

**The Rossville Scandal, 1846: James Evans,  
the Cree, and a Mission on Trial**

by

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**The Rossville Scandal, 1846: James Evans, the Cree, and a Mission on Trial**

**BY**

**Raymond Morris Shirritt-Beaumont**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree  
of  
Master of Arts**

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## Abstract

In February 1846 the Reverend James Evans, who had been for several years the senior missionary among the Cree at Norway House, Manitoba, was accused by members of his congregation of sexual impropriety with young Native women who had resided at various times in his home. The trial that followed is a central theme in *The Rossville Scandal, 1846: James Evans, the Cree, and a Mission on Trial*, which is a study, like past historical works, of the impact missionaries and Hudson's Bay Company officers had on events before, during, and after the trial. However, framed by a consideration of the larger debate concerning the broader meaning and significance of missionary/aboriginal encounters, analysis seeks to break new ground in its focus on the origins, culture, and possible motivation of Evans' accusers and the Cree community from which they came.

Some conclusions are possible as a result of this investigation. Certainly the Rossville Cree were actors, not merely acted upon, in their encounter with the missionaries. They played a major role in the establishment and progress of the mission and acted decisively to defend their religious beliefs in the face of HBC opposition in 1845. In addition, some of them were also willing to resist perceived misconduct by their senior missionary in February 1846. The circumstances of Evans' trial may never be fully understood, nor his guilt or innocence proven with any finality, but not one member left the Church as a result of the allegations against him nor was anyone involved in the trial expelled from the congregation by the local elders. Evidently converted to the message rather than the messenger, the Rossville Cree had built their faith upon a rock and withstood the storm.



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## **Preface**

When I first read the transcript of the trial of James Evans, I thought he was guilty. Now, after studying the case, as Robert Service said it, “from every angle of view,” I am not so sure. On the surface it seems a straightforward case. A clergyman working in an aboriginal community is accused of sexually abusing young women in his charge. That type of revelation would have sent shock waves rippling through Victorian parlours, but in today’s cynical world, made wiser no doubt by its exposure to hundreds of such cases through the news media, it is more likely to be met by a question. So what else is new? However, just as a newspaper article or a two-minute clip on the late night news can trivialize issues, so too can a flippant rejoinder minimize the complexity of such cases. Certainly the trial of James Evans played itself out in an atmosphere fraught with intrigue and subterfuge, so that the trial transcript and related documents have to be studied with infinite care to discern their hidden meanings.

One’s biases have to be recognized, too. As a practising Christian, I sympathized with the cause in which Evans was engaged, but as a member of a lay church suspicious of the professional clergy, I was initially prejudiced against him. His overbearing personality also grated, and it took considerable research before I could find a context for his outbursts. My bias in favour of the downtrodden initially blinded me to the shortcomings of William Mason, Evans’ subordinate, and caused me to gloss over discrepancies in the stories the young women told about their associations with Evans. However, as each new piece of evidence illuminated possibilities, those biases were sorely challenged, and what had appeared obvious at the outset was now obscured by doubt. Indeed, in the end I had

to conclude that a final answer might never be found.

In spite of the complexity of the subject, and the challenge of developing a credible historical perspective, the thesis eventually took shape. The Introduction is essentially an overview of the various approaches that have been taken historically to the missionary/aboriginal encounter. It helped me to acquire a perspective with which to tackle the thesis topic that is developed in Chapters 1 through 6. Chapter 1 is an analysis of the historiography relating to the Rossville Scandal. It focuses on the shortcomings of previous historical works and explains briefly what will be done in the balance of the thesis to address the still unanswered questions. Chapter 2 is a detailed study of the origins and culture of the Norway House Cree and the first steps they took to become Christians. Its purpose is to show that these people were Cree with a difference. Because of their close trade and personal ties with the European traders that went back over a hundred years, they were prepared for the missionaries and the cultural changes that religious conversion implied. Indeed, they welcomed them. Their cultural background also provides insights concerning the dynamics of Evans' encounter with the Cree community, in particular the young women at the centre of the charges against him.

Chapter 3 is about the religious transformation of the Norway House Cree. Its purpose is to describe the progress of the mission through the combined efforts of James Evans, his missionary associates, and the local Cree. It also draws attention to the growing tension between the mission and the Hudson's Bay Company that culminated in the refusal of the Christian tripmen to hire on with the company if it required them to travel on Sundays. Chapter 4 is a detailed analysis of the trial of James Evans conducted by his subordinate, William Mason, to investigate charges concerning Evans' alleged sexual misconduct.

Chapter 5 deals with the antagonisms between Evans and Mason on the one hand and Evans and the Hudson's Bay Company on the other as possible explanations for Evans' troubles. The search for answers continues in Chapter 6, which is devoted to an analysis of the characters and credibility of those members of the Cree community directly involved in the charges against Evans. It also offers some general conclusions concerning the case.

