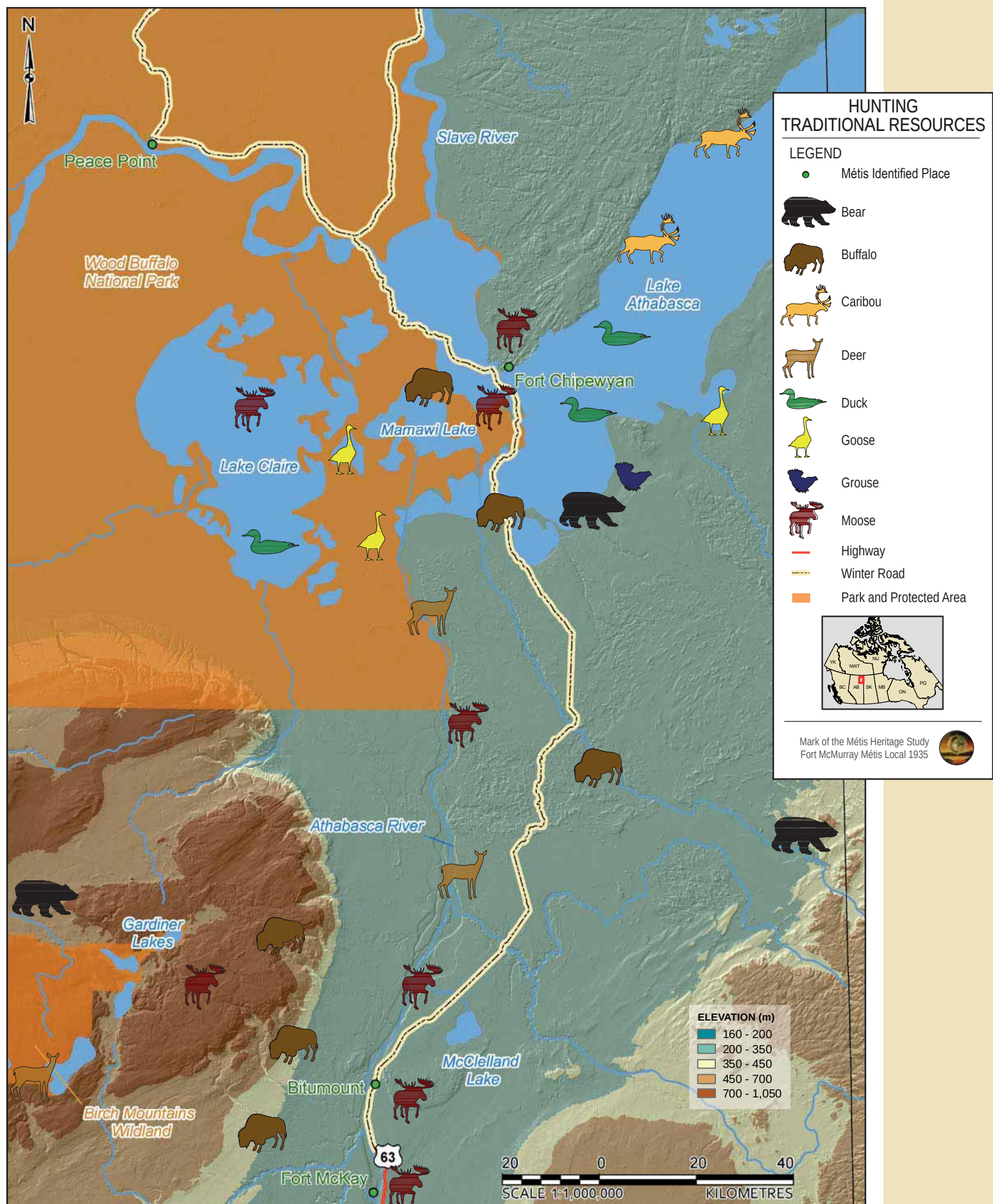
Elsie Yanik:

I remember, one time they came to town, lots of people, even women were killing caribou, just with an axe. Their horns got caught in the fence, so they slaughtered them there. There was lots. They was only about a couple of days staying and then they were all gone. They were just passing by.



HUNTING AREAS INDEX





HUNTING AREAS - NORTH

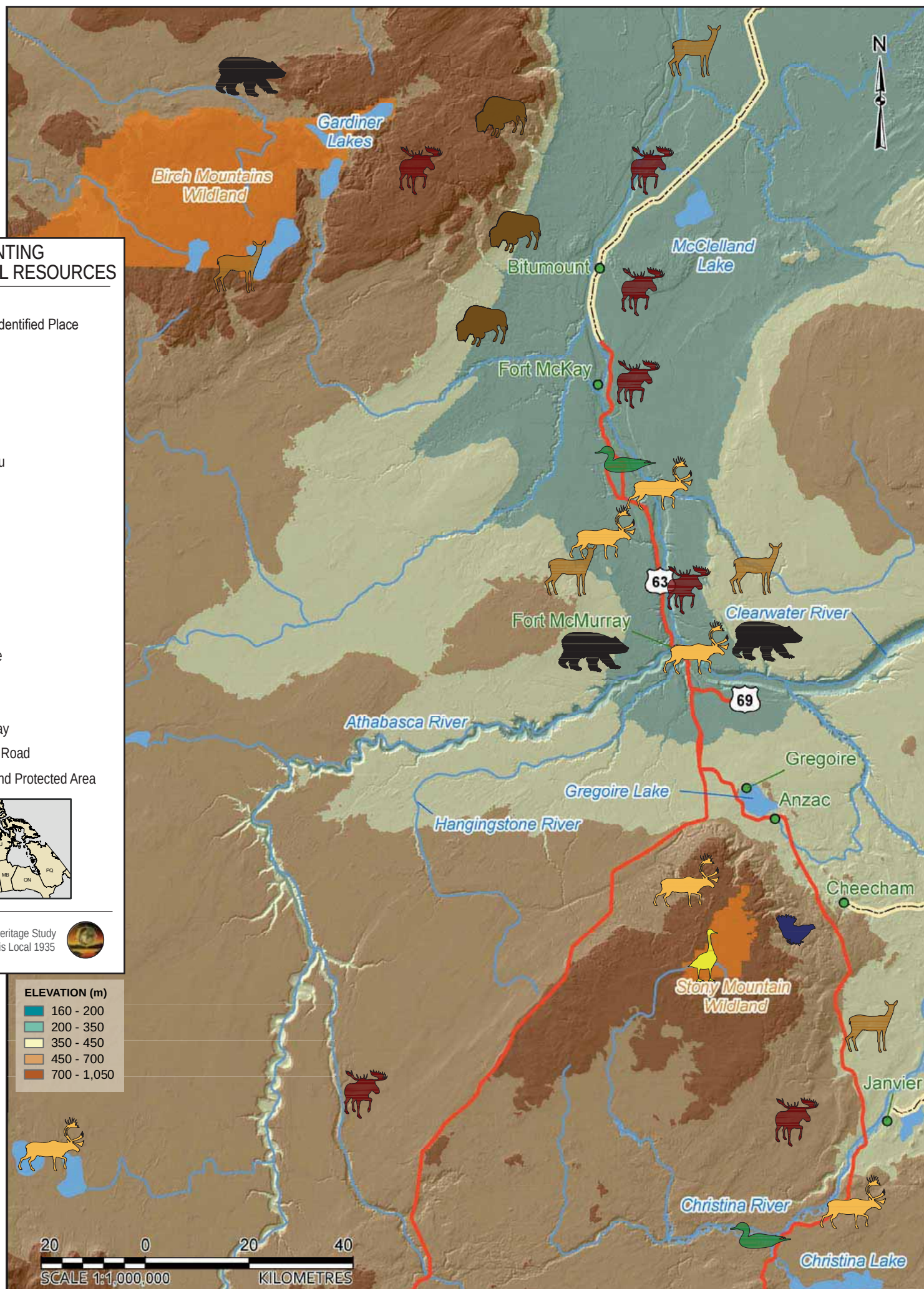


HUNTING TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

LEGEND

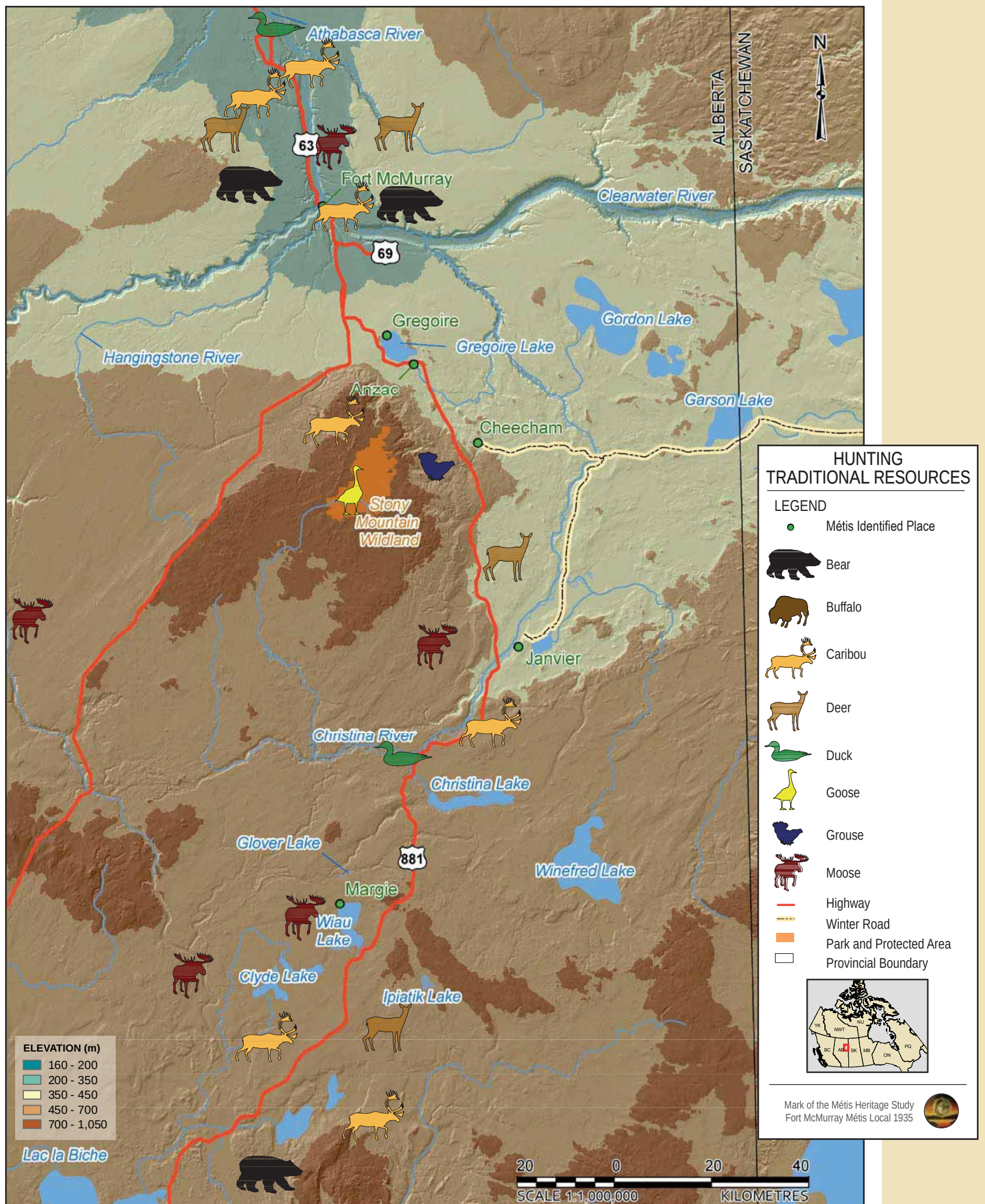
- Métis Identified Place
- Bear
- Buffalo
- Caribou
- Deer
- Duck
- Goose
- Grouse
- Moose
- Highway
- Winter Road
- Park and Protected Area

Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935



HUNTING AREAS - MID





HUNTING AREAS - SOUTH

MÉTIS RIGHTS

Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and Treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, of which Métis peoples are explicitly included. While these rights were affirmed in this Act, the definition of Métis rights-holders remained ambiguous and therefore often remained unrecognized until the R.v. Powley decision in March of 2003. In 1993, Steve and Roddy Powley, members of the Sault Ste. Marie Métis community in Ontario, were charged with possession of a moose shot out of season and without a licence. Father and son pleaded not guilty, asserting they had an Aboriginal right to hunt, and that Ontario Game laws unjustly infringed upon this right. This test case eventually went to the Supreme Court of Canada, where a unanimous court ruled that the Métis have an Aboriginal right to hunt as defined under section 35. The Supreme Court defined a ten-step “Powley Test” to identify Métis rights-holders, a modification of the test used to define the Aboriginal rights of First Nations (the Van der Peet test).

Shortly thereafter, in October of 2004, the Métis Nation of Alberta signed a Métis Harvesting Agreement with the

Government of Alberta as a step to ensuring that this Aboriginal right to hunt, trap, and fish year-round within the province of Alberta is recognized and affirmed.

While these positive legal decisions have recognized the Métis as a distinct people with Aboriginal rights, Métis individuals and communities must demonstrate that they meet the Powley Test to qualify under the legal definition of Métis, which can be a time-consuming and arduous process.

The recognition of Métis rights has meant that Métis actions and self determination related to traditional land use can be legally supported. Métis patterns of resource use were and are complex, embedded within and connected to many factors such as family structure, local fluctuations of resources, changes to the regional environment and access to land, as well as shifts in local economies. The expression of Métis rights, however, resides in the sustained ability to make decisions about subsistence and resources, and the ability to adapt through time to a changing environment and dynamic social and political landscapes.

FRANCES DUPERRON (SANDERSON) & HER FATHER, GEORGE SANDERSON GOING TO TRAPLINE



Sustaining this ability to make decisions about how resources are used and maintaining traditional practices is therefore a part of contemporary Métis life. James R. (Dickie) Dragon explains his perspective:

Yes, it is important. 'Cause there's a lot of Métis that can't afford it, don't have jobs, you know. If they do have jobs they don't have a good enough job to, you know, keep up with the cost of living and everything; rent and all that.

Even with a job, it is important, it's something that's their right whether they use it or not, they still have that right. It's part of their heritage and should be handed down.

Métis hunting practices have had to evolve and adapt to rapid changes in the local environment and animal populations, and ever more restricted access to traditional hunting areas. It has also been necessary through time for hunters to make adjustments related to changing trends in wage labour, and prior to the 2003 R.v. Powley decision, government hunting regulations.

Before the advent of snowmobiles, hunting areas were often accessed by dog sled and snowshoes, limiting easy access by newcomers while keeping travel corridors open for wildlife. Development of oil and gas projects and the infrastructure that comes with them, such as roads and cutlines, is changing Métis access to hunting in previously undisturbed areas, sometimes removing hunting areas entirely due to large-scale land development. However, new roads and cutlines also mean new points of access to hunting areas for some.



Ron Huppie describes hunting life before recent changes:

We used to shoot caribou, shoot moose in the summertime. Moose was really plentiful at Wiau Lake and Clyde Lake. You got to remember there was no access, so nobody hunted there except for us guys and old Oliver Bourque and even Alex Boucher. It was just a way of life, you shot one in the wintertime and you shot one in the summer. I mean now there's roads, there's cutlines, gas compressor plants right in the middle of those areas now. At one time there was no such thing as gas plants.

Cutlines increased the visibility, and thus the vulnerability of wildlife. Jules Flobert describes this effect:

I know that from my trapline. When we go hunting in the fall, my wife used to see more moose than I did and I was out in the bush looking for them. Because we were on a cutline eh. She could look both ways from the cabin and she'd see more and more animals than I did.

MOOSE

Throughout these changes witnessed and adapted to by Métis over the years, many hunting practices have decidedly remained the same. For example, as per government regulations, the official open season for hunting ducks is in the fall, but as part of the annual cycle, Ron Huppie explains, “Traditionally we’ve hunted ducks in the spring and we still do it today.” He goes on to describe the reason why:

When they come back in the spring, they’re nice and fat because they’ve been in the grain fields down south. In the fall when they go back, they’re skinny, they’re not any good until they get around Stettler and that area, after they get into the grain fields. That’s when they’re nice and fat but where we traditionally lived, and we didn’t travel to Stettler to shoot ducks, so springtime was your mallard time and in the fall you had other ducks that you could shoot that would actually get fat up here but a mallard won’t.



GREEN-WINGED TEAL



MALLARD DUCKS



EDDIE ARMIT HOLDING A BEAVER AT RAT CAMP IN 1950.

Many Métis Elders have noticed rapid changes in the local environment and have been alarmed in particular by changes they've noticed in animal populations, the cornerstone of a traditional diet. Métis Elders speak about the changes they've seen in the environment:

Dorothy Squire:

You know, anything that you want to hunt or fish, they're all on limits now. It's probably because there's not that much coming in anymore. You know. All these oil sands going up all around us here, the animals aren't coming this way as much anymore as they did before. You know. Like the caribou. We don't even get caribou unless you go further north. Very, very seldom do you get caribou.

Jules Flobert:

When I used to go out in the spring and go spring hunting for beaver, there used to be birds singin', ducks quackin' and one thing and another. Now there's nothing, no bees, hardly any birds, not too many ducks anymore. A lotta change since 1966.

Agnes Herman:

There is a big difference now because in the olden days there was everything that you can go hunting for. Nowadays you'll hardly see any rabbits, you'll hardly see any ducks, you'll hardly get any fish due to the industry, the oil and gas that they're digging, they're digging under the ground and pumping gas and oil and all these different things. That's the reason why we don't eat wild meat like we used to.



MUSKRAT



CANADA GOOSE

FISHING

Fish was a staple and year-round mainstay for Métis people, representing an important resource especially when other foods were scarce, and served as an accompaniment to wild game, garden vegetables and berries. Fish were also the primary source of food for sled dogs, thus fuelling a key mode of transportation for trappers before the arrival of snowmobiles. “When we were on the trapline, my parents put a net for fishing jacks and pickerel,” recalls Georgina Flobert.

While fishing activity increased in the spring as people returned from traplines, many Elders recall winter ice fishing to feed dogs or to build up surplus food to sell to trappers arriving from afar. In order to preserve the meat, the fish would be frozen or smoked in the winter and dried or canned in the summer.

An understanding of the seasonal availability of fish and good fishing locations and techniques for catching them was and continues to be important for many Métis. Many Elders know which species of fish are abundant at certain times of year as Ron Huppie, who has spent a lifetime fishing in the lakes and creeks of the region, shares:

When I was a kid when we were living at Wiau Lake we used to fish at Ipiatik Lake, which is inside the bombing range. That’s probably the biggest whitefish I ever seen in my life that come out of that Ipiatik Lake.

But you can only fish that lake when the bombing range is shut down between Christmas and New Year’s. So they used to go set up tents and fish there between Christmas and New Year’s.

Mother’s Day, see the jacks [northern pike] come running first down a creek and then the pickerel would be after. Right around Mother’s Day the pickerel will be in the creeks. I can remember that for sure.

When we lived at Chard, you fished in all the creeks there and Christina River had lots of pickerel and all the creeks coming off any river system off the Athabasca. Any creek that comes off the Christina River will have grayling. They’ll have jack, pickerel and ling.

What used to be Birch Lake - you just go across the railway tracks, we called it Long Lake, there’s another lake there. And that’s really good for whitefish too. Huge whitefish in there. What you call a jumbo whitefish. Glover Lake, go set a net in there, get all kinds of whitefish.



NORTHERN PIKE

Métis used hook lines, snares and nets for ice fishing. Some techniques are better for certain situations than others, for example, “whitefish you couldn’t hook, so we’d always have to set nets for whitefish. No, no you can’t fool them,” explains Ron Huppie. He elaborates on the practice of catching fish without a hook:

What you do is you put a snare at the end of a pole and when the fish come up the creek you just slowly put it around them and when you got the snare around the fish you jerk them out. At Imperial Mills, we left there in, I think, ‘59 or ‘60, that’s how all the Métis people did it there, you snared the fish. Massey Boucher, Walter, Fred all those guys, we snared fish on the Heart River. All the Métis people, around and some of the people are still there today, born and raised there, all snare-fished. That’s the way they did.

That’s how we got them and that’s usually in the springtime. April. I’d say right around early May. After the ice is gone in the river, depending on where you are at but if you are near a lake, give it about two days and them fish will be coming. They won’t bite your hook so you use a snare. Later on in the summer we used hooks, but when the fish come down in spring, it was snare because they wouldn’t even bite the hooks. Everybody would be happy, yeah.

It was a lot easier to snare fish especially in the springtime when they come down, you can see them when they come swimming and you just put the snare around them and pull them out. You just had to sneak. That’s all. You can get creeks as narrow as two feet and it might be a foot deep and those fish will be coming up there like crazy. Just pull them out. When I was a little kid that was a big thing.

Ice fishing using a net and “jigger” is a more complicated method, involving more care and attention devoted to the maintenance of nets and the challenge of fishing in winter conditions. Ernie Ray Michael describes his experience and how the ice net system works:

Well, you see, if you’re commercial fishing or fishing every winter in the lake from home, you use a jigger, with a board with a rod up and a steel tooth on it and a chunk of wood with weight on it. Then you got your cord line, your line under ice. It’s under the ice now. So then you tie your net to it, you pull it out. Then when you visit your net, you tie your cord onto that. So when you pull your net, the cord’s going down. Then you pull it back. As you’re pulling a net, it comes out of the hole. But it doesn’t all come out in one pile, it just comes out as you’re taking out the fish. Then when you get it all out, you’re going to spread out all over the ice.



LAKE TROUT



FISH DRYING RACK IN THE WOODS

Lots of times it freezes. Maybe you're gone sometimes a week, ten days, it freezes down right to the bottom, it sinks. Sometimes out there you're all full of ice because the water's flying as it hits you and freezes. Then soon as you get into where it's warm, it starts to melt on your clothes, so you kind of scrape it with a knife or anything. It just comes off. You don't let it stay there til you're full of ice. You just have a parka and half the time you got it open. And once you get full of ice, you can't close it anyhow. Your zipper's all froze up. Oh yeah, but you get used to it.

Ernie Ray Michael would use ice nets to build a winter surplus to sell. His wife Therese reminisces:

I remember his fishing days. I remember going to the warehouse where he kept all his fish. We'd go in there and it seemed like a mountain of fish. All this frozen fish was piled right up to the ceiling and this way, this would be eating fish for, you know, to eat. And then this side over here, it was piled up to the ceiling and this was for dogs, that's what he said to me.

Ron Huppie recalls that preserving fish required ingenuity, because refrigeration was expensive:

You got fish in the spring whenever or in the winter and if it was wintertime you froze them, in the summertime you can them. We'd smoke them, we'd eat them, but you got to remember the old days, I can remember as a little kid, it would have been '61, we got the first TV. We had to put up the big pole with the antenna and then my dad had bought the generator. Now we could have TV. We could have a fridge, but then we didn't run it all the time because it was fairly expensive right. About a dollar a night. So we would run it

about six hours then shut it off. Then wintertime you only ran it when you needed TV because you had your natural outside fridge right. But that's why in those days you smoked a lot of fish and you smoked your meat because it is the only way that you can really preserve it.

Illustrating the importance of dry fish as a commodity of the trapping economy, Therese Michael describes her family history running Dog Camp, a sled dog boarding outfit at the mouth of Quatre Fourches.

My mom did lots of dryfish in the summer. We used to move out from Chip, go in towards Lake Claire, and my dad would keep a bunch of dogs for the Hudson Bay. Their men used to travel with dogs and in the summer they'd need somebody to feed the dogs. Sometimes my dad would have a hundred dogs there to feed.

Roland Woodward recalls that the Aboriginal way of managing the aquatic resources of the region has traditionally been sustainable, showing care for the environment:

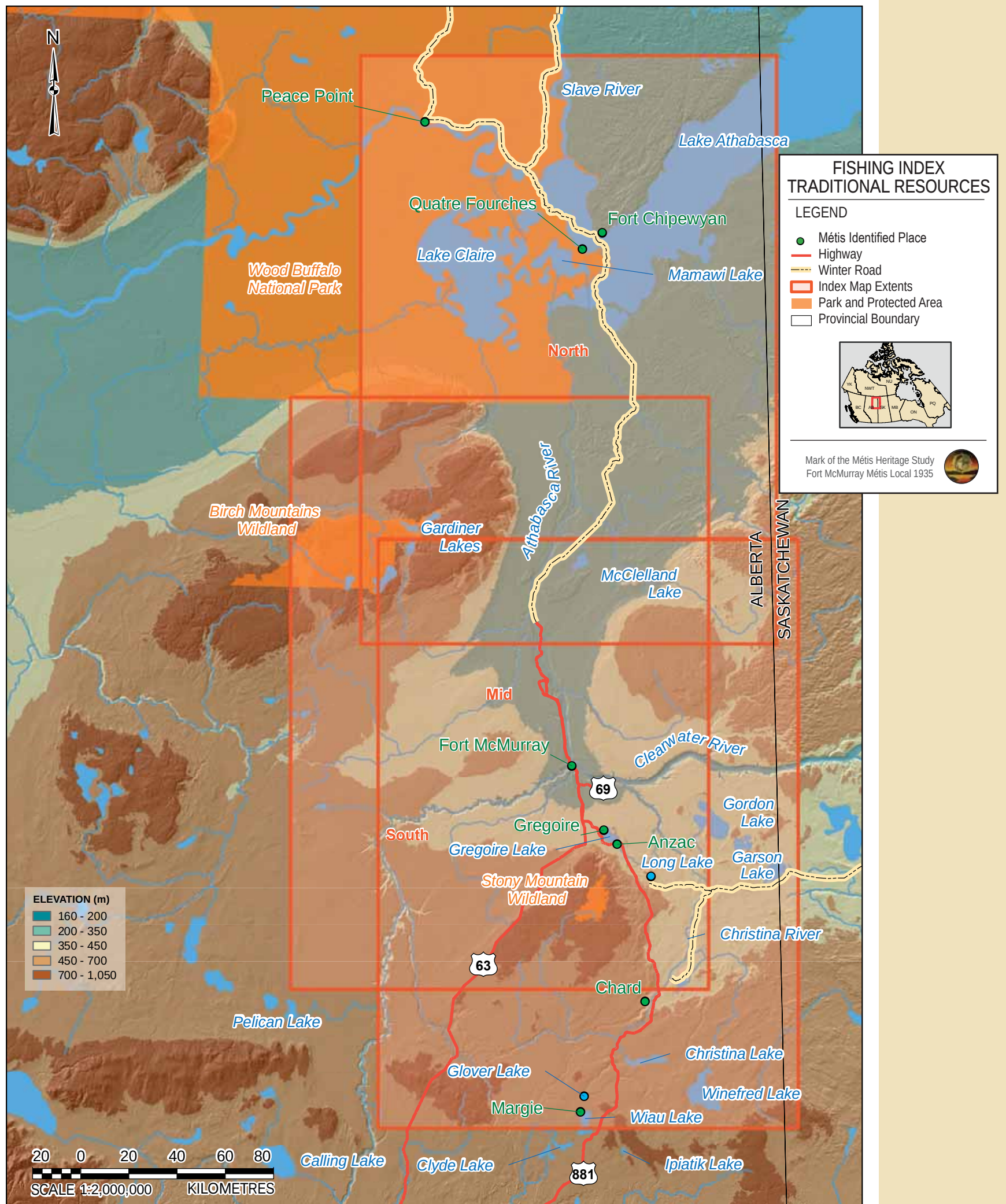
The Native people, they always managed their own resources. You never killed all the beaver or all the muskrats, you know, you didn't fish out the lakes. Your nets weren't big enough, you know. Like, when they go in to fish Lac La Loche, you know, a hundred and fifty fishermen come in here and they've got ten nets each. But, they're only allowed to fish for three days. You know, they get two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of those pickerel out of there just like nothing. It's better to fish it conservatively year round, sell a little bit at a time, eh.



LAKE WHITEFISH

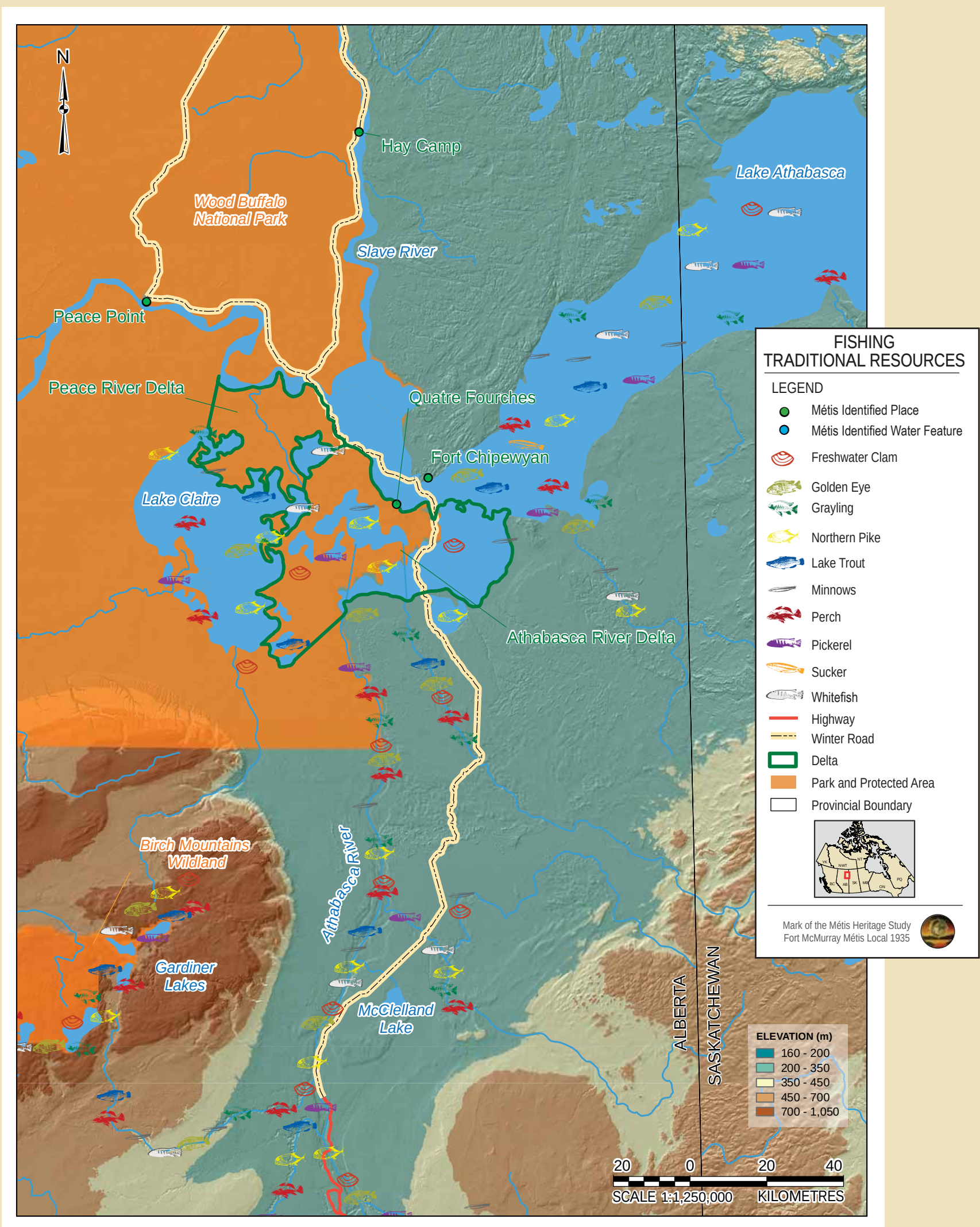


GANG OF WHITE SUCKERS



FISHING AREAS INDEX





FISHING AREAS - NORTH

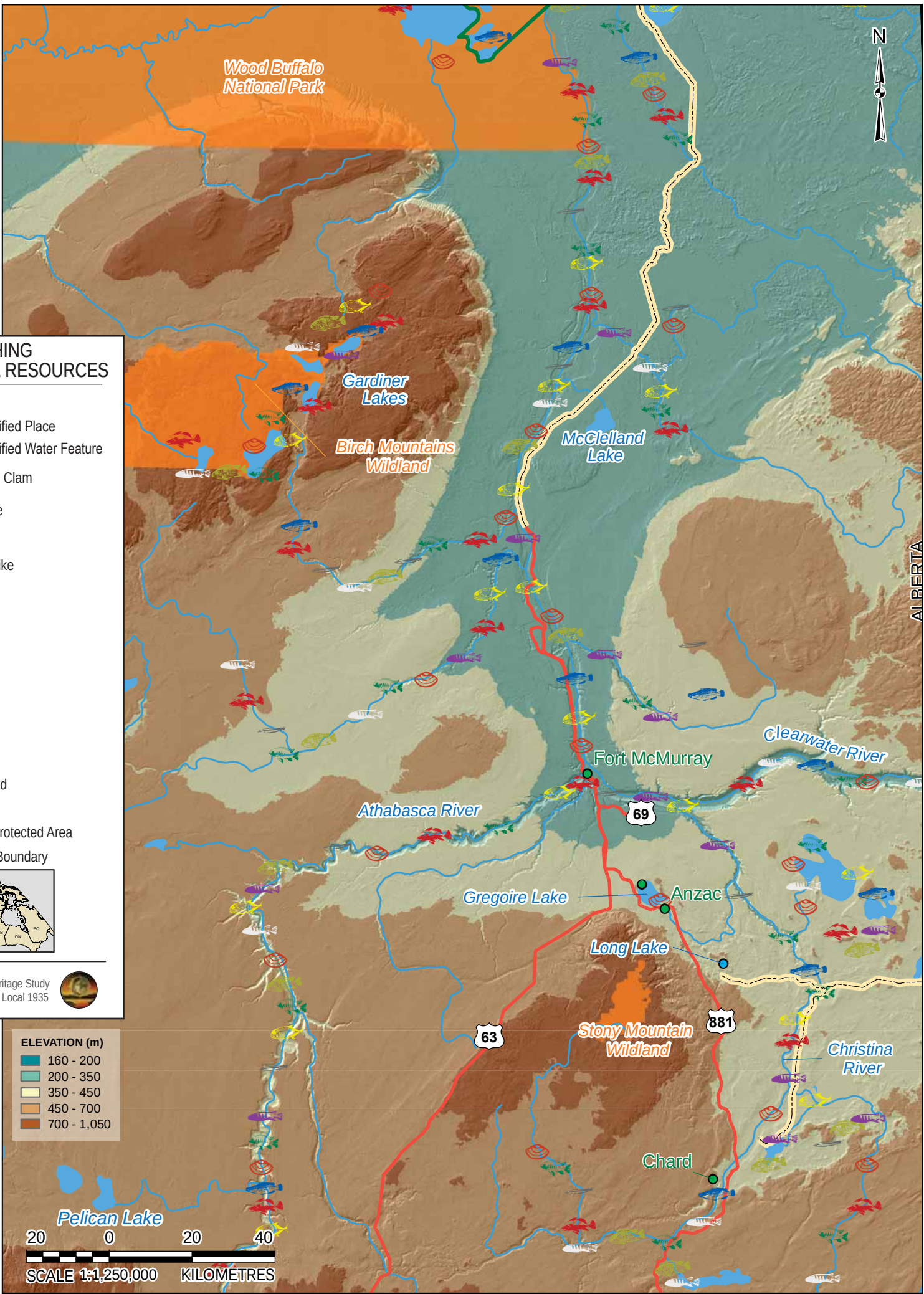
FISHING TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- Métis Identified Water Feature
- Freshwater Clam
- Golden Eye
- Grayling
- Northern Pike
- Lake Trout
- Minnows
- Perch
- Pickereel
- Sucker
- Whitefish
- Highway
- Winter Road
- Delta
- Park and Protected Area
- Provincial Boundary

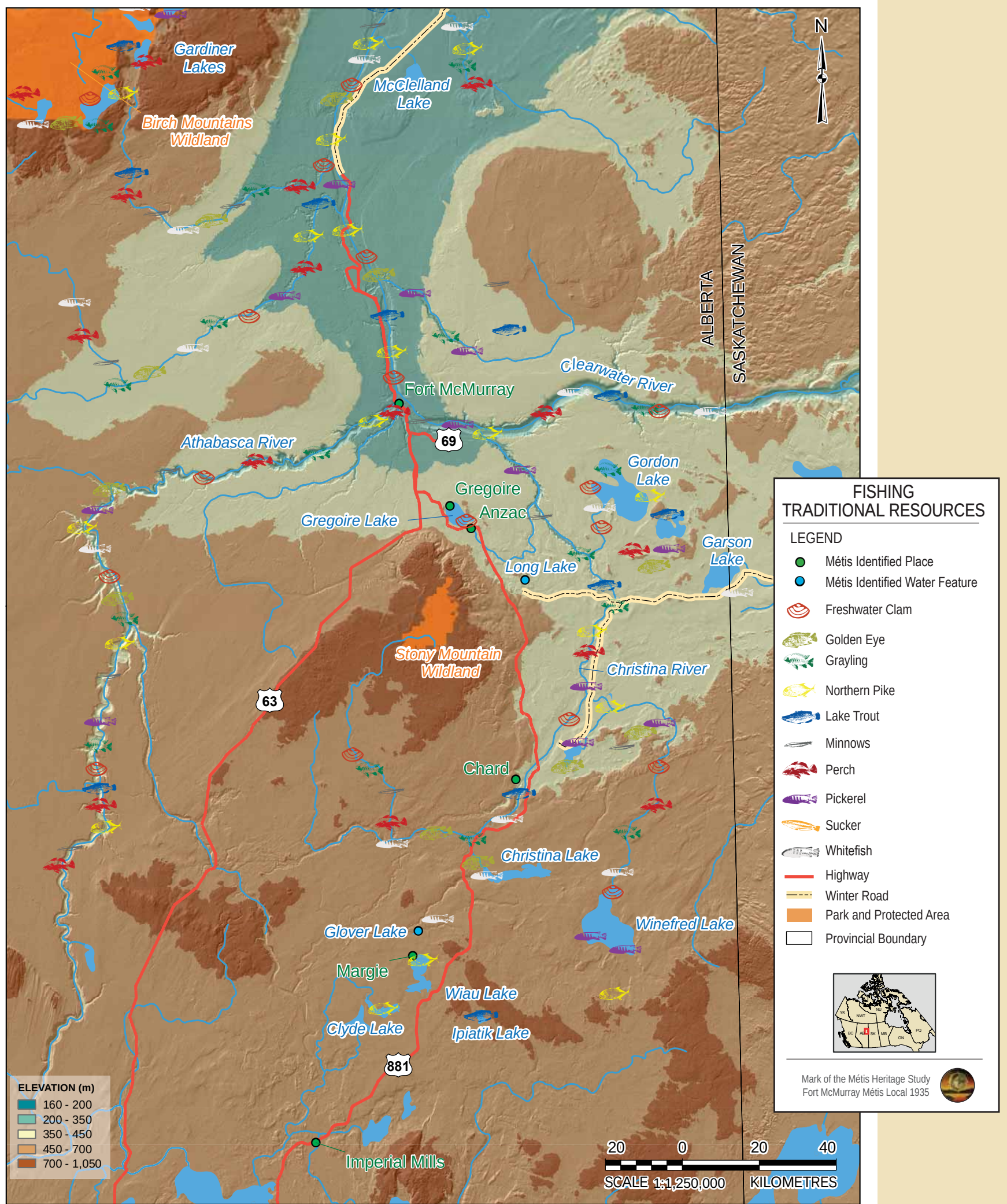


Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935



FISHING AREAS - MID





FISHING AREAS - SOUTH

Selling fish to trappers was an industrious business for Métis families as Ernie Ray and Therese Michael. Ernie Ray Michael explains:

Before the skidoos come around, there was all dog teams. And the trappers, they come in for Christmas or they come in, they bring their families, they got five dogs, six dogs, seven dogs. And you bring in your wife and two, three kids and the sleigh and your junk, you got no place for fish. But you got money, 'cause you got your fur. So you come in and you stay with relatives or neighbours or somebody. You didn't stay in a hotel, there was nothing. And then you buy fish from somebody that was fishing.

So there was some fishing, some trapping. Like, if you're trapping and there's no rats and there's not much fur, you went and you fished. And some of these guys, they got big lines in the bush and they got lots of fur, well then that's where you'd buy your fish. I remember times at Christmas time I was broke, yeah, before Christmas, next to broke. But I had, maybe I had five or six hundred dollars' worth of fish. So by the middle of January all the trappers were broke but I had a big pile of money. But I had no fish.

Lots of them, they trapped in the wintertime and fished in the summer. Well like I said, if there's lots of rats, good trapping in the Delta, they didn't bother. They'd fish for themselves but they didn't fish for sale. But, say, some years it's dry, like you know, some years there's no water, some years there's lots of water. But in the bush it's usually the same, it's always the same out in this kind of country. But in the Delta, it changes.

So you got a bunch of nets out, you went and fished. 'Cause you know those guys are coming in and they've got to have dog food. But then you're usually not alone, there's usually quite a few of you. But they all get a little bit.



YELLOW PICKEREL (WALLEYE) FOREGROUND, WHITE SUCKER BEHIND



BERRIES

The nutritional value, variety, availability and abundance of berries make this resource an important food source and commodity for Métis families. Berry picking remains a consistent activity in the summer and early fall months, with families travelling to revisit favourite places from knowledge passed down by parents and grandparents.

Therese Michael describes her family's berry picking activities:

In the summer there was raspberries and strawberries, saskatoons, blueberries in the fall, cranberries. My mother used to dry berries, like the saskatoons, they would dry them on a big white canvas. They'd come just like raisins, used to cook with them. Cranberries they made jam with. Put them in the sealers, gallon jars, with the big lid. That's where they used to put their jam. I remember washing those pots.

We'd go a long ways by Pine Pass, wherever there's berries, Big Point. All over the place like that. Down river for different kinds of berries. Strawberries at the mouth of the Athabasca River behind the Dog Head. There's a big hill there that's the best place for strawberries. But raspberries, just around the place that we lived. And saskatoons.

Georgina Flobert illustrates the importance of berries to her family:

Mom did a lot of canning. We have to, otherwise we'll starve. Because at that time we were poor. We'd go out picking raspberries, blueberries, cranberries and mom canned them for the winter, to make jam, food. But at that time we got a lot of blueberries, lots. And now, just what's going on, there's nothing. All the blueberry patches are gone now.

RASPBERRY



We went across from the Snye River over there to climb up that hill like that. Berries all over there.

Mom didn't go. We had a friend there, an old lady she wanted to go and pick berries over there so mom said, "Okay go with her."

Mom said to the old lady, "I'll let the girl, the kids, go with you," and she was happy. We took blankets and boxes and we filled them up. For three days I think we were up there and come back home. Her name was Mrs. Powder, her first name I forget now.

Every time I get a chance I'm out there picking berries.

Good berry picking areas were and are well known and cherished by families and circles of friends. Discussions about berries are almost always accompanied by comparing the best places to go to pick them. Harvey Sykes recalls the importance of certain berry gathering sites in the region:

My mom, she used to pick a lot of berries. This time of the year, they picked blueberries up the hill just on this side of the office there, where that campground is. It was all jackpine in there, and that was always good berries in there. Blueberries, especially. Her and three, four other Elders. And they used to camp there for a whole week, and they'd set up a big camp there, and that's where they stayed. And they picked berries for a whole week or two sometimes. And then they used to bring the berries out and can some and then sell some to local people here and stuff.

Right down there by the Keyano College housing and all that's there. It used to be good for high-bush cranberries. We used to go there with five-gallon pails, and then my mom would can them.

HIGH BUSH-CRANBERRY



As with many traditional activities, berry picking was an opportunity for families to gather and work together. Arthur Harpe describes:

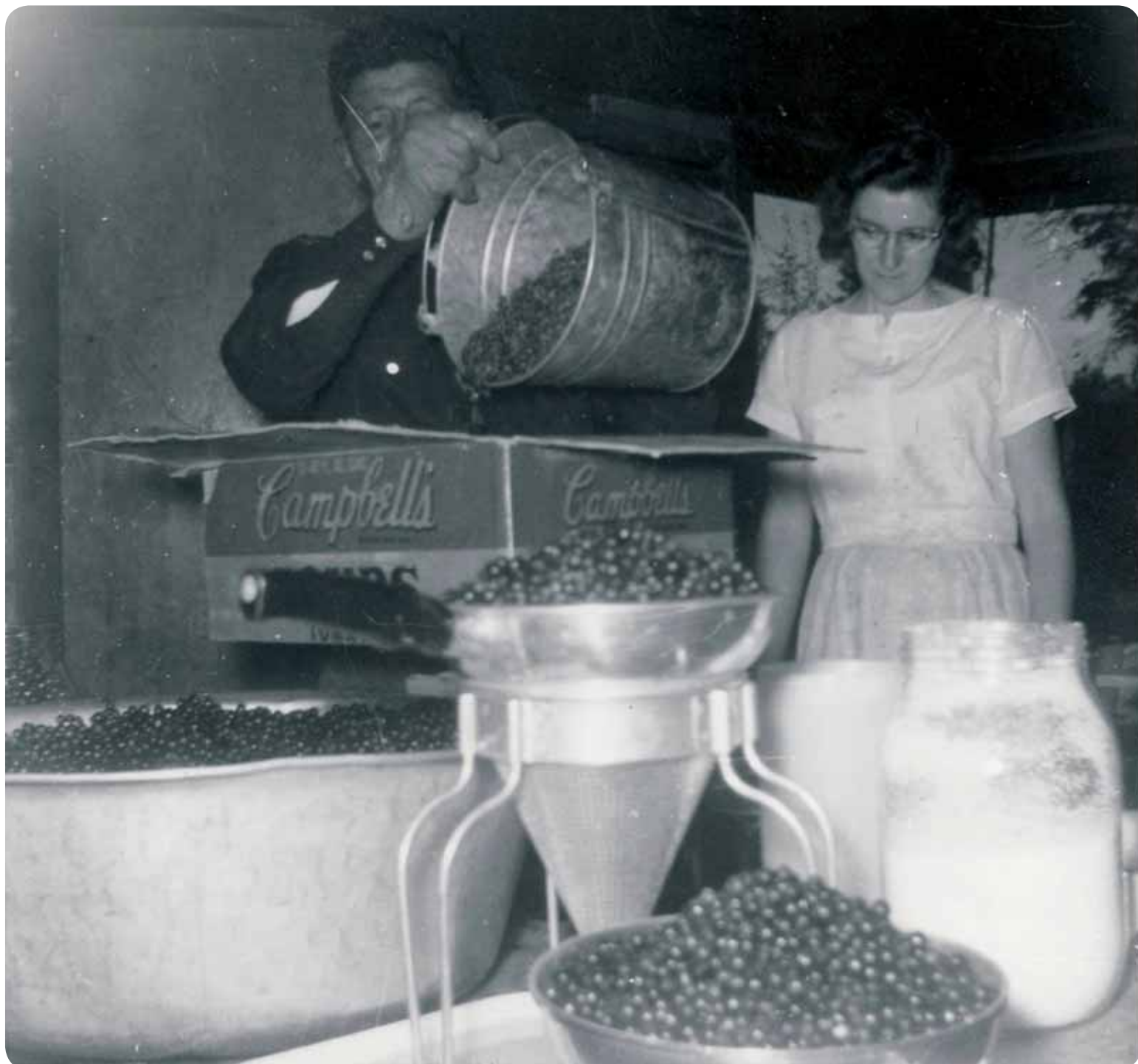
We'd go pick blueberries every fall. The whole family. We lived downtown there by the Prairie and my dad would hook up the horses and the wagon and bring the whole tribe up here on Saturday. Starting from the Sawridge, all around this area, wild blueberries. We'd go home with two tubs full at night.

Changes to the regional environment have interfered with the availability and accessibility of berry picking sites, and, as Jules Flobert describes, he's noticed changes to the berries themselves:

They're a bit on the smaller side, what I've seen anyway. I used to go out at one time with a three or five pound pail, 45 minutes I used to fill it, and they were big like peas, eh. But now I don't see them that way as much anymore.



BLUEBERRIES



MEENSA PRODUCTS COOPERATIVE PLANT IN ANZAC, 1965



WILD STRAWBERRY

Therese Michael recalls berry picking areas lost to the impacts of industrial development:

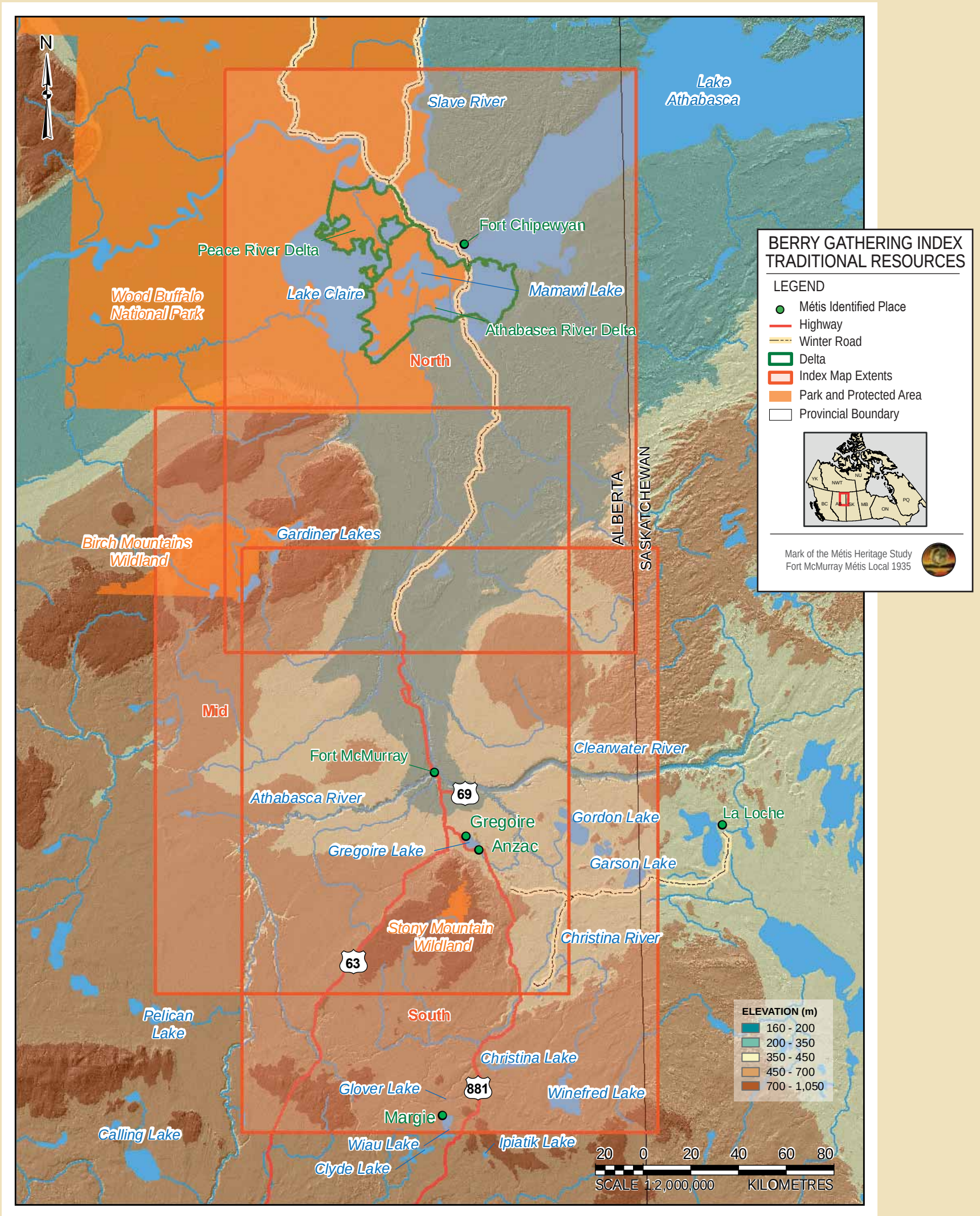
At that place where the Syncrude buildings are there used to be all kinds of berries. And when they first came, that was it. And another mine came, that's it, that's gone. So there's nothing, there is nothing to pick now. It seems they used to be mostly blueberries around.

Agnes Herman feels that a change to the quality and availability of certain berries is linked to environmental contaminants:

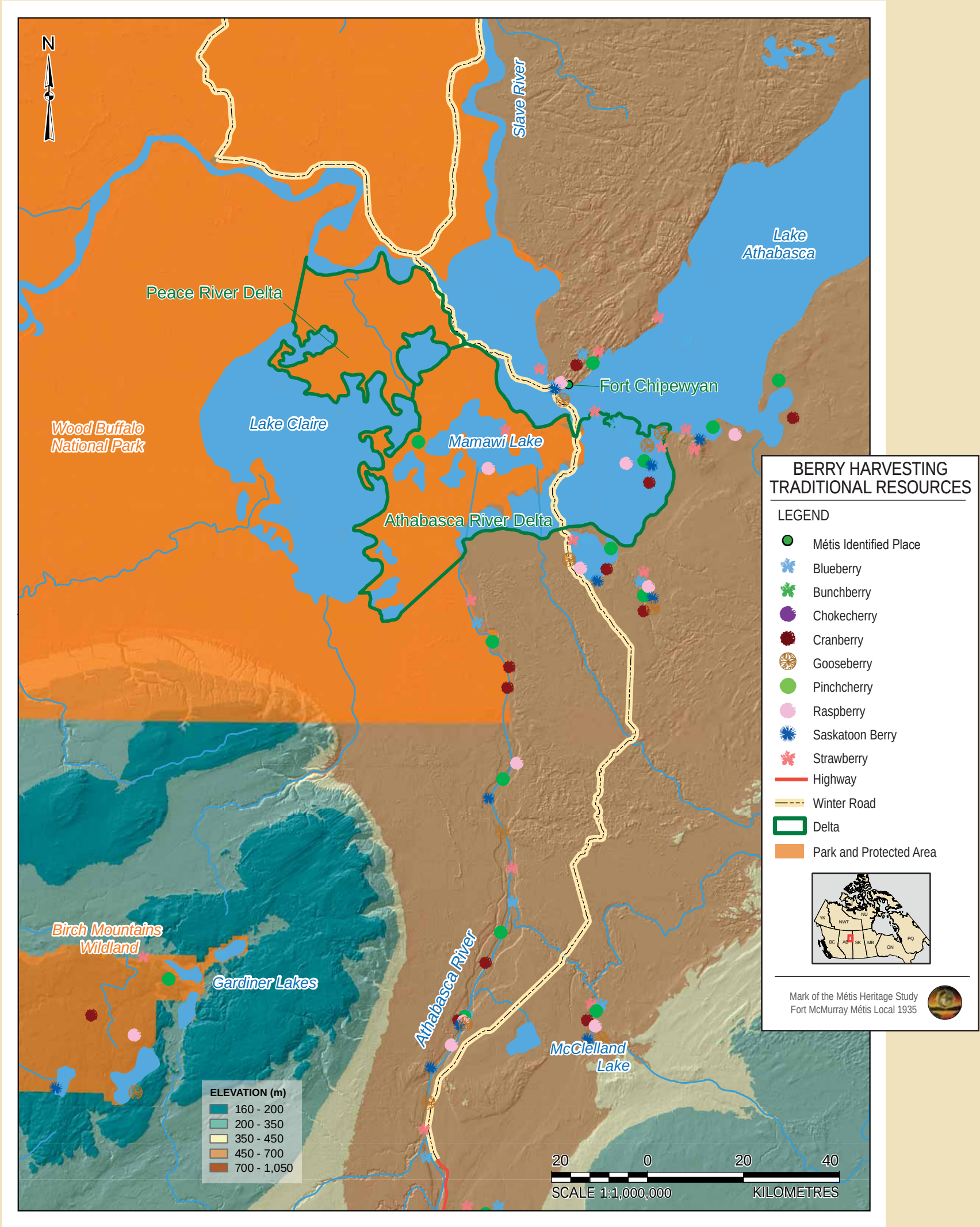
There's a lot of poisons out there. They spray different leaves at times and that's where they killed all the berries off is from the pollution. So that's the reason why we can't eat berries like we used to in the olden days. Right now it's really hard for us to live off the land. There is a very big difference from the olden days to nowadays due to the pollution. Like there's just rarely berries or any wild meat that we used to live off.



PREPARING JAM AT MEENSA PRODUCTS COOPERATIVE



BERRY HARVESTING INDEX



BERRY HARVESTING - NORTH



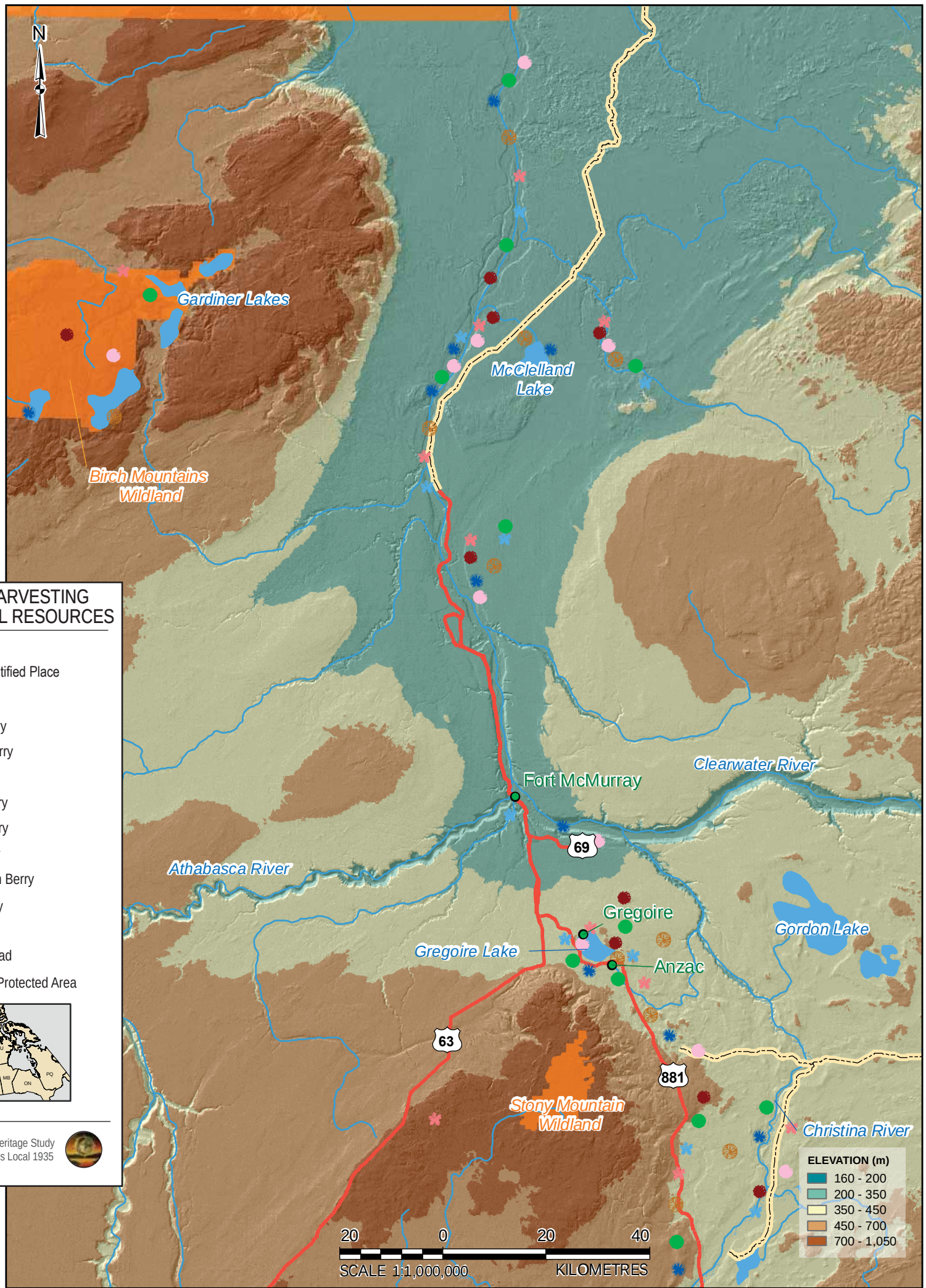
**BERRY HARVESTING
TRADITIONAL RESOURCES**

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- ✧ Blueberry
- ✧ Bunchberry
- Chokecherry
- Cranberry
- Gooseberry
- Pincherry
- Raspberry
- ✧ Saskatoon Berry
- ✧ Strawberry
- Highway
- Winter Road
- Park and Protected Area



Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935

BERRY HARVESTING - MID



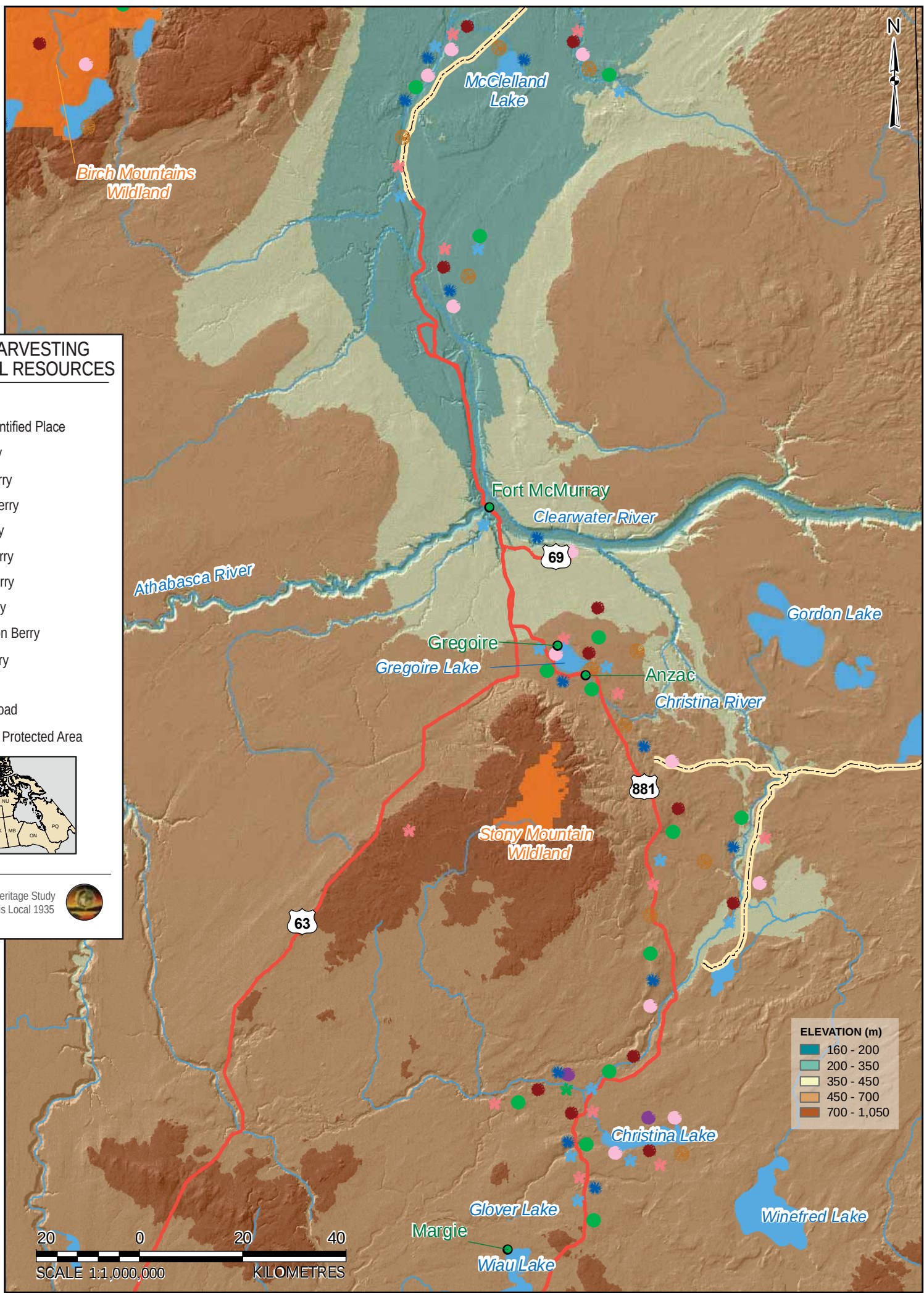
BERRY HARVESTING TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- ★ Blueberry
- ★ Bunchberry
- Chokecherry
- Cranberry
- Gooseberry
- Pincherry
- Raspberry
- ★ Saskatoon Berry
- ★ Strawberry
- Highway
- Winter Road
- Park and Protected Area



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Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935

BERRY HARVESTING - SOUTH





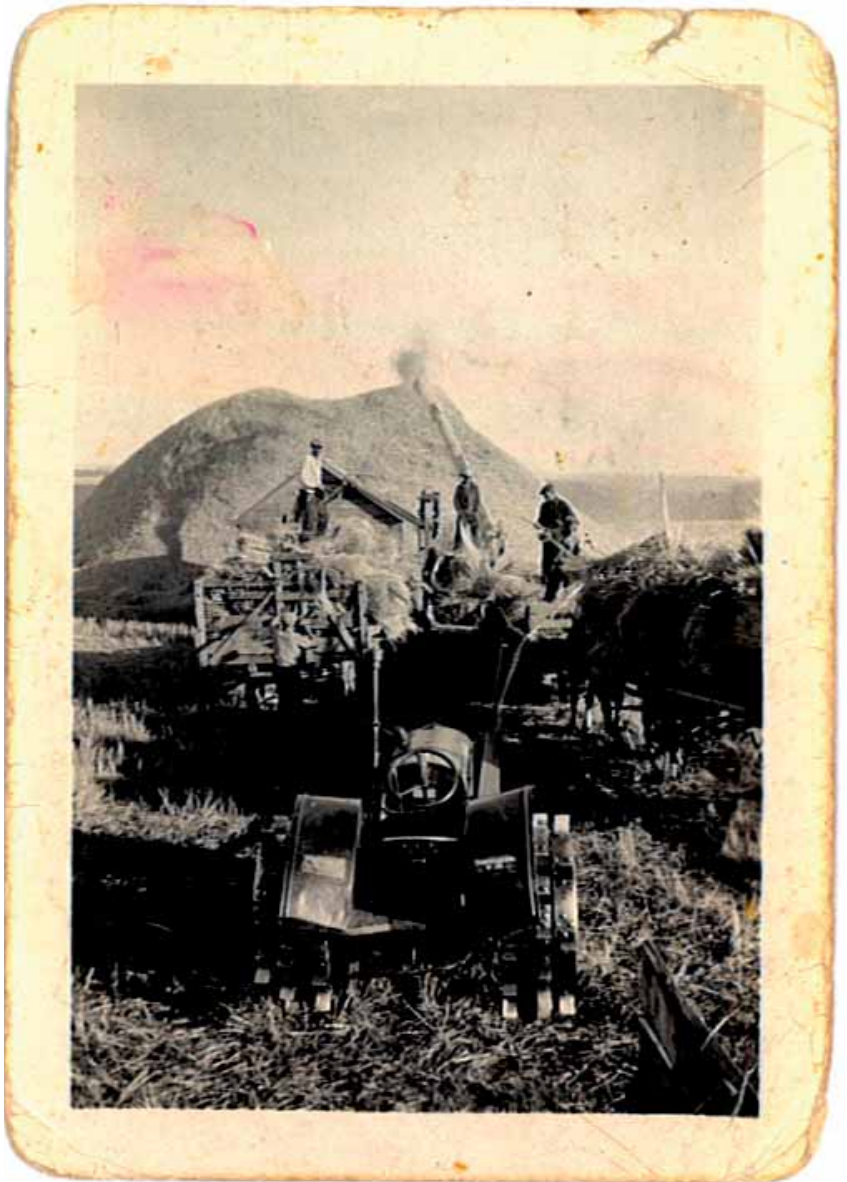
CHEECHAM PURCHASED THE CATTLE WITH MÉTIS SCRIP



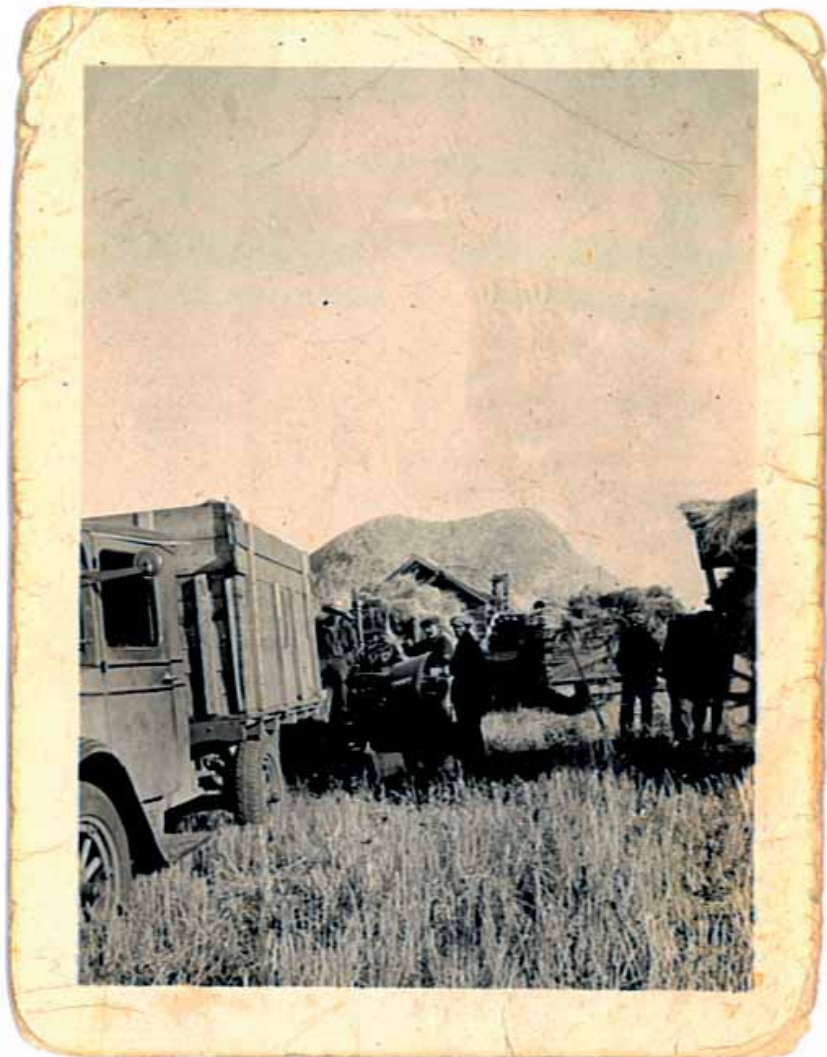
A GROUP OF MEN PUTTING UP HAY AT CHRISTINA CROSSING



TRACTOR USED FOR HAULING WOOD



THRASHING IN THE OLD DAYS



FARM WORKERS

GARDENS

In addition to wild foods harvested from the land, Métis families often maintained subsistence gardens. They kept root cellars to store vegetables for the winter, along with preserved wild foods such as meat and berries.

Arthur Harpe recalls his family plot with pride:

We lived out there and we'd grow big gardens, eh. We always had vegetables. All the time. You've heard of the root cellar, where you'd put all your stuff in there and it would last all winter. We always had lots, not fancy, but lots on the table.

Georgina Flobert kept a garden at her home on MacDonald Island:

We grew potatoes, carrots, pretty near everything, beets. People put fish in there to fertilize the ground, then your potatoes grow good and your vegetables.

MAC MacKENZIE'S ANZAC FARM, CIRCA 1920





CATTAIL

CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Traditional resource use is an integral part of Métis livelihood and heritage. The environmental change witnessed by Métis over the last two generations has concerned many people. Many Métis believe that all traditional resources are supported by healthy water systems. Changes to water, and the cascading effects through ecosystems are diverse. Métis Elders describe the changes witnessed in their lifetimes.

WATER

Ernie Ray Michael explains how impacts to the water cycle have changed the vegetation and the water levels in the Athabasca and Peace River Delta:

There's no basin. It used to be the lakes, they got to be deep, there was a bottom for the water to stay in. But now it's all grown up, grown up and the water's high, whole country's full of water. It's high, and it just runs around all over. But soon as the rivers drop, the lake drops, everything else drops. A lot of years ago, it stayed. It's like you got a pail or tub, the water stayed in it. But now you can fill that tub full up, there's nothing to stay, it drains out.

We lost seventy percent of water in the last fifty years, Athabasca and Peace River Delta. The Bennett Dam, that's what started to go downhill. Because, you see, the water— every four to five years, the cycle was up or down. Up or down. Well, you see, now when it goes up, they cut the water off, they were making that dam. Then when the water went down, they're still making it. Then when the water come back up, they were still making it, so the water still didn't come from Peace River. Then when the water went down, they were still working on that dam. And then by that time, the willows and the grass took hold. Usually, you see, before it could take hold, the water come and it flooded and killed it, and it was just weeds. But now the grass and the willows took hold because it was too long. And everything went to hell.

These impacts to the water cycle have affected beaver populations, Ernie elaborates:

Back when I was trapping twelve years ago, I killed a hundred and twelve beaver there on the Embarras River. Dickie figures there's not a hundred beaver in the whole Embarras now. You see, when it floods in the spring, the ice jams and the water comes over the banks and it floods all the Delta, so it all fills up like when the snow melts, you know. Everything fills up. But now, everything fills up, but soon as the water in

the rivers drops, everything runs out, 'cause there's no basin, no hole. It's filled up.

The water level changes down beaver every year. And rats, otters, stuff like that. They live in the beaver houses, lots of them. Why? Well, you see, lots of times when you leave Chip, you go to Fort Smith, they let water out of that dam. When you come back, you can't cross the ice on the Peace River. The water's up about three feet. You got to go around. See, they let water out of the Bennett Dam and they flood everything. They flood the whole country.

The beaver, he got two feet of ice and has to go through it, and the water's over that ice and its right over top of his house, and he can't come out. The house is thick and it's all frozen mud. And he got a little hole in the ice where his breathing hole is, how is he going to get out? Well how could we change it? Let the water out in September, and you don't hurt nothing, because then beavers didn't make the house yet. And by the time it froze up, the water would be back down.

Changes to water levels are not the only factors affecting aquatic plants and animals. Ernie Ray Michael recognizes pollution as a major concern, as evidenced by the changes to wetland grasses:

You see, every farmer all the way up the House River or Peace River, the mountains, everywhere, they put

all these chemicals they put in to kill the weeds, and stuff to make it grow and all that stuff. But when it rains, you see, it's all washed and it all runs into the ditch. They all got a little ditchway so it don't flood. And those little ditches runs into a bigger ditch. Then it ends up in a little creek. Then it ends up in a bigger creek. Then it ends up in Athabasca River or it ends up in Peace River. And then it all ends up in the Delta. Then when it passes Mamawi Lake where all this wildlife and stuff is, ducks and fish and everything else inside there, animals, it all ends up with those weeds, and the weeds act as a filter. That's why they all got hair on them. They look just like they've got hair, and that's filth.

For Alcide (Massey) Boucher, both pollution and changes to water levels are notable concerns:

The water dropped. You can see what you call sand bars now any place, even in little rivers. You never seen that before, sand bars. I see sand bars all over now.

Before, we used to drink this water, now you can't. It was nice before, anyplace, even the creeks. Sometimes you can see that river, it's like rust on top, that's no kidding. You can't even use it for washing dishes.

I wouldn't get a fish, too much pollution.

BEAVER



WESTERN BOREAL TOAD





PEACE RIVER VALLEY - WEST





**PEACE RIVER VALLEY
TRADITIONAL RESOURCES**

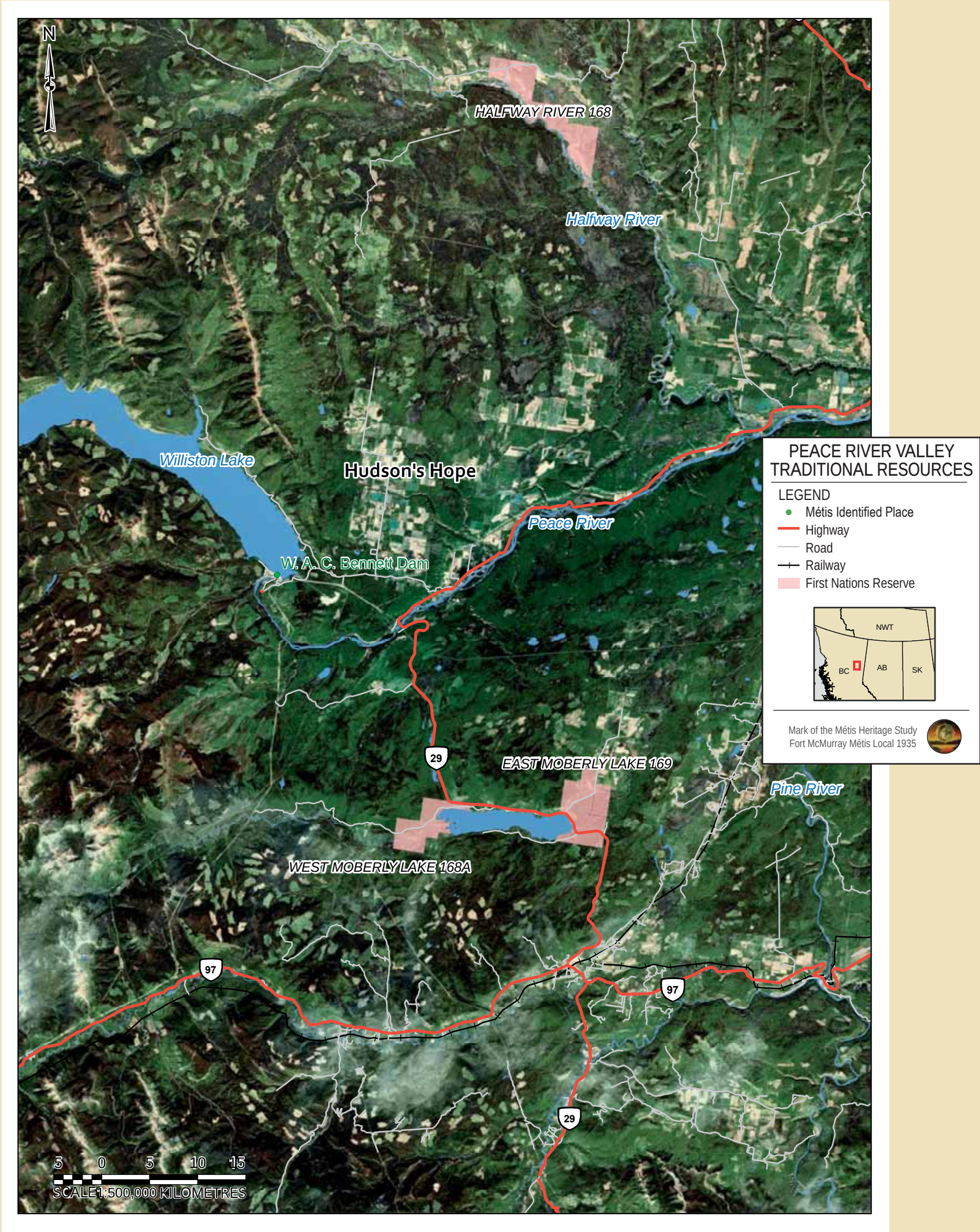
LEGEND

- ! Métis Identified Place
- Highway
- Provincial Boundary

Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935

PEACE RIVER VALLEY - EAST





W.A.C. BENNETT DAM, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Changes to water quality have affected people's perception of the safety of drinking water. Several Elders describe their observations:

Therese Michael:

In the Peace and the Athabasca and Embarras, when we travelled, everybody that travelled up and down the rivers and the lake always carried a dipper or a tin cup or something in their boats, always. 'Cause remember when you travel? We'd just drink water. And when we lived in Sweetgrass, you pumped water right out of the Peace River into a barrel, and then you let it settle for a few hours. Then you take your bucket with a little cheesecloth or a cotton and you'd dump it into your pail. And nobody got sick from it, that's the way it was.

Ernie Ray Michael:

Now you go to a trapline, you take bottled water.

Changes to water levels and water quality are part of a larger picture of environmental change, including effects to animal populations, as witnessed by Métis people:

Roland Woodward:

Over the years, I've noticed that our wind has changed. We no longer get Chinooks like we did at one time. You'd hear the wind coming, and you'd look

over, and the sky would be an arch. And by the time you got home, all the snow was thawed out. You'd hang your snowshoes in a tree and you walked home.

Therese Michael:

There were lots of frogs but now those frogs they got no water so they're gone. There used to be a little pond in the front of my house to go to Drapper's side. Boy it was just like music early in the morning, all those frogs and now nothing. We go over there and sit and try to listen, you don't hear nothing. All gone.

William Castor:

Some people ask me, "What do you think it's going to be like after it's finished—tar sand taken out?" I said, "You want to know?" I said, "This place is going to be totally worthless." I said, "Animals will be all dead from the pollution, fish, ducks." The river's already all polluted. I can go on and on what's it going to be like. It's not going to be worth living on.

I don't think I had any moose meat in years, because of this. There's a buddy of mine—we used to go to bingo together. He said he killed a moose. He said he opened it up. There was sores all over inside and between the meat. He said, "If you seen it, it'd probably turn your stomach."

PITCHER PLANT



WOOD FROG





Dorothy Squire:

They've taken a lot of our environment away from us. There's a lot of fish you can't even eat. And look at Fort Chip, Fort McKay, it's all closed, you can't eat the fish and you don't even know if you want to eat the wildlife because you don't know what they've eaten, and some of them are rotten.

Harvey Sykes:

They call this progress. I don't know what destruction is.

As far as I'm concerned, it's too much, too fast. There's no reason for this as far as I'm concerned. There's got to be a cleaner way of doing this. They can send a man to the moon, but they can't find a cleaner way of doing this. And it just keeps going on and on and on. A plant every few years—I've got really no qualms against that, but why throw in 20 plants at one shot like that? And it's destructive. Very destructive.



FRANCES DUPERRON'S HUSBAND, DANIEL, AND
FRANCES DUPERRON; BEAVER HUNT



ATHABASCA RIVER



THE ATHABASCA AT THE WILLOWS

Song by Harvey Sykes:

Well, the great countryside, it might be wild and free, but tomorrow it's empty, just wait and see. They're stripping the forest year after year, destroying the homes of the muskrat and deer.

So Daddy, won't you take me down to McMurray country, a place where the birds and the beaver, they'd play. But I'm sorry, my son, you're too late in asking. Oil Sands Company, they've stripped it away.

The banks of this river were part of this great land. Now there's nothing but piles of white sand. The smokestacks out yonder are polluting the fine air, and making a dollar is all that they care.

So Daddy, won't you take me down to McMurray country, a place where the birds and the beaver, they play. But I'm sorry, my son, you're too late in asking. Oil Sands Company, they've stripped it away.

A plant every few years is there in the making. Another oil project is well on the way. But man is greedy. Keeps taking and taking. And gives back nothing; just lives for today.

So Daddy, won't you take me down to McMurray country, a place where the birds and the beaver, they'd play. But I'm sorry, my son, but you're too late in asking. Oil Sands Company, they've stripped it away. Yes, Oil Sands Company, they've stripped it to clay.