Writing a thesis of this nature presented some practical difficulties. In the primary sources I consulted, there was no consistency in the way that Cree names were spelled. Rather than arbitrarily privileging one form, I decided to spell them as they appeared in the relevant documents, even though this resulted in different spellings throughout the thesis. I did deviate from this rule of thumb in one case. I used "Mamanuwartum," spelled here as it appeared in the transcript, in direct quotations, but in other references I used the more correct "Maminawatum," because there is no "r" in the n-dialect of Cree at Norway House. Quotations have been copied as they appeared in original sources. Occasionally, I have added [sic] after a misspelled word, if that was needed for clarification. Finally, recognizing that the use of diminutives is a way of diminishing the importance or credibility of individuals, I have avoided the use of "Maggie" in reference to Margaret Sinclair, except in direct quotations.

I owe thanks to a number of individuals, whose assistance has aided me in the completion of this thesis. To my advisor, Dr. Jennifer S. H. Brown, who encouraged me to begin this odyssey, offered me helpful advice along the way, and edited my work with painstaking thoroughness. To Dr. George Fulford, Department of Anthropology, University of Winnipeg, a member of the examining committee, whose suggestions have enhanced the

final text of the thesis. To colleagues Shirley Hogue, Adele Lafreniere, and Gay Sul, who also gave me excellent editorial advice. To Reverend Gerald Hutchinson, who generously shared copies of the trial transcript and other primary documents with me, as well as his insights on the Evans' trial, and to his gracious wife Miriam, who made me feel so comfortable when I visited their home during my research trip to Alberta. To historian Chris Hackett for directing me to the works of David Marshall and Frank A. Peake, and to his brother, geographer Paul Hackett, who took time from his busy schedule to pass on sources he had discovered. To Dr. Kathryn Young, who made me attentive to the historiography relating to missionary/aboriginal encounters. To historians Richard E. Bennett, John Fierst, Renée Fossett, Barbara Kelcey, Ruth Swan, and others who have encouraged, challenged, and informed me along the way. To the staff of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives for so generously providing research assistance and especially to Pam Cormack and Chris Kotecki who went beyond what is ordinarily expected in that regard. To Diane Haglund of the United Church Archives at the University of Winnipeg who did likewise. To the staffs of the D. B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario, and Methodist Missionary Society Archives in London, England, my thanks for making their microfilm collections available. In addition, I also owe a debt of gratitude to my employer, Frontier School Division, for giving me time to write the thesis and to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for granting an extension on compassionate grounds when grief turned my attention elsewhere. Finally, I thank my wife Wan, whose loyalty and support throughout this process has made the task so much easier.

Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont  
January 2001

## **Abbreviations**

NAC	National Archives of Canada
RG	Record Group
15	Department of the Interior
D	Dominion Land Administration
II	Dominion Lands Branch
8	Land Records, Half-Breeds and Original White Settlers
c	Applications of 1886-1901, 1906 made by North West Half-Breeds
m	North West Half-Breeds and Original White Settlers, Registers and Indexes
PABC	Provincial Archives of British Columbia
PAM	Provincial Archives of Manitoba
CMS	Church Missionary Society Archives
HBCA	Hudson's Bay Company Archives
UWO	University of Western Ontario
WMMSA	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives (now part of the Methodist Missionary Society Archives, London, England)

# Introduction

## *The Missionary/Aboriginal Encounter: Developing a Historical Perspective*

Rossville, the first Methodist mission station west of Lake Superior in British North America, was established in 1840 on the eastern channel of the Nelson River just below the northern outlet of Lake Winnipeg.<sup>1</sup> Six years later, it had grown into a village, consisting of about thirty houses and a church, a seemingly peaceful counterpoint to the hustle and bustle at the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post of Norway House nearby.<sup>2</sup> In February 1846, however, its apparent tranquillity was rocked by a scandal which threatened not only to ruin the reputation of its senior missionary, the Reverend James Evans, but also to imperil the evangelical work which had been accomplished among its largely Cree population. For some time, rumours had circulated quietly about the village, and across the bay at Norway House; now they surfaced as charges of sexual misconduct between Evans himself and three young native women who had resided at various times in his home.<sup>3</sup> Even worse, members of his own congregation laid the charges. Evans had faced opposition before, first as a missionary among the Ojibway of Upper Canada, then in his role as Superintendent of Wesleyan

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<sup>1</sup> It was named in honour of Donald Ross, Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post at Norway House.

<sup>2</sup> In July 1846, the artist Paul Kane wrote that the "Wesleyan Methodist mission....consists of about thirty small log houses, with a church and dwelling-house for the minister." See J. Russell Harper, ed., *Paul Kane's Frontier*, including *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America* by Paul Kane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press for the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1971), 76.

<sup>3</sup> All the young women were native-born. Margaret Sinclair, his chief accuser, was the daughter and granddaughter of Europeans who had married native women. She had resided at HBC posts prior to living with the Evans family. Anna Sapin was the daughter of a Cree man long employed as a hunter and fisherman at Cumberland House. Eliza ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (May-chi-ki-h-kwah-nay-p[b]) or Majekekwanab, as it was written in the trial transcripts, was the daughter of a Cree hunter at Norway House.