MARK OF THE MÉTIS

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND STORIES OF THE MÉTIS PEOPLE
OF NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA

LIFEWAYS



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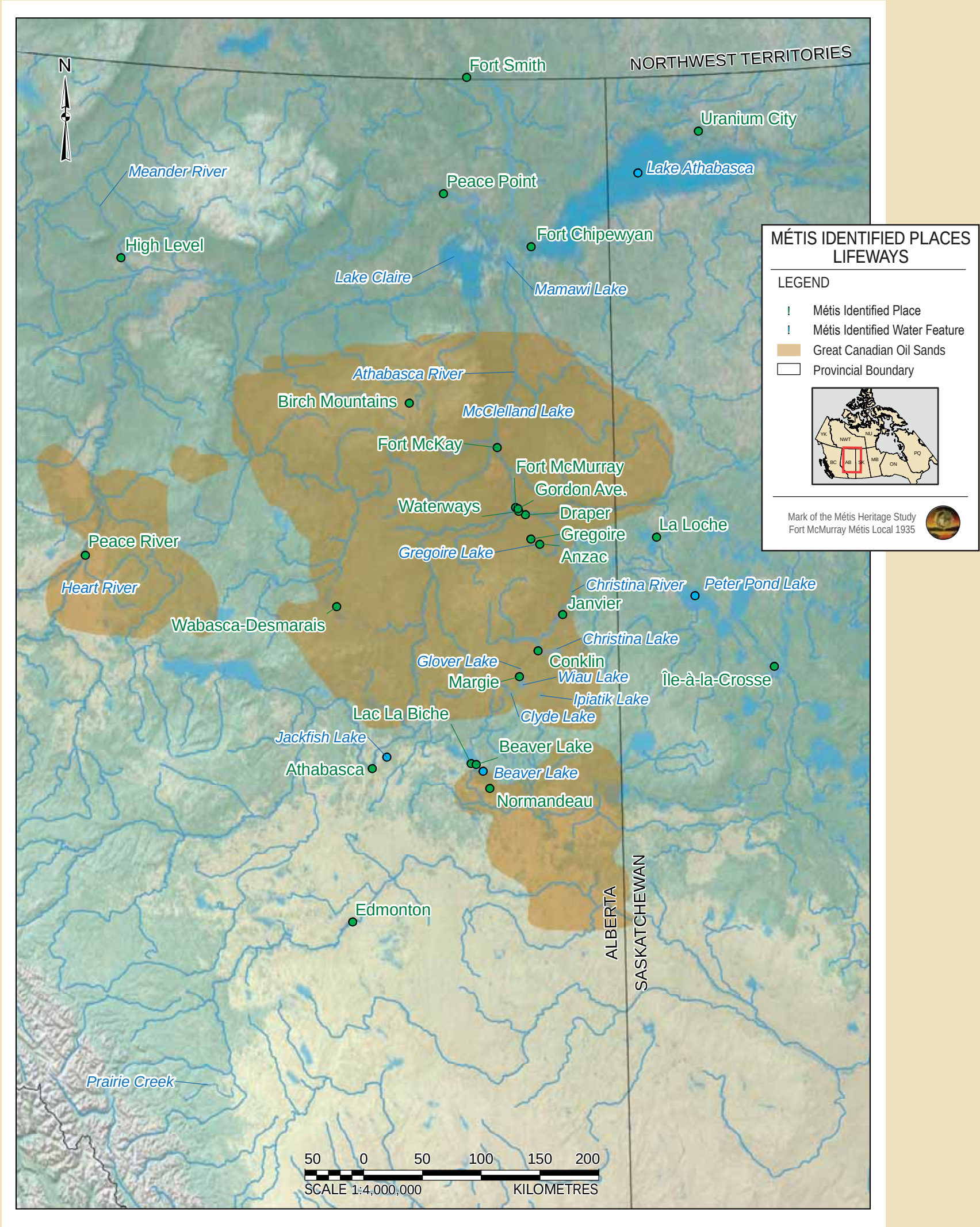
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MÉTIS IDENTIFIED PLACES

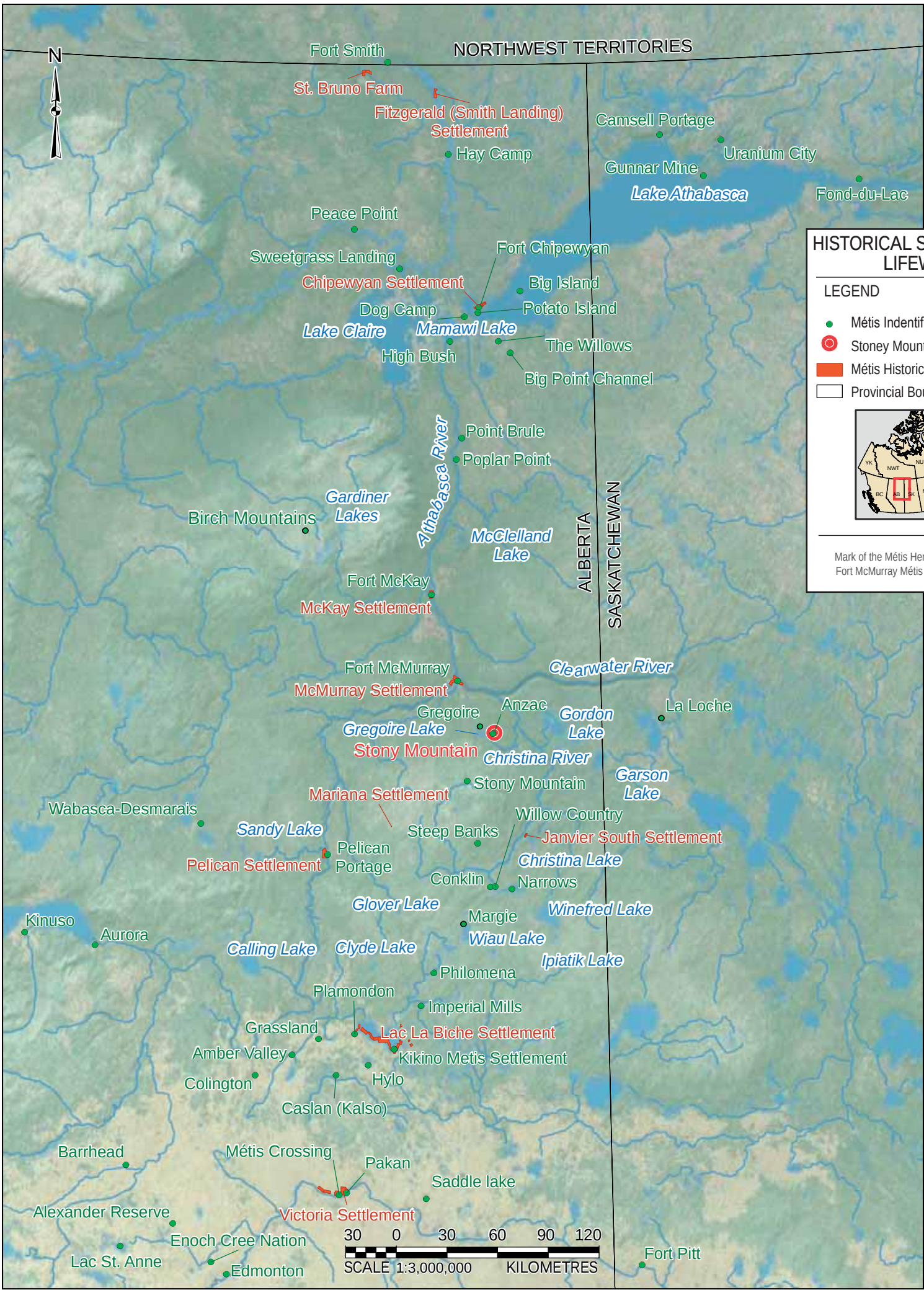
INTRODUCTION

Métis Elders have shaped, with their life stories, a unique economic history in northeastern Alberta, built upon the virtues of adaptability, ingenuity, family and community. Mobility – defined as the willingness, knowledge, and family structure to be on the move across the landscape for traditional purposes and for wage work – is at the heart of the Métis experience. In recounting their own personal and familial labour histories, and economic lifeways, Métis Elders drew on experiences from the traditional fur trade economy, the modest pre-war labour economy, World War II, and the oil and gas boom that completely altered the environmental and socio-economic matrix of Métis life in the 1960s.

The following accounts are more than a record of the impression made by rapid industrial development on the lives of Métis; they depict a proactive Indigenous culture that has evolved in relation to different economic initiatives over the centuries. Even as the Métis landscape became the subject of an amazing oil and gas-instigated transformation, the stories of the Elders bear witness to Métis attempts to order development in their territory and to avoid being swept aside by history.

CUTTING ICE FOR McINNES IN THE 1930's - WATERWAYS

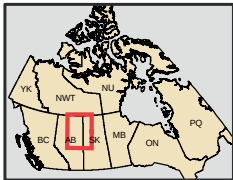




HISTORICAL SETTLEMENTS LIFEWAYS

LEGEND

- Métis Identified Place
- Stoney Mountain
- Métis Historical Settlement
- Provincial Boundary



Mark of the Métis Heritage Study
Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935



HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS

BUSH WORK

Margie Wood's maternal grandfather, Alfonse Powder, was born in Lac La Biche around 1890. Her maternal grandmother, Louise Boucher, was born at Fort Chipewyan in 1905. Raised in the Fort McKay area, Margie spent a lot of time with her other grandfather, Isadore Janvier, and grandmother, Mary Rose Trotteault. Margie recalls that her grandfather told her that, when Alberta became a province in 1905, Métis were living mostly off the land, "Trapping and all that, killing wild animals to survive. That's how they were living". Métis trappers supplemented their trapping with wage work as needed. While trapping was the mainstay of her grandfather's generation, Margie describes how he also worked odd jobs:

And I remember my grandpa said he used to work on the steamboats. The Athabasca steamboat. He was a cop then too, my grandpa. He was an RCMP. That's how my dad would tell us they survived — by trapping, little odd jobs. In those days, there were no jobs then, just by trapping. That's how we were brought up.

Lillian McCallum's great-grandmother, Harriet Ducharme or Delarme, was alive when Lillian was a child. "She used to tell us old-time stories," Lillian remembers. "And she would show us how they used to dance. She dressed old-fashioned in those long dresses and homemade clothes." Lillian's father was born at the Lac La Biche Mission after his parents, James McCallum and Eliza Desjarlais, had migrated from Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan.

PREPARING A SCOW TO TAKE OVER THE RAPIDS

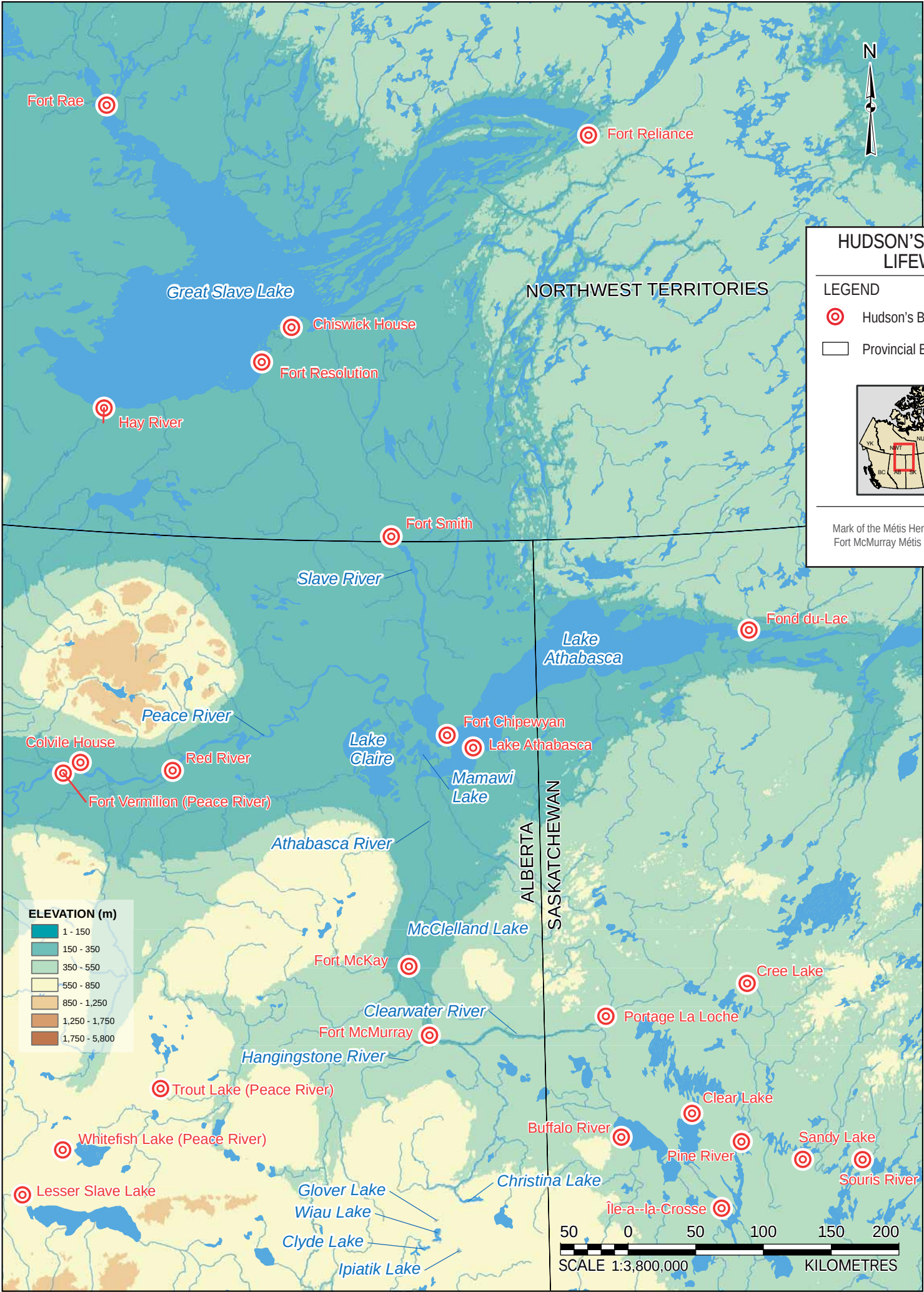


Lillian's impression of her parents' early life is one of frequent movement throughout northeastern Alberta and Saskatchewan.

My dad was born in Big Mission, the Lac La Biche Mission. And from there I guess he moved to Fort Chipewyan with my Mom. They spent time in Fort Chipewyan. He talked about that lake there, Athabasca Lake, I guess. And he said they crossed that lake one winter and then his uncle, he wanted to go visit somebody, their friends I guess or relatives, across the lake. He said, "I guess we were crazy. We were young." Because I guess it would be kind of dangerous to cross that if it gets stormy. You could get lost and freeze to death. They stopped a little bit in Fort McKay and eventually they made it to Conklin and that's where they stayed.

Lillian spent many hours listening to her father's stories of the trapline and his experiences on the land.

Well, I used to listen to them tell stories, lots of them! My dad was good at storytelling about his travels, his journey and the trapline. I guess one time too when he was younger he fought with a bear, but not alone — the dogs helped him! And he managed. Anyway, he must have carried a knife and he stabbed it to kill it. So he wasn't injured by that, but he did have



HUDSON'S BAY POSTS



an injury right in his arm. He had an accident when he went hunting. He shot himself accidentally in the arm. He used to have, you know, the big scar here. And he came home like that one day. His arm didn't go cripple, but he did have a great, big scar here. I suppose they looked after him themselves, because he didn't talk about being hospitalized. That was before I was born. So after that, my dad never used to do anything on Fridays. He said he believed every time he gets something on Fridays or when he leaves for the bush or something, or even the work, he has little accidents, because Friday – we talk about Jesus was crucified on a Friday. So he kept that day holy. He wouldn't do anything on Friday.

For children growing up in the Métis world before World War II, life on the trapline was still a possibility. At the age of six, Howard Webb's family moved to the Athabasca area so Howard's stepfather could seek work. "He had a couple of uncles up here and come up here looking for work," Howard says. "He did a little bit of bushwork, logging. My uncle had three or four horses and he'd do work around town." Howard continues:

Well, my stepdad and I had a trapline right there along the river, three miles wide and 45 miles long. They were registered traplines, so when you sold one, you had to have it registered in your name. You had to buy it, so much per trapline. My stepdad David Reed got them from old Curly Jewitt. Done everything, I guess. Logging. When we left, McDonald took it over.

With the little boom years of the war yet around the corner, people were still cobbling livelihoods together from seasonal work and trapping. Howard's family also spent time in Fort McMurray around 1938, living with Howard's brother, Johnny, who had gone there for work. "Oh, he worked on the boats, shipping stuff north. He worked for old Sid Hawkins," recalls Howard.

There was also bush work. Hermas Janvier remembers having to lie about his age by a year (he was 15, not 16 at the time) to sign up to work in the woods:

First job I ever did, I was cutting brush for four dollars a day. Then after that, fighting fire at 75 cents an hour. I was 15 years old. Then planting trees, about 90 cents an hour that one. I think it was, 90, 95 cents I think the last time I fought fires.

He was not alone in having to stretch the truth a little. William Castor says that it would have been impossible for him to get his first job in Waterways without the intervention of a certain priest. William explains:

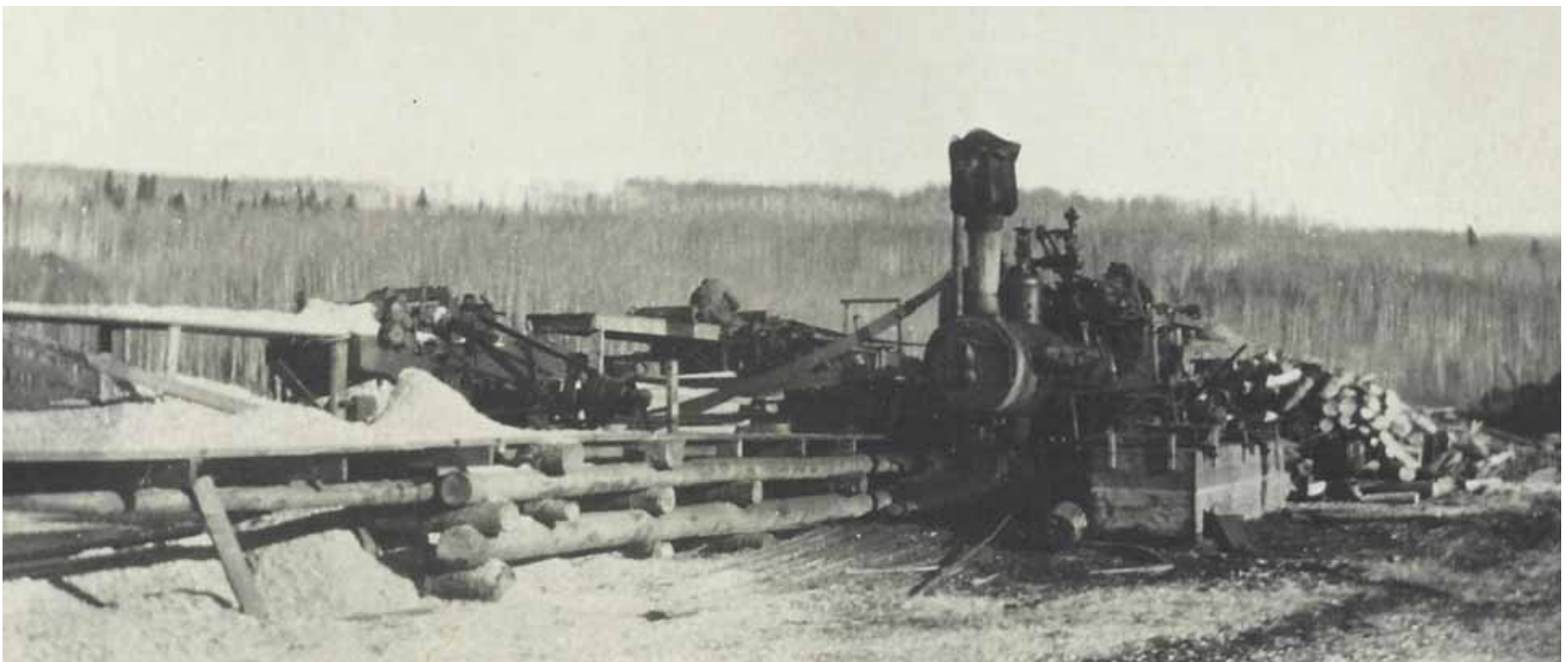
When I worked in the Waterways, that was my first job and there was a saw plant in the Waterways. I went there to ask the boss, "Can I get a job?" He asked, "How old are you?"

I said, "Fifteen."

"Well," he said, "We can't hire anybody under sixteen."

And I said, "Okay, I'll come back tomorrow."

GEORGE GOLOSKY AND BILL GORDON'S SAWMILL





TRAPPER WITH PELTS

I went to the Father, see the priest was supposed to be honest, so I explained to him what problem I had. So he looked in all the books they had, people's birthdates, he gave me a birth certificate that put me at sixteen years old.

Sidney McKay and his wife, Christina Martin, moved from Fort Chipewyan to Fort McMurray in 1965. All five of their children were born in Fort McMurray. Before settling down in Fort McMurray with his family, Sidney had worked on the trapline with his father. Sidney's memories of trapping in the 1940s with his father are of natural abundance and food credit with the Hudson Bay Company:

Oh, it was good, we'd kill three or four thousand muskrats! Then, the Hudson Bay used to give people credit. When you start killing muskrats in the fall, then you would start giving them the muskrat as payment for the grub you got.

To be a successful trapper was a well-respected position in Métis society. Lillian's grandmother, Eliza, was betrothed by her grandparents to James McCallum, although he was ten years older than her, because he was a good trapper and provider. Lillian explains:

Grandma Eliza's grandparents picked a husband for her. What they were looking for was a good provider. I think that's what people used to look at. Grandma Eliza said she was kind of hurt because she didn't want to get married right away. She was still young at the time, only 15 or 16. But she went through with it anyway.

As far as Madeline Patterson can tell, her ancestors have been in the Anzac area all their lives. She remembers moving to Waterways with her mother Marceline, after Marceline's husband (Madeline's stepfather) got sick with pneumonia and died while they were living on the trapline. They managed

well enough on Marceline's widow allowance of \$35 a month, which according to Madeline, could "buy more stuff than you can today." Madeline recalls how her grandparents made their way "living off the land...that was the only way".

Life began to change when jobs became available in Fort McMurray. "People would come and move to McMurray and work. My husband worked on the railway. And there actually were no jobs in Anzac, I don't think," she says. Madeline remembers bringing the fur to Waterways to sell it:

You could come into town and sell your furs here, eh. Hudson Bay would buy it, or the MacIver store. There was a MacIver store. That building is still up in Waterways. We would come in like I say from the trapline, and then they would bring their fur.

Today, Sidney McKay observes, the income from trapping cannot cover the costs of operation. "No, any trapline now is just a hobby. You can't live if you try, you don't make enough money," he says. "It don't matter what trapline you get, you can't make it. To start off with, you got to have a \$7,000 skidoo."

Margie Wood observes that today very few people trap with any commercial goals:

Some people still do trapping. Well, now you can't go trapping like before, because there's nothing there to trap. It's all bare. And if you want to trap, they have to escort you there first. Before, they never used to escort you when you wanted to go in the bush. Just put your dog team and your dogs and pack up whatever you need for going in the bush and you're just gone. So whatever they kill, they come back with. They used to unhook the dogs, tie them up, feed them, and bring the moose meat inside. Bring whatever they killed, the fur, whatever, we brought it all inside.



LENORA & JAMES MULAWKA TRAPLINE CABIN



THERESE MICHAEL'S BEADWORK

ARTS, CRAFTS, AND DOMESTIC WORK

Crafts and domestic arts have always been a pillar of the Métis household's economy, and Lillian McCallum remembers that all the women in Conklin were highly skilled:

They made good bannock. In their way of life, they knew all the survival skills, which I don't think now young people do in this modern age. I don't think any of us would know how to survive in the bush anymore, not very much. My mom could make anything. All women were like that. Not just my mother, but all of them, all the women I know in Conklin. Sometimes they used to get together when they sewed in their homes, and they used to sew, make moccasins and the little slippers, and they put them in a big box and shipped them out to Edmonton to sell them. That's how they made their money.

Mostly, though, they just do their work at home. And mom was also good at making moose hides. Everything was homemade, even their blankets, some of their blankets. They saved feathers from ducks, and they'd make feather blankets, down-filled, and pillows. Everything was homemade at one time. And they made a lining, so that way your blankets stayed clean. That's the way it was. They used to like embroidery, too. That, I did learn a little bit when I was a little girl, but I didn't keep it up. I never learned to bead, though.

Madeline Patterson remembers that her mother, who was quite skilled in embroidery and knitting, was always kept busy:

Oh, yeah. She did all of that. She could knit. She could embroider. She made me clothes. She was a good sewer. And that was nice because back in those days, well, you just didn't go to the store all the time for clothes. It's not like now today. Yeah, the women back then, they kept busy, they did. Whether they had lots of kids or even if they didn't. My mother was

always busy. If she wasn't doing this, she was doing something else. I guess she just, well there was no TV back then, so. And it's nice, as long as you don't work, work, work all the time. But to them I think it was just something they had to do, so they just did it, yeah.

Artisan skills were passed down from one generation to another, and so were domestic responsibilities. Both skill sets were important parts of a family's survival. Mary Cardinal Sykes remembers that her labours around the house were hard work for a young girl:

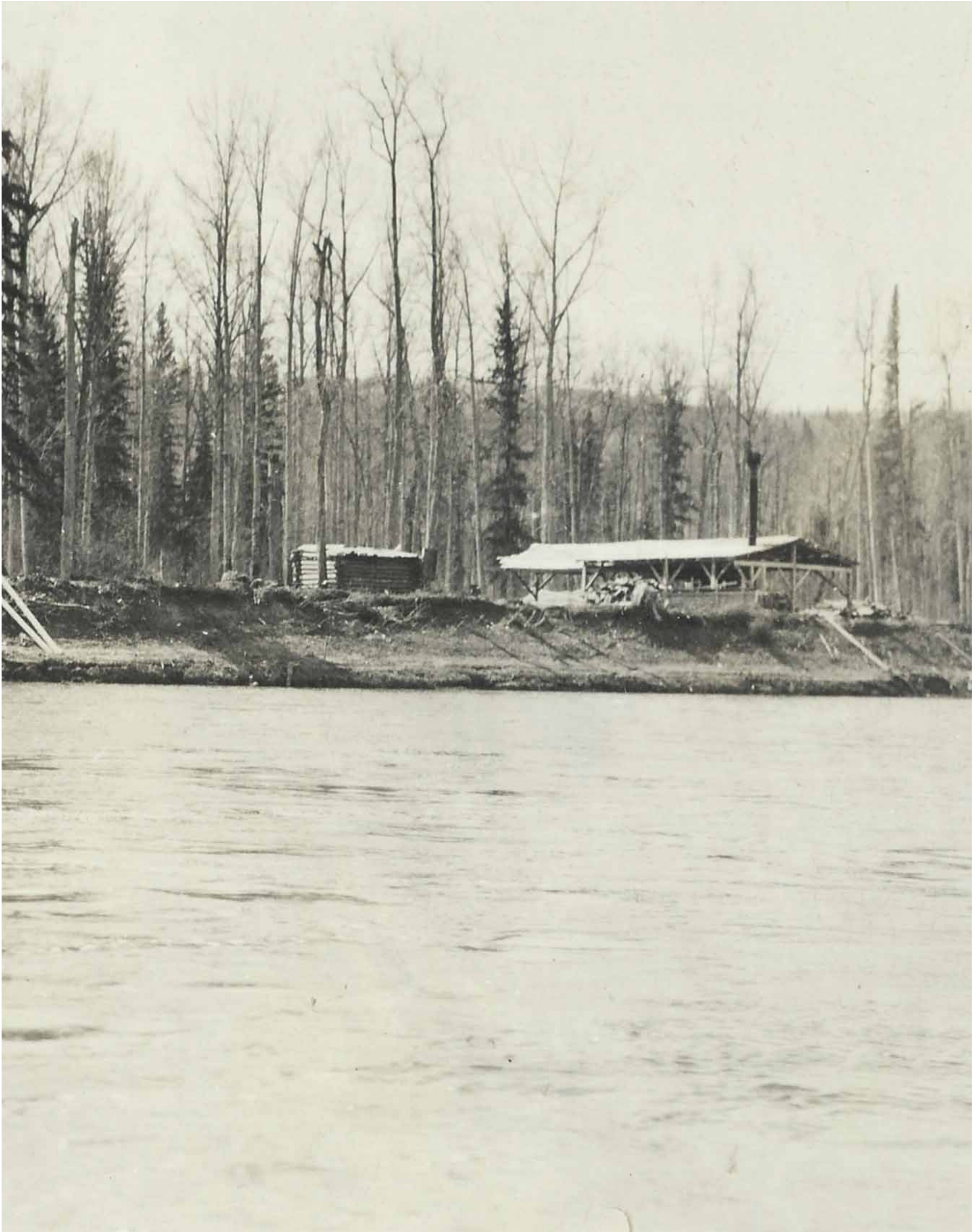
I think I had to do everything there was to do around there because my brother Ron had joined the Air Force. So now it left me at home as the oldest. I sawed logs with a power saw. I chopped that wood and piled it, and chopped ice to haul in to my mom to melt for washing clothes. I worked hard. Yes, I did!

Mary remembers with great fondness the days spent picking berries at an area now known as Prairie Creek, fetching water and working in her parents' garden:

Oh there was a great abundance of blueberries up there, and they were huge, eh. So we'd spend all day on the weekends and after school, we'd go up there next morning. All day long, we'd be picking berries out there. Oh! And we had big water pails. We had to fill those up, eh. We couldn't come home unless that was done. My dad wouldn't allow that. We had a big cellar under the house, and my dad built shelves, and mom used to put all her canned stuff down there, because we had a huge garden. Everything was preserved. That's another thing, we had to spend hours weeding, cleaning out the weeds, oh... Then, when it was ready to harvest, we were spending hours there picking beans and shelling peas and digging. Oh, my God. We worked hard. And mom preserved everything, because back then we didn't have a deepfreeze or anything. Nothing was frozen.



GEORGINA FLOBERT'S BEAVER PELT WITH BEADING



A SAWMILL IN THE 1920s

MAKING DO

Both Fred MacDonald's parents were Métis. His father, Harry MacDonald, was born in Edmonton around 1906, while his mother, Mary Cardinal, hailed from Wabasca. In every situation, work was hard and demanded long hours with few breaks and constant hustling. Fred points out that it was the hard-scrabble need to make a living that left Métis with little leisure time to sit around dreaming up ways to have their rights recognized. In the words of Fred MacDonald:

I started to work at 15. I had to survive, eh. I had to go to work early, and kept on working and working. Not until I got older I started thinking, well, "Where did I actually come from?"

Wilma Kowaluk's memories are exemplary of the Métis experience over the last 50 years, which has been characterized by the rapid transition from the traditional harvesting and fur-based economy, into a wage labour system. Wilma was born in Fort Vermilion, Alberta, to Daniel and Sylvia Hodgson, and later married William Kowaluk in 1976. When she was a young girl, Wilma remembers that her father would still find time to pick berries for the family even while he was away working:

I helped my Mom raise my brothers and sisters, because my Mom was always home by herself. My dad was always gone to Peace River, all in that area to work, right. Dad used to be working for the Forestry Department and Mom would stick us all in the car and there we'd go, in between High Level and Meander River. Dad would be picking berries — we'd have to take him quart sealers because he was picking raspberries, canning raspberry fruit for us.

William (Bill) Woodward's father, James Arthur Woodward, was an Oxbridge-educated Welshman (Oxbridge meaning that he was educated at both Oxford and Cambridge in England), and Bill's mother was Suzanne Janvier, originally from Saskatchewan. Bill's parents first came to Fort McMurray in 1928. He describes what he remembers of the fishing industry from his childhood:

You see, the reason that we moved out to Fort McMurray was because McInnes Fisheries were fishing in Big Buffalo, Peter Pond Lake, whatever you want to call it. Anyway, when the fish were getting scarce, they were hauling that fish 90 miles across the winter road, 20 boxes of fish to four horses. Then to the railroad at Cheecham. So we rode on the fish boxes in March,

right on top of the fish boxes. There's only parts of the trails that I remember. I was five years old at the time.

Bill spent his young years "mostly hunting and trapping," and making his living in the Fort McMurray area, first at a sawmill, and then on a farm in 1939.

I worked just for room and board. That's all you got was room and board. Then I worked for the Japanese, they paid me 25 cents a day. This old Miss Gordon, that's Gordon Avenue now, she paid 10 cents a day for picking potatoes from daylight 'til dark. Ten cents could buy a

loaf of bread, a can of beans, two cans of sardines and two pounds of lard. In those days, all for 10 cents.

In the same year, Bill started the first of his seasonal shifts working at the McInnes lumber camp in the summers between 1939 and 1942.

The wage was so poor. When I went to work for

McInnes I was 16 years old. I got 50 cents a day. First time I ever ate Corn Flakes. That's true. I used to see it in the store and I didn't know what they were, eh, because I grew up in the bush. Finally I seen Corn Flakes on the breakfast table, well, I eat that then. They weren't that good, better to eat bacon and eggs. But then in March they give 75 cents a day. We were getting the logs ready to roll into the river. There was a big slough there and we would ride the logs to Draper. They gave us \$1 dollar a day then. Oh boy, now we were making good money. Buy 10 cans of beans just like nothing. But, like, these socks I've got on, they were only 35 cents back then, now they're \$18. I'm sure that sheep didn't have more wool in those days. If you didn't get up in the early morning somebody stole your socks because you'd dry them by the stove, you know. They had a big barrel stove and you'd put your socks around there. The first guy that got up, he had nice dry socks, no holes, the last guy had all the holes.

Métis people of the 20th century are known as innovative and adaptive workers who possess the knowledge and skill necessary to survive off a combination of wage labour and traditional harvesting. Their creativity and unfailing work ethic has proved successful in supporting families and sustaining the community over the generations. Métis workers have often had to make great sacrifices, including working long hours or working far from home. Métis from northeastern Alberta have also served their country overseas during international wars.



ORIGINAL MAIN STREET IN DRAPER WITH HOTEL AND RESTAURANT



SYLVIA HODGSON GIRL GUIDES



THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COLD LAKE AIR WEAPONS RANGE (CLAWR)

The Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR) has been used by the Government of Canada to test weapons for the air force since the 1950s, and consists of a tract of land measuring 180 kilometres by 65 kilometres, and covering an area of 11,700 square kilometres. The Canadian Forces Base at Cold Lake is located approximately 270 kilometres from Fort McMurray and 145 kilometres from Conklin. National defense is an important issue; however, the process of testing weapons has had an impact on the people who live in the vicinity of the testing. The inhabitants of the area around Conklin and Philomena have had to deal with noise disturbances from weapons testing for many years. Elsie Cardinal, from Conklin, explains:

My grandson said, “Grandma, what are they doing flying around?” I said, “Phillip, Cold Lake Air Base is just a little ways across the way here, 60, 70 kilometres.” That’s where they train, that’s one of the best training centres in Canada. They send all their army guys there to train. It’s been there forever that I know, that I can remember.

Joe Hamelin also remembers hearing weapons testing near Philomena:

In my cabin out there, one time I was heading towards — that way, hunting, and I was out there calling moose and all of a sudden, I thought they were bombing me! They were right above me, I was right there! I took off back out of there! That’s bombs, the air weapon range, they’re throwing bombs, practicing at Cold Lake.

DEW LINE

The Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line is an integrated chain of 63 radar and communication systems stretching over 4,800 kilometres from the northwestern coast of Alaska, to the eastern shore of Baffin Island. The DEW Line had its origins in a Cold War era 1952 Massachusetts Institute of Technology defence research report on the vulnerability of Canada and the USA to air attacks from the north. Following several years of planning and design, the primary line was constructed between 1954 and 1957, with additional development occurring to the east into Greenland into the 1960s¹. Construction required many hands, including those of the Métis people of Wood Buffalo.

The construction and operation of the DEW line was an important part of the cultural heritage of the Canadian north, bringing in staff and goods from the south. Communities such as Fort McMurray became more exposed to southern people and southern ways, two active ingredients in the evolution of culture in the north throughout the mid 20th century. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the resulting end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the deactivation and decommissioning of the DEW Line’s facilities began. Today, there is some interest in preserving the DEW Line as a Cold War Heritage site.

INTERNATIONAL WARS AND MILITARY SERVICE

Although northeastern Alberta was a relatively isolated place, Métis life and land were nonetheless touched by wars happening in other parts of the world. Métis soldiers from the region fought in World War I (1914 – 1918), World War II (1939 – 1945), and in the Vietnam War (1955 – 1975). The Fort McMurray region has been used by the Canadian military as a training ground for aircraft of war in the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range since the 1950s, and as an intelligence outpost during the Cold War (1945 – 1991).

World War II marked a turning point in Métis economic life. While fur prices rose for the period, there were also increasing opportunities in new industries such as mines and mills. Arthur Harpe remembers that his father consciously chose wage labour at the salt mine over trapping during that time:

We had dogs, yeah, three or four dogs. My dad loved dogs. My dad used to raise dogs and sell them to trappers. Seventy-five to a hundred dollars for a dog like that. See, during the war fur was good, eh. And a lot of guys trapped. They trapped heavy. But my dad said I couldn't trap. My dad had a good job. He worked at the salt mine where Ptarmigan Trailer Court is. There was a big salt mine there at one time, and that's where most of the people worked. Whoever could work there got a job. That helped the town a lot. For revenue, I don't know, not much more. The wintertime was not too bad. There used to be a lot of sawmills. There were three, up to four in this country, three to four sawmills at one time.



ALBERTA SALT COMPANY'S HORSE CREEK SALT PLANT

Later, Arthur worked at the salt mine too, after leaving school in grade nine. "I had to go to work. I didn't want to go," he says. "I was 15 years old, just about 16. I made 57 cents an hour. My dad used to give me \$5 every two weeks for that."

At the outbreak of the war, after having spent time at bush camps, William (Bill) Woodward figured, "It would be better to join the Army and get three square meals a day." So he enlisted in the Army in 1943. But Bill was in for a rude awakening. For starters, he had more meals trapping in the bush than on the front lines, where there was often no food to be found at all. One day, Bill's mother Suzanne received a letter indicating that Bill was MIA — Missing in Action. Bill spent 208 days in a German POW (Prisoner of War) camp, and experienced new meanings of work and deprivation. Bill shares his memories of that time:

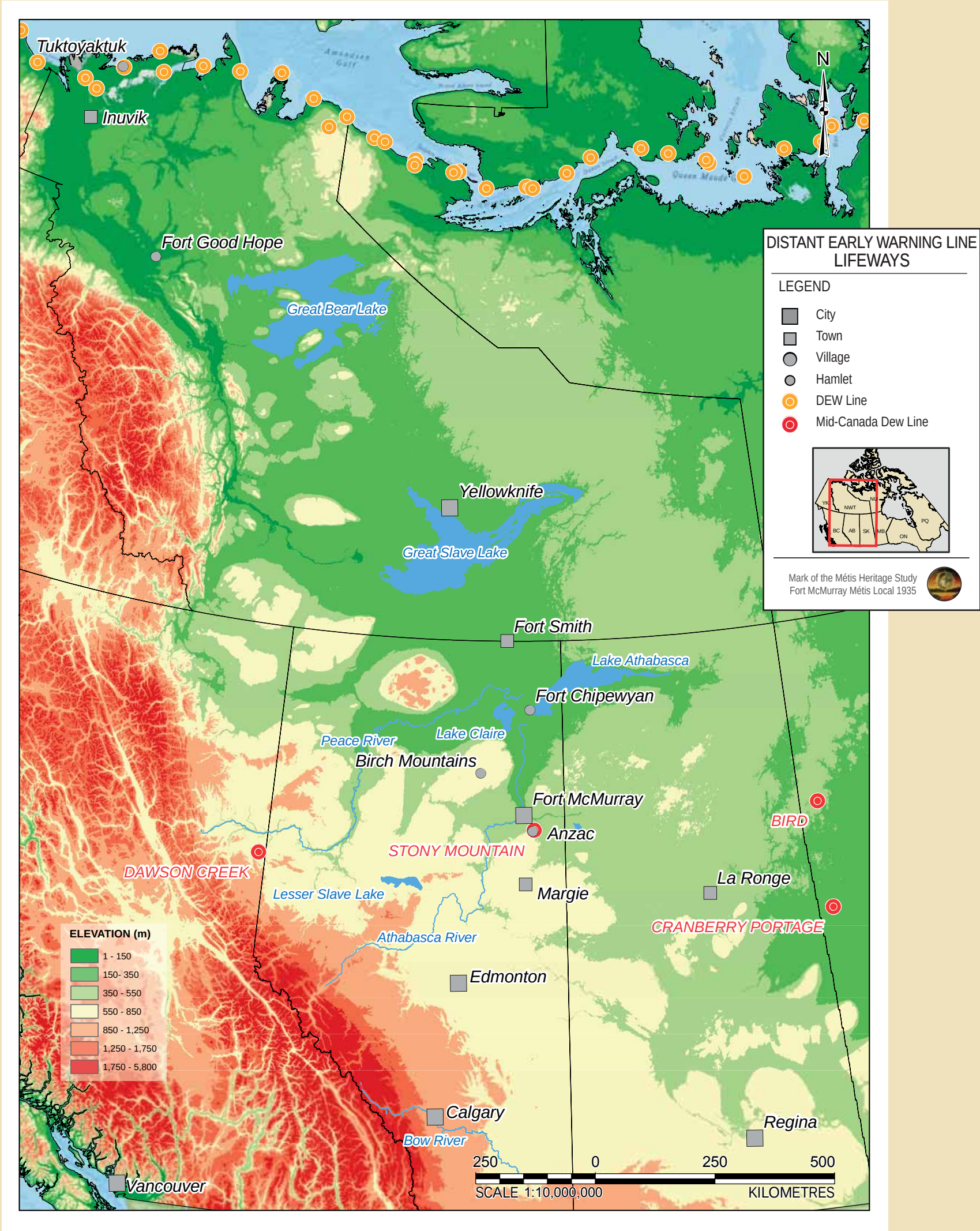
I was 21 when I walked into a German prison camp, went through the gate. And we had to work every day. So in February, when the fronts were getting smaller, they were filling the camps up with the wounded and the crippled. And the ones that could walk like me — maybe 20,000 of us out of that one camp — they put us on a march. We had to march so far in one day and then stop and stay there at night, right on the highway. The next day we kept on going.

We marched all around Germany. I saw a lot by walking around, paying attention to what we seen, eh. I saw that big camp where they were making this "super-human race". Nothing under six feet, they had the best Polish women and the best Germans they could get, all blonde. I saw a lot of different things other people didn't see while they were in Germany. But I paid attention to what I saw.

I surrendered but I never gave up, there's a difference. If you give up then you . . . but if you surrender then you're always looking around for an opportunity. People don't realize that. They fed us turnip soup. One turnip to 100 people, I bet. It was just water. And six men to a loaf of bread. You had to slice it. And all the crumbs that fell, if you got them today, then six days later you got the crumbs again. Nobody cheated. Not too many crumbs either you know. That's one thing: you learned to share when you were in a German prison camp.

Like the ones that were crippled when we were there, whatever I could find I would share with them. Like in the fall when we were picking potatoes I'd tie my pants here at the ankles and I'd put potatoes down there, and the Germans would touch me all over but they never touched the bottom of my pants. Then they allowed us to trade cigarettes for a loaf of bread. Because we got two cans of soup then — we got one while we were working and we got one when we got back to camp. So we were better off than the ones that stayed in camp.

Even Christmas day we had to work. We didn't have any Christmas trees, no lights, nothing. And the area we stayed in was 12 feet long by five feet wide — that was for 12 people. That's how crowded we were. Then they give you a 30-inches-wide board, 1'x6', that's what you slept on, and one blanket. I didn't



DISTANT EARLY WARNING LINE (DEW)

have mitts, and when my socks wore out, I made myself socks out of half a blanket. Then when your shoes wore out, they just put a piece of 2"x4" and that's what you wore. They just cut the soles like that and just nail them on, tack them all around you know. They didn't make them nice and fancy like the Dutch shoes.

When the war ended, Bill returned to Canada and got on a train for Anzac. But when the train arrived and he saw all the citizens wearing their decommissioned soldiers' uniforms – which were made of quality, waterproofed wool, excellent for trapping and hunting – Bill thought he'd ended up back in another war and rode straight through to Fort McMurray. Bill explains:

I come back to Anzac. The funny part of it, the train used to get here at 4:00 in the morning. I didn't know that when the war ended they gave all the First Nations their uniforms, every Reserve got uniforms. So I got off the train and, oh Jesus, I thought I was back at war! There's Canadian soldiers, fat ones, no gun . . . I didn't know what the hell to do, I jumped back on the train and rode through to McMurray. This is true.

Bill was married to his wife Nancy two years after he returned from WWII, when Bill was 23 and Nancy was 15. To this day, Nancy still has the letter that was mailed to Bill's mother all those years ago, and she still remembers her own grandmother "was just like a snug soldier" in her ex-military uniform. When Bill married Nancy in 1947, he was working in a sawmill in Waterways. During the early years of their marriage they lived along the railway line where Bill found work and eventually followed the relocation of the railway station to Anzac. Along the railway, Bill had lived and worked at Mile 262. Since the wage of a railway man was not enough to support a growing family, Bill still ran a trapline on the side. Bill talks about his life's education:

I trapped mostly. I didn't have no education, no education at all. A little bit I learned from the white men in the war, well I used that for my knowledge and then when I did go out for different jobs I always got a foreman job. It's true, and I couldn't write my name, but I picked things up. Like for carpenters, I worked for a carpenter for three years, I got quite a bit of knowledge there.

Mary Cardinal Sykes' father was of Polish heritage, and traveled from Canada to Europe to fight in World War II under a new name. Mary explains:

I never met my grandparents on my father's side. They're from Poland. But of course, naturally, they've been gone for years now. They came over to Canada, 'cause my dad was born in Canada. They lived out in

Winnipeg and they were Skrypetz. And then of course, my dad shortened that to Sykes before he went into the army, to World War II. And my uncles all had changed their names. Barton, Martin, Cochranes, you name it. But I had an Auntie Mary, dad's sister. She was just Mary Skrypetz too, eh? But her brothers, there were three brothers there that changed their names. So my dad came into Fort McMurray area, or Cheecham, where he probably met my mom and then went overseas. And I think they got married after he came back in.

Métis soldiers of the generation following WWII were also willing to fight overseas in order to maintain security in North America, and were even prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. Linda Boudreau-Semaganis describes the loss that her family suffered during the Vietnam War:

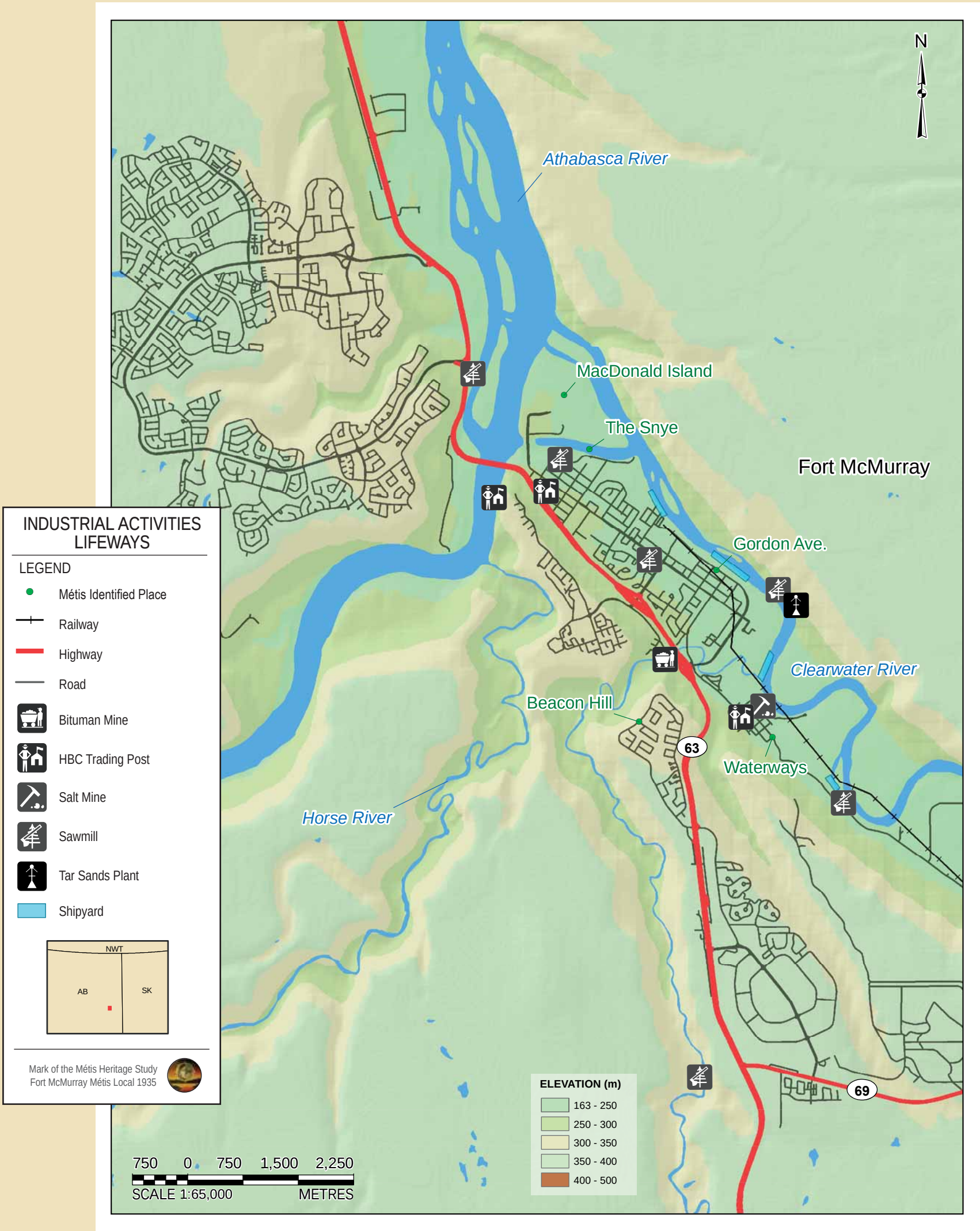
My brother joined the US Marines and went to Vietnam and he was killed over there in March of '69. And they brought him home and we buried him there at the old cemetery in Fort Mac.

The Cold War (1946 – 1991) also impacted local communities because of their strategic location in the standoff between the United States and Russia. During the Cold War, the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line was constructed across the Arctic. The DEW Line was a system of radar stations extending from Alaska to Greenland. The Pinetree Line was one of three lines in Canada. It reached from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, passing through the Fort McMurray region. Robert James White describes his memories of the construction of the DEW Line during the Cold War:

Distant Early Warning system, that was to warn them against Communists attacking us, it was a radar line. And Stony Mountain was a secondary. I think they called it the Pine Tree Line, if I'm not mistaken. Stony Mountain was an installation for the military. And that was back in the '50s, when they were building the DEW line and they were putting installations up by Anzac at Stony Mountain. My dad ran the crew there. They were doing the slashing, the clearing and that kind of thing. And they were just about all Aboriginal people on that crew, and every time they came out from Stony Mountain, they'd gather at our place and they'd play music all weekend.

Joe Hamelin also remembers how local people worked on the DEW Line:

They used to have radar sites every 50 miles in that area of McMurray. It'd be people manning them, in case there was a war. They were watching for a Soviet attack on radar.



INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES - 1950s

WAGE LABOUR AND TRADITIONAL LIFE

While some people were bravely fighting in wars, it was left to those at home in the community to work at jobs in the region, to carry on with traditional harvesting, and to raise and feed the children. During the Second World War, Lillian McCallum's father and mother worked on the railroad and the family lived in a tent near Mile 212. Her father usually worked summers for Northern Transportation (the NT) loading barges near Waterways. Lillian recalls the seasonal movements of her family:

Most of the time, we moved to Waterways in the summertime. My dad would go work for the NT. Then, towards fall, we'd move back when it's time to start picking berries. We'd move back to Conklin and start picking berries because we didn't have school at the time.

Lillian recalls that her grandfather, James McCallum, or Mushum as she called him, had done the same job loading barges a generation earlier.

In the earlier times, I guess they used to load those barges and every time they came to rapids, they would walk on foot. They tied up the ropes and they pulled them, and they packed the stuff on their backs. And then they'd load up again where the river smoothed out. I don't know how many men worked on one trip. They had to work together. They had to carry that boat together too where they couldn't ride it because of the rapids. That's what they used to talk about. I guess they used to be gone for long periods of time, leaving their families behind.

Lorrie Gallagher's family history in Fort McMurray is also tied to his grandfather's work on the boats. Lorrie explains how his family came to the region three generations ago:

My grandmother Agathe Ladouceur came here to Fort McMurray from the Athabasca area when she was 16 years old. She married Billy Loutitt in 1914. My grandfather was already here because he was with the Hudson Bay Company, and they never had a manager up here. And then they started running the Hudson Bay boats from here to the north. And he was a captain on one of the boats so they transferred him here. So that's what I remember. Then they stayed in McMurray in the summertime, like, they had a place on MacDonald Island. That's where my mother was born in 1922.

Back then there was no dyke to connect the island to town. The dyke was put in in '64, I think it was. So the island was separate from town and people got across by boat. But that's where they stayed in the summertime. Now, every winter my grandpa Billy went north to Poplar Point and he had a trading post there. And then he bought fur for the Hudson Bay Company. In the summertime he would work on the boats, and in the wintertime he'd buy this fur. They stayed there all winter, the whole family. There were eight of them, four boys and four girls.

Well, later on when the kids got older, they worked on the boats too. Like, my mother cooked on there. I believe her sister Tanni did, and I believe Lola did, too. The girls, anyway. Then the boys cut wood along the river for the barges, for the steamers.



McINNES SAWMILL IN DRAPER, CIRCA 1930s

Working in sawmills was another major occupation for many Métis, as Virginia Whitford knows from her own childhood. She recalls that men and women did different types of work:

When I was a child, we lived in Imperial Mills. It's not very far, maybe 34 miles, or something like that, north of Lac La Biche. It's only 14 miles from Philomena. It was a sawmill town. And they had a few stores and schools, a sawmill. My stepfather worked there. And my mother sewed every day, delivered babies. My grandmother did the same. My grandmother delivered me and gave me my name.

Work at the salt plant drew labourers into the Fort McMurray region, both Métis and foreign. Diane Hamelin explains how her parents met:

My parents were Florence Ladouceur and Frank Leitner. You probably know the Leitner family, no? My dad was a cab driver here. He was one of the first cab drivers. Ladouceur, that's a Métis name, my mother Florence was from Lac La Biche Nation, yeah. My dad's European. He's from Pilgersdorf, Austria. He was 12 years old when he came to Canada and he was raised near Stettler. Then he came to Fort McMurray with the salt mine, that's where he came to work. Well, he was trapping before that. He used to trap with Eddie Hopegood, who was a trapper from Anzac, yeah. And, then he was working at the salt plant, that's where he met my mother. In Fort McMurray yeah, he came to the mines to work.

Wilber Graham recalls the locations of the salt plants:

Well, they had two salt plants there at one time, you know. And one was over by where Horse Creek is. The original salt plant was there. And still the old foundation's down in there. That's where the salt plant was. And then they moved it to Waterways. There's about 500 feet of salt underneath that town—solid salt.

During the second half of the 20th century, Métis people began to concentrate more on wage labour. Ernie Ray Michael observes that wage labour could disrupt a person's ability to pursue the traditional economy:

If you had a job working for somebody, some of them said they paid. Some workers got a dollar a day, some of them said they got more. Some said they got less. I don't know. I never got a dollar a day 'cause I was working then, but you hear these stories. Well then, you see, they didn't trap. They were working all the time, working for a trader or something like

that. Some of them were trapping, some of them were hauling wood, and some of them were in the Mission. Wherever, there wasn't that much work so the rest of them made a living out the bush. You had to. When it was time to do something you had to move out there, get out there. So you could get this done, because it's a long, bitter winter and that's where you make a living. Out of that country.



LOADING CORDWOOD ONTO A STERN WHEEL STEAMER

Walter Cardinal lived with his grandmother until he was about 16 years old. Then, he went out on his own to seek work. He moved to Fort McMurray in the 1940s. Starting in 1947, he spent 10 years working with a railroad company. Then, he spent another 15 or 20 years with the Northern

Transportation Company, working on boats and barges destined for the Arctic:

Well look at this, the 40's okay. See that was Waterways, see how busy it was? We're loading freight in the barges by truck with hands, Hudson Bay freight, there were no forklifts a long time ago – it was



WATERWAYS SALT PLANT 1938

all by hand work. Holy what a job, boy! Packing them big hundred pound bags of flour, 50 and 24 pounds, eh. Holy gee — that's something, boy! I'll tell you, all handwork, all heavy work. Son of a gun boy, yeah. Yeah that's quite a place.

Walter also recollects that shifting to steady work could lead to the forfeit of a person's trapline:

Well, somebody else took over their trapline after a while, eh. You see you had the law, at the Fort, you had the law: if you had a steady job then you couldn't hold a trapline, a long time ago. You had to give up your trapline as long as you had a steady job. Yeah, that's how they worked of course.

Around 1946, when Sidney McKay was only 13, he began doing additional jobs to supplement what he earned on the trapline with his father.

Then I worked in the store, hauling all the stuff up from down in the basement so they could put it on the shelves. Then I went out and went to Fort Smith. I got work there on the dock. Everything was still hand-bombed. So, I loaded freight off a truck onto a little wagon that they used to pull, it's like these big carts, haul them off to the barge, load them. Once they got them loaded, they took the stuff up north to wherever.

In 1950, Sidney McKay and many others from the Fort Chipewyan area went to work at the Eldorado mine. Sidney recalls, "So, that's when I thought, well, I might as well learn to drive a cat, and then I'll be qualified to run equipment when I leave Fort Chip." In 1953, he went up to Uranium City to work at McInnes fish camp with his father. When that summer was over, Sidney went to work at Gunnar Mines.

Well, there was all the people they needed, they just kept hiring until they had enough people there. First they dug the hole, a clay hole, with a dry grind, and then they pumped some out with big pumps. Then they hauled the crushed rock into the plant.

Eventually, McKay and Gunnar parted ways, and he left and went up north, drawn in part by a peculiarity of Ottawa's administration of the North. Sidney explains:

We came up here because, you see in the north then, you got paid a 'Northern Allowance', if you stayed in the territory, or across the Peace Point Road. If you were on this side, you didn't get the Northern Allowance. If you were over across the other side, you got the Northern Allowance. Or you were in a cabin the other side, anything across that Peace Point Road, you got Northern Allowance.



INDUSTRIAL MINERALS CO. SALT PLANT IN WATERWAYS

Bert Golosky started working as a deckhand for Northern Transportation in the summer of 1950, when he was 18 years old:

Well, just that first summer when I started up with them, I was on one of the boats, travelling from Fitzgerald back to McMurray then over to Uranium City and all the stops along the way. Well, we stopped at all the trapper's cabins, eh. Dropping freight off, or picking up freight. Stuff that had to go back to Eaton's, you know. There was furs too.

Bert remembers the cultural diversity of the men he worked with:

We had, it was like the United Nations here. People from all over the world worked here. We had a guy from Scotland and we got to know him pretty good and he said, "I won't be back in the spring." Next spring, first guy coming in for another shift! Yeah, we had guys from Australia, Africa.

Howard and Evelyn Webb met at a dance at Jackfish Lake and in 1954, they were married. Two years later they headed to Fort McMurray. Howard had spent some time working there in the post-war years and still had some good contacts

in the area. He worked first on the construction of a new school, as he explains:

Yeah, I worked on the auditorium there in St. John's school. I worked for old Bill Mann. Everybody worked for him. We put that auditorium on the school. There was no auditorium at the school there, St. John's school. It was hard work, too, because we had to lift all the beams and everything by hand. There was no cherry-picker. Lift them up one end at a time.

In the post-war years, there was a greater diversity of work available to Métis. According to Fred MacDonald, Métis traditional knowledge of the environment made them prized workers in certain wage occupations, such as piloting river boats:

You know like how they used to handle freight. You know up and down to Uranium City and all through the north right up to Tuktoyaktuk. Especially when the DEW Line was on, those boats were loaded. Sometimes four feet, like this river was good one time, deep eh, just imagine, a big boat coming down with four big barges drawing about four feet of water and making it all the way down.

MV MABEL D & C AT STONY RAPIDS



Once you get to Lake Athabasca, then it's good from there, it's mostly all rock, very few sand bars. Oh yeah the Métis men would work on the boats and a lot of them became pilots. In fact most of them did because they got to read the water, know the water better. You know by looking at the water you could see where it's deep and not deep, eh. Because sometimes you're up there maybe 30 feet and looking down is good.

I used to pilot the boats too. But not long, as an actual pilot. I only worked 30 days, because I wanted to prove to Northern Transportation that I could do it. I quit them and went to work for a fish company and made two trips on the Athabasca River, from McMurray to Fitzgerald and back, twice, then I quit.

Richard Golosky started welding when he was 17 years old. He recalls how much time was spent commuting back and forth between home and the G. C. West construction camp in the days before the highway was built:

We stayed in camp at G. C. West there, and you worked six days a week. You'd come to town Saturday nights, and you come one night in town, then go back there. And my Dad had a boat. So he travelled every day back and forth to G. C. West. And we stayed in camp. About an hour travel. Yeah. It was good during the summertime, but it got pretty cold in the fall when it started to get snow on the ground, right, and you still travelled 'til there's too much ice. So we'd come to town Saturday nights and go back Sunday night. And there was no highway to the plant. Before the bridge was built, there was just travel by boat. That was it. They took all the freight down by barge, and railroad. They'd bring it in by railroad because there was no highway yet. Until the plants were almost finished being built, then the highway came in, in about '67 or somewhere there, I think it was.

Charlie F. Somers' memories are similar to those of many Métis of his generation. He remembers leaving his community to seek out work. He held, over many years, a wide range of jobs from bookkeeping to hauling freight. Charlie elaborates:

I left McMurray to go find work in Goldfields. I worked for exploration companies mostly in the early days

and was a bookkeeper, warehouseman, expeditor. One of the merchants from McMurray had moved to Uranium and Goldfields, and one of my friends, Harry Morimoto, worked for this storekeeper. So, I used to hang out around there and help. I helped unload the NT barges, hauled the freight up the hill in Goldfields by hand. And then the same thing in Uranium City, where I worked, the office was just behind MacIver store on the next block. I was working around there all the time. I came back from university and went to work for a shaft miner doing payrolls and accounts payable and stuff, and moved out to the Lorado Mine site, which is about 10 miles out of Uranium City. I was a bookkeeper there.

Kay Loutitt was born and raised in Embarras Portage, part of a family with 15 children. After she and her husband Paul, a prospector, were married they joined the migration to Uranium City. Kay remembers:

Well my husband was in Uranium. See, he used to go down to Uranium City, and then I was still living here in Embarras. Then he'd come up once in a while. And he has working. He was prospecting, I guess. Because he'd prospect quite a bit in Uranium, like for Eldorado and all those places, eh.

When her husband lost his leg in a workplace accident, Kay began a job as a cook:

But see my husband, well he had been on compensation, because he lost his leg there up in the mine, eh. So he was out of work for a while. But he did go back for light duty and stuff. He worked in some kind of a workshop. After he lost his leg, that's when I went to work for the school, cooking for Treaty kids. There was, I'd say, at least 70 kids or something. I used to come and cook lunch for them.

William (Bill) Woodward recalls that times were exceptionally hard for Aboriginal people who had to travel long distances to work for low wages, in the days before social assistance. Bill says:

They trapped and they worked. Could you imagine people travelling from La Loche – three days walk to McMurray – to work for a dollar a day? And they'd walk back with a little bit of groceries in the fall, all the way back. You know, people struggled 'til the welfare came.



MV YELLOWKNIFE IN THE CLEARWATER JUST AFTER LAUNCH

SAINT GABRIEL'S HOSPITAL AND THE GREY NUNS

Saint Gabriel's Hospital was constructed by the Catholic Church in 1936, and stood at the corner of Hardin Street and MacDonald Avenue until it was demolished in 1979 to make way for the new provincial building. The resident nurses were The Sisters of Charity, also known as "The Grey Nuns". Much of Catholic social life revolved around the hospital, but it was also an important landmark in Fort McMurray, with many people from the region having been born there. Local people would travel from the surrounding area to receive care at Saint Gabriel's, including Margaret Quintal's mother. Margaret describes the place she was born:

I have lived around Conklin pretty much all my life — not right here in Conklin, in the area, because my grandparents were already living at Mile 199. We call it 199. It's just a milepost on the railway, and it's five-and-a-half kilometres north of Conklin. And that's where they had a little house there. And they kind of had settled there. That's where they were living when I was born. So, my mother went to Fort McMurray. And that's where I was born, at the Saint Gabe's Hospital.

Like many other people in her community, Helen Roy was also born at Saint Gabriel's:

I was born in St. Gabe's Hospital. So in 1940, the hospital was there, yeah, but in 1934 it wasn't, because my husband wasn't born in it. So it was built in between that time. And it was run by the Sisters of Charity, the Grey Nuns; but I mean, hospitals were not used very much then at all, you know, because you had to pay for them and whatnot.

Many Métis women worked with the Grey Nuns at the hospital, caring for their fellow community members. Elsie Cardinal was one of them:

I lived in Conklin 'til I was 15, then I moved to Fort McMurray and lived with the Grey Nuns for three years. I never went to school. I stayed with the Grey Nuns and worked at Saint Gabriel's hospital. I'm cleaning, taking care of patients, washing patients, changing beds, washing floors, doing laundry, everything.

Evelyn White recalls receiving treatment from the Grey Nuns at Saint Gabriel's:

And the Catholic Church built St. Gabriel's Hospital [1936-1937]. The woman would put goose grease in two quart jars, put them in the basement. When we got chest colds, coughing, she would apply a layer of the goose grease on our chests and cover it with strips from an old flannel sheet. It was left on all night, and then removed before we went to school. It smelled bad and this was in the days before we had running water! It was very good, they had a good hospital, it was one sister there, she was the head nurse, she was better than the doctor. We usually wished that the doctor would be out of town, so we could have Sister Cardinal.

During the oil and gas boom times of the 1960s, it became apparent that the community needed a larger public hospital. In 1965, the Fort McMurray General Hospital replaced St. Gabriel's as the primary healthcare provider in Fort McMurray, and Saint Gabriel's became a convalescent home. Years later, it became the first home of the Fort McMurray YMCA. Today, the Jubilee Center Municipal Building stands in its place.



ST. GABRIEL HOSPITAL, FORT McMURRAY, ALBERTA

The old St. Garbriel Hospital used to stand on the corner of Hardin Street and MacDonald Avenue until earlier this year [sic] when it was demolished to make room for the coming provincial building (McMurray Today, Friday, December 28, 1979).

In the mid-1960s, when her husband could go trapping and make \$2,000 during a good year, Georgina Flobert worked as a restaurant server in Fort McMurray and in Waterways. At Club Café in Fort McMurray, which sat near where the Oil Sands Hotel is today, she made 60 cents an hour. She remembers working with her friend Kay Loutitt:

When the trappers come, we were busy. We would go on different shifts though, we'd change off every week, Kay and I. Sometimes I go on in the morning, 7:00 a.m. 'til 3:00 p.m., and she comes on at 3:00 p.m. 'til closing time. That's how I know Kay real good. We both worked together.

Lillian McCallum left Conklin for Fort McMurray in 1954 when she was 19 years old, and later became involved in hospital work.

Well, when I left home, I went to work. I started out in Jack Wagner's restaurant as a dishwasher. Then, after he sold that we all got laid off, and I went to stay for a little while with my sister, and I was called to go to work in the hospital there, St. Gabriel's Hospital. I started out in the kitchen helping, and from there I went to work in the laundry. Eventually, I went to Fort Smith, and I was trained for a ward aide – a nurse's assistant. So I learned how to look after the sick people, patients. We learned to take temperatures and things like that.

Diane Frank also remembers working at Saint Gabriel's hospital, alongside her mother:

We'd go and help mom work. Even at the hospital, after school, I'd go up there, and she'd be in the sewing room, and I would spend my time in there, helping her with the sewing.

Like many women who found themselves active participants in the wage labour economy, Evelyn Charlton discovered that she had to split her time between work and raising a family:

Yeah, I didn't have much time in Whitecourt to socialize with people. I was always working, and kids, you know, when you come home, you're not done. I worked in Blue Ridge while we were there, at a lumber mill, too, and I worked on a highway for two seasons doing highway building.

Métis, as people positioned between cultural worlds, have often found productive careers as cultural and linguistic interpreters. After her children were at school, Evelyn

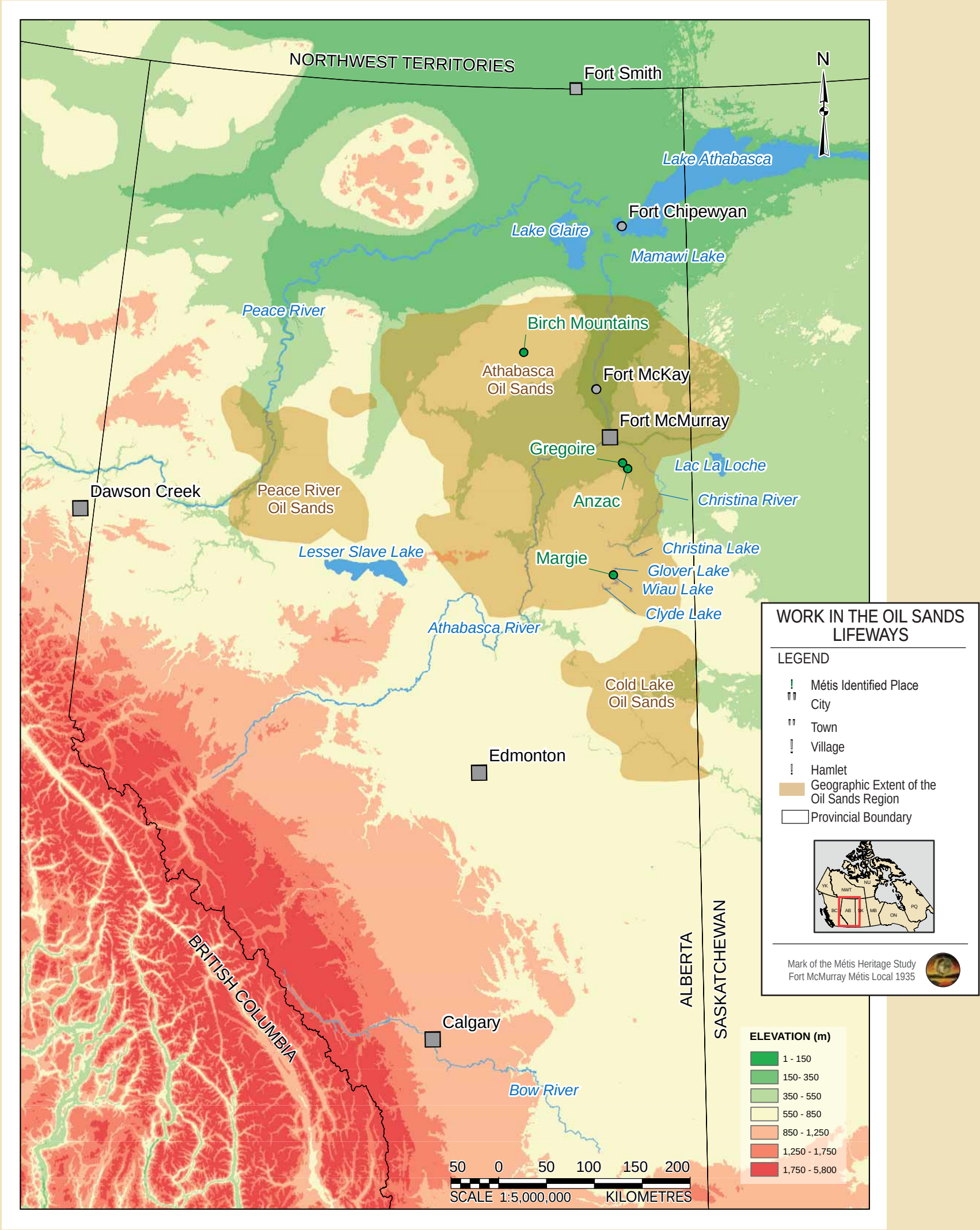
Webb began a job as a court worker with Native Counseling Services, Evelyn elaborates:

That's where I went to work as a court worker. Because even then, Chester Cunningham was our director, and he saw how the Native people were treated in the court system. They didn't know the system. If you were charged, you were guilty, and that's all they knew. So he set up an organization to help the Aboriginal people in the court. And the judges and the lawyers and the prosecutors, they really respected that. Before, nobody knew. I mean, even now if I was charged with something, I'd have to think before — what to do, eh? Most people didn't know. Even the non-Native people, they wanted us to help them, help them, help them, but we had such a load as it was. Nobody really understands the courts, unless you have business there. And the judges would just wait for us to give them information because they were at kind of a loss, too, of the differences.

Dorothy Squire and her sister Diane Frank recall that their mother, Florence Paquette, worked as an interpreter for the courthouse as well. Dorothy did some interpreting of her own when it came to writing letters for her mother who, despite her fluency in several languages, had only received a Grade 4 education. Dorothy tells about how she used to help her mother:

She wasn't very good at writing letters. I used to have to write her letters for her. I used to have to write her love letters to my dad when he was gone working for the oil company! Yeah, I'd have to write her love letters, but there was nothing in it she wouldn't tell me.

Men and women of Métis heritage in northeastern Alberta have worked at an astounding diversity of jobs in the 20th century, while also participating in traditional community and family life. Their experiences range from loading barges on the river to caring for patients at the local hospital. Hard labour on the railroad ensured that food and supplies could arrive at their destinations, while intelligence applied at the courthouse helped Aboriginal people to understand their rights. Young men fought on the front lines of international wars while many women would make traditional clothing to sell. Many would work in the bush trapping or logging. People worked as shop keepers, factory workers, miners, welders, servers, cooks, bookkeepers, guides, boat pilots, and more. In recent decades, one industry has impacted Métis economic life more than any other: the exploration and development of the oil sands.



OIL SANDS REGION





FORT McMURRAY LOOKING SOUTH, FALL 2011

BOOMTOWN

The 1960s brought on a new era in the Fort McMurray region, one dominated by large-scale industrial development projects to extract petroleum resources from the geological formations of the Earth. Suncor and Syncrude were the first to establish projects around Fort McMurray, and today a plethora of companies occupy the region with multiple oil sands projects operating simultaneously. This has resulted in massive changes to the landscape and lifestyle of the local Métis communities.

In the 1960s, Suncor's U.S. parent company, Sun Oil, invested \$250 million dollars to establish the Great Canadian Oil Sands (GCOS) project in Fort McMurray. This was the largest single private investment in Canada's history at the time, and some deemed it "a daring venture into an unknown field" and "the biggest gamble in history."² Construction began in 1964, when president and chairman J. Howard Pew was quoted as saying, "I am convinced this venture will succeed, and it will be the means of opening up reserves to meet the needs of the North American continent for generations to come."³ The Suncor project officially began streaming in 1967, making history as the world's first oil sands operation.⁴

Meanwhile, the Syncrude consortium was established in 1964. Syncrude's goal at the time was to conduct "research on the economic and technical feasibility of mining oil from the Athabasca oil sands."⁵ In 1969, Syncrude's proposal for

a production facility was approved. In 1973, construction began on the Syncrude site and lasted for five years. In 1978, the first barrel of oil was shipped. The Syncrude project officially opened on September 15, 1978. Production increased steadily over the years, and "on April 16, 1998, the billionth barrel was sent down the pipeline, five years ahead of schedule."⁶

The workforce in Fort McMurray grew exponentially with the rapid success enjoyed by industry. On the positive side, the oil and gas industry provided jobs with a steady income and adequate housing for their local employees. Many people were able to earn a good living in the oil sands, gain skills and training, and provide a quality life for their families. Wayne Hodgson has worked for many years in the industry and had this to say:

I run heavy equipment yes, I ran one of the big shovels there for quite a few years, loading the big trucks. I enjoyed that, you know. I don't think anybody should ever call Fort McMurray down, because it sure treated a lot of people good, you know, good money, good living. Fort McMurray has been really good to my family, I know that.

Wayne is the second generation of oil sands workers in his family. His father, Daniel Hodgson senior, had also achieved success in the oil sands after losing his hand while working as a young man in a sawmill.



FRANKLIN AVENUE FORT McMURRAY, JUST BEFORE THE 1934 FIRE

It was Wayne's father's motivation and solid work ethic that allowed him to provide for his wife, Sylvia Hodgson, and ten children:

My dad, he's only got one hand, like, his fingers are all cut off in an accident in a mill when he was young, but he can do more with those two fingers than a lot of guys can do with two good hands, you know. And he worked his way up and he eventually become fire chief there at Great Canadian Oil Sands, you know, which is a pretty damned good accomplishment for somebody that didn't have that much education. But my dad always read, always read, you know, and educational books, you know.

Charles Fraser is also a Métis Elder and a long-time oil sands worker. He attributes his success in life to his hard work and perseverance:

I went to work in 1964 at Great Canadian Oil Sands, June the 21st, 1964. At first we stayed in tents down at the Athabasca River. But we only stayed in the tents for about a week and then they give us a bunk



FITZSIMMONS BITUMOUNT OIL PLANT SEEN FROM THE ATHABASCA RIVER, LOOKING SOUTH.

house, but then there was no running water and whatnot. But it was raining and finally they give us a place to live. They had a cook shack right on the wrong side of the river. See they had the first plant there.

I was driving truck, yeah, I was driving a jeep and hauling people back and forth. I worked thirteen and a half years at Great Canadian Oil Sands and I went over and I worked thirteen and a half there at Syncrude. There was no way I was going to sit around, because I always had two to three jobs. As of today, I have two to three jobs per day.

Yeah, I had a house in Fort McMurray. I was the first guy to bring in a 12 by 66 trailer, the first one, that was huge that trailer. I think I paid something like \$8,000 for it then. Man, and then I had to work. Then I went to work and even on weekends, I drove truck for Imperial Oil and fuelled up the trailers in the trailer park, eh. I was just working, oh man, I was always working, like I said, I never sat around.

Today, two of Charles' three sons also work in the industry, continuing their father's tradition of disciplined work and success.

Developments in the oil and gas sector completely transformed the traditional economy of northeastern Alberta because, as Howard Webb notes:

At that time, before that, it was just seasonal work. Most of the guys worked at the NT or Hudson Bay or on the boats, something like that. Some would go to work in the bush. A lot of guys drew unemployment insurance. A lot of them guys used to work six months and draw unemployment for the rest. I slung beer at



FITZSIMMONS BITUMOUNT OIL PLANT SEEN FROM THE ATHABASCA RIVER, LOOKING NORTH.

night. Work in the daytime, sling beer at night. When the oil companies come in, they'd work all winter. You had a job, you had a family. Everybody had something to do then, places to go. Go to work.

According to his wife, Evelyn Webb:

Before, everything was just kind of placid, and then when the oil companies and the work came in, everybody was happy. That's how I saw it. Everything was just relaxed and everybody seemed to be smiling. And it was so different. It was good to be alive then.

Once again, Métis had something very particular to offer the new companies in the way of local knowledge about how to run their operations in the bush, as Arthur Harpe's memories of his first years in the Great Canadian Oil Sands camp reveal:

There was no bridge there at that time. There was no road. You had to go down and stay in camp. We stayed in camp the whole year the first year I worked there. There were three bunkhouses when I went there. A, B, and C, and I was in C. Yeah, me and Bobbie Brooks and all of those guys had speedboats. We'd go down in speedboats, Davey Couture and I. In the wintertime we went on the ice. John Nelson, he was Labour Foreman for Suncor. I think it was Great Canadian Oil Sands at that time. And he and I and a Carpenter Foreman came in a jeep, because they had to find a way to go.

I said, "I know, I've been out through there with the logging," because we logged all that.

I said, "I know where there are logging trails. We can go back that way." And we did. We took a jeep. We come all through the bush, wherever we could get

through. And that was the first time we come through on a road with a vehicle.

Then later, when they laid me off at NT and I was sitting in the bar in the oil camp, this guy said, "You want to go to work on an oil rig? Because you worked on them before."

I said, "Yeah."

He comes and says, "You want to go to work for Bechtel?"

I said, "When?"

He said, "Tomorrow morning."

I said, "I'd like to go home for a few days." I went home for two days, and then I went down. Bill Golosky and Walter and I, we went down. We had a little boat, I guess about a five-horse motor on there. Took us all morning to get to the camp and we just about froze to death. We pulled off a couple times, to pull in to shore to make sure to get warm with a fire. Oh, it was cold! Very early in the spring.

NORTHERN EDGE OF FORT McMURRAY LOOKING SOUTH, CIRCA 1930



William Castor observes that living off the land had prepared Métis for the rapid changes in labour and lifestyle brought on by the development of the oil sands. William explains why:

You know, when you're on the land and you see what's coming, you gradually adapt to it. That's what happened there. They see oil, tar sand, haul equipment, machinery, people getting jobs on them. You know, you learn pretty fast. At least, I knew what I was doing when I left there. But then it was retiring time. So I put in twenty years there. And I was laid off for one year. I couldn't take it. I worked all my life. So I got a job in Fort McKay. They put me on hauling water from town, to deliver to the houses — house to house in McKay. I enjoyed that very much. I was driving a truck — a tanker, and I hauled water from the water treatment plant across the river to McKay.

Sidney McKay was hired on with Suncor in 1962, and then with Syncrude. Sidney remembers how the skills he learned working at Gunnar Mines helped him in his career in the oil sands:

Then I went to work for Syncrude. I went and ran the Little Beaver, the drag line that they used to test to see how much pressure they could put on the edge

of the pit. Now that's an experience. Well, the minor injury, nobody got crushed, just hand injury, or foot — but we done that test. We ran it in four shifts, we ran that Little Beaver. So then I went back to work for Canadian Bechtel, putting the big drag lines together, with smaller cranes. I worked for them on the smaller cranes, 'cause I learned to drive a crane at Gunnar Mines. So, we did that, we finished putting the big cranes together and the drag lines and the conveyor belts. Then I went back on maintenance, with a crane for Suncor, and Syncrude and that's the last I worked. I worked right up 'til '73.

Joe Hamelin was born in Normandeau, just out of Lac La Biche. His great-grandparents were born and raised in Slave Lake. His grandfather, John Gladuquin, became the chief of the Papaschase Reserve. After the Reserve was lost, they moved to Beaver Lake, and later to the Lac La Biche area in the late 1800s. According to Joe, there was a heavy expectation that a young man would find productive work from an early age. Joe explains:

We were raised in this little settlement, Imperial Mills, and education didn't mean nothing. You either had to trap or you had to work. When I was 15, I lied about my age, I said I was 16, just to get a job in the sawmill.

FORMER NORTHERN EDGE OF FORT McMURRAY LOOKING NORTH, FALL 2011



And, Mom was right proud of me because I started working.

Well, we pretty well worked all our lives. I had two jobs in thirty-some years. My brother became a welder. I was running heavy equipment, but I got into the supervision side. Like, I became a foreman and I did foreman work most of the time. I started off with Suncor up here or GCOS, and then I went over to Syncrude in 1978 and I retired there. I retired awhile back, about ten years ago, but I still take odd jobs in the winter.

Joe's brother, Martin Hamelin, followed a similar path through the new booming landscape of the oil and gas industry, and used his adaptability to overcome educational barriers in his path. Martin tells about his experiences:

I went in supervision too at Suncor, looking after machinists, millwrights and ironworkers. I used to look at myself and say, "Geez, I'm supervising all these well-educated, smart cowboys here."

You know, but it's a good thing that I improved in math, because to take a trade, you got to have math. So, I had an office there and then they gave me more and more work and my eyes were getting from bad to worse with this computer thing. So, I had to bow out. But, I had a good run, I gave it a good run, eh.

After times of hardship and poverty, Kenneth R. L. Hill noticed improvements to the local quality of life that came from working in the oil sands, such as a pension plan and benefits. Ken shares his opinion:

Well, the oil sands helped every last person. And they helped more for those that took advantage of it. And, you know, you can just look at Dickie Dragon and Arthur Harpe and me. If it hadn't been for the development, we might be living very, very carefully. Because working for NTCL, it was six months on, six months off. But the off meant no money coming in normally. And when they were working, there wasn't a pension scheme or what have you. Along comes working for GCOS or Suncor, and then all these benefits are there.

Elmer Waniandy's family left Embarras Portage to move to Fort McMurray in the early '40s for work, and Elmer was born in 1949. He was a teenager when life in Fort McMurray began to change. Elmer recalls that a young worker had a lot of options and could look out for their own best interest in the workplace:

Well, I would say when I turned about 18 or 19, everything started changing – fast! About 1959 and early '60s it all just, it seemed like... well, we had I think it was a thousand people, close to a thousand when I was 14 or something, or 15. There was close



MEN SITTING ON TOP OF A BOILER, CIRCA 1915

to about a thousand people. But, all of a sudden, overnight it just went like that! Just — people just coming in, eh, they opened up the camps and stuff like that, starting to build and everybody had a job.

You couldn't stay home and say you didn't have a job because you'd just go out there and you could get a job. You could be working for this guy here today and that guy there tomorrow. You could just tell this guy, "I don't like working for you, I'm working for him." That simple, there was no union you had to fight with. Like maybe you were in the union, I was in the Labourer's Union since I was 18 or 19, but, I could go from one job to another job, just like that.

If I said, "Hey, you're not treating me right. I don't like working for you because you're not safe enough for me." Well, that's part of life, right. So, we're all involved. I mean, everybody's involved in this change of the planet, right. The planet's changing because we're doing it. It's the way you got to live. You got to do it for your money, right.

Marie Agnes Herman was born near La Loche Saskatchewan in 1937, and raised in that community. She moved to Fort McMurray after getting married to her husband Alexander in 1953. Out on the trapline, the traditional mode of life continued to intersect with the industrial way of life for the

remainder of the 20th century and into the new millennium. Marie explains how it was when the oil and gas companies wanted to renew their developments on her trapline:

Last winter, I didn't even know that they were going to make that big plant halfway to my cabin. Every time those companies come here, I go to the meeting and talk to them about working on my trapline so that they could do something for me in return, at least to build a decent road for me.

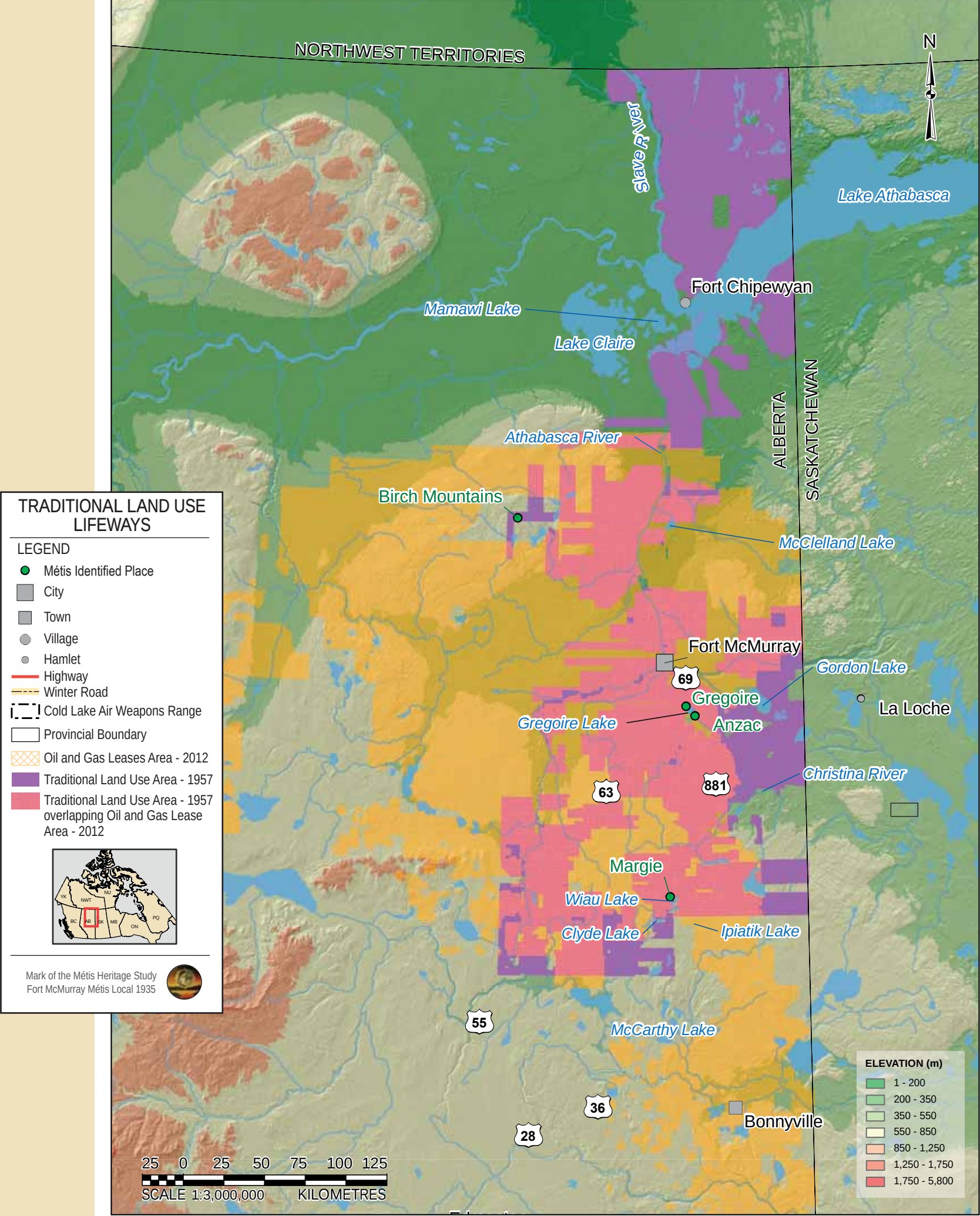
Although the oil sands development brought many benefits to the local communities of the Fort McMurray region, there were also some drawbacks. Although local Métis were able to get jobs, there were a lot more jobs than there were local people. The sudden incursion of transient, foreign workers drawn to the area brought about culture shock and trauma for many local people. The region had previously been quite isolated and the community was a tightly-knit social network of friends and family members. George Bacon remembers the way things used to be:

Yeah, well, at one time, McMurray was — when I was a kid, was only about maybe 1,500 people here and I think the majority of the people were related.

Some members of the Métis community perceive that the petroleum boom and the shift from a primarily subsistence



MEN STANDING IN FRONT OF DOMINION TAR AND CHEMICAL



TRADITIONAL LAND USE AND OIL AND GAS LEASE AREAS

livelihood to a cash economy brought about many problems. For example, the influx of strangers with a foreign value system led to cultural misunderstandings including racism, violence and increased exposure to excessive alcohol and other social ills. These were detrimental factors for many people. The small rural settlement of Fort McMurray suddenly became a sprawling, petroleum-fueled hotspot. Linda Boudreau-Semaganis explains some of the changes she saw in her community:

Like, from '64 to '70, it was just drastically changing. Like, the town just, boom! And there was a trailer city. Like, there was trailers in horseshoes, they're now crescents, all in that Alberta Drive area and all that. That was all trailers, just trailers after trailers, because the people that came up there, had to have a place to live. There were just tons of people coming in and families and the schools were bursting at the seams. Everything changed.

For many people, the massive migration into Fort McMurray seemed to drastically alter the social fabric of the small town. According to Linda Boudreau-Semaganis:

I think everybody felt the loss of the sense of community, because that's what it was, you know. Before, if somebody had trouble, somebody passed on or somebody was sick, everybody kicked in to help. They were caring. And when this development came in, it changed the whole dynamics.

Many Elders believe that oil sands development has contaminated natural water sources. In the past, hunters and trappers could survive out in the bush for weeks, carrying all they needed with them in their packs. They could take a cup and drink the water from natural sources: springs, rivers, lakes or even the muskeg. Today, the contamination of local freshwater sources has severely limited the Métis hunters and trappers' ability to remain for long periods of time in the bush.

WHITEMUD FALLS, SOUTH OF FORT McMURRAY



Amedie (Billy) Cardinal explains:

That's why we don't even go out in the trapline anymore, because they pollute the water. Where are you going to get your water? You've got to pack the jugs like this from here? Can't do that! You can see that oil right on top of the river water. Even on the sloughs you even used to use that water before, eh, make your tea, now you can't.

Jean-Marie Janvier would agree about the depletion of resources in modern times. At the age of 96, Jean-Marie explained in Dene to an English-speaking interpreter that he used to rely completely on food and water from the bush, but since nearly a hundred years have passed during his lifetime, he has observed that there has been less and less for people to live on with each new generation. Thinking about the foods he used to eat, such as fish, rabbits, ducks, duck eggs, and moose meat, Jean-Marie tried to count how many moose he had killed in his life, and stopped counting after 80. He says there is no way he would be able to have duck or moose meat today. He also explained that muskeg water was one of the best types of water that they used to drink, and sometimes they used to use it as medicine for coughs, if they caught a cold or if someone was sick. They would rather go and drink muskeg water than water from the river or the lake. Now, he says, there's a big difference because everything is dried up. But he says he would still live on that water, and if he had the choice to go back into the bush, he would still want to live there. He also added that he was a tough young man in the olden days, during the time he lived off hunting moose in the bush.

While Métis traditional harvesters have witnessed many drastic changes to their landscape over the past century, the oil and gas industry continues to be a central theme of importance in Métis discussions about community life. Métis over multiple generations have worked to achieve balance between economic benefits and opportunities for education and professional development, with respect for the environment and Métis cultural traditions of living off the land.

SUMMARY

From bush work to oil sands work, there have been immense alterations in Métis fortunes, economies, and labour over the course of just a handful of decades. Change has been rapid and irreversible. Oil sands operations and modern towns now dot the landscape where families once took their living from the trapline and the trading post. Cultural attitudes toward mobility, entrepreneurship, ingenuity, and adaptability have allowed Métis to respond to and benefit from this rapid environmental, social, and economic change, to persevere through history and to triumph.

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ELDER PROFILES

Interviews were carried out with 104 Elders between 2007 and 2010, to learn about the traditional Métis use of the land, their culture and values. These vivid life stories provided the information necessary to complete this Atlas. The following section contains profiles on each of the Elders who helped to make this work possible by generously sharing their knowledge, and their memories for others to learn from and appreciate.



IN MEMORY OF...

Interviews for the Mark of the Métis Atlas Project were completed in 2010. During the time that elapsed between the interviews and the completion of this publication, many Elders have passed on. This section of Elder profiles is dedicated in loving memory to those who have contributed so much to their communities and their culture in life, and whose legacy is preserved for future generations in this book.



ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



EDWARD CARDINAL 1937 – 2011

My grandfather was Harry Bourque; and he was from Chicago, and all he spoke was French. I think they came here as Métis and married into Ladouceurs. My grandfather was like a gypsy. He moved from place to place! My grandmother's side, my mom's mother, her maiden name was Johnstone. My mom was born in Lac La Biche. I think it was called Piases Reserve. Her name was Delaphine Bourque and she married my dad, Jim Cardinal. I married a Bourque as well. They used to say, "You throw a rock over your shoulder, you'll either hit a Bourque or a Boucher!" I was raised around Philomena and went to school there. I had two brothers, Vern and Alec. Alex died of throat cancer. I'm the oldest; 72 years old. Father Mercredi was our teacher, and he was also the guy that married me and my wife Virginia; right there in Philomena. We've been married 46 years, I think.

My dad spoke Cree and English, and probably a little bit of Chip, because he came from there. He was born in Heart Lake. My family spoke mostly Cree and English, and not much French. I grew up speaking Cree, and my grandfather used to try to teach me how to speak French, you know. I knew a few words and that was it. My father was a trapper. He took us out 'til we started going to school. We used to go and hunt ducks. We had dogs, you know, that'll chase the ducks into the weeds. And we used to hunt caribou, but now you can't even come close to one.



WALTER CARDINAL 1930 – 2009

I've been in this area mostly all my life. I was born October the 2nd, 1930, right in McMurray. My mom Mary Cardinal was part Cree, from Lac La Biche. After she got married, my granny raised me until I was about 16 years old. We lived in a little town called Cheecham, in a cabin. She would make moose hide, sewing right until two o'clock in the morning sometimes, making moccasins, and gloves and mitts, and jackets. She made them pretty fancy too, with surprising bead work. And she made medicine out of balsam trees and spruce trees too, and sap off the trees. All kinds of stuff. And they talked a lot of Cree them days too. I learned lots from the older people, like for bush life and stuff, especially when I was young.

I started trapping when I must have been about 12 years old. I learned mostly from my uncle Sammy Cardinal, my mom's brother. We had traplines west of Cheecham near the Stony Mountain area. We'd get a lot of squirrels, weasels, minks, foxes, coyotes, and timberwolves. We would set snares, and shoot rabbits. Every once in a while we'd get a moose; and a little bit of fishing too. We snared fish with rabbit wire and a pole. And we had dogs; all dogs, no skidoos in them days; just dogs and horses. We'd haul fish with dogs, and haul wood, and haul moose meat in toboggans. All kinds of stuff going around in the bush. It wasn't too bad at all, but now lately there's nothing there hardly, you know. It's not like it used to be. Disappearing animals now.

I moved back to Fort McMurray probably in about 1940. I started in 1947 on the railroad there. Then after a while I quit, about ten years after, probably in the '50s. So then I worked with the NTCL on the boats and barges when they had the river transportation. I was married one time, in about the '50s, and I got four boys and one girl.

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



GERTIE CASTOR 1934 – 2009

I was born November 29th, 1934. We were raised near Fort Chip, and I was three years old when I left there and came to McMurray. My dad's name was George Sanderson, and my mother's name was Katie Powder. My mother came from House River, and my dad comes from here, Fort McMurray. My dad trapped a lot, and he got a trapline for my mother near the airport. When he passed away in 1973, she automatically took over. She trapped there 'til she passed away in 1984.

I've been on traplines since I was 17 years old, but I wasn't out on the trapline all the time. I went to school, you know. I had to cut wood. I had to do everything. I had to go look after horses. I trapped with my mother and we trapped beaver, and we had snares for lynx. And I caught a lynx in a snare. We had a bunch of cougars out there at one time. Mom said, "Go and look in that dugout and see what's in there." So I went in there, and there was nothing. I said, "No, there's nothing here."

She said, "What's there?"

I said, "Nothing. Nothing but a bunch of tracks."

She told me, "That was cougars."

I said, "Cougars?"

"Yeah," she said. Well, I was just scared. I took right off to her, because she was way ahead of me. Well, I was already married, so I wasn't about to have the cougars swallow me! And they went on a little trail, and I never seen them after that. That was 1978.



COUGAR

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



JENNY FLETT 1908 – 2010

My father was Roderick Fraser, and Colin Fraser was my grandfather. They were the ones with the bagpipes. My grandmother used to talk Cree all the time. My mom was Liza Loutitt, and her dad was Peter Loutitt, from the Orkney Islands. My parents, they came from Athabasca, from up out of Edmonton somewhere. They came down from the other side of Edmonton in two scows, as the Frasers and the Loutitts. I'm 98 years old now and I was born here, and that's when they moved down to Chip; the year I was born. They both had these great big scows with their equipment and everything they owned and moved into Fort Chip. And then through the rapids, they used to have these guys on the shore with a great big rope, pulling these boats over the rapids.

My mom died when I was too young to remember a lot of things. She died at 42. I was only 16 years old when she died. Then, my dad had his own outfit on the Quatre Fourches, and after mom passed he had to get something he could do himself. Two years after she died, I was 18. I thought to myself, I'm going to do something with my life. My mom used to be a midwife, and I thought, that would be a nice job; there's no doctors, no nurses there. So I went to Edmonton, and bought myself a doctor book on maternity. I said, I want a good book that I can go by, because I've got no education. You see, I only went to school for four years because mom was sick all the time.

Then I fell in love of course, and I had to go and get married, which didn't stop me. My husband was Edward Flett and it's a good thing he let me do as I like. Sixty-three years I was married, and I had a man that never opened his mouth when I wanted to do anything. I was the boss. I often think, how on Earth could he ever put up with me! I lived a good life and enjoyed every bit of it. I remember the first baby I delivered. We were in a tent out on the Athabasca Lake there, in the fall of the year, fishing you see. One night, oh was it ever rainy and snowy and dark you know, and there's a knock at my tent door. It was pitch dark but everything went all right. That was 79 years ago.



GEORGINA FLOBERT 1932 – 2007

I was raised in Fort McMurray, close to the Snye. My mother came here a long time ago from McKay. Her name was Margaret Cooper, maiden name Tourangue. She was adopted by Dave and Sophie Cardinal, who were Treaty. My parents both talked Cree. My dad, George Cooper, was Métis from Chip. I was only a small girl when he died. I have two brothers from my dad: Ed and Charlie. My mother remarried Jean Pauline, from New Brunswick, and they had four girls, my sisters. My stepdad was a trapper and he worked too. He worked in so many places I don't remember now. After winter trapping, we lived on MacDonald Island during the summer months. Yeah, my parents were going to the traplines, so they'd take us out of school. We'd come back, and then we'd go back again. Mom did the cooking, but we helped. We helped by peeling the potatoes and stuff like that. We'd peel all the vegetables and then she did the rest, and bake bannock. My sister and I, we used to do everything. I married Jules Flobert and we remained a trapping family.

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



ARTHUR HARPE 1931 – 2010

My ancestors were born and raised here in the Fort McMurray area, and died here in the Fort McMurray area. My dad, Edward Harpe, was French and my mother, Olivine Bushie, was a Métis. Dad was born in the United States, but he moved to Alberta when he was just a boy. He was strong – I've never seen a man so strong in all my life as my dad. Oh, he was a strong pot licker! They came all the way from the States in covered wagon; all the way to the Lac La Biche area. It took them all summer to get here. My grandparents on my dad's side, Joe and Adele Harpe, never came up north.

On my mom's side, my grandfather, Patrick Bushie, and grandmother, Alice, were born in Lac La Biche. They moved up here, I don't know when, back in the '40s I think, because I was raised here since the 1940s. Grandpa Bushie worked up here at McInnes Lumber, Lumber and Fishery, for about 30 years. And we're still here. There were some tough times, but I don't know, I think our grandparents and our parents, they knew how to survive. They had to in order to feed their kids. That's the way it was.

We had three or four acres down at the Prairie, we called it 'the Prairie', you know the river and all that around there, where Keyano College is now. It was all open field back then, the Prairie. We lived out there and we'd grow big gardens. We always had vegetables; all the time. We always had lots, not fancy, but lots on the table. And my dad had a trapline, we had dogs, just for weekends, to go up to our trapline. My dad's trapline was known as the Hog's Back. Yes, we spent a lot of time out on that trapline.



AGNES HERMAN

When I was a little girl, I lived in Garson Lake. My family travelled all the way up the Christina River to Chard, where we eventually settled. We travelled by foot, because we had no horses at the time. I took my first step into the community of Janvier, or Chard as it was once known, when I was nine or ten. Today, I've been here for 67 years. My parents were Christine Piche and Alexander Deltas. Dad was a fisherman, originally from Fort Chip. My mother was from Fort McMurray, and so was her mom.

Back when I was a girl, I never thought that it was 'hard times'. We never wanted to think it was hard. When it was that time of the year for that certain type of wild meat or wild animal that we lived off of, well we went out and got it. Just the three of us. My mom and dad and me, 'cause I was the youngest. We would just go out and go into a certain area to hunt and trap. Then, come spring, we would come back. May 15 was the deadline for when we had to sell our beaver hide.

I was young when I met my husband John Baptiste Herman in 1947. We spent years and years living together common-law in Janvier. He had been married before and had one daughter with his first wife. But we eventually got married and had children; only five of them were born in a hospital. The Elders in the community, they were the midwives. Everybody was pretty well raised off the land. We mostly trapped and hunted and kept ourselves going.

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



RON HUPPIE 1951 – 2010

My family has been in the Fort McMurray, Fort Chip, and Lac La Biche area since 1865, which is actually before Confederation. My grandparents from my mother's side came from Lac La Biche, then travelled all the way up to Fort Liard, which is off the Slave River system. My grandfather was a Boostrom and my grandmother was Boucher. My mother Eva Boostrom married my father, Joe Huppie. My dad's side was Huppies and Prudens. Huppies, we can track them down to the Glendon area in the 1800s, the Goodfish Lake area; and Prudens from the Saddle Lake Reserve. My grandfather on my dad's side was Dumas Huppie, and my great-grandfather's name was Tomas Huppie. His wife was Métis from the Saddle Lake area. In our family, I'm the oldest, then Donnie, then sister Elaine, and then Leon.

Now, my grandfather spoke a bit of French, but at home we spoke Cree and English. Huppies all spoke Cree. Everyone of them that I know spoke Cree at one time or another. I've been living in Fort McMurray since '69. In my early days, in the '60s, there was a very strong Cree community here. I can remember probably close to half the people spoke Cree in this town.

I grew up along the railway tracks. It was quite a way of life, and I really enjoyed it – it's what I know. You remember life being the way it was when you were young, and that always influences you. Well, I still remember all those things from when I was young. We had the privilege of still being out on the trapline, shooting ducks in the spring, shooting moose in the fall and drying the meat. And in the fall it's picking blueberries and cranberries, drying meat at the same time, and fishing. You know, we'd go set a net at Kirby Lake, somewhere in there and bring home some fish and smoke it. Last year we did a whole bunch at the cabin because we have a smoke rack there. So traditionally that's what we did and we still like doing that.

JEAN MARIE JANVIER, BORN 1911

I was born in 1911, in Garson Lake, Saskatchewan. My mom, Elaine Herman, is from Garson Lake, and my dad is from La Loche, Saskatchewan. They call it "In twa les dwele" in Dené – La Loche. I'm the oldest of seven kids. There are four of them alive including me, and they are all in La Loche. I moved from Garson Lake to Christina Crossing when my grandmother passed away and my grandpa remarried. He remarried and took another wife from La Loche, and they moved to Christina Crossing. That's where I did my trapping and raised my kids. The first time I got my house built in Janvier would be at least 20 years ago. People from Garson Lake would come, and they would meet me at Christina Crossing, and we would go to Janvier and have dances and all that; or we would have a celebration if there was a lot of moose meat. There would be fiddle music, jigging, and dancing.

When I think about how many moose I've killed in my lifetime, I stop counting at over 80. And there was lots of fish at Christina Crossing, pickerel, whitefish, jackfish. And I would go duck hunting too. That's what we lived on, fish, duck, and moose. I was a tough young man in my time. My wife and I would go berry picking in the bush with the kids, and pick cranberries, raspberries, blueberries. The muskeg water was one of the best water that we used to drink, and sometimes we used to use it for coughs, if someone caught a cold or was sick. We made do with what the land had to give us, and we had a pretty good life!

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



PETER LADOUCEUR 1924 – 2011

I was born October 31st, 1924, just out of Fort Chip at Big Point, that's at the mouth of the Athabasca River. That's where my parents moved from Lac La Biche, that's where they settled. My dad is Modeste Ladouceur and my mom is Louise Cardinal. Dad had a trapline. When he came down, he had horses and cows. We were well-off, not money-wise, but I mean, we had lots to eat. We lived right by the lake, fish right there, lots of ducks, and then my dad had two horses and whenever he killed a moose, he'd go and bring him in with the horses. Dad had a big garden with potatoes and carrots, turnips, onions, stuff like that, you know, right by the river. It wasn't polluted then. I used to go with my dad on the trapline, 'til I was old enough to go on my own, you know... about 14, 15, in there. I fished in Saskatchewan for about, I don't know how many years, Crackinstone, Saskatchewan, they call it. I fished for five summers and two winters in Great Slave Lake. We drove dogs from there all the way to Fort Chip. Oh, that's a long ways, me and my brother. They shipped the fish on big reefer barges, eh, they froze them there. McInnes had a big plant. That's the outfit I was fishing for, they had a big plant in Waterways and that's where they unloaded all the frozen fish and they shipped them out from there to God-knows-where. At that time fish was cheap. I remember when I was first fishing there, about three cents a pound for pickerel and now it's a dollar something. I have been married to Elsie Powder since 1951. Elsie was born November 25th, 1931, and we live in Fort Chipewyan.

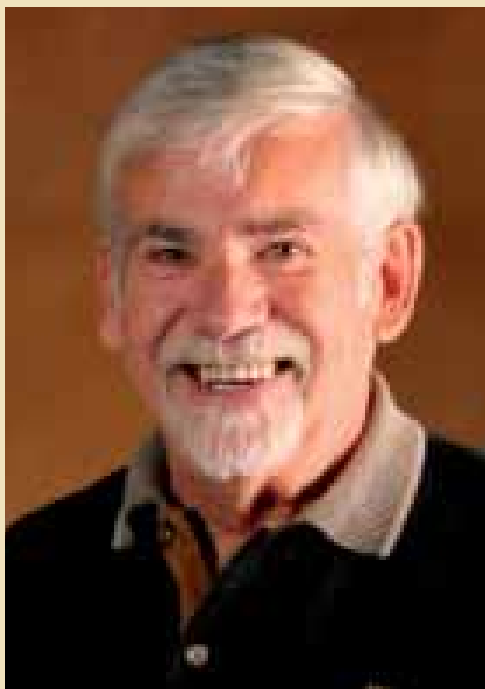


FRED MacDONALD 1935 – 2007

Well, as far as I know, my family came here around 1889. My dad, Harry MacDonald, was born in Edmonton in 1906 and my mother, Mary Cardinal, was Métis from Wabasca. My dad was Métis and his father was a Scotsman who came over from Scotland. My grandfather married a woman from Lac La Biche. Her name was Josephine Tremblay. And then two brothers came north, John and my great-uncle Kenneth. They bought into MacDonald Island and started a little farm there; cattle, chickens and stuff like that. And then after a couple of years, two years, my great-uncle Kenneth, went to Fort Chip; and that's where he married into the Campbells, and that's where the rest of the MacDonalds started. They went right through the north. All the ones in the north, they all came from Kenneth. And my grandfather's kids, some are in this area, some in La Loche, some in Stony Rapids, and Fond du Lac. And then his other brothers, they were all around the Stony Mountain. Now they're in Edmonton. That's where they've been living. I met quite a few of the boys there, eh. But it was in my younger days, and we didn't have time to talk about history or anything like that.

We were raised on a trapline there, just 14 miles north of McMurray. In 1946 we left there, stayed in town one winter, and then in 1947 we moved down by the Firebag, and we still have that trapline in the family. In those days, we talked nothing but Cree; a little bit of English, but mostly Cree. Everybody talked Cree then. I started to work at 15. I had to survive, eh. Years ago, people — in the summertime when school was out and the berries started getting ripe — there was no place they'd call home. They'd go and go, and kill the moose, and that's where they'd stay. They make the hides, dry the meat and have a bunch of feasts — a lot of people share, eh. You know, then they start getting low, they move on again. You know they do that a couple months a year, then they'd all come back again. They lived in tents and they made lean-tos. Lots of hardships, but it was good.

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



RICHARD PLISKA 1943 – 2011

My father was from Russia, and my mother was from the USA, Minnesota I think. I came up to Fort McMurray from a little farm town in Saskatchewan in 1964 to be an ironworker for the Great Canadian Oil Sands. McMurray was still small then. Franklin Ave was the only street in town. We stayed in McMurray for about a year, and then went back to Saskatchewan. Then, in 1968, we came back with eighty dollars in our pocket, two kids and all our worldly possessions. I worked for Diversified Transportation off and on for quite a few years, and then had a taxi business and an ambulance service.

McMurray was a great place back then. There were Treaty Aboriginals, Métis, everybody just hung together. Everybody was mixed in, and everybody knew everybody. It was interesting, because there was always something happening. We were either working hard, or partying! And there was no difference between people. We were all together.

After McMurray started getting larger, it kind of changed the atmosphere of the place. But, what an education moving up here, you know, just with all the action. You know, from where we'd come from, there was nothing happening for a hundred years there and then to come here, what a change!. A lot of opportunities. I don't think anybody could be ready for what happened here. I mean, ninety percent of the people weren't sure what was happening because, you know, it just happened so fast.



MARIA VERMILLON 1916 – 2010

Our family has been in Fort Chip mostly all our life. I was born in 1916, and raised in Birch River. We were six kids all together. Long ago, we had an Indian name — Ticolay, but when the missionaries came, they changed it to Shortna. Growing up, I spoke only Dené. In the mission it was French and English. So I speak Dené, Cree, a little bit of French and a little bit of English. I went to the convent when I was eight years old with my sisters. My brothers wouldn't go because my dad was teaching them how to survive in the bush. I was in the convent just during the winter months. In the summer I would go, but we never stayed in town. Straight into the bush. I was 13 when I got out, since my mom wasn't well and I needed to be at home.

My mom and dad showed me ways of living in the bush. In the springtime, we would move back to Fort Chip, and my oldest sister would stay home with us, and then my mom and dad would go on a steamboat. They'd go to Fort McMurray to buy food for the winter, and then when they got back to Fort Chip. My dad had a great big scow where they used to pack all their food and everything, to take back to the trapline. They brought enough food to last us all winter.

When I was 18 years old I got married to a trapper, and we moved up to Jackfish Creek. Long ago, if a man looked like he was a good trapper, and a good survivor, then these old people would just give their daughter away. We had eight children, but we travelled too much in the bush in the fall time, and the babies would catch cold; so we lost most of them when they were babies. When we lived in the bush, people were healthy. And all of a sudden this big flu came around and killed a lot of people. Long ago, we used to get our medicine from the Crees, and from the land.

ELDERS - IN MEMORY OF...



WILLIAM (BILL) WOODWARD 1923 – 2007

My father's name was James Arthur Woodward. He came from Wales and went to school in Cambridge and Oxford. And my mother was Susan Janvier. She came from this Reserve here. I don't know if she was born here or where she was born but... could have been Saskatchewan, pretty hard to tell. It was a long time ago. Her mother's grandmother came from this Reserve, Anzac, married in Saskatchewan to Joseph Janvier. He had Scrip. Whoever took Scrip was a Métis. And my ancestors, well they were here in the 1800s I guess. I was born in Saskatchewan in 1923 but I came out here to McMurray in 1928, then Anzac in 1934. Between here and Fort McMurray was where I made my living; and I hunted all the Stony Mountain right up to Algar Tower, into the Grand Rapids. In 1943, I went to Europe to fight in World War II. To make a living when I came back, I trapped mostly. Every animal that is in this country I trapped. My wife and I got married in 1947. We had 14 children and only five survived. But I'll say that we never went hungry. I didn't lay in bed and wait for the rabbit to come; I went after that rabbit or whatever it was, a fox or a coyote. The way I learned to trap is to watch the animal, watch the birds. Watch how they live and follow them around. Pretty soon you live like an animal yourself. I ate so many rabbits that every time a dog barked I hid under the porch!



COYOTE

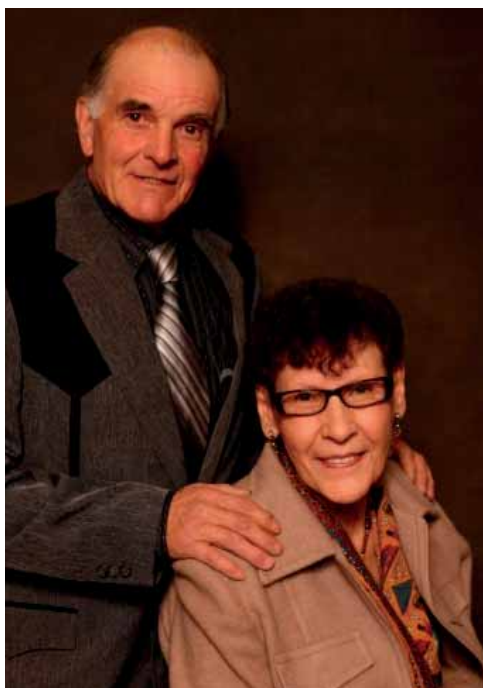


ELDERS - PARTICIPANT PROFILES



LEONA ANDERSON

My parents were Leonard Williams from Mississippi and Helen Quinn from Lac La Biche. I was born in Edmonton, but I've been up here in Fort McMurray since I was 14 or 15 years old. Oh, we'd go berry picking, and they used to plant such huge potato gardens. We had no choice but to at that time. We planted mostly potatoes and I think a few times they would try corn. There were always the regular things too like onions and beets and carrots and all that stuff. My mom would do a lot of canning. She'd can blueberries, raspberries, strawberries and saskatoons. Yeah, we had to go berry picking. I'd just fill my pail half full with leaves and then put the berries on top! My dad was the night watchman at Mildred Lake, and then for 35 years he was a conductor on the train for Northern Alberta Railways. My dad, he just kept working. I think he worked 'til he was 82. I care about the history of my family. I know that my grandmother lost her Treaty rights because she remarried and she didn't marry an Aboriginal person. I've gone through the family tree. We found that it was very hard to get the names spelled or pronounced properly and stuff like that, because they didn't know how to read and write back then. So they had the missionary do all this for them. So that's where we ran into sort of a brick wall, because the names weren't spelled right. And even then, there was just X's too, you know, they didn't know signatures. So it's hard to trace the names. Some of the history is still alive in Fort McMurray today. My grandson now, well, he's going to be 17 in the summer, he's just fascinated that he lives on the street that was named after my dad, Williams, you know. His great-grandfather, yeah. A lot of these places are named after the people who lived here for years.

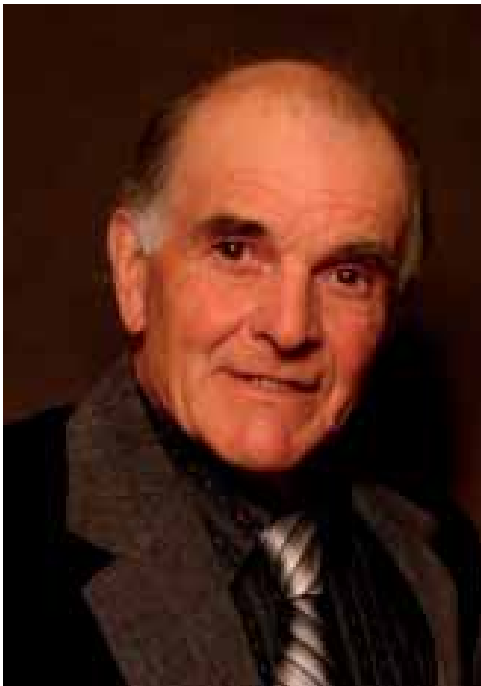


AUGUSTINE ARMIT

I was raised in the Lac La Biche area by my grandmother and grandfather, Alexander and Madeleine Tremblay. We would trap in the winter months, then, come springtime, when the trapping's over, we'd go home to Lac La Biche. We'd stay there for the whole summer, and then go back out to the trapline come fall. Grandma was a midwife, and she delivered me. There was ten of us in the family all together, and growing up we spoke a mix of French, Cree and English. Grandma didn't talk much English, but Grandpa taught her more, and then eventually she started, you know, to talk more and understand more in English. And, Grandpa also talked Cree, but he mixes everything, both languages together.

We used to use different herbs and plants for medicine. Grandma used to use rat root for a sore throat, she'd shred it or cut a little piece and you just hold it in your mouth and chew it. Or even a toothache or something. Grandma used to use strawberry root and rat root to make medicine for when she'd deliver babies. A lot of women would hemorrhage. She used to tell us to boil it together, and strain it, and then make the mother drink that, and it slacks everything down so the mother doesn't hemorrhage. Grandma made lots of her own medicines, and showed us girls how to make some too.

Augustine Armit photographed with Ed Armit



ED ARMIT

I'm half French and half Indian. I was raised on a trapline by Blanche Lake, Mud Lake now, near Fort Chip, by the Armit family. They took me in when I was born, and raised me 'til I was 18. Growing up, we'd go spend a week or more on the trapline. We used to plant a garden in the spring, then, about the 15th of May we'd leave and come to McMurray. Then we'd go back in the fall, harvest the garden, and get ready for trapping in winter.

We trapped all winter. Muskrats, beaver, squirrels, mink, foxes, wolves, pretty much everything there was to be trapped. We'd go spend a couple of nights there on the trapline and we had little squirrel lines going out from there, you'd look at them and then you'd go to the next cabin, spend a couple of nights. When I was ten years old, mom would make me bannocks, and I would be gone for a week with my three dogs trapping squirrels and they never worried, as long as I was back on the day I said I'd be back. The only thing was that I wasn't allowed to skin the squirrels. I'd come home with a whole sleigh load of squirrels and mom would skin 'em.

But today you would never see a ten year old kid go out in the bush and do that, you know. But, it would do them good if they would. I mean, growing up on a trap line, you're actually a—like, an adult when you're ten years old. You know, I shot my first deer when I was seven with a 22 and my first moose when I was nine years old. I was allowed to pack a 30-30 rifle and I shot the first moose. When I grew up and left the trapline, I went to work on the tug boats on the Athabasca, and moved to McMurray in 1958.



EDNA BACON

I was born on January 2nd, 1927, in Fond-du-Lac, Saskatchewan. My mother was Nellie Loutitt, and she was born in Fort Chipewyan. My father was Magloria Cardinal, and he was born in the Peace River area. There were six children in our family, and I was the second-oldest. My oldest brother was Allan and I was second, and then Leonard, Tilley, Irene and Marvin. I was eight years old when mom died. I remember my grandmother, because she was the one that looked after us when mom passed on, and her name was Maryann Loutitt. My grandmother's dad was from Scotland, from the Orkney Islands. But, you know, our grandmother passed away when we were still young, and then the aunts and uncles took over. So, we were scattered out between the families. I lived much of my life in Fort Chipewyan. I went to school in Fort Chip, and then in about 1944 I moved here to Fort McMurray, just looking for work. I was about 18, I guess it was, when I started working. I worked on the Echo, that's the Hudson Bay passenger boat. That was just a summer thing, and then I lived with my aunt and uncle in McMurray. That was the reason I came to McMurray to start with, you know. They had a business here, running a café, and I worked there as well. That was even before I was married. I got married when I was 21, to Harold Bacon from Athabasca. We had two children together: first George and then Allan. So after I got married I didn't work for awhile and my husband worked out at the airport. He was an equipment operator and then he became the foreman. So we moved out to the airport. The airport housing was really good. I liked it anyway, nice, big houses. But then they were going to tear them down, so we moved out, moved to town and bought our house. That's on Fitzgerald Avenue. My husband died about a year after we bought the house, he had cancer. I've lived there ever since, by myself. I'm still there, hopefully I'll last for awhile.



GEORGE BACON

I was born June 17th, 1948, in Fort McMurray. My father was Harold Bacon from Athabasca and my mother was Edna Cardinal from Fond-du-Lac. My parents were married in McMurray and my mom became Edna Bacon. Well, back when I was a kid here in Fort McMurray, you couldn't get across the river unless you went by boat and I remember there were people who used to live across the river. And I remember I went to school with a girl whose dad lived over there. He had kind of a little farm set up there with horses and that. He lived almost right where the water treatment plant is now, somewhere in that area. He had a little house there. His name was Dimitri Saline, and he was also a trapper. My family used to hunt moose, deer and stuff like that, mostly antlered game. We weren't into the bears or anything like that. We had a garden. Actually, that was pretty much our source of food. We had gardens and wild meat. You know, you'd get the odd beef every now and then, but it was more of a treat than anything, because back in the day, there wasn't really a lot for storage here. There was a local meat store in McMurray, but back in the day money was pretty scarce too. I think it was a healthy diet we had though. We used to hunt out past the airport towards Anzac. When the highway came, we used to go out on the highway and head down towards Mariana Lakes, along the road there. There was caribou occasionally. There is still, as far as I know, a herd of caribou that lives between McMurray and Anzac somewhere, but I just don't know where. I guess it's pretty hard to get to it. And deer, deer was just like dogs, they were everywhere! There were lots of deer here, back in the day. And it's not like there was an abundance of hunters here, eh. There's always been deer here, ever since I can remember. When we lived at the airport, we used to have a lot of problems with the bears coming right up on our doorsteps!



ROSE BACON

I was born in Lac La Biche in 1935. My father was Charles Lewis and he was born in Devonshire, England. My mother was Rosalie DeLima Cardinal, and she was born in Lac La Biche. Lots of Cardinals in Lac La Biche, but their name was Kakikekamik before they changed it to Cardinal. My mother passed away when I was eight months old, so Maria Desjarlais adopted me and raised me. Maria Desjarlais had no children, she only adopted Jim and me. I came to Fort McMurray and Waterways by train in April of 1957. The train ride was quite enjoyable actually, I had a good sleep. We had friends that lived in Fort McMurray, they were Lena and Remy Couture, and that's who I came to visit and decided to stay. I worked at Saint Gabriel's Hospital in Fort McMurray. Half the town was Métis in those days. Then I moved to Waterways and I lived in Waterways 'til I moved again in 2002. Yes, in Waterways I lived on Bulyea Avenue, 7305 Bulyea Avenue. There's a church across the street now and there's a little store called Marketown, and that's where I spent just about a lifetime working in that store. I got married to William Henry Bacon and today I live in Lac La Biche. I moved back here to take care of my foster mother, Maria, in her elder years and I thought, I might as well stay here, it's too late now to go back to McMurray, right. So I don't mind, I bought a little house. What I'd like to see for our Métis young people is to get educated. I don't like to see the young people go to waste like they are right now. I think they need education and I think our Métis Locals and that, they should have bursaries. Then they should go to the schools and tell these young kids that they have bursaries and opportunities. If the mother and dad can't make lunch and send their kids to school, somebody should be there to help that child go to school, you know, stuff like that.



RODERICK BIRD

I was born June 16th, 1946. My parents were William Bird from Fort McMurray and Ethel Fraser from Fort Chip. On my dad's side, my grandparents were Joseph Michael (Joe) Bird and Katherine Cardinal. On my mom's side, my grandparents were Roderick Fraser and Eliza Jane Loutitt. I was named after my grandfather, Roderick Fraser. My grandparents on my mom's side lived in Fort Chip. When I was a kid we lived in Waterways for quite a few years. Actually, that's where I was raised until I was 11 years old. There's five boys and seven girls in my family, and my mother worked at the salt plant. There used to be a salt plant in Waterways. My dad was on the boats then, the tugboats. He worked for Northern Transportation. He was a captain on the river boats – well, it was usually the same boat. He retired on the Radium Miner. It was built up here in Fort McMurray in 1956, brand new, and he was on it until he retired. I went to school until Grade 9, and then I went to work on the boats. Once, on a trip across Lake Athabasca, we were tied up in Gunnar Mines, we were shut down. We were still moving stuff from Uranium and Gunnar to McMurray. And, there were some people who had a horse that we had to bring up on a barge and that's the same time we were wind-bound, eh. And we had to, kind of, make a corral out of empty pallets. But the poor horse was on there for about five days. He lived. He was a little scared when he got to town here. In Waterways at one time, there was just a small little hall. That's where we used to have dances, teen dances and that up there. Then that hall closed down and they built one at the Prairie, where they had an outdoor rink, and we used to play hockey on it. They used to have parties in there all the time, like teen dances and different functions. In those days my dad looked after the outdoor rink in the wintertime, right next to the community hall. It would be right where Composite High School is now. My first wife was Geraldine Paulson and we have two children together. I then married Celesta Shelley from Baie Verte Newfoundland and we have a daughter, Bailie.



HELEN BISHOP

I was born in October of 1922 on MacDonald Island and grew up in Poplar Point. My father, Billy Loutitt, was from Fort Chipewyan, and he was a captain on a boat and a trapper. He never had a trapline but he had a store all the time. He would buy fur from the Indians. My mom was Agathe Ladouceur. She had nine of us. One of them died though. A little boy died; caught pneumonia. My mom talked Cree all the time, and French, and my dad talked English. So, the rest of the family could talk Cree, but I can't. I can't twist my tongue to get it! My mom used to make syrup from birch wood. We had lots. We'd just run here and there all the time. She only had one great big barrel outside there, and dump all that syrup in there. Oh, and we went down to Poplar Point, and we used to dance! My mother played accordion a lot. I was small then. They'd get us up on the bed and had us dance the jig! I used to, but not anymore. My legs won't give. Probably I danced so much, that's why my legs are sore now.

We lived off the land over there. There was always something to do, you know. In the wintertime, my dad used to cut cordwood for the steamboats, and we all used to go across the river, and go to cut cordwood; the whole family. In spring it was a busier time, where most of these people from McMurray, the men, came down and trapped rats in the spring. There were lots of them. During the War, I was a stewardess on the Echo; 1941 I think. And I had my own family to look after. I had two boys. Then my first husband Donald Gallagher went in the Army, and I was alone. He came back and we had two more children. My second husband was Clifford. We had two girls and moved to Edmonton.



ALCIDE (MASSEY) BOUCHER

On my dad's side, my grandfather was Emile Boucher. He was Native but his dad was a Frenchman from Montreal. And, the old lady, I think her name was Manny. She was Native, her name was Cardinal, I believe, from Lac La Biche. On my mom, Emma's side, her dad's name was Charlie Boostrom, a Swede. My parents had three of us, Evelyn, Florence and me. Now from my dad's second wife, there's Daniel, Larry and Stanley. And with his third wife there's Donny, Linda, Lena and Rainie.

I was raised in Little Egg Lake, out at Lac La Biche. It's by the lake. Now it's called Martin Lake. We lived out in the country, and used to walk about three miles to school. In the winter we had a horse and toboggan. I went to school for eight years, and I went to Lac La Biche mission for about six months. Then I turned 16, and I never went back. All my books, I left everything. I started trapping when I was going to school; me and Adolphus Boucher. We would trap rats, weasels, martens, fishers, foxes, and caught maybe five or six wolves all together. But we used to put snares for squirrels, and even for rabbits. Oh yeah, well, there weren't that many moose that time, just deer. Now there's moose all over in that country. Ah, it was a good life.



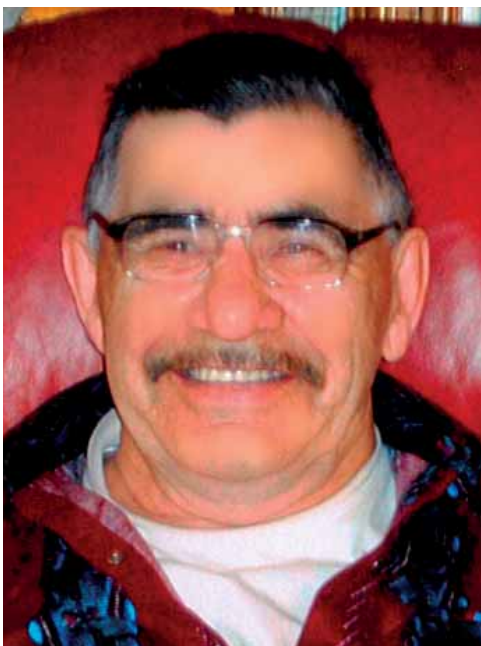
CLARA BOURQUE

I was born March 22nd, 1932, in Lac La Biche. Growing up, my family lived at Imperial Mills. We'd garden, we always had gardens, yeah, and pick berries. We used to camp, go fishing. We'd just go in the bush and pitch a tent and camp, just about any place. My mother, Betty Quintal, was born in Lac La Biche, and my father Charles Boostrom was from Sweden. My dad started working on the railroad when they started building this railroad near Anzac. Yeah, he worked the railroad, and then he was trapping after that. He was on a trapline too. This is years ago, he had a trapline, not here in Anzac, in the Owl River area. I remember Owl River, and I remember that my grandmother used to live in Big Bay. Lac La Biche is near Big Bay along Highway 881 there. I married Fred Bourque in 1951 at Philomena, Alberta. Fred was also born in Lac La Biche. My husband started on the railroad for NAR, then we finally got to Anzac and he became a foreman here and we've lived here ever since. I've lived in Anzac since 1966. There were only a few people living here at that time. Most of them lived by trapping. My husband trapped, and he worked on the railroad for 19 years. I worked at home and took care of the family. Fred and I have six children: Thomas, Shirley, Wayne, Darren, Eileen and Gordon. Wayne is in Toronto now, Shirley is in Edmonton, and all the rest live in Anzac.



PEARL BOURQUE

I was born in Fort Chipewyan and my maiden name is Pearl Virginia Michael. I lived out on the trapline before I moved to Fort Chip. I think I was 13 when I moved to Fort Chip. Then I went back every spring with dad and mom. Dad used to build skiffs. That's what dad's trade is, building skiffs and dog sleighs, and mom used to make wrappers for the dog sleighs. Dad fished and he kept dogs there at the trapline, just about 200 dogs in the summer. People brought their dogs there and dad fished and he fed dogs all summer. That's because people don't use dogs in the summer, eh, they use them in the winter. And we went picking berries. About half a mile from the house, there were cranberries and blueberries. In Jackfish Creek, that's just off Jackfish Lake, the water was beautiful there then. Just clear as a bell, you could see right down to the bottom. For drinking water we had a well behind our house, right behind the kitchen window, a nice well, yeah. I don't know how deep it was, but it was real good water. I married George Bourque in Fort McMurray in 1953. George was born in Smoky Lake. We used to go out on the trapline, my husband and I, and the children. One time, my daughter Merle was four years old and I had rheumatic fever. I couldn't get out of bed, because my feet were sore and I must have had the flu with it. Merle was only four and we had those little tin cook stoves, they had an oven. I was laying in bed and I was telling Merle how to make bannock. Yeah, and she made bannock and she cooked it and everything! Another time, we were moving from the bush camp out to the river, with our dogs and a canoe and a sleigh, and we went through the ice... me and the kids! Merle was four and Brenda was a baby and Teddy was older, he's the oldest. I just had the three at the time. My husband had a rope and he was pulling the dogs, which had fallen through the ice and they were trying to get out. So he was pulling them. Well, we had a canoe in our sleigh for just that reason, because if you didn't have a canoe, you'd sink right to the bottom, we would have all drowned I guess or something like that, anyway. But we were in a canoe, eh. The canoe was in the sleigh. It was in April. You go to the trapline on the first of April or the end of March or something like that, and you come out after break-up in May, about the 20th of May, the trappers all come.



AMÉDÉE (BILLY) CARDINAL

I was born in Conklin and I've lived here all my life. I belong to the Métis Association here, and I speak Cree and English. My parents were Modeste Cardinal and Mary-Louise Bourque. There were ten of us kids in the family. My family had a trapline and we were on it all the time. My mom taught me how to make bannock. I know when you're out on the trapline you've got to make your own bannock. You can't make a trip for bread! I cooked my bannock outside on an open fire. My mom used to make moccasins and sell them to storekeepers. For trapping, well there's quite a few different kinds of animals: squirrels, weasels, lynx, foxes, you know. Oh, there were all kinds of wild animals, eh. And for hunting, well there's moose, caribou, deer, you know. Moose was the most. My parents used to build the rack and dry up the meat so that it'd keep. My dad used to make a cellar. He just dug a hole right into the hill. So he'd build it up with logs and then, you know, food keeps good in there. My dad used to have a tie contract too, eh. So he used to get contracts and then hire a bunch of men, making ties with broad axes. Well, you cut them up and then haul them to the track. The ties were made from jackpine, most of them. And I worked on the railroad for about 33 years. Working at whatever they put me to do, putting rails, ties, railroad repair, there's lots of it. Once in a while I'd work fighting fire. I used to play the fiddle for the dances in town before, every week from night until morning. My wife and I had six children but we lost two. My children are now living in Fort McMurray, Lac La Biche and Edmonton, but no one carries on trapping. I can't go out to the bush like I used to. I've seen a lot of pollution come from those gas plants boy, I'll tell you. That stuff landed all over.



ELSIE CARDINAL

I was born on March 14th, 1935, in Conklin, Alberta, and I live here in Conklin today. My dad was George (Stony) Cardinal, and my mom was Annie Bourque, both from Lac La Biche. My family lived out on the trapline. That's what my dad did, he used to trap fur in the winter and we moved to Fort McMurray in the summertime, and that's where he worked on the barges, floating barges. In winter he trapped fox, lynx, everything that's out in the bush, squirrels, weasels, rats, beaver. At that time too, the fur was at a really good price, eh, because I remember moving with my dad. He used to have a little cabin about six miles from Mile 199, and we would all move there in the winter. And all of us kids would trap while my dad's gone further out to trap, yeah, we'd stay in the cabin. We'd get squirrels and weasels, and there was a little lake there, it's just a little one, eh, and we used to trap rats there. One year there were so many rabbits! We trapped rabbits and we sold the fur in the spring. We always had meat, my dad always killed a moose and all winter we'd have enough to eat. You know, we would eat rabbits, chickens, moose and deer. My husband Walter was born and raised in Cheecham. When he was young, he worked on the railroad for Northern Alberta Railways for years. In about 1950 he moved to Fort McMurray, I think maybe even later, and then he quit the railroad and went to work for Northern Transportation, but that was just seasonal. And then he used to work for oil companies after that. I also moved to Fort McMurray in 1950, to work with the Grey Nuns at Saint Gabe's Hospital. I married Walter Cardinal in 1953, and we had five children: Matthew, Marlene, Michael, Murray and Ken. They were all born in Fort McMurray at Saint Gabriel's Hospital. I remember when my kids were growing up and we lived in Fort McMurray, there were taxis and a bus that went to Waterways. I used to send the kids to the show at the movie theatre in Waterways on Saturdays. I'd call the taxi, give the taxi driver 50 cents and my kids 50 cents each. They'd go to the show, and then the taxi driver would bring them back home and I'd pay him 50 cents again. While they were out, I'd do my housework, do laundry, so I'd get a break from my kids.



MUSKRAT



VERN CARDINAL

My father's name was James Cardinal. He was born in Heart Lake, Alberta; my mother was Delphine Bourque (her maiden name). I was born and raised at Philomena, Alberta. In my younger days I would go with my mother and father in the bush to learn the ways of life living in a remote area such as Philomena. This would later give me the knowledge and skills to become a trapper and hunter and carry on with the same life style I enjoy today. We had a garden and a root cellar inside the house where all our garden vegetables were stored for winter use. In the wintertime my dad used to do hunting and fishing. I remember they used to go out to Caslan in summertime to go picking berries for canning. We used to go visiting family and friends and they'd come to Imperial Mills or we'd go to Lac La Biche by horses, which took three days of travel. We had cows and horses, and we used to cut hay for them from the meadows at the ranch area near Philomena. We also had sleigh dogs all the time. In the wintertime we'd feed them rabbits or whatever you catch, along with fur bearing animals that were skinned and shipped off for sale, the carcass was feed to the dogs. As for medicines rat root was picked and used for many remedies but you had to be very careful, because there's another root that looks similar to it and was considered to be poisonous. You have to know what you're doing when using any types of roots. My dad was a very strong man and great provider. At a younger age he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and he spent 14 years in and out of the hospital in Edmonton Aberhart sanatorium. When my dad was finally released from the hospital now with a portion of his lung being removed this resulted in significant change to our family as he was limited to what he could do. He still used to go trapping and hunting! I was just young when he went in the hospital and had to learn fast so I could help my mother because my mom and I now had to carry on with life so we could support our family. We had one horse and used to take that horse to the meadow at the ranch, and haul our wood like that along with hunting with trapping.

I went to work on the railroad when I was about 18 years old which took me to other isolated areas along the railroad further north from my home. Throughout the years I would always return to Philomena as this was always considered home, even when I latter worked in Fort McMurray. Now I have moved back to Philomena full time with my family for the past five years and still enjoy showing my children how life was and how much easier it is today.



WILLIAM CASTOR

I was born November 12th, 1928. My ancestors have been here since the early 1900s. My father was Colin Castor and my mother was Margaret Desjarlais. I believe they started out in Plamondon, in the Lac La Biche area.

My dad ran boats, and he worked for the Hudson Bay Company as a pilot on the tugboats, hauling freight north. And he couldn't read or write, but he made his logbook in Cree. Every place you come to along the river, the time and miles, had to be in a logbook. So he put it in. He wrote everything down in Cree. On every trip came back to Waterways, he got a man there that translated from Cree to English.

My dad taught me how to set snares for animals, traps, and how to hunt. He knew by looking at the tracks of moose, just how long ago he'd been through there. And I went with him moose hunting. And he would have his gun out of its case, and was shooting the moose before I even saw it! He was a great hunter. We stayed on the trapline 'til we were old enough to go to school. Then they brought us down to Fort McMurray, and that where I've been since.



EVELYN CHARLTON

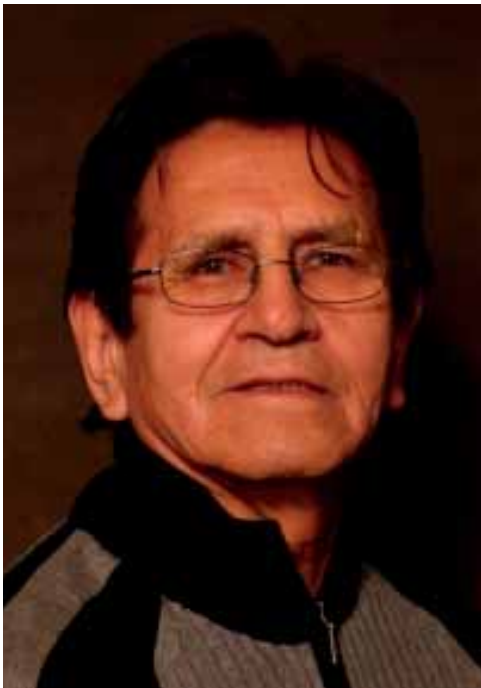
I was born in Lac La Biche. My grandparents were Emelien Boucher and Marie Collins. That was my dad's mom and dad. My grandparents on my mom's side were Charlie Boostrom and Betsy Quintal. Grandpa Boostrom was from Sweden, and Grandpa Boucher, I really don't know. Some say he was from Quebec. Grandma Marie Collins, she was from Saskatchewan. Somewhere, Red Lake, Red River, Green Lake or something like that. But she was the daughter of Clement Collins and Isabel.

When I was growing up I spoke mainly English and a lot of French, and I learned Cree. But you see, I was in a convent for quite a while. We were taken there when we were just like little pups. I think I was maybe five. And over there, I always remember speaking English, being over there you couldn't speak any other language but English. So you forget. It was not a good growing-up life. I went to school in the convent until I was 16, and then my foster parents brought me to the University Hospital. I kept working until one day I thought, you know, I want to go to find my family. I knew the name Lac La Biche, so yes I did. I got to Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray, and it was a little hard. This was the late '50s. But that's how I found my family. I took up beading a little bit with my mom, Emma in the '70s. I was really interested. I just had to do this! So what I did was I sat down, and I thought, *okay Evelyn, there is nothing you cannot do. You got to do it.* So that's where I'm at. I teach at the Friendship Centre.



DOROTHY CHRISTENSEN

I was born on November 9th, 1940, in Waterways. My mother's maiden name was Ethel Fraser, and my dad is William James Bird. I was always outside helping dad in the garden or hauling wood. So yeah, we'd stack the potatoes and the carrots in our cold cellar in the basement. We had them almost all winter. My dad would hunt rabbits and we'd have rabbit and whatever people would give us, mostly moose. We grew up on it. My mother was always canning and baking. She got her chef's certificate when she was 40 years old at Keyano College. She had to go to Edmonton to write her final exam. She had her chef's certificate, a big one and a little one in her purse. She was so proud of that. I was married to Paul Christensen. He was born in Denmark, but he came to Canada when he was 21 years old. I met him in Peace River. When Paul and I moved to Edmonton in 1985, I went back to school. I finished my Grade 12. Then, first of all I studied social work, and then I took criminology. Then I took my ground school for a private pilot, because my daughter was in the Air Cadets and she received her private pilot license, and she was going to the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, NAIT. So I thought, She goes two nights a week, I'm going to take something at NAIT, because I was driving her anyway. So I said, "I might as well take something." So I thought, Well, ground school. So I took it and I passed my ground school. And then I have four years of theology. When we were growing up, we didn't notice people's colour of skin. We didn't know there was any different growing up. If I had a little darker brother and sisters, or a little lighter or whatever, it didn't matter. People are all the same. One tradition that everyone knows is that we always had a big celebration for Christmas, you know, maybe just an orange in our sock, or candies, but we never, ever — I don't ever remember being disappointed, you know.



JEAN PAUL COUTU

I was born April 1st, 1942, in the morning. Back in 1800, my great-great-grandfather was married to Marianne Gaboury – she was the first white woman to be in the west. She came to Winnipeg, St. Boniface, and had her first baby born there, Renee LaPrairie. He was the first white boy to be born in Alberta. My great-grandpa on my father's side was Pierre Henri Coutu and my great-grandmother was a Vaudry – they were both Métis. My dad was named after him, Henri Coutu. On my mom's side, my great-grandma was a Saulteaux Indian, and mixed with Métis. They could speak Cree and Saulteaux, and they were LaVallee. My grandma was LaVallee.

My grandparents, both of my grandparents, were trappers and farmers. They came to St. Laurent, Manitoba, which is a Métis place. My grandpa was a farmer, trapper, carpenter and a fisherman. My grandma was a Cheboirier Métis. And, they lived in St. Laurent. They were fishing, trapping, and all my brothers, my three brothers were trappers and fishermen. I used to go trapping with my brothers. We used to trap muskrat. Yeah, and we used to set snares for partridge and we hunted deer too. I was the last child of eight. And, so when I finished school, I went to Winnipeg and we were not allowed to speak our Native language; or Michif, they called it. The language was French and English mixed with Cree words and Saulteaux. We were not allowed to speak that. So I worked in the city, I worked as a sheet metal worker. Then I became a journeyman, but it was so seasonal in the city of Winnipeg. Every winter you get laid off and yet, being a Métis, it was hard because you were the first one to get laid off, and you were the last one to get hired, you know. Finally I decided in 1980 to come west.

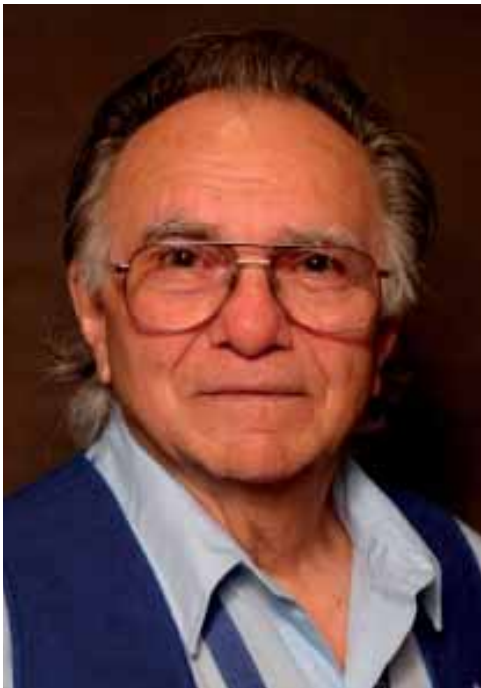


LENA COUTURE

My mother was Sara Quinn, and my father was Peter Hamelin. My grandparents were, on my mother's side, Maria Belcher and Johnny Quinn. I didn't really know my grandparents on my dad's side that well, as he passed away when I was young. I grew up by Eleanor Lake, close to Lac La Biche. When I was 14, I left home to go to work. I worked for a family, taking care of their house, and the three little kids. When I was 18, I married my husband Remi, a Frenchman. We bought a farm near Lac La Biche, at Owl River. There wasn't much on the farm when we moved there. We had a few pigs, and a few cows. We had to build the fences, and the barn. Remi was working back and forth at the time between the farm and Imperial Mills, so I looked after the farm by myself a lot.

We stayed on that farm for nine or ten years, and then we came to Fort McMurray by train in 1956. That was the only way out at the time. We came up so Remi could work construction, and so that our kids could go to school. We ended up having eight kids! It was lots of work, but I raised them up, and worked at the same time. Yeah, back then McMurray was small, a few trappers. Waterways was the big town. We didn't have radio or nothing back then. We used to buy water by the barrel from the waterman, and we had to use wood to heat our house, before propane. Yeah, times were sure different back then.

As the 1960s went on, things got better in McMurray. We got radio, and running water, and gas heating. My husband and I bought a house right across from the theatre in midtown. More people came into town when the road was built, and there was more stuff to do. We used to curl, and play ball. And there were lots of dances too. There would be fiddling, and violin. People would get together and have parties, and everybody'd know each other. Métis, Indian, white, everybody. It was real nice back then.



JAMES R. (DICKIE) DRAGON

My grandfather Jonas Powder was born in Rock Lake Alberta in 1881. My grandmother was born in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan, in 1885. After they married, they lived at House River. He worked on the river boats and scows till they shut down. They then moved to McMurray around 1920. Then moved to Ft. Chip, Big Point area.

My dad, Dave Dragon was born in Camrose, Alberta. My mother Philomena was born in Lac La Biche. She was Cree and spoke both Cree and french. Her mom might have been Métis as her maiden name was Cardinal. My parents were married February 27th, 1927, in Fort Chip. I was born 1937, in Fort McMurray. My dad had a trapline down at the Delta, at Big Point. And that's where we lived in the wintertime. In the summer, we used to come back to Fort McMurray and we lived at the Snye, in a tent. I was there on the trapline till I was three, then my mother passed away and we left the trapline. We were put in the mission in Fort Chip and spent seven years in the mission there. All we spoke Cree before we went to the mission. I remember a few things, you know, like my mother sewing our clothes. I still remember the old hand sewing machine she had.

Later in life, I worked on the boats in the summer and in the sawmill in the wintertime. Then I left and went to Uranium City, Saskatchewan. I worked in the mines. I never did any hunting in Uranium City. I then went to BC, and worked in the mines there too. That's where I met my wife Susan. She came from a mining town. She was Norwegian and Scottish; a MacDonald. In 1965, I came back and settled down here in Fort McMurray. Susan came to McMurray in 1965 and we were married in Waterways in a little church. We started our family. Today we have two girls.



FRANCES DUPERRON

I was born September 20th, 1951, at Horse Creek in Fort McMurray. Our family is very connected to this place. My father was George Sanderson, born October 15th, 1907, also in Fort McMurray. My mother was Katy Powder and she was born October 27th, 1912. They were married in Fort McMurray in 1929. I remember my mother had a garden. She had a vegetable garden and a flower garden. I know there were always potatoes, and I don't remember what else. Because I was quite young, and never really paid any attention I guess. I just remember she had lots of delphiniums. Dorothy and Edna were my two oldest sisters, but they both died of spinal meningitis when they were 16 years old – two years apart, they both died at the hospital in Edmonton. And there was a brother Billy, he was four years old when he died. Apparently he might have had an infection. He had a very high fever, he went into convulsions, and they couldn't do nothing – they couldn't revive him. Anyway, I didn't come along until my sister Gertie was 17 years old. Gertie was a lot older than me. My brothers and sisters are all deceased now. But I had strong parents. My dad only had one leg. He did have a prosthesis, but I remember one time he put on a pair of coveralls and the leg. I was just a little girl and I had never seen my dad with another limb, so I was like, "Oh my God." I started crying. I was scared.

"Daddy, take that off!" I said. So he took it off, and he never, ever wore it again. I used to see that leg lying around the trapline. Well, when I grew up, I married Daniel Duperron. Daniel is from Breynat, Alberta – it's just a little bit south of Wandering River. He was born August 5th, 1949. We were married in Fort McMurray, at St. John's Church on January 23rd, 1973. I have a daughter, Michelle, she was born February 21st, 1971. Her last name is Garrett. She was born in Fort McMurray. Her husband is Guy Garrett and they were married in Sylvan Lake. Dean, our son, he was born January 9th, 1972, in Fort McMurray, and his wife is Christina Goulash.



SARAH FINCH

I was born May the 1st, 1926. My grandmother was Martine Gladue, and my grandfather was Adam Waniandy. They were Iroquois from Ontario. My mom, Caroline Nusom [née Gladue], was born in Lac St. Anne in around 1884. She was raised there, and had three kids there with her first husband. In 1917 she made the trek from Lac St. Anne up the House River to Fort McMurray.

My mom was working in McMurray during the 1919 flu epidemic. That's where she met my dad, an Englishman. She nursed him along with the others. Mom was the only one brave enough to go in there and nurse those people. They were together until 1928 when he passed away from pneumonia, when I was just two. So, mom was on her own again, and from then on it was just her hard work that took care of us. She made her life— and a life for us when we were kids – just sewing, washing laundry.

When I was young, I spoke English to people that came to the house and mom would talk Cree to me. So, I could understand all the words. And, mom would end up saying, “speak English,” because I'd get her so confused. I'd start off in Cree, and I'd end in English, you know, and I'd have her all confused. When I went away when I was six and lived out in Ontario with my sister, I didn't forget the language, I just didn't speak it.

When I was 16 I met my first husband. He was an American soldier. We moved to the States, and lived in Brigham City, and then Ogden City before we went back to his home in Pittsburgh. I lived with his mother and dad, and got my first job with the Bell Telephone Company. I remember I was on the switchboard the day President Roosevelt died. Those were busy days.

My first husband went overseas to the war, where he was in the medical field. Eventually, he and I went our separate ways. I went to Toronto, and in time came back to Fort McMurray in 1945. Then I went to Yellowknife in 1948 to be close to my sister, and for work. That's where I met my second husband, Les. He was flying for the McInnes Fish Company. We came back to McMurray in 1949 and had a family. Since then, I've spent pretty well my whole life here.

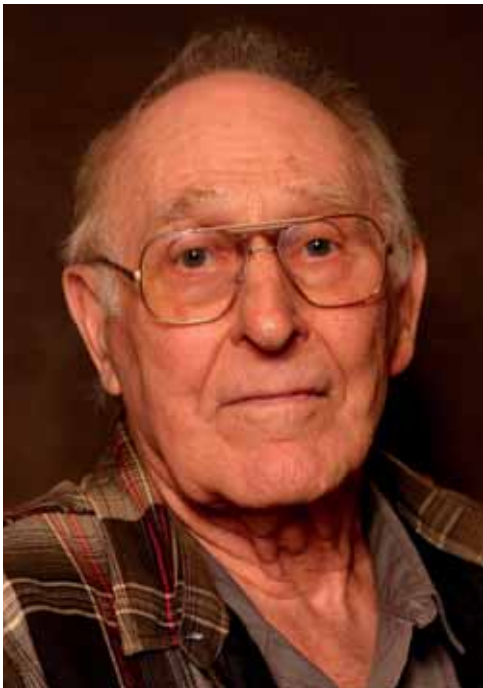


ANDY FLETT

I was born in 1946 in Fort McMurray to Fred Fraser and Ellen Gallagher. Then, I was adopted by my dad's sister, Jenny Flett, and moved to Fort Chipewyan when I was a year old. Robert Fraser was my adopted grandfather. There were a lot of adoptions back then. There were 10 or 11 of us in the whole adopted family.

Growing up in Fort Chip, we didn't have running water or anything, so we used to go down to a lake and chop through two or three feet of ice to get water. We used to make four or five trips a day before we went to school. We used to trap in Wood Buffalo Park. Each family got a different area they could trap in the park. And we would hunt too, caribou and buffalo.

I played ball all over the place: Lac La Biche, Uranium City, Regina. I went to Fort Smith eventually, and then up to Yellowknife. I used to box too. I started in Yellowknife, made my way to Edmonton, and then I went down to Calgary, and kept it up there. After the boxing, I went back up north again to work on the rigs. Furthest north I went was Zambuk Creek. After working a couple years as an ironworker in Calgary again in the 1980s, I made my way back to Fort McMurray. Wherever there was a job, I just went!



JULES FLOBERT

I moved to Fort McMurray from Lac La Biche in 1957, where I met Georgina Cooper, who later became my wife, Georgina Flobert. I have had trapline #2156 since 1966. The animals I trapped on the line were beaver, mink, marten, fisher, coyote, fox and lynx. The trap line is still active today. Georgina used to skin the animals and put them on a stretcher. There used to be caribou out there at one time too, eh. Back in the days, gardening was a necessity. Down towards Abasand, there used to be berries. I've seen that myself. When I came here in '57 you could pick berries in that area. It's like everything else now; something gets built and that's the end of it; same with my trapline now. I've been trapping on it since 1966. Over forty years I've been on that line. There has been a lot of change since 1966. People can't make a living on trapping now. I wouldn't be able to. Not with the prices of things nowadays. For a winter's work, when my fur sells, I'd be lucky if I see \$2,000 possibly for the fur I've got. Maybe better, but not much. That's just for the winter, eh. The animals are just not there anymore. Some areas are not too bad. If you go towards Mariana Lake, you can still catch some.



Diane Frank

DIANE FRANK AND DOROTHY SQUIRE

My name is Dorothy Squire, born July 11th, 1943.

And I'm Diane Frank, born in October of 1946.

Our mother, Florence Victoria Paquette, was born in 1911. She was from Athabasca Landing. Our grandparents on our mother's side were Adele Atkinson, and Xavier Paquette; on our dad's side, they were Caroline and Harry Malcolm. We get our Métis from our grandparents. Our grandmothers were Aboriginal and our grandfathers — Paquette was a Frenchman and Malcolm was a Scotsman. Mom and Uncle Philip are the only ones that spoke Cree, and French, and English. They spoke better Cree and French than they did English. Mom and granny would speak French to each other and Cree, since our grandmother spoke fluent Cree. Our mother used to be an interpreter, too, for the courthouse for the ones that came up from McKay or something that couldn't talk English. She would translate for them in Cree.

In our family, Albert was the oldest, then there was Fred, George, and Lorna. And then there's Elmer, Dorothy, Diane, Alan and Marie. Marie died when she was just a little girl, six. We were all raised Métis. We went to school at St. John's. The nuns ran the school and the hospital then, St. Gabe's. You know, back then there was always something to do. And then there was skating in the wintertime. They had this outdoor skating rink. And sometimes it would be 20 below, 25 below, but people would still go out. We used to pick blueberries with our mother. Diane remembers, "I used to go with my mother to the graveyard to pick blueberries; everybody did." Dorothy says, "Even when I dream, I don't dream of McMurray as it is now. I dream of it when I was a little girl. I liked that time, you know? I really did."



Dorothy Squire



CHARLES FRASER

I was born November 9th, 1939, in Fort Chipewyan. My parents were Roddy Fraser and Mabel Loutitt. I used to trap in winter and then in the summertime I fished. I got a fishing license, and I still have a fishing license. I had a trapline in between Lake Mamawi and Lake Claire. I trapped just straight muskrats. My dad used dogs and he used to go around the lake and he used to drive dogs all year 'round, no snow, eh. He had five or six dogs, and he would set his traps. It was nothing for him to get 200 rats and come back again. I used to go out in my canoe and whatnot, but dad never, ever walked, he just used dogs all the time. He drove dogs out there and then drove them back into Dog Camp. My dad spoke French and he understood Chip and he understood Cree. He had to, because he was a guide for the RCMP off the start. He took the RCMP and the doctor from here around the lake to where the trappers used to be, if anybody called for a doctor for the trappers on the south side and the north side of the lake and over in Wood Buffalo Park. We used to pick berries too. All the blueberries, and all the cranberries, we would put up enough to last us all winter. We'd go out and we'd pick pails and pails, wow! We had berries! We were sick and tired of berries. And for entertainment, oh boy! There used to be a lot of dances, on Treaty Days and many other days, man! Dances used to be at the Hall, and that hill right there used to be just loaded! Lots of women and lots of guys, everybody all over the place, and dancing! Yes, and boy we danced, I'll tell you, you danced all night, nothing to dance 'til eight or nine o'clock in the morning. Fiddling, there used to be a lot of good fiddlers here. You know, the Old Fort guys there, all those guys from Old Fort used to just pick up the fiddle, right there, right now. We never, ever had to wait for a fiddler, always somebody would just jump in there, and away you go. The square dancing was just unbelievable.



JOHN FRASER

I was born May 1st, 1948, in Fort Chipewyan. My parents are Roddy Fraser and Mabel Loutitt, who is Mabel Fraser. They were both born in Fort Chip. My dad was a park member, so they trapped in the Wood Buffalo National Park. My dad worked for the park for many, many years. He used to take out different park members and he knew all different parts of the park and different things, like where the birds were and what they want to check in buffalos, and different lakes, and he knew where everything was at, eh. In the summertime, the park wardens used to bring all the dogs into Dog Camp. And that's where my brothers and sister and I were raised most of our life, was at the Dog Camp, because that's where my parents would take us after school, like when school was out in September. Once, when I was young, I took a plane ride from Fort McMurray to Fort Chip in the month of December. All the planes in the month of December, any time going to Fort Chip, were pretty well loaded because of the mail. Everything was mailed, eh, like, you know, it was getting close to Christmas and stuff. So all the gifts, everybody was ordering through catalogues, it's lots and lots of mail. At Christmastime in Fort Chipewyan, everybody knew when the Indian Affairs left Fort McMurray with their Bombardiers and everything, even though we had no telephones in them days. But we used to know when they were coming — when they left Fort McMurray. So we'd know how many days it was 'til they would get to Fort Chip. We always watched for them. They always seemed to come in at night. So we used to always watch across the lake in the direction that they would come from and we'd watch for lights. Then we knew the Bombardiers were coming. And next day was just a glorified day because we all had Mandarin oranges — or Japanese oranges, and fresh fruit and turkeys, and oh man. Then there was lots of gifts and stuff. They bought lots of stuff. I know these two machines used to haul quite a bit, eh. So that was quite exciting them days, you know.



LORRIE GALLAGHER

Growing up and as a young man, I spent a lot of time with my granny, Agathe Ladouceur. In fact, I stayed with her for some of the winters when I was working on the NT boats. I put in three summers on the NT boats, and in the wintertime I'd stay with her. She was Cree and Métis. Ladouceur is French. See, granny could speak four languages. She had English, French, Chipewyan and Cree. But I didn't really understand it because I was never brought up with it, although my mother could talk Cree, too; and Chip. My father was Don Gallagher. He was Métis as well, and was brought up by his grandmother, because his mother died when she gave birth to him. So his grandmother brought him up. His grandmother was born and raised in Fond-du-Lac, so that's where he descends from. She was also Métis; she was a Mercredi. My dad, in the wintertime he'd normally go out and shoot a moose. So we always had lots of moose meat. In those days, the caribou used to come down into this area. Like, when I was a kid, I remember my dad going out on Sunday with a couple of his friends, and they'd go out and shoot caribou. And the caribou would come right from Lake Athabasca. I remember one year there were thousands that came through here. I was about 12, so it was 1953 or '54.



JOHN C. GLADU

My mother was a Gladue, and my father was a Dumont. I was raised by my uncle over at Fishing Lake. There wasn't a school where we were, so I had to go to school in St. Paul. I'd catch a ride with a different family to go over there, because we didn't have a vehicle back then. I went to that local school, and stayed there for a year so that the family could get the family allowance from the government. We'd get five dollars, which was a lot of money back then. Five dollars could buy two 100 pound sacks of flour. My mom used to make lots of things out of that flour sack. And we had to do a little trapping here and there for meat, and to buy more flour and tea. The basics. It wasn't easy, but it was a good life.

The first time I came to McMurray was in 1949. Pretty sure I was about 14 years old that time. I went to be with my sister and her family, and to work. I was working driving trucks for a couple years, then I worked in the sawmill, and when I was 16 I worked for Northern Transportation as a summer student. I worked on the barges, and for the Department of Public Works, and, in 1956, I went to work for the oil rig, and that's where I'm at now. I had a lot of jobs throughout the years.



MARGARET GLADU

Johnny McDonald was my grandfather, and Helene Janvier was my grandmother. Grandma was from the Lac La Biche area. I was born in Fort McMurray, and lived there most of my life. When I was little, we lived mostly out in the stores during the summer, 'cause it was a bunch of women all the time together with the kids. So it was a seasonal place, Fort McMurray and Waterways. In the summer it was busy, and in the winter it was real quiet. My mother always had her relatives over, which were all Métis. They all spoke their language to her, except when my father was in the house. He couldn't understand, so respectfully they didn't speak their language, so he would understand them.

When I got older, I met my husband on the railroad. In those days there wasn't much going on in Waterways. So we used to meet the train coming in. It was a big thing to know who was coming in. My husband worked on the railroad at the time, and he'd seen me around. Eventually, we started going together. And now we've been together for over 50 years since 1960!

For me to be Métis, it means that I live in the best of both worlds. I use both worlds to make one, my own world. Because as a Métis you're unique. You're neither there nor here. You're not an Indian and you're not a White person. So you make your own world with the best of both of those worlds. And that's how I define a Métis. A Métis is someone who's proud of both of their backgrounds. They're proud of their white heritage and their native heritage. And I'm proud to be Métis!

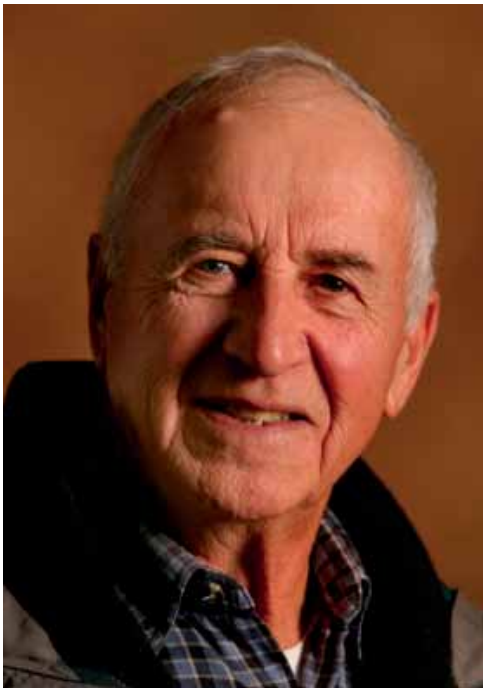


OLIVER GLANFIELD

My parents were Frederick Glanfield and Anne Isabelle Hodson. My father was born in Idsworth, England. My mom was born in Preston, Lancashire England. My parents along with my brother and three sisters came to Canada in 1929, to Erskine, Alberta. I was born in Erskine in 1931. About 1934, 1935 we moved to the homestead between Winfield and Hoadley, Alberta. Out in the bush, hills, swamps, creeks and beaver ponds, my oldest sister and father cut the logs for our first house, often wading snow up to their rumps. When we moved into the house in the spring it had no gable ends. The mosquitoes would come in one end, take out a load and fly out the other end. Tough times during the 30s with no work for dad; grubbed a garden with a grub hoe, axe and shovel; lots of rabbits and wild chickens, and help from neighbours until we got a cow and a few chickens. Mom got arthritis in 1938, dad joined the army in 1940 and never came back. He died in Toronto.

Fast forward to 1956; I was employed by Alberta Forest Services as Forest Officer One in Lac La Biche Forest, stationed at Janvier, then Anzac, Fort McMurray in December 1956. I met my first wife Betty Wylie in 1957 and married in 1958, then transferred to Wandering River. Wandering River several years ago was called Muskeg Prairie because it burnt. You could see a moose at Breynat, three miles from the Ranger station site; in the early days the early settlers were largely Métis - Powders, Oakley, Shott, John A. McDonald, Desjarlais and Ladouceur, who moved as the French and Ukrainian farmers moved in. They ended up in Fort McMurray, Fort McKay and Fort Chip.

Betty was a descendent of the Frasers, Wylies and Loutits in Fort Chip. She passed away in 1985 because of breast cancer. We had two daughters Florence Anne and Brenda Victoria. Brenda has two girls, Lara and Valisa, and lives in Fort McMurray with her husband Bernie Ulrich. Florence lives in Edmonton with her husband, Andrew Rathbone, who has a Ph.D. and is associated with the University of Alberta.



BERT GOLOSKY

My mother Agnes Biggs was born in Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan, in 1898. She was Métis, Cree and I don't know what. See, we don't have much history of our grandparents but somebody said they came from Scotland — Billy Biggs. Well, the family moved to Fort McMurray when my mother was a young girl. My father George came here in 1903 when he was about 10 or 11 years old. He had run away from home, east of Edmonton, and was working around the livery stables there. There was a fur trader's brother and sister by the name of Christina and William Gordon, and they found my dad and brought him to McMurray and raised him. My dad was Ukrainian, but his birth certificate showed Romanian. I don't know if the borders were changing at that time. My parents met here in McMurray. They got married in 1915, and Cree is all we spoke at home. They had 11 children. Three of them died as infants, and there's six boys and two girls that survived.

My father had a trapline. Our jobs when we were kids was probably just hooking up the dogs and feeding them. Well, when it was just the two of us we trapped together. I had a great time there. I'd shoot squirrels while Dad was cooking lunch. I remember one time hunting, it must have been about -30°. I went with my oldest brother up across the river there, and chased that animal all day before we got him. It was so cold my brother built a big fire. I was so cold I stood up and I backed up to the fire trying to warm up and I smelled something burning. I had woollen pants over my other pants, and I'd burnt the back of the heels off them!

When I was 18, I started working for Northern Transportation. I started working in the summer of 1950. I was a deckhand on one of their boats. After that I went to work in the warehouses. I stayed there for many years, until 1975. Then I was given a job as shipyard foreman, in charge of hauling the barges up in the fall, and launching them in the spring. So, I did that until about 1982, and then the company moved their operation to Hay River. Then I went to work for CMI Rentals in town here, and I retired in 1992.

I first met my wife Jeanne at a dance 50 years ago. My friend, Arthur Harpe starts saying, "Across the room, go dance with her. Go dance with her." He was giving me these shots in the ribs to go out dancing. "Boy," I say to her, "It's 50 years later, and that pain is still in my side." We had six girls, Charmaine, Kathy, Janet, Julie, Patty, and Alison.



BARGE

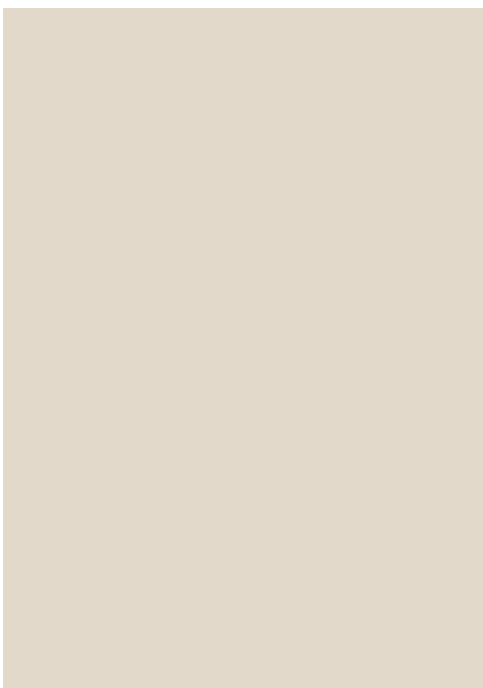


RICHARD GOLOSKY

Apparently my grandfather on my dad's side, George Golosky, came to McMurray in 1903 when he was about ten years old. They had a 100-year celebration in 2003 for him. It would have been 100 years that he was in McMurray! He was from Romania; apparently kind of a gypsy, or whatever they call that. I'm not sure. But he came from another country anyway. And he married a woman, Agnes. She has relatives in Fort McKay, I believe. They said she was a 'status' — a Treaty Indian, then she lost her rights when she got married to him. So that made us Métis, I guess.

My father was William Golosky and my mother's name was Eva Auger. Her mother Virginia, and her father Eli Auger, were Métis I guess also. Apparently they came here when my mother was just five or six years old. They came from Lac La Biche area, the whole family. Then they raised a big family here. They came down river by scow from Lac La Biche with their family and moved here and they were raised up at a lake called Selene by Syncrude. My grandpa used to cut wood — firewood — for the steamboats. And my mother's brothers turned out to be riverboat captains. So they spent all their life on the river.

They all talked Cree. I mean they were all Cree-speaking. But they never taught us kids Cree; never spoke Cree unless they wanted to hide something from us. There were five boys and two girls in our family. I was the fourth. I was raised in Fort McMurray, and used to spend lots of time on the trapline, since I was old enough to go with my dad on the trapline. My grandfather had it first, then my dad had it. It's been passed down to the family since day one. And my daughter traps with me now. She's a partner on that trapline with me.



GERALDINE GOODWIN

My father, Frank Lightner, was from Austria, and my mother, Florence Ladouceur, was from Lac La Biche. I was born in Fort McMurray in 1944, but then moved to Lac La Biche about a year later after my mother passed away. I lived with my grandparents there. When I was five, me, my dad, and my family came back to McMurray so my sister and I could go to school, and we've been here ever since. We lived right downtown across from the Peter Pond, where the post office is now.

Dad would get caribou when he went hunting, and pickerel and jackfish when he went fishing. The caribou and fish was all canned, and in the summer we had almost two lots of garden that we had to tend to. We had a root cellar for all the root vegetables, and any of the other vegetables got canned. We'd get potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, and all that stuff was canned, or put into the root cellar. We grew a lot of vegetable marrow for jams, and cucumbers for pickling pickles.

When I grew up a bit, I worked over at St. Gabriel's Hospital, right downtown. I worked there from when I was 12 until 15. I would go after school. There weren't many rooms there, maybe 12, or less. I really liked it there. I knew the nuns. I worked with the Grey nuns. They taught me a lot. They taught me how to cook, how to sew, how to clean. Later, I lived with them for about a year, before I got married. Then, when I was older, I was back at the hospital to have my first baby. And those nuns — they were nurses, registered nurses, they took care of me again. It was a good place, and a good learning experience for me!



MYRTLE GRAHAM

I was born in 1924, and grew up in Fort McMurray. I spent a lot of time with my mom growing up. When I was young, I used to go with my mom to the old time dances. I'd watch them dance the old square dance, and the Red River jig. It was great. In the wintertime we'd go skating. I was probably about 15 then. Everybody used to go together, because everybody knew everybody back then.

When I got older, I went to work for the superintendent at the Abasand doing housework. I stayed with them for about two years. They were such good people. I was like one of the family with them. Shortly after that, I met my husband Wilbur in 1948. My brother and him were working on the same dredge. My brother introduced us, and we started going together that summer. We were married in 1949.

My husband did lots of hunting. We ate almost everything! Bear, moose, deer, and I even ate beaver. Lynx was good eating. I boiled the white meat, and roasted it, and put some onions over it. And, boy, was it ever good! I used to like moose nose. I tell my kids about it, and they wouldn't even think of eating it. One time my husband even brought home a porcupine! I parboiled it, and put it in the oven, and I'm telling you, was it ever good, just like pork.

You know, it's funny, I often remember—I often think of it. We were pretty well hard up, eh, when I was a kid, and when we were young. And yet, you know, you didn't think of being hard up. You ate what you could eat, but you were happy. No complaints. You lived off the land, and you had what you needed.



WILBER GRAHAM

I met my wife Myrtle in 1948 when I was working on the railroad. 1948 was also the year the Abasand burned down. After the Abasand caught on fire and burned, I worked tearing it down. I moved on to Bitumount in 1949, and worked there for a while. In the 1950s I was working for Canadian Engineers. We built the Peter Pond Hotel, and the strip of little stores there. From there, I went to work for Royal Light, City Services, and eventually, Syncrude. I worked all over the place. A job is a job, and if there was a buck coming in, well, you take it.

When I wasn't working I hunted. There was lots of animals to hunt back in the day. I always carried a .410 on the truck—around the camp with me, when I was cutting sled lines in the winter. Nights out on the swamps there, you'd run into ptarmigans, all kinds of them! I had lived up in McMurray for 40 years, and if I felt like shooting a moose, I went and shot one. But I would only shoot one moose. One was sufficient. I used to kill a moose every year up there. But there's still lots of animals today, actually, if you go out and look for them. I still go out hunting every year for deer, even at my age!



IRENE GREGOIRE

I was born in April of 1934 on the Chard reserve to Evelyn Cheechum and George White. My Grandma, Mrs. Cheechum, was a midwife and a medicine woman, and she delivered me. My family lived in Anzac when I was growing up. For the first five years of my life, I spent a lot of time on the trapline near Halfway Lake. We'd pick blueberries and cranberries in the summer, and make dry meat and pemmican for the winter. After my mom passed away from TB, we were raised by my grandparents. They raised 13 kids in total. They even raised a little orphan girl. It was very different in those days.

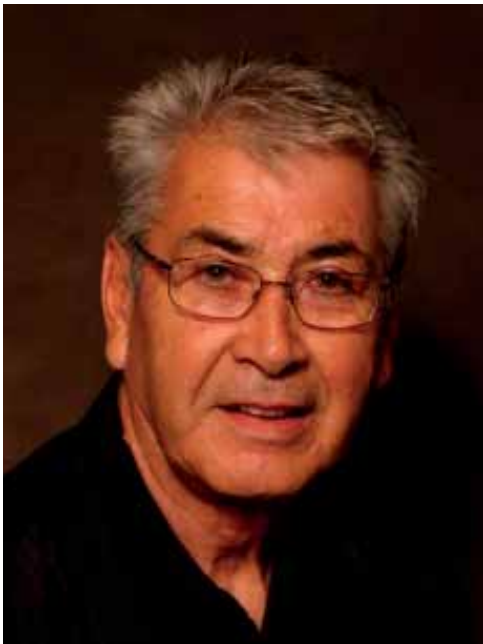
Eventually, I moved to Edmonton, and lived between there and Morinville until 1984, when I came back up to McMurray. In 1985, I got my treaty status, but I was Métis before that, part Cree, part Stoney. Now, I'm a little of both, but I think I'm more Métis than belonging to the reserve. I guess you could say that I'm a mixed up Indian!



DIANE HAMELIN

I was born February 9th of '46, in Lac La Biche, and raised there my first five years. Then I came to McMurray when I had to go to school, because my grandmother was looking after me. My grandmother on my mom's side was Phyllis Boucher, and my grandfather was Pat Ladouceur. My grandmother spoke French, she spoke French to us always. And my grandfather was Michif, the French Cree and Blackfoot. When we went to my grandpa's house, for sure that was a Métis thing there. When I was there, my grandpa would have everybody sing and dance and play music. You'd have to sing and dance and oh yeah, they had their music going all night long!

We used to go and pick blueberries and we'd go fishing. Like, in those days that's what we did. We had a huge garden, canning, we had everything. We had lots of vegetables. Like, we were raised with healthy stuff, for sure. And all the fruit we had was all the berries and rhubarb, and that kind of stuff. Our life used to be so simple in those days. It's so different now. But they still have their culture. Our grandkids have their culture. They know their culture because we have the cabin, and we can teach them all that kind of things. But, I think they live quite well actually, between the two worlds. Yeah, I think they do quite well. They know their heritage, for sure.



Joe Hamelin



Martin Hamelin

JOE AND MARTIN HAMELIN

Our names are Joe and Martin Hamelin, we're brothers. In our family there were 12 of us kids. There were actually 13, but one died before our time. But, there were seven boys and five girls. On our mom's side, our great-grandfather was John Gladuquin. He was a Papaschase. He was First Nations, born and raised in Slave Lake, and became chief of the Papaschase Reserve. And our great-grandmother was Isabel Dumont. Our grandma was Mary Belcher, and she was married to John Quinn.

We were both born in Lac La Biche area, and were raised up at Imperial Mills. Joe was born out in the bush, in the middle of a big storm. They say it was the worst storm ever. The dogs were howling, and it was supposed to be the biggest thunderstorm ever. They were moving out someplace with a wagon and horses. Our mother was a midwife too. We were raised in this little settlement, and we started working when we were teenagers. Joe started at the sawmill, and Martin became a welder, a heavy equipment operator and a supervisor.

See, in Lac La Biche, in a way, the second language in Lac La Biche was Cree. All the people, like the Syrians, the Ukrainians and the French people, they all talked Cree. You'd go in a store, they all talked Cree and the Chinese people too. And the Michif language, eh, you know. Like, we had those kind of people over there, and they lived in the mission. One sentence they'll speak Cree, French and English, all in the same sentence; and we understood that just plain because, you know, 90% of the words are English and Cree.

DOROTHY HANSEN

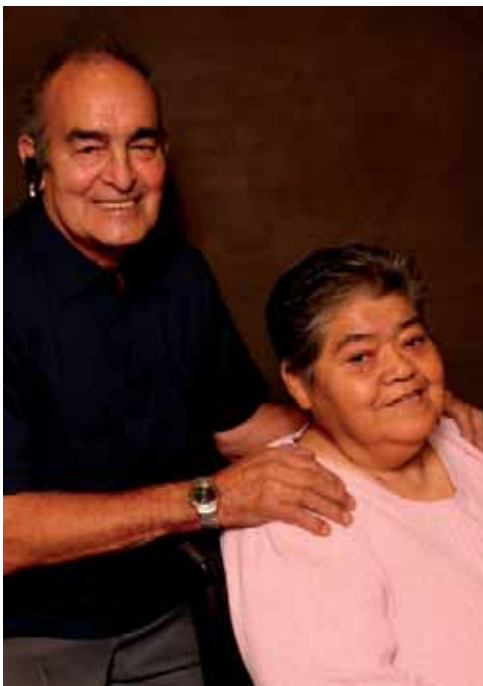
I was born in 1938 along the Athabasca River, near Fort Chipewyan, to Lillian Malcolm and Henry Auger. There was a total of 15 kids born in our family, but only ten of us survived. We lived on a trapline near Point Bruley, or Poplar Point, when I was a little girl. I don't remember much about the trapline, other than mom going out hunting, because we moved to Fort McMurray when I was five. We moved down there so that I could go to school, and so dad could find work.

When we were in McMurray, we used to pick berries. Blueberries, strawberries, cranberries, chokecherries and raspberries. And rosehips too. We'd pick them with granny, and put them in a wool blanket and shake them to catch all the leaves and clean the berries. We used them for blueberry pie, crushed up in pemmican, and dried for the winter. Mom also used to make medicines from plants. She'd collect the balsam sap for eczema, and the birch sap for headaches and fevers. Mom would make Labrador Tea too from the muskeg. Yarrow was good for arthritis, and in tea for headaches too. We used lots of plants back then.



VIOLET HANSEN

My name is Violet, but you can also call me Vi or Auntie Vi. I was born on August 17th, 1927, in Fort Chipewyan to Edward and Jenny Flett. My dad trapped and my mom had to stay home with the kids. We had a big family with lots of children. I used to go trapping for muskrats with my brother Sonny in the spring of each year for seven years. He had his own line in the Park. Just the two of us in the bush for three weeks, buffalo and everything around, I didn't care. My mom Jenny Flett was a respected midwife in Fort Chip. When I was young I would go with her all the time. I'd help her out delivering the babies. There wasn't a heck of a lot of people back then, so we had to help each other. I used to do beadwork and knit with my mom, and make siwash sweaters and things. I remember Valentine's Day in Fort Chipewyan, we had a big dance. We made baskets with whatever we could find: crate paper, cardboard boxes, even a shoebox. We decorated it up and put a lunch in there for two. Then the men would bid on it. Whoever bought your basket would meet with you later and you'd have lunch together. We all got along in Fort Chip, I didn't care who bought the basket. I liked them all in Chip anyway. And for travel, I used to use the train before I got married. My sister and I, we were working in Edmonton. Oh, that train, boy. We'd jump the train, we had – not quite enough money, but we got a hold of Len Williams, Leona's dad the conductor, and he'd give us his berth, give us his sleeping room. Oh, it was a long ride, but we didn't care, we had the room. They called that train 'The Muskeg Special'. Then later, I married my husband Lloyd in 1957 and at first we lived out at the trapline. After that, we had a little house in Waterways and Lloyd worked on the boats for Northern Transportation in the summer. I used to go with my husband every year on a boat, for a trip to Uranium City. Today, we have six children.

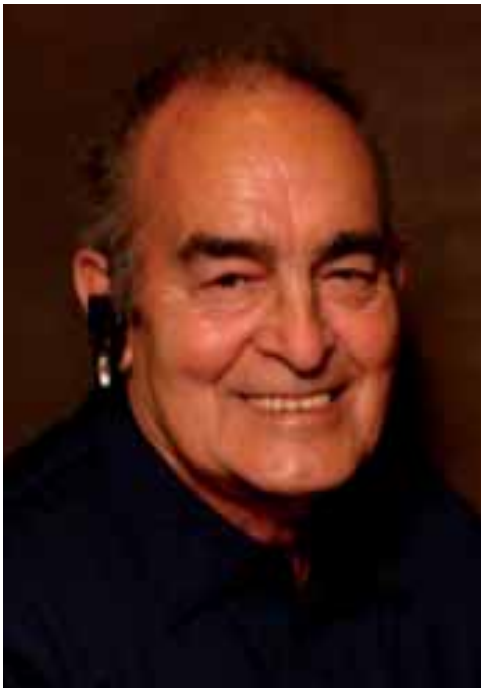


AGNES HARPE

My mother and dad were Edward Loutitt and Eliza Jane Harron. I was the third child in a family of nine. When I was a girl, we would have porridge for breakfast, fish for lunch, and moose meat for supper. That was our menu every day. But that was the way of life back then. Living right off the land. My dad would go out on his trapline, and get a moose for the family every now and then.

I went to a nice two room school in Fort Chip when I was a girl. I went to school, but I always wanted to go trapping instead. I begged my dad to take me to the trap line. "No Agnes, you're in school", "Please dad, please." Finally one year he says, "Okay you can come with me." So we went beaver hunting, and he says to me, he says, "What do you want to carry? A canoe or the beaver?" And I says, "Well, what's heavier?" He says, "The beaver is heavier." I said, "Oh, I prefer the canoe," so I put that canoe over my head and walked along behind dad. Well, suddenly, I went into the muskeg! I went right down. The only thing that was holding me up was the canoe! So my dad said "I'll bet you wouldn't want to come with me again!"

Agnes Harpe photographed with Emile Harpe



EMILE HARPE

My mother and father were Olivine and Edward Harpe. My dad was an American. He moved to Lac La Biche from Michigan when he was just two. My mom was a Boucher, a Métis. We had a big family – nine boys and five girls. Growing up on the farm, we weren't big fishers. We had horses, and pigs, and we always had a nice big garden. People would bring us a chunk of moose meat, and we'd trade it for some pork, or for potatoes. We used to have lots of potatoes. We'd sell them to the mines in Uranium City each year; 400 bags every fall. And we'd go berry picking up on Beacon Hill. My mom would can a hundred quart jars of berries for the winter. Plus we'd eat lots during the summer!

When I left the farm, I was 17. I got a job up north at Wood Buffalo Park in a logging mill. From there, I went off to Edmonton to work in a plant. I came back to McMurray in 1941, and started working for the Northern Transportation. Eventually, I ended up working at Bechtel, which became the Great Canadian Oil Sands in 1967. In between I met my wife Agnes in 1958 in Fort Chipewyan, and we got married and set up shop here in McMurray.



MARIE AGNES HERMAN

I was born in La Loche, Saskatchewan, in 1937, and I was raised up there by my parents. My dad's name was Felix Herman and my mom was Annie Morris. I think they're Dené names. My father and mother were both Métis. I think my mom was born in Green Lake, or some place around there in the 1800s. My parents never moved here to Chard. I've still got two sisters and a brother living there in La Loche. But I got married to a man from Chard, Alexander Herman. We met in '52, before Christmas, and we got married in 1956, when I was 16 years old. We had 21 children, but I only have ten living now. When my children were grown big, I used to go trapping with my husband. I used to like going with him. Once when my girl was small, right across from my cabin, he saved a rabbit snare for me. Next morning I went to get it, and I got lost in that little area. When he came back from squirrel snaring, he had to get me. Yeah, I used to have a good husband. He passed away in a plane crash in '97; him and my daughter. My family today, they still like going in the bush, they like staying in the cabin with me, and they like cooking outside on the fire. That's the way I brought them up, and they like this. Anytime we want to go someplace, we just go to my cabin, and then they do trapping, hunting, things like that.



BARBARA HERMANSEN

I was born December 21st, 1954, in Fort Chipewyan. My father, Edmond Ducharme, was born at the Lac La Biche Mission. His father, Antoine Ducharme, was a Michif, a French-Cree Métis who came from Winnipeg, Manitoba. My mother, Annie Ducharme, was a Scottish-Cree Métis. Her grandfather was from Scotland, and he homesteaded at MacDonald Island in Fort McMurray. I remember mom tanning moose hides. Some other ladies would ask her to tan hides, and she would do that. And she would sew, she would be sewing, beading, embroidery, while a lot of times my dad was out on the fires, eh. I've helped a lot. I try to teach my grandchildren too. I never was told, "Okay, this is what you do." But I guess just by watching I learned. I was always around, you know – and just by looking at her, at what she's doing, I learned. There were times I would have to help her, especially stretching the hide, wringing the hide. It's a lot of work. I used to sit there and watch her embroidery, you know. And she taught me that. I couldn't have been very old, but I would embroider pillowcases. I always remember this little cat I had to embroider. And I watched her sitting there by a coil oil lamp. Another thing my mother taught me was how to make *Lupachine*, which is a cake pudding – it's like something they call 'plum pudding'. But this one is boiled in a cloth, in a sugar bag or flour bag, a cloth sack or something. It has to be boiled. I guess you can steam it, but my mom would boil it. And no measuring. The ingredients are flour, has to be molasses, and some raisins. And she used to tell me when her mom didn't have raisins they used to have dried Saskatoons. Saskatoons because being in Chip, there were lots. And they would use bits of caribou fat, chopped up – they call that suet. And then it's tied up and it's boiled. And when you peel that off it's like a cake inside. And then they would make a white sauce with a bit of milk, vanilla, and flour for thickening, and they pour that on there. It's good. I make *Lupachine*.



KENNETH R. L. HILL

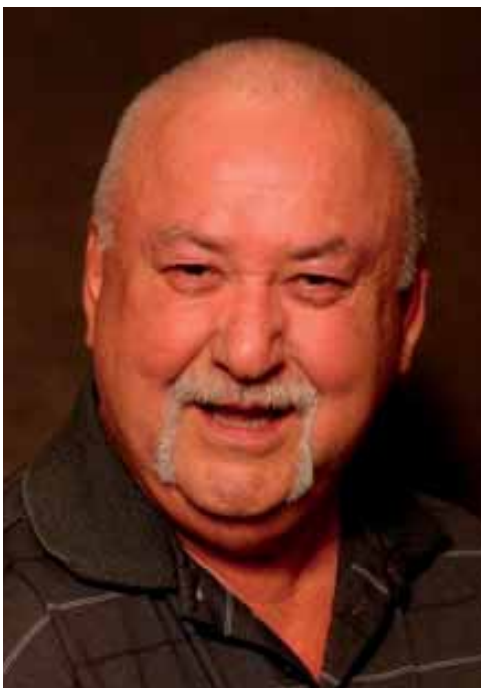
I was born on South Cooking Lake, just after the plane landed, on August 29th, 1932. My father had moved up to Fort McMurray in 1922, and he owned the drugstore in town, Hill Drugs. The store was in our family for 66 years and we closed it on the 8th of October, 1988. I went to high school in Fort McMurray, Edmonton and Yellowknife. After Grade 12, I went to the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Charlie Somers is my lifelong friend we grew up together and started university together too. After graduating from university as a pharmacist, I returned to Fort McMurray and followed in my father's footsteps.

We were very fortunate because there were people coming and going quietly; more so than you'd find in the farming community, and people from all walks of life. And if you treated them well, they treated you the same. That would not have happened in very many communities. Joe Couture was a priest, and had his PhD in psychology. He won a National Aboriginal Award for doing some innovative work in the prison system, especially related to Native people. But he often said in our company, "Well, weren't we lucky growing up in Fort McMurray because we were all mixed together?" I think it's time that we try to be a little bit more cohesive, like Joe suggested. We shouldn't separate ourselves, like "you are Métis" or "he is this and she is that". Let's work together. Because we're a multicultural country, and that's just the way I see it.



SYLVIA HODGSON

I was born on July 15th, 1930, in Fort Vermilion, Alberta. My mom was Madeline Cardinal and my dad was John Smith. My husband Daniel Hodgson was born on December the 11th, 1929, in Hay Lakes, Alberta. My husband got a job at Suncor and we moved with our ten kids. My family travelled here to Fort McMurray from Fort Vermilion in two cars with six of us in each car. It took us 14 hours from Wandering River to here. We had to get pulled through the muck and the ruts by Cats! I didn't know where I was going, I didn't have a clue. We got to the top of Beacon Hill and my husband Dan said, "Oh, we're here, we're here!" The kids were all saying, "Where? Where? Where?" There was all nothing — yeah, nothing. We had to go right there to the Suncor employee trailers, and the worst part of it was Dan had to start night shift that night! I was left alone there. I didn't know anybody, and I was scared. I never slept that night. All I did was walk back and forth, checking on my kids. I've worked all my life too. I started working two weeks after Dan, at the old hospital, Saint Theresa. We did very well, though. Dan started off with heavy equipment, but he ended up being the fire chief down there. He was the fire chief at Suncor. He must have been there almost 20 years. Then he went to work for Fort McKay, driving the bus back and forth for them, mail delivery. And when he turned 65, they told him he had to quit because he was 65. They didn't want him no more. He fought that through Labour Relations, he won too. They had to pay him a whole year's wages.



WAYNE HODGSON

My parents, Daniel Sr. and Sylvia Hodgson, moved in '65 to Fort McMurray, so I was 15 years old when I moved there. I think in '65 there were only about 1,500 or 2,000 people there. There were 12 of us, you know, with mom and dad and ten kids. I was the oldest. Oh, we tried hunting, but, you know, how many moose do you need for ten kids? I mean, you need quite a bit and where do you put it after you kill it, you know? We didn't have deep freezes or whatever. But of course they didn't have them back in the day either. But I think my dad wasn't much of a hunter. He never got taught, he was in the Mission residential school, nobody taught him how to hunt. Then later he worked at the sawmill and lost three of the fingers on one hand in an accident. Well, I remember one time, I was taking him to work in Manning and we got a flat tire. So I'm there changing the tire and we see a moose. Well, my dad's got a 30-30, operating it with his two fingers... All of a sudden I hear this boom! Well, the bullet come right through the side of the car, through the trunk and into the ground, about ten feet away from me. Well, I thought, He's trying to kill me again. Yeah, well, you know, with two fingers like that, it slipped or something. The moose was safe, absolutely. No, we didn't go hunting much when I was a kid. I went out with my uncles when I was a kid. You know, I enjoyed it, but like I tell my son nowadays, I said, "Now you remember, the fun is over when you pull that trigger, because the work starts." And I said, "When you shoot something, drop it, don't let it run ten miles, because there's lots of work." And I've done it, I've packed quarters over trees and it's hard work. But other than that, moose was the only thing, like, these deer that they have around, I don't know how people can even shoot them, little tiny things



EVA HUPPIE

I was born April 22nd, 1930. I came to McMurray in 1969 and raised all my family here. There wouldn't have been too many families here in the Waterways back then. Some Métis, some Treaty. You had to learn to communicate with everyone. I speak Cree, and my husband Joe did too. Joe was part French, part Cree, and maybe some Scotch in him too. A mix. His mom was a Treaty Cree. Katie was her name. And Joe's grandma was Treaty as well. When Joe's mom died he was just a small boy, and his old man couldn't keep them. They were too small, so Joe's grandmother took the boys, and when they were old enough to go to school she put them in Saddle Lake.

Before, in the early years, there were no traplines. People would go anywhere and trap. You could come and run a line right beside one another. My dad used to trap, but there was no boundary then. He made a little trail in the House River area, and put his snares there. See, for us we had that trapline, but we never lived there. We used to just run it on weekends. We'd go out late on Friday night and set snares 'til it was dark on Sunday, and then we'd come back home. Then, back to work for the week, and then we would go check the traps on the weekend. At that time you didn't have to check every 48 hours. You left them until the weekend because, you go 48 hours, you scare everything away.



ALINE HURLEY

My dad's parents were Potrice Lepine and Lucy Nolan, and my mom's parents were Sammy McDougall and Delia Ringee. My mom had 13 children. Eight girls, and four boys survived, but she lost a little girl between me and my brother. We were a big family! We grew up on a farm in Saint Laurent, near Batoche. When the farm stopped being good business, we moved to Île-à-la-Crosse where Dad bought a hotel. We stayed there for four years, and then went over to Meadow Lake. I moved to McMurray in 1964 to work. At the time, there were no homes, just trailers, and there were no cars other than the taxis. It was all bush and gravel roads. Very different from now.

When we were kids, we used to go hunting. We lived on deer meat and on milk, grain and a few pigs from the farm. When we went hunting, we used everything – the antlers, meat, hides, everything. We had an ice shed behind the house where we kept all the meat that we got from hunting, and our milk, because we didn't have power then. Dad would make a great big hole in the bottom of the shed, and he'd fill it up in the wintertime with snow and sawdust so the meat would keep. Sometimes, we used to take the hindquarters and lay it out in the snow, and just cut off what we needed as we went.



HERMAS JANVIER

I was born in 1950, and raised in the Christina 'til we moved here to Chard in 1958. I have five brothers and three sisters. All together, we're 13 of us, but five have passed away. I don't know when my grandparents moved to Christina Crossing. They had been living there for years I think, because my mom, Marie, was raised there. My grandparents, they're still in Saskatchewan. From my dad's side, he was French. My grandfather, he lived to be 96, I think. Well, he was a trapper and a mailman. In summertime he used a horse, and in wintertime he used the dogs. From the Cheecham to Buffalo, Dillan, La Loche; wherever they had a store. I don't know for how long he was the mailman. For years I think; I know that. My other grandpa from Saskatchewan, that one too, he used to carry mail on the river, from La Loche to Little Lake, Big River, and all the rivers on that side. He travelled all summer.

The railroad was built in 1922. That's what they said anyway. Old people used to tell me the story. They say 1922. But before, everybody, you know, they lived by the lake, where the fish are. They survived that way. Wherever there's the fur, you kill fur and you sell it. There wasn't no traplines in those days, I think. I don't know when they started traplines, maybe in the 1940s. My dad is going on 99 years old, and he still has traplines. They started paying \$2 dollars a year for a trapline. No income from the government at that time; just everyone trapping, fishing, hunting. That's all it is — survival. Wherever, whatever, they know. They didn't even have a cabin. They used a tent. In wintertime they used a tent. Canvas I guess. And some people, they used a tipi tent. And they made the tipi with the lodgepole. I seen that back in 1963 — better than this house. After I grew up I travelled with my dad 'til 1974. We were down north in 1959; we just moved over here and I went to the school. They had a school over here. There was only one teacher that time.



GERALDINE JENSEN

I was born April 10th, 1944 to Henry Auger and Jean Malcolm. My mother had ten children — Lena, Dorothy, Betty, Lillian, Billy, Ron, Bobby, Jack, Raymond and me. When I was born, my father was still a trapper, but when I was a month old we moved to Fort McMurray so he could work in the salt mine plant. We lived downtown in the town proper, where we'd get groceries ordered in from the Hudson Bay store, or Haxton's little store.

Mom had a garden with lettuce, carrots, cabbage, turnips—all that good hearty stuff. And we would pick berries just about every day when they were in season. Blueberries, chokecherries, raspberries, highbush and lowbush cranberries, saskatoons, stuff like that. We had power in our house, we didn't have running water, but we had power and we had a wood burning furnace, of course a wood burning cook stove and a good old airtight heater when it really got cold. That was our main source of heat.

When I was 17, I met my first husband Evan Jensen. He was from Denmark, so we moved back there. That was quite the trip! We were on a plane, on boats, and on the railway. After two years living there, we decided to come back. We sailed to Montreal, and then took the train all the way from Montreal to back to Fort McMurray, just for the experience!



BERTHA CLARK JONES

On my dad's side, my great-grandparents were Louison Houle and Maria Shott, they were out of the Red River Settlement. My grandfather hunted with the First Nations. They hunted the buffalo at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. He was a great horseman, and I guess they chased the buffalo down to the bottom of that hill. On my mother's side, my grandparents were Frank and Madeline Savuard. My parents were Louis Houle and Emily St. Arnault. Mom was born here in Athabasca and dad was born in Glasgow, Montana. My parents had 14 of us; 11 girls and three boys. We only spoke English at home because dad had never gone to school, and he didn't want us to not get educated. So they only spoke English to us, but together, they spoke either French or Cree. They could speak both languages fluently. They spoke Michif too. My grandparents were Michif Cree.

Dad was a trapper and hunter; a great hunter. He had a trapline right from the Manning area through Lower and Upper Hay River. They went with horses in the fall, and they used to come home just before Christmas. Then once Dad had got all his fur, he used to have pelts from silver fox, black fox, coyotes, beavers and muskrats – he'd take them to Peace River and sell them. And they'd come home with a big sleigh full of groceries and presents for us for Christmas.

Dad was very careful. He never abused hunting. If we needed it, we got it. And when he got a moose, we'd share it with neighbours, because there were a lot of the neighbours that came from the foreign countries where they never hunt. So he'd always give them meat. Mom would dry meat. Oh, I can still taste that dry meat!

Around 1939, my sister and her husband had moved to Grande Prairie and opened up a shop there, and I went and lived with them, and worked in the restaurant. The recruiting people came along one day, and they were recruiting for the Army. I tried to join, and they wouldn't take me because they said I was too young. And so then I waited, and then the Air Force come along. So it was a few years later, and then I joined the Air Force in Grande Prairie. Yeah. That's how I left the Peace River Country. My very first train ride. I was a physical training and drill instructor. Then I took a hairdressing course in Edmonton, and my husband and I got married in Calgary. He had been overseas and he came back.

BETTY KOBBERO

I was born in Wood Buffalo National Park. The story goes that I was born under two spruce trees, on the land, outside. My father was Henry Auger, and my mother was Lillian Malcolm. My grandparents on the Auger side, Clament and Augustine Auger, were Cree, and the Malcolms were Métis. I grew up on a trapline by Poplar Point for the first few years of my life. When I was young, we came up the river on the paddle wheeler, the Athabasca, to go to school in Fort McMurray. We were raised with Cree in the house, and so I couldn't speak any English when I got here. I had to learn.

When we first moved to McMurray, we lived by the Snye with Grandpa Malcolm until my dad got a job over in the Abasand salt plant. We lived there until it burned down, and then moved back to McMurray and lived below the Hudson Bay Hill. Mom would hunt rabbits up on the Hudson Bay Hill, and set snares to hunt chickens and spruce hens. Mom was the hunter in the family, and dad did the trapping. Mom would hunt just about anything. Moose, caribou, squirrels, beaver. Beaver tail was my favourite. She used to roast them over a fire and make smoked fish too. Dad would go further out of town. He'd take the dogs and go to trap beaver to sell their pelts to the Bay. We lived off the land, and had a pretty god life.



WILMA KOWALUK

I was born July 3rd, 1951, in Fort Vermilion, Alberta. My parents are Daniel Hodgson and Sylvia Smith. My mom was born in Fort Vermilion and lives here in Fort McMurray. My dad is still here too; in the hospital in long-term care. They were married in Fort Nelson, BC, July the 7th, 1952, when I was one year old. They had ten children. Wayne is the oldest, then there's myself, there's Wendell, Delbert, Curtis, Cameron, Danika, Derwin, Daniel Jr. and Dwila. My family moved to Fort McMurray when I was 16, in 1967. I didn't have the time to go and play because I helped my mom raise my brothers and sisters, because she was always home by herself. My dad was always gone to Peace River, all in that area to work, he was a fire chief at Great Canadian Oil Sands at that time. He travelled a lot, but he always provided for us. He raised us children the best he could, and we never went hungry. My mom too, the same, she was our dad and mom; our whole upbringing. She was the carpenter, she was the mechanic, she was everything. And she spoke Cree, very good Cree.

So I kind of helped raise the eight younger than me, and that was right 'til I left home. I went back up to High Level, Fort Vermilion, when I was 19. I left school and took a secretarial course for ten months. Then I met my husband, William Kowaluk, and then we left and moved to Red Deer for awhile, and then came back. He'd come from The Pas, Manitoba, and worked as a heavy equipment operator. We got married here in Fort McMurray in 1976. My dad got him on at Suncor, and that's where he was working up until he passed away, on May 19th, 1999. We have one daughter, Melanie.



LAWRENCE A. H. LABOUCANE

My original family name was not Laboucane, "the smoke," meaning in French. When the people came from France, it was Le Fourneau, which was "the furnace." And apparently the old people that came, there was one or two, whoever it was, that were stove builders, furnace builders. A stove in French is le fourneau. So that's what they were doing when they came to this country.

My grandfather on my dad's side was Patrick Laboucane. He married a Cardinal from Good Fish / Saddle Lake. On my mother's side, my grandmother was a Whitford, a Métis, and my grandfather was Harry Cardinal. He was the last life Chief of the Willow Lake Indian Band (including) Janvier, Christina and Grand Rapids Bands from 1922 to 1961. My Grandpa Cardinal was the one who raised me under custom adoption since I was about four years old. I lived with him at Anzac by the lake on the reserve. He was a good man, and he taught me a lot.

I left Anzac to go work in different places in the early 1960s. I worked on the rigs, and on the boats with the Northern Transportation. I also worked on the DEW line. In the 1970s I was the first Aboriginal contractor to get a contract with Proctor and Gamble for logging in Grand Prairie. My crew was all native people for a number of years. Yeah, there was lots of work to be had back then.

Due to circumstances, I left Anzac to go to school in Calgary. I came back in 1957 and worked in various different jobs including forestry, the rigs and the boats (N.T.L.).



EDMOND LADOUCEUR

I was born in Fort Chip on March 13th, 1954. My father's name was Frank Ladouceur. Mom was Georgina Cardinal. The trapline was our life because every free time we had, the old man took us, or dad took us, to the trapline and that's where we had the old house there. We did everything there! We had gardens. We trapped as kids, went fishing. From Grade 1 to Grade 9, I was in Fort Chip. I didn't stay in the Mission there, but I went to school at the Mission for two years. Then, when the other school was built, we moved into the other school. I went to Fort Smith when I was in Grade 10. Every day off we had, like Christmas, New Years and Easter, we'd always be at the trapline. It wasn't a cabin. It was a big old log house. It looked more like a plantation I think. They had built that house years ago. My brother, my dad and his brothers, that's where they lived. And it was right on the river, Athabasca River. And there's Nine Mile Island there. As kids, that's where we trapped. We trapped across the river. It was my dad's trapline, and we learned how to fish, set nets, and we used to commercial fish in the spring and help my dad. And my brother Ray, he did that.

When we worked for the fish company, basically a boat, a company called McInnes Fisheries came down to Fort Chip for the spring run of pickerel, and they would fish there. So, my dad and my brother and my uncles, they would fish there. And they'd sell it to McInnes. McInnes had a place called Tokyo Snye, which was on our trapline, and that's where the Japanese people filleted the fish and all that, and they smoked it, and they had these big reefer barges. And the tugs used to pick the Tokyo Snye barges up, bring them up here and then they moved out to the other side of the lake. The people would follow the fishery, wherever the fishery went in the summer, so they could make a living fishing commercially, fishing pickerel, whites and trout.



EVA LADOUCEUR

I'm originally from Big Point, south of Fort Chipewyan. I was born April 1st, 1922. My dad was Modeste Ladouceur, and my mom was Louisa Cardinal. I grew up between Big Point, and Fort Chipewyan. Growing up, I had to help my mom a lot. She taught me how to cook and make bread when I was only nine years old. I had to do all that, and after I grew up a little, do the beadwork on the moccasins and parkas. She'd cut them up and I'd finished them off. Everybody always had a new pair of shoes, mukluks, parkas, gloves, you name it. And they were beautiful with the beadwork.

In the late 30s, we lived more in Fort Chipewyan. During the war, in the 40s, a lot of American soldiers came up north here. That's how I met my husband. When I was 20, I met and married my husband, an American soldier. I ended up moving all over the place with him, because I was a war bride. California, Chicago, New York, Texas, we went all over the States. It was quite the life. Eventually, I moved back to Canada, back to Edmonton, on my own.

I kept travelling when I came back to Canada though. I used to be known for singing Oh Canada, in English and in Cree. I'd sing at church, for Remembrance Day ceremonies and at City Hall in Calgary. They sent for me to sing in Lac La Biche, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Ottawa, and even down in the States. I even sang at the Pan Am Games in 2001. I sang for the Queen, and for Prince Charles and Princess Margaret, when I worked for the Lieutenant Governor in Edmonton. That "Oh Canada" went all over, and I went with it!



GORDON LEPINE

My great grandfather on my dad's side, Maxim Lepine, was Louis Riel's right hand man. After the revolution, he went to North Battleford. My grandfather, Portice Lepine, was his son. He was married to Lucy Nolan. On my mom's side, my grandparents were Sammy McDougall, a Scot and Delia Ringee. I grew up in Saskatchewan, in Île-à-la-Crosse and Meadow Lake. When we were in Île-à-la-Crosse, as a little kid, we used to speak Michif French – Cree and French mixed together – because we grew up around Aboriginal people, you had to learn to speak Cree. When we moved out to Meadow Lake, it wasn't the same. There was no one to speak Cree to, so we kind of forgot it.

I had a little trapline when we were in Meadow Lake. I'd hide my gun in the snow, just before I got to school, and I'd check my trap on the way back. I got mostly rabbits. I'd sell all them rabbits to a mink farmer. I didn't have to skin them or nothing, just sell all them to him for about twenty-five cents a rabbit. We used to pick up bottles too, when we were kids. We'd get a penny a bottle. Gunny sacks full of bottles, we'd work all day, and bring them to the bottle depot. And all for a penny a bottle! We'd use the money to go to the store, buy flour and whatever we needed. We sure worked hard.

When I was 14, we moved to Fort McMurray, but I didn't stay long. When I was 16, I went to Edmonton for three years, before coming back to McMurray again to finish my Grade 12. I left for a while in '74 or '75, and went travelling, but ended up back here.



KAY LOUITT

I was born and raised in Embarras Portage, in a family of 15 children. As a young woman I lived in Fort McMurray where I worked at a café. When I got married to my husband, Paul, we moved to Uranium City because of his job. There were people from all over going over that way. We went from Fort McMurray to Uranium by plane. My brother George and his wife Margaret moved there too, and my dad and his brother Dave also went there to work.

Then to come back to Fort McMurray from Uranium City, George and Margaret and dad, we all came from Uranium by boat on Lake Athabasca. It was kind of a fish boat, a big boat. It was a rough trip. You don't get out. Sometimes you don't see shore. But they handled it, George and Paul. They were used to that. Most of the men knew how to handle their way on the water. The kids stayed home. There's no place for kids on the lake, I would say. We just took our time getting back to McMurray. We didn't rush it. We even stayed overnight at Chip and stuff like that. We didn't go into town. We just anchored out, and stayed out. You know, that night we came in, it must have been late. Everybody was on the shore there waiting for us. So we anchored out. We got up in the morning, and everybody was still there; just to see who you know, at Fort Chip.

We did mostly the same stuff in Uranium as in Embarras and McMurray: picking berries, hunting, fishing, and trapping. But oh, the caribou! One year they came right through town. They were right on the little lake that we had there; Martin Lake. So we canned meat and everything that time. Our house when I first got there was just the one room and we already had three kids. So it was not an easy life. It was outside toilet and all that stuff. So it wasn't easy. You wash clothes behind the house, with a washboard! And we had a waterman come around selling water. So we would just keep it in a big barrel. That was drinking water. Lots of times you'd bath the kids, the youngest ones first. We lived a good life, though. Had 12 children, and most of them were born in Uranium. We left there in 1983.



LILLIAN McCALLUM

I was born in 1935. One of my great-grandmothers still lived when I was a child. Her name was Harriet. I don't really know how old she was, but she was still fairly spry. My dad was born in Lac La Biche. His father, James McCallum, was from Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan, and my dad's mother's name was Eliza Desjarlais. My parents met in Conklin, and they got married and started a family. We spoke Cree. I guess our Cree was mixed with French. But I didn't always know that. So I guess sometimes when the missionaries would ask the Native people what this means in Cree, and they would say a French word. I didn't start school until I was a teenager. Our teacher left for a few years, and we had to wait 'til he came back. We used to just have summer school because the teacher was a trapper, and he was on the trapline in winter. I left Conklin for McMurray when I had just turned 19 years old. That was in 1954, I think. I worked in Fort McMurray at the restaurant and the hospital.



SIDNEY McKAY

I was born April 1st, 1933, in Fort Chip. Noel McKay was my father, and Isabelle McDonald was my mother. She was the one that rode across from Winnipeg to Athabasca by wagon trip. I have three brothers and two sisters: Donald, Reggie, Margarie, Shirley and Henry. I came up to Fort McMurray in 1965 with my wife Christina Martin, now Christina McKay. She was pregnant when we came up, and all my kids were born here. We had five children. Margaret's the oldest, then Tina, Darryl, Cindy and Michael.

I started working early, when I was a kid; about 1946, when I was about 13 years old. Local work, you know, in Fort Chip. Then they brought an Eldorado ship in 1950. So, I done a little work, got a few cents in my pocket and I got a horse. Oh, and we hunted caribou. At first, we didn't have dogs. Then we got dogs, and we started hunting caribou to feed the dogs, and feed us. And we had fish nets out at Big Island.

Then I came back south and I worked at Sweetgrass, where we rounded up 1,800 buffalo. We rounded up 1,800 head of buffalo and vaccinated them. Then I slipped over into the Yukon, and Alaska. I was all over up there, working. They talked Eskimo, they talked Dogrib, they talked Loucheux (Gwitchin). I can't speak that. I spoke Cree. But you work with people that just talk English, that's what you talk, and even your Cree will, and Chip will, it'll all slip away.

My dad had a trapline 15 miles out of Fort Chip at Poplar Island, on Lake Mamawi. I was the one that the old man took out with him, for company and to teach me how to do things. Then I'm supposed to teach the younger people, my kids. Well, that's what did happen. Then I got this trapline at Poplar Point. My boys have that now. I used to take my boys down there and the girls didn't want to stay. They went down there on a few trips. Oh, that was lovely trapping.



ERNIE RAY MICHAEL

My great-grandfather on my mother's side came down for the Hudson Bay; Old Man Wylie, from Scotland. He was a blacksmith for the Hudson Bay Company; and from there on, my grandfather and my mother, and then my mother's family were pretty well all born and raised here around the Fort Chip area. I don't know too much about my father's side. His name was Ernest Bell Michael, but everyone called him Tex. He came here from the States, Virginia, in 1920, and he said when he got to this country, he'd hit paradise. He'd come from the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia and he said back there was something like around here: mountains, hunt deer, hunt raccoons, farm, whatever it was to make a living. My mother Gladys Wylie had Dené and Scotch ancestry. She was from very, very far north. My parents had nine of us, and I was the oldest. I was raised up pretty well around Jackfish Lake there, and got to Fort Chip when I was 14, going on 15. In the fall when the caribou first came, seven or eight of us got blankets; some had no blankets, and the lake was only half frozen, and we had a picnic with a bunch of tents and a big, long fire.



THERESE MICHAEL

My family has been in Fort Chipewyan for over a hundred years. My mom, Rose Tourangeau, my grandfather Antoine Tourangeau, and my granny Madeline Leroc. They got to Chip, and that's where they stayed. My mother's parents were from the Winnipeg area. My father's name was Maxim Villebrun, and I don't know much about his parents, but my granny's from around Fort Vermilion. Marie Villebrun was her name, and her husband was Francis Villebrun.

My parents got married in Fort Chip and they had two boys and three girls. I'm the youngest one, born in 1920. I've been sewing ever since I was four years old. When I was six years old, I made myself a pair of moccasins with beadwork. Since then I've been sewing. I made parkas, mukluks, gloves. I still do a bit of sewing today.

In winter my dad would trap, and my mom would trap in March, which is rat season. My parents used to hunt caribou in winter. We would stay out of town for the summer; stay along the rivers and there would be other families too. On Sunday, they'd pick a Sunday to say the rosaries together, in Chipewyan or French or Cree. And Easter Monday they used to have people gathered from all over and have round dances. Fiddle music used to be good, and I used to jig. It was a great time.

I had 14 children, and most were born in Fort Chip. For most of my life I lived at Lake Athabasca in Saskatchewan, near Uranium City. Fish Camp they used to call it. As soon as school was out, I'd take my kids and stay over there all summer until fall. When it was time to go to school again, I would bring my kids back to Chip. I moved to Fort McMurray in 1972.



ANNE MICHALKO

My family has been here, as far as I know, all our lives. My dad died when we were young. His name was Peter Hamelin and my mother was Sara Quinn – she was Métis. The only grandparent I've ever known is my kookum, my mother's mother, Maria Belcher. That's the only one. I was born in a place called Normandeau. It was a little farming community, or just houses here and there and everywhere, you know. I'm not even sure how they survived other than their fishing and hunting and trapping. None of us were born in a hospital, all by midwife. For the boys, Louie was the first born, then Jimmy, Albert, Martin; then I think Charlie, and then Joe and Oliver. And the girls; Lena would be the first born, Nancy, Katie, myself and Virginia. My mother was a wonderful cook and she was a good Native woman who can clean and cook. I'm sure she tanned lots of hides too. I left very young, when I was 16. Got married young and moved to Saskatchewan, and that's where I stayed until I came back. Even though, you know, we might not live in one area, we always were homesick for the family together.



LENORA MULAWKA

I was born in October of 1939. I barely remember my grandmother, Marie McGraw, but I know we used to live in a tepee. She was a Métis, and I believe she was a Treaty Indian. My grandfather was François Janvier, he was French. My mother was Philomena Janvier, and she was married to a Lemais, her first husband. She had six children from her first marriage. Then my dad, who was Lebanese, used to come and sell blankets and stuff for fur. And, that's how he met my mother, and she said he wouldn't leave her alone, so he ended up staying with her. She also had six kids from him. She had 12 all together. But I lost all of my sisters and my mom to tuberculosis. Today I have a boy, whose name is Roy, and I have a daughter, Lorraine.

The way my mother raised us was trapping. We used to go from one place to another with our tepee. Set the tepee up, set up our snares. And, we had a cabin somewhere down north of Cheecham. Some people are ashamed of the way they were raised but I'm not. I'm proud of the way I was raised. We had nothing, but we had love. I never had any formal education. I taught myself how to read and write. I speak fluent Chip and I also speak Cree and used to interpret in Chipewyan language at the court house at McMurray. I'm proud to be Métis.



Madeline Patterson is photographed with her grand-daughter, Dana Patterson-Lacorde.

MADELINE PATTERSON

My ancestors have been here all their lives, as far as I know. I'm pretty sure my mother was born in Anzac, and the same thing for all her brothers and sisters. I don't really know where my grandfather, Paul Cheechum, really came from, but my grandmother, Maggie Cheechum, I think was from La Loche. She was Cree and spoke a little bit of English. They were Treaty, my grandparents, and my mother. My mother's name was Marceline Cheechum, but everybody called her Mary because I guess they couldn't pronounce her name. My dad, I don't know much about my dad because I didn't grow up with him. His name was Joe Foley, so I was told.

My mother and her second husband, Napoleon Boucher, had a trapline. I found it was so far to walk, because we walked there in the fall, with the dogs. And we'd go to Gordon Lake, and that's where we stayed for a month sometimes. I used to set rabbit snares with my mom all the time, or go hunting. You know, go check the snares, go check the traps and stuff with her. They had to have dog packs to take the stuff. We must have had a toboggan or some kind of sled out there. But by the time we came back from the trapline, there would be snow, and then we'd come back by sleigh. We'd put the dogs on harness and bring them in; come back.

In Anzac Lake, my mother used to set a net, and she had a canoe. I remember it was green, and we'd go on there and lift up the net, and there would be a lot of fish. I don't even know what kind of fish. All I know is we lived on it. To this day I still like fish. And my mother always had a huge garden. Well, she had ten kids! We had a cellar and that's where we stored our stuff; our berries, because we did a lot of berry picking. Anyway, we moved to Lac La Biche when I was about 12, to a farming place. They called it Egg Lake. Then we came back to McMurray, and when I was 17 years old I got married to Mickey Patterson. We had eight children, and now we have 14 grandchildren.



WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBIT



OLIVE PENTE

My maiden name was Waniandy, meaning ‘point of the river’ in Iroquois. My dad was Leo Waniandy. He grew up in Lac Ste. Anne, but moved away when he was eight years old in 1911 to Fort McMurray with my Granny, Martha Waniandy, when my grandpa, Adam Waniandy, passed away. They moved up for the good hunting at the time, and for work. Dad went to work at the sawmill up in Embarrass Portage. That’s where he met my mother. She was a waitress on the steamboat on the Athabasca at the time. My mom’s mother was a Brazeau, and her dad was a Daniels.

I remember growing up on the trapline, my mom used to be so clean and tidy. We had this beautiful house. My dad built it himself. It had hardwood floor in the living room, bedrooms for the kids, and in the kitchen there was cupboards and everything. And behind the house my Dad made an icehouse where he hung his meat and all that—put big blocks of ice and sawdust in there. And then we had a barn—a big barn. We had one cow and horses, because they were using the horses for cutting cordwood, and the cow, we used to get milk from her. And mom would make butter. We always had a garden too. But that house, I used to love that house.

I moved to McMurray when I was about 9 or 10, when I had to start school. I went to school until I was 15. Then, I had to go to work. From there on, I was working all over. I worked on the boats. I cooked on the Pelley Lake. And I worked at the Hudson Bay docks as a cook. And I worked for the Fish Camp—McInnes Fish Camp. And from there on, I started working in a restaurant, and working at the Laundromat, and working at Wayne’s Confectionery. Then I met my first husband. We moved to Athabasca, where he was from, and brought up the kids there. After he and I went our separate ways, I moved back to McMurray.



MARY JEAN PLISKA

My parents came from Russia and England. I came to Fort McMurray in 1964 from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan when my husband went to work for the Great Canadian Oil Sands. We stayed for about a year, and then went back to Saskatchewan. It was just too isolated here. But, we came back to McMurray again when I was in my twenties, in 1968. We had a taxi business that ran out of the Oil Can. We had an ambulance too, but we never got paid for running it or anything. In the mid 1970s we also had the Little Arrow Café. We had all sorts of jobs and businesses throughout the years.

In 1977 we opened up a fishing lodge at Lloyd Lake, about a hundred miles northeast of McMurray. We ran the lodge for 25 years. People would come to McMurray in the summer, and we’d hop them across to the lodge. We’d run the lodge all summer, and then we’d hit the U.S. and advertise all winter. So, we were active pretty well year round. We worked with lots of good people over the years. McMurray was a pretty good place. When we used to travel and people would say, “where are you from?”, I’d say “Fort McMurray”. I was proud to say Fort McMurray because, if you said Fort McMurray 20 years ago, they didn’t have a clue where it was. But, in more recent times, we’d be down south, even out of the country, way down in the States and they knew Fort McMurray. That made me proud.



MARGARET QUINTAL

I was born on September 19th, 1947, in Fort McMurray. Today I live in Conklin where my family has a lot of history. My ancestors were definitely here before Alberta became a province in 1905. My father was Jimmy Welsh, James was his real name. He came from Norway. My Mom was Irene Cardinal, and she was born in Conklin in 1932. I have four sisters and one brother. We were very close with my grandparents when I was growing up. My grandmother, Mary Louise Bourque, was born in 1908, and my grandfather, Modeste Cardinal, was born in 1900. After my grandmother and my grandfather were married, they lived here in Conklin — not too far from the railway. When I was a young child, we spent a lot of time on my grandfather's trapline. The main cabin is where my grandmother would stay. And then my grandfather would go further, you know, out to his line and that. We'd stay at the main cabin on the trapline for awhile, and then go back to Mile 199. Yeah, we lived there at '99 for quite a few years. My grandmother used to trap too. She used to go and set traps and I'd go with her. So, I used to watch her do all the trapping and the skinning. She used to make mukluks and moccasins and jackets with some of those hide. From the moose, she'd make moose lard. The duck feathers my granny used to keep. And then she'd make pillows with that. I remember she made a bear rug twice. One she gave to Father Mercredi, and then one she kept, years ago.

We were at the trapline in winter and summer too. Winters, we'd go there by dog team. From what I can remember, my grandfather, he basically provided for the family from his trapping. So, in the spring, after he's done his winter trapping, he would go to Edmonton on the train and sell his furs. Then he'd come back and bring the staples in bulk. There would be sacks of flour and sugar, peanut butter in big pails and baking powder, you know, things like that, that they needed. I married Andrew Quintal. Father Mercredi married us in Conklin. Today Andrew and I have six children: Valerie, Velma, Veronica, Laverna, Osborne, and Kathryn. Our son has the trapline, but it's not the same anymore. There's so much disturbance, the furbearing animals just aren't there anymore. The oil companies have wells and a huge plant out there. You know, the livelihood has changed because for us, that was our livelihood. And now we can't trap like we used to. Our trapline has been in the family for five generations for sure, and we still take the kids out there — the grandkids and that. Our kids and their spouses built a cabin for their dad there when Andrew was sick because he couldn't walk very far. So, they built him a cabin close to the road where we can just drive, you know. We've got a nice river going through our line too, and we still go there quite a bit.



COYOTE



HELEN ROY

My dad was in the First World War and then he came into Edmonton, and he was married at that time. But that was when that flu, that real bad flu, went around in 1918 or so, the bad flu. And his wife got the flu and she died, they'd only been married a few months. So he headed north and that's when he met my mom and they got married. I was born on April 23rd, 1940, in Fort McMurray, Alberta. My parents were Tom Grant from Burgeo, Newfoundland, and Selena Malcolm. My mother passed away from TB when I was about two years old though, so my dad didn't talk about it much. I started school in Hylo, but I spent some of my time in McMurray. I'd be there in Hylo maybe eight months or a year or whatever, you know, go for a full school year and then my dad would come and take me back by train. For maybe a year in McMurray I had Sister Sutherland as a teacher and I went to St. John's School. And then I'd go back to Hylo and that's where I did the majority of my school, was in Hylo and then in Lac La Biche. We had to travel by train. There was old Len Williams, he was the porter. He was the African-American gentleman, he was a wonderful guy! And that trip was an overnight trip from Lac La Biche to Fort McMurray and it was party time. Well, they stopped at every little place, you know. I've even seen guys get kicked off at one of the — not their destination, but at one of the stops because, you know, they'd get rowdy and whatnot. I'm telling you, it was quite an experience. And oh you better believe it was cold, yes! I mean, they had coal stoves in there, so if you were lucky enough, you got around there. Those were the days, I'm telling you. On the train you got to see people that you wouldn't have known otherwise. I worked at the Hudson Bay in Fort McMurray until I married Elmer Roy. We were married in 1956 at the Roman Catholic Church in Fort McMurray. All the Way of the Cross pictures in there, Father Mercredi had painted, yeah, it was beautiful actually. And we had sort of a big wedding, for those days. I had three bridesmaids and a flower girl and a ring bearer. There were very few vehicles there then, eh. So we rented the cabs to take us to the church. Oh my goodness. And then after that we had a big supper at his mother's place, and then after that, we had a dancing party at a friend's place and that's the way it goes, yeah.



COMMON YARROW



LINDA BOUDREAU-SEMAGANIS

My father was Henry White, and he was born on the 7th of January, 1907, in Stony Plain, and he passed away in Edmonton in September of '74. He was on the board of the Métis Nation of Alberta when he passed on. He had been on the board for quite awhile. And my mother's maiden name was Evelyn McKinnon, and she was born August 14th, 1920, in Calling Lake, of Scottish and English parents: George McKinnon and Alice Blackett. Grandpa George came from Ontario, and his parents came from Scotland. Granny Alice, she was from Leeds, England. They're both buried in Fort McMurray. They had got together in Eastern Canada and they came across to Winnipeg. My granny and grandpa ran the first dry-cleaning business in Winnipeg and I have pictures of them with those little old irons. Anyways, they got together and they had six or seven children – one of them being my mother. And my dad's people were old Joseph White, who also used the surname Blanc, and Isabelle Foley. So, like, they're all over, the branches of our family. I think we're probably related to everybody in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba! My father was Métis. He went to England and did active duty over there, and when he got back he met my mother and started our family. My father had three sons from a previous marriage, my step-brothers. Their language was Cree. John and Lawrence were older so they maintained their language even though they were in residential school from probably around '36 to '45 or something. Russell was ten years younger than them, so he didn't have his language, he could only speak a few words. But my dad got them out of residential school when he came back from the war. My mother's first husband was an American soldier named Ira Brazington, and he drowned in the river in Fort Mac. They were married for 10 or 11 months and he drowned. So, mom had been in mourning, and along came this good-looking, tall, handsome Métis man and swept her off her feet. So my mom and dad got married and began a family. They lived happily ever after.



MALLARD, FEMALE AND DUCKLINGS



MARCEL SHEPHARD

I was born on December 6th, 1949. My father, Raymond Shephard, was born in England, near Lancashire. When I was young, dad worked on the railroad about 25 miles south of Conklin. After that, he worked for Northern Transportation on the barges in the shipyard. My mother, Delia Cardinal, was from Conklin. Mom was 20 when she married my dad, and he was 50. My dad was working and always providing for the family. My granny, Mary-Louise was known to everyone as Pisu, which in Cree means “lynx”. They called her this because she was fast with her hands, and a fast worker. My grandfather, Sylvester McCallum, they called him Mischik, which means “wood” in Cree. As for my brothers and sisters, there’s Irene Shephard, who’s the oldest. Florence Delorme lives in the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, where she works at the Caslan School teaching Native Studies. I have another sister, Hazel Peterson, who works at the Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton. My sister Charlene Shephard lives in High Prairie, and my sister, Eva, is in Fort McMurray. I’ve got a brother too – Walter. He’s down in Calgary. I have two brothers and a sister that have passed away, Anthony and Johnny Shephard, and Leona. And that’s the family!

When we were young, I remember the dances. And not only at the school did they have dances. They’d have them in your house, and you’d have to move all your furniture and the stove out so that you could have the dance. I remember those days. Now you see the ground where the house used to be. I bet it wasn’t even 20’ by 20’. And yet you would think that was a big place, a big dance. I know my grandpa played the fiddle, and Demais Tremblay and Billy Cardinal, they both played too. A lot of them played fiddle at those dances. Even the kids bought those little fiddles that were made out of metal and tried to play like the old folks! We had some good times at those dances.



CHARLIE F. SOMERS

I was born August 11th, 1931, in a two-bed nursing station in Fort McMurray. It was the ex-RCMP office. My dad was the Federal Government telegraph operator in Fort McMurray — the end of the line. I was raised in McMurray ‘til I was 19 or 20. I finished Grade 12 and then took commerce for one year at the University of Alberta. Then I went back and got a bookkeeping job in Goldfields; so I did okay. I spent a lot of time working in Uranium City and in Fort Chipewyan.

I remember one time we went hunting. Three guys about the same age talked me into going. They were going to hunt rabbits. There were quite a few rabbits around. It was late fall and the creeks and rivers were frozen. So, I had to walk over the hill across here, and then this hill over here was just as high, but it sloped up from the river this way. And that is where all the rabbits were. So they gave us a canvas backpack. I was pretty small, and the snow was over my knees, struggling with all of this. And these guys would keep running ahead shooting more rabbits, and we’d have to follow the track where they were running and pick up the rabbits. Oh, I was never so tired in my life! I also hunted with them in Uranium City; George Waniandy and Steve, his older brother. And the caribou came through this way a couple years, in early spring of 1950. And Stan Wylie, a Métis fellow from Chipewyan took me out hunting there. I got 11 caribou and Sam got 13. And he showed me how to hunt caribou.



ALVENA STRASBOURG

My Grandfather on my mother's side, Julian Cardinal, was from France, and settled in the Lac La Biche area in the early 1800s, working for the missionaries. He was married to my grandmother, Liza Ladouceur. My other grandfather, Napoleon Laboucane, was a Métis trader. Both my mother, Philomene Cardinal, and my father, Patrice Laboucane, were born in the 1890s. I myself was born in Owl River, on June 10th of 1921. I was six months old when my family came to Fort McMurray.

Fort McMurray was only just a little hamlet. And, when I start remembering, I remember very distinctly the day I started school. I started school in the new Peter Pond School in 1927. There was nobody—you know, a lot of people that were 14, 15 years old, hadn't gone to school yet. And, none of us that lived here could speak a word of English. We all spoke Cree and I often think that woman must have had a terrible time, the young girl that taught us, you know. But, it didn't take us long and my Aunt Katie's daughter, Mary Byrd, she was already in grade nine and so she'd come to our place and she'd teach us, you know, how to speak English.

Mr. Hill was our lifeguard back then. He'd teach us how to swim. He was also the druggist. He was a really good friend to everybody. Mrs. Hill and nurse Ross started Girl Guides for us when I was about ten years old, and sports in the summertime. They kept the kids busy and kept us in the know about things that were going on. And, Father Mercredi, you know, as we were growing up, helped us with sports and stuff like that. Mr. Skelton was the Butcher. Yeah, there, were lots of good people in town.

And Christmas Eve came, and we lived close to the church there, and we had, you know, not a big house, but anybody was welcome and people would come and stay overnight at our place when they'd come in from the trapline for midnight mass. And, the dogs were all tied outside there, you know, you could hear the sleigh bells coming for a long ways. Everybody had sleigh bells. It was a beautiful time. Yes, things were really nice growing up back then.



CHRISTMAS CARD



HARVEY SYKES

I was born in Waterways in 1952. My father was Polish, and my grandparents came over from Poland back in the late 1800s. They moved into Manitoba and that's where my dad was born, in Libue. On my mom's side they've probably been here forever. My mom came from around the Fond-du-Lac area, and they're Métis people. They travelled, they always travelled. My mom was born in Lac La Biche. There's the old mission there, and that's where she was born. Then my grandmother and my grandfather on my mother's side, they lived in Cheecham. My mom was a Cardinal before she married my dad. My parents got married just before he went to war in '42. My dad went overseas during the Second World War.

My dad, he did a lot of hunting and trapping. He would trap mostly beaver, mink, lynx, squirrels, weasels and muskrats. He probably killed one moose for sure every winter, and would bring the meat into Waterways and cold-freeze it. My dad taught me quite a bit about traditional life. Other Elders taught me a lot too. They would come visit my parents on the trapline and they spoke Cree. I don't speak Cree. I wish I would have learned to speak it. I just know a few words and stuff, and I wish I did learn all the words. It's a beautiful language.



MARY CARDINAL SYKES

My grandfather on my mom's side, I never even knew because I think he died at a very young age. His name was Jules Cardinal, and he was from the Quebec area somewhere. My grandmother was Victoria Martel. She was from around Big Bay area, Lac La Biche area. They got married when she was 16 years old. My grandparents on my dad's side were from Poland, but I never met them. My dad was from the Winnipeg area. I was born in Cheecham, and I was delivered by my Grandmother Victoria. I think she delivered most of us that were out there at the time. There was my sister Rose, Walter, Ron, and myself.

When I was three, and my brother was two, we both developed whooping cough. They couldn't save him, but they saved me. And so after, I must have been about four, we moved to Waterways. We used to have some great times there in Waterways! Back in those days, you had to create your activities and have fun, play games. The whole neighbourhood; we always used to get together and do this.

My grandmother and my mother, they had a mixture of Cree and French, you know. My grandmother would be speaking in Cree, and then there'd be French words and it was just a — just a mixture. And I understood every word my mother said to me, but I can't speak Cree. I know a lot of words but I can't sit and converse with anyone in Cree. But I just love the language. I just love listening to people.



LILA THOMPSON

I was born in Fort McMurray in 1938. I was the first baby born in Saint Gabriel's Hospital, and the first baby baptized in St. Aidan's Anglican Church. There was a lot going on in 1938! My dad was Captain William James Bird, better known as Billy Bird, from Fort McMurray, and my mom was Ethyl Fraser from Fort Chipewyan. My grandparents were Joe Bird and Katie Cardinal on my dad's side, and Roderick Fraser and Elijah Loutitt on my mom's side. Grandpa Joe was an Englishman who came over with the Hudson Bay Company.

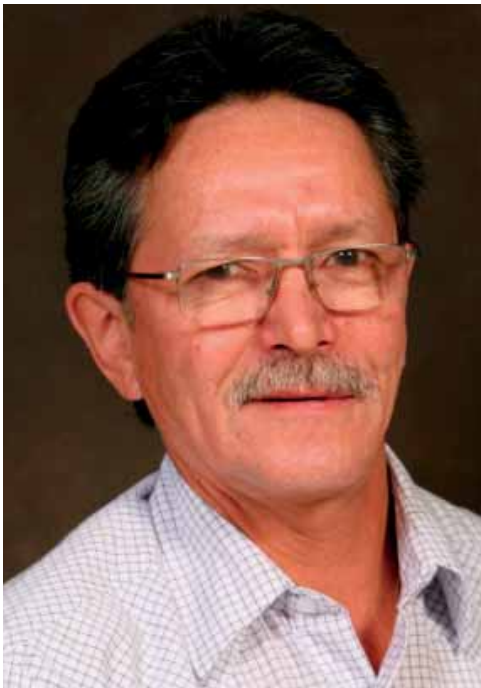
I grew up in Waterways. Back then, Waterways was a bigger town than McMurray, because that was the end of the railway. There was no high school in Waterways back then. I went from grade one to grade nine in the one room school there, and then we moved to Fort McMurray, where I went to Peter Pond High School for 10 and 11. Then, in 1956, I moved to Edmonton to finish my grade 12. I didn't realize at the time that I would not come back to McMurray until 1978.

After high school, I thought that there was nothing much left for me back home, so I went and joined the Air Force. I was trained in meteorology through the Air Force in St. Johns, Quebec, and basic training in Centralia, Ontario. After my training, I got transferred right back to Namao, near Edmonton. That's where I met my husband. We got married in December of 1957, and have been together ever since. We moved all over the place, from Namao to Ottawa, to Gimli, and then to Toronto and Brampton. Then, in 1978 when our girls had both gone to college, and our son was in high school, we moved back to McMurray to get out of Toronto. Being away all that time, things had changed a lot. Then, in 2001, we left McMurray again for Wetaskiwin to be closer to our kids.



MARGARET VOYAGEUR

I was born on February 24th, 1938, in Fort Chipewyan. My father was Emil Mercredi, and my mother was Elizabeth MacDonald. Dad trapped when he was in Fort Chip here, yeah, he made our living on trapping. He wouldn't allow my sister and I to go on the trapline, we have never seen the trapline. We used to stay with a lady by the name of Freda Fraser, from the Fraser family. She had a store, that's where I ended up helping her in the store and that's where I started liking working in stores. So in 1952 the whole family went to Uranium, we all went. Well, Uranium was called a town, but when we got there in 1952 the town wasn't there yet. The first winter everybody had to put up tents, because there was no place to go. So come spring, there was one building, old Gus Hopper's store. That was the only building there. Then everybody kind of built around, a town formed. It was a beautiful town! Everybody had flowers and gardens with fences. It was 95% white, but we were all just like one big family. It was really, really friendly, nice. Oh, yeah, the school was built right away. I started school there, and then my father got sick. I had two brothers younger than me, my mother never worked, so I had to quit school at 13 years old. But I kept on going, teachers helped me with correspondence, that way, I finished everything up to Grade 12. I had to do schooling, I had to look after my family, but the whole town of Uranium helped me. Yeah, if it wasn't for them, I would have never made it. And I'd do it again! I have three children, Andrew, Nathan and Miranda, with my first husband Andrew Schultz, but my first husband passed away about, oh my goodness, about 17 years ago. My second husband was Charlie Voyageur. When I married Charlie, he's a Chipewyan bush man, eh, so I had to learn how to tan moose hide and make dry fish and dry meat!



ELMER WANIANDY

My mother was Vera Daniels and everybody that knew her called her “Girlie”. She was born on Sunchild Reserve. My dad was Leon. We called him Leo, Leo Waniandy; and he was born in Lac Ste. Anne. I don’t think my dad or mom was ever Treaty. My mom was Blackfoot and she had a mixture of, I think it was Scotch or Irish or something in there. I think it was Scotch. But, my dad, he was Iroquois. He was full Iroquois. They met in Fort McMurray here, and then mom was 17 or something when they had the first kid. So, yeah, there was seven girls and eight boys in the family. We lost three sisters early. Me, I’m the seventh son. I was born in 1949, and raised in Fort McMurray here. When we were kids, you had to make sure the water and wood was all done. Then you pretty much had your chores, they would be to help pick berries, and stuff like that, so you could can berries and look after the garden. I used to be a garden guy myself. We grew pretty much everything in our gardens, and we had good gardens.

When we grew up, they wouldn’t let us sit in the house while they had company, because they were speaking Cree or whatever; and if we learned how to speak it going to school, we would get in trouble because we’re not supposed to speak it. You know, only one language, English. But my grandparents spoke Cree. They spoke Cree and Chip. They both had two different languages. My dad spoke Iroquois and Cree, and a little bit of French, and my mom could speak a little bit of Blackfoot, but mostly English.

I think when I was probably 19 or something, it all changed a lot. I mean, you couldn’t go down by the river and make a fire like we used to when we were kids. We’d go there, and we’d make a fire, and we’d cook up our fish, and have our spuds and that, and put them in the fire there; and we’d get them all cooked up with the fish. In those days, Forestry used to talk to me a little bit, but the officer just gave up when I said, “Hey, this is my land here buddy.” I said, “You’re coming into my territory.” We can’t do that now. After, I think I was 19 or 18, when we quit. They used to come there and put that fire out. You’re not allowed to have a fire. Too many people; too many people coming in. They had to stop it because other people would be going all over the place making these fires.



NORTHERN STARFLOWER



GARY WANIANDY

I was born in Fort McMurray and my mother was Mary Waniandy. My grandmother was Caroline Waniandy. She was born in Lac Ste. Anne and she raised me with my father figure, Gilbert Ducharme, in Fort McMurray. We used to do lots of berry picking. I didn't mind picking berries, because we used to go by boat to pick blueberries, and the old man would sell them. Blueberries, raspberries, chokecherries, saskatoons... my grandmother would can all that stuff. In the wintertime, we got snow to melt on the stove for having a bath. Eventually we got a well put in, it was good water. The old man used to say, "You go pump water." The water man would come about every two weeks, but I'd go out there and pump water when he's coming by, so we didn't have to buy water. It was 50 cents a barrel back in the day! Yeah, it was a lot of money. The old man had a dog team he would use in the wintertime, and the old man would fish in the Clearwater, right down from where we lived. He used to trap, anything that a trapper would get, squirrels, fox, lynx, and hunt moose. We used to live mainly at the trapline when I was young, but when we got old enough to go to school, the old man traded his trapline for a house in town. So he got another trapline after that. Then the old man passed away. I used to work on the snag boats. It used to pull snags out of the river, trees that would fall in. We'd have to pull them out of the channel, cut them up, and haul them to shore. Later, I started with Suncor and spent 35 years at Suncor. Not all for Suncor, but at the Suncor site. Yeah, five years with Mannix and then 22 years with Catalytic and then I switched over to Suncor and put eight in with Suncor. And then I retired, then I went back to Suncor twice as a contractor. Yeah, I'm working now. I stayed home for a year and went stir-crazy and bought an acreage, but all I was doing was cutting grass, so I got rid of that.



EVELYN AND HOWARD WEBB

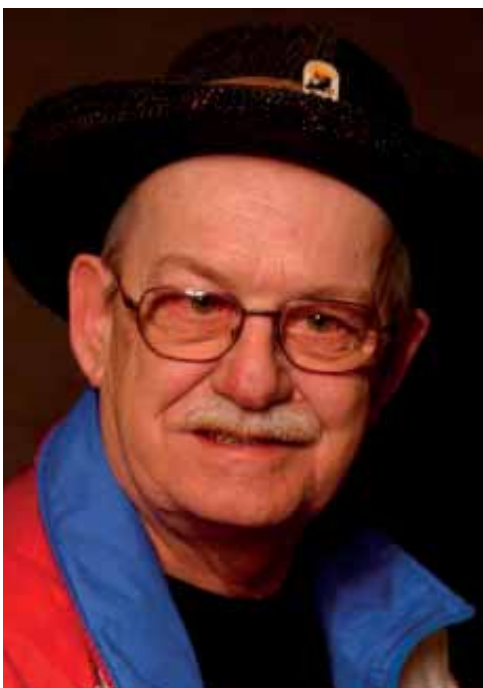
My name is Evelyn Webb. On my father's side, Norbert Larondelle was my grandfather and Veronica was my grandmother. They were from Lac Ste. Anne, I think, but they lived around St. Albert when I knew them. The family had a 100-year anniversary about ten years ago on that same farm. On my mom's side, my grandfather was Norbert Quarterpat. My parents were Victor Larondelle and Margaret Quarterpat, and they lived in Spruce Grove. Then they moved to Athabasca just after the war. Our family had 11 children: Mike, Clara, Jessie, Georgie, Delphine, Doug, Terry, and three died that I didn't know. Nobody stuck around Athabasca. They all ended up in Edmonton. After I married Howard, I raised our children, and then I worked after all the kids were in school. I was a court worker for 21 years. I used to can as much food as I could. We had a little garden there too one time, with beans and peas, and dill pickles. But we lived in a log house, and we just had a dirt cellar.

My name is Howard Webb. My father died before I was born. He was killed in the First World War. He got gassed in the First World War in France, and he died six weeks before I was born. One of my grandparents was from Scotland, a McDonald, and I don't know where my grandmother was from. My stepdad and my mother came up here to Athabasca, more or less looking for work, I guess. We moved to Fort McMurray for the first time in 1938, and then again in 1956. Then I stayed. Evelyn and I got married here in Athabasca. We met at a dance in Jackfish Lake and in '54 we got married. We had seven kids: one girl, and six boys. Our family lived in little shacks to begin with, then we moved to Waterways. After that, we got a house on Franklin Avenue and we stayed there for 40 years, I think!



EVELYN WHITE

My father was George McKinnon, born in Ontario and of Scottish descent. His relatives hailed from Glengarry County in Scotland and there is still a large settlement of relatives in Ontario. My mother was Alice Blackett, born in Leeds, Yorkshire, England. My family moved to Fort McMurray in March of 1936. My parents, my three brothers, my sister and I went up. Dad was always looking for greener pastures. He never could sit still for long. I think seven years was the record in one spot. In Fort McMurray, we rented a small house right down in the main section of town. We lived there for a few months and then we rented another house, more out of town and we lived in rented houses for quite some time. And then after the war, mom bought an old house and we moved onto a lot that was on the same corner as our first house. I was married first to an American soldier, but he was killed less than a year after we were married. About two years later, I remarried. I met Henry – although I never called him that, he was always known as ‘Whitey’- when he was sent up there to McMurray with the Canadian Army, in the Home Guard. He was sent up there to do some work on army installations. The Royal Canadian Corp Signal operated short wave radios all through the north, for communication, and they sent this group of soldiers to repair the stations and do maintenance work and that was when we met. So, I married Henry White from Rivière Qui Barre on June the 28th, 1945, in Fort McMurray. We lived right downtown on the main street for a little while. He was working as a night watchman and bartender in the old Franklin Hotel, and the O’Coffees gave us an old, beat-up shack to live in for a little while, ‘til we got organized. Then we bought a house and an acre of land, it was a mile out of town at that time, on Franklin Avenue. It was right on the corner. They bought the land afterwards and built a Pancake House right where my kitchen used to be. Henry and I raised nine children together. Today I’ve got approximately 20 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.



ROBERT JAMES WHITE

I was born at St. Gabriel’s Hospital in Fort McMurray on July 18th, 1948. My parents were Henry White and Evelyn McKinnon. Linda Boudreau-Semaganis is one of my sisters. Linda does family trees for everybody, she’s right into that. My great-grandmother is a lady by the name of Bluears from the Papaschase Reserve on the south side of Edmonton. My ancestors have been here for a long time, as far as we can figure, scientists say 19,000 years, so I don’t know, you figure it out. My grandfather Joseph LeBlanc took Scrip, but my grandmother Isabelle was refused because they claimed she had taken Treaty. The whole thing is so murky, you know, because at one time you were given a choice, Treaty or Scrip — a lot of people who had Treaty gave it up and took Scrip. And a lot of people took Scrip, gave it up and — you know, it was all so confusing. We have a letter from around 1907 or 1908 where Isabelle was refused Scrip because she had taken Treaty in 1900 or something, through the Enoch band. But we don’t know that it was true, because none of the kids were Treaty. Like, my dad wasn’t Treaty and he was born and raised on the Reserve. He was raised on the Enoch Reserve, not Papaschase, because they sold Papaschase so that the white people could have it. That was the first Reserve sold. That’s how they disbanded it, they gave a bunch of them Scrip and said, “Well, not enough people living here, might as well shut ‘er down.” And then they disbanded all the people, some went to Slave Lake, some went to Hobbema, some went to Enoch, some went to Alexander, Beaver Lake, Lac La Biche... So that’s the history. But my dad was a motivated person when it came to Aboriginal rights. In about 1967, in that time frame, what happened is my dad and some of the local people had organized Nistawoyou housing and they were able to purchase 25 brand-new homes for the Aboriginal people who lived in the town. Some of the houses were down by the Athabasca River, by the bridge. And the rest of them were spread throughout the town, like, we only moved about a block I think, from our little shack to this new home, all my brothers and sisters, nine of us together, and our parents.



VIRGINIA WHITFORD

I was born November 29th, 1944. I've lived in McMurray for about 38 years; moved here from Edmonton, and before that Prince George. When I was a child, we lived in Imperial Mills. It was a sawmill town. My mother, Sara, was born at Toefield in 1902, I believe. She was Métis and she was a midwife. She delivered a lot of babies in Imperial Mills. My grandmother did the same. My grandmother delivered me and gave me my name. I think my mother ended up at the Eleanor Lake area. That's where she had most of her own children, I think. There were 13 of us. She had 11 kids from Peter Hamelin, but then he died when Joe was just a baby. And then she met my father and had two of us. My father was Harry Cardinal. He was from around Lac La Biche. My grandmother was Mariah Belcher and she married John Quinn, Jr. My great-grandfather was Papaschase.

I was in the hospital when I was young. When I went to the hospital, I had no English. I learned English in there, and I came out. I was in there for some time. I imagine I was seven, eight years old. I had pleurisy in the lungs. And I got chicken pox in the hospital, and it almost killed me.

My stepfather had a trapline out at, they called it Paustic. Somebody told me it means rapids in Cree. We would go up there when the fish were spawning and we'd set camp right there by the river, and catch a whole big bunch of fish and dry them. I remember them doing that. And we had lots of wild meat, too. We had deer, moose, muskrat. I loved muskrat. We had our own smokehouse, to smoke fish or dry meat. There were a few Chipewyans there, and Cree, and some white people that were working there. They had different nationalities. We used to go picking berries towards Philomena by the railroad tracks. We'd set camp there for a few days and pick blueberries. That's all I remember – picking blueberries! By myself, I'd wander around and pick strawberries too.



MULE DEER



MARGIE WOOD

My great-grandpa on my mother's side was Albert Bernard Powder. He was born in 1853 on the plains, and my grandpa, Alfonse Powder, was born in Lac La Biche in 1890. My grandmother on my mom's side was Louise Boucher, and she was born in Fort Chip in 1905. I never met these two. On my dad's side, Isadore Janvier was my grandfather, and he was born in 1914. My dad's mom, Mary Rose Trotteault, was born in 1900 in Fort Chip. My great-grandpa on my dad's side was Jonas Trotteault, born in 1864 in Fort Chip, and my great-grandmother was Isabelle Piche, born in 1867 in Fort Chip. In those days my granny and my grandpa, my dad and my mom, they used to say we were living off the land.

There used to be dances all the time, with fiddling; mostly fiddling. In those days, kids didn't go dance. Just the adults. That's when we used to go sneak in. We'd go sneak in the window, and we'd see the old timers just givin'er; just sweating! And when they finished dancing we'd take off and run home. My dad used to be a caller for the square dance. They'd do jig, waltz, you name it.

I left here when I was 17 and a half. I am 59 years old now and it's been ten years now since I came back. This place is not the same, like it used to be many years ago. You can't swim in the Athabasca anymore. You can't use water there anymore. We used to swim there all the time. The Athabasca we used for fishing. In those days, we would eat rabbit, we would eat bear meat, and we'd eat fish and chicken and deer meat. Even when we were on the trapline we used to have lynx meat. The rabbits, we used to cook, if they were nice, fat rabbits. And even the squirrels, we used to eat too. Now you can't eat those anymore.



ROLAND WOODWARD

Well, as far back as we can trace the local history, my ancestors have been here in the larger area of Cheecham Hills. Cheecham is a name that was derived from my ancestors. That's my mother's side. On my father's side, my grandmother Suzanne Janvier was born in La Loche and she married a Hudson Bay guy by the name of Arthur Woodward from Wales. My father was Métis and it was sort of interesting because he was born in Old Man's Village on Big Buffalo, and raised in a 'round'; he lived in a circle. So his area was just south to House River from Fort McMurray; south to House River and all the way to La Loche.

I was born and raised along the railroad at a place called Lenarthur, which is about four miles out of the community of Anzac. I watched my cousins on both sides, Métis and Native Indian, my aunts and uncles, all get taken away to residential school at an early age. I didn't go until I was 15 and I only stayed for four months, maybe five months, and I came home at Easter time. I had to work. But because these kids were taken away, they lost the chance to talk to the old people.

But, yeah, one thing the Métis were, were a colourful people. When they got dressed up, they had on their red shirts and jingle bells and everything else, a big colourful sash. Dancing and jigging. It was quite the show!



ELSIE YANIK

I was born September 25th, 1917, on the banks of the lake at Fort Fitzgerald, Alberta. My mother, Mary Flett, was from Fort Vermilion, and my dad, Henry LaRocque, was from Winnipeg. He was a cook by trade. They met and were married in Fort Vermilion. I was in Fort Fitzgerald 'til I was about eight years old. My mother had to go to Edmonton. She had problems with her throat and they prepared her for her operation, you know, and she never woke up.

So then the bishop came to see my dad and told him the best place for us was to put us in Fort Resolution Convent, and that's a long ways away – on Great Slave Lake, Northwest Territories. So in the summer of 1925, they bundled us up and took us to Fort Smith and further on to Fort Resolution. And that was the hardest thing I ever had in my life, being separated like that. I was in the convent for 10 or 11 years. Three times a day, we ate fish. Fish was okay, but they gave us too much, too big, we were not used to big, big meals. We ate nothing else – no bread, no potatoes, no vegetables, just fish.

My brothers and sister stayed longer than me – I was 18 when I left. And I went back to Fort Fitzgerald and stayed with the nuns, because I was raised with the Grey Nuns; and I wanted to train to become a nurse and a nun. But my dad said to me, "You know Elsie, I will never, never give you permission to be a nun. I don't want you to be a nun. I'd rather you meet somebody, get married, have a nice family, have something to live for." A few months later my father got killed by a train accident, in 1936. So I respected his wish. I worked another year in the hospital, then I met my husband at midnight mass — Lawrence Yanik, his family was from Czechoslovakia.

I went and had a date with Lawrence on the farm and that was in the spring, and then in August, we got married. Our honeymoon was in the bush. We packed the dogs, and I was wondering where we were all going or what was happening! He trapped in the winter months and in the summer he prospected with his brothers. And so we built a nice little house and we lived there all that winter. That same year, that winter, I was pregnant. I had Patricia, born on 17th of March, 1939. And then I had Marylan; then I had Lillian. I had Dolores, and about four and a half years later I had Bunny. Her name was Mary, but this lady used to come and say, "She's as cute as a bunny." So the kids called her 'Bunny'. My youngest is Lorne, and I adopted a little boy, Tony.

We trapped at this place near Fort Chipewyan until a fire went through there one summer and burned everything. So we headed out to the Arctic, to the barren lands and lived there for five years. I remember the wind howling all night and wolves howling all around. Well, we'd get lots of caribou and they were very fat. We kept a little farm too, in Fort Fitzgerald. That was a wonderful life, I enjoyed my life on the farm. And I enjoyed it in the barrens too. We moved the family to Fort Chip in 1961, and lived there for 40 years. I loved Fort Chip, the people there were wonderful.

PHOTOGRAPHS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTORS

Métis Local 1935 acknowledges the following for their contribution of photographs to the Mark of the Métis Project and especially the Fort McMurray Heritage Park for their contribution of historical photographs:



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In addition to the data collected from the Fort McMurray Métis Local 1395, the following datasources were used to produce the maps contained in this book.

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