Methodist Mission in Hudson's Bay, but never on this scale.<sup>4</sup> His integrity as a Christian clergyman challenged, Evans insisted on a church trial, presided over by his subordinate, the Reverend William Mason. He knew he could no longer function as a missionary until his name was cleared.

*The Rossville Scandal* is about that trial, the events that led up to it, and what followed. The analysis focuses, not only on the relationships among its leading participants, clerical and lay alike, but also on the history and cultural perspective of the Rossville Mission itself, which provided the larger context within which the trial took place. Such emphasis places the present study within a genre of scholarly works by historians and others seeking to understand the dynamics of European/Aboriginal religious encounters. Since the 1970s, these studies have encouraged a more critical appraisal of missionaries than was evident previously, and they have also promoted greater attention to aboriginal perspectives on missions.<sup>5</sup> As Bruce G. Trigger noted in 1986, such shifts are a recurring phenomenon in Canadian history, "fashions in the historical portrayal of native peoples," that reflect "changing anthropological

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<sup>4</sup> His moral rectitude had never been so openly challenged. While Evans was a missionary among the Ojibway of Upper Canada in the 1830s, he took a leading role in the campaign against the removal policy of the colonial government, which aimed to relocate all the aboriginal people in the fertile western region of the colony to the relative isolation of Manitoulin Island. Evans was never a focus of attack; it was the reserves, and by extension the Methodist missions associated with them, that were threatened. See Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), 169-170. As Superintendent of Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Hudson's Bay, Evans locked horns with the HBC when it required Christian tripmen to travel on the Sabbath, a dispute that reached crisis proportions at Norway House in the early summer of 1845. Although Donald Ross attacked Evans because of his intransigence on the issue of Sunday travel, he did not at that time openly question the missionary's moral worthiness to minister to the local Cree.

<sup>5</sup> The first major study to illustrate the change was published in 1984. See John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). However, this advance probably occurred in part because of dialogue with other historians, a discussion to which Grant had alluded as early as 1972. See John W. Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era: The First Century of Confederation*. Gen. ed. John Webster Grant, Vol. 3, *History of the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), viii.



understanding and the actual position of Indians in Canadian society” at the times when particular historical works were produced.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, they do not always result in better history. Indeed, in the last three centuries, historians had managed to portray aboriginal people, if they considered them at all, as allies, enemies, noble savages, evolutionary primitives, or immoral degenerates, depending on the prevailing notions of the day. By the 1970s, sympathetic histories were on the rise, paralleling the growing visibility of aboriginal people in a society that had become increasingly attentive to the plight of indigenous people around the world. Trigger applauded the general direction of these trends, but cautioned, “In spite of the progress that has been made so far, there are strong reasons to believe that entrenched European stereotypes continue to distort our understanding of native people and their history.”<sup>7</sup>

That distortion has a long history. According to Frank A. Peake, the religious or ecclesiastical histories produced in Canada from the latter half of the nineteenth century until the outbreak of World War I were narrowly denominational, uncritical and barely aware of “contemporary society and prevailing influences.”<sup>8</sup> Those from nineteenth century Rupert’s Land were usually missionary reminiscences, based on journals or correspondence, and written to encourage support for their respective missions.<sup>9</sup> Although Peake made no reference to the

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce G. Trigger. “The Historians’ Indian: Native Americans in Canadian Historical Writing from Charlevoix to the Present,” (1986) in *The Native Imprint: The Contribution of First Peoples to Canada’s Character. Volume 1: To 1815*, ed. Olive Patricia Dickason (Athabasca University Educational Enterprises, 1995), 423.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

<sup>8</sup> Frank A. Peake, “Reflections on Canadian Church History,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 22 (1) (1980): 46–47. An Anglican clergyman, historian, and honorary president of the Canadian Church Historical Society, Peake made a clear distinction between what he called religious or ecclesiastical history and general or secular history.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. The name Rupert’s Land originally designated all of the land granted to the Hudson’s Bay

fact, these were not essentially different in tone from secular histories about early Red River in the middle years of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The authors of these latter works did not write specifically to promote the work of the church, but operating within a system of Christian belief, they universally lauded the work of the missionaries. Embedded in that perspective was a Eurocentric bias that saw missionary work as a logical extension of the white man's burden to take enlightenment to the less advanced, a bias that was also evident in the writings of clergymen like Egerton R. Young and John McLean, who envisioned missionaries as heroic beacons of truth in a sea of darkness and barbarism, dedicated disciples, who took the light of the Gospel to the heathen and at the same time gave them the benefits of civilization, or more specifically, British civilization.<sup>11</sup> It was an age of industrial revolution, expanding frontiers, and imperial power to which aboriginal peoples were expected to succumb. Influenced as they were by the prevailing philosophies of the day, both religious and secular historians were largely insensitive to the aboriginal side of the European/aboriginal missionary equation.

That bias continued well into the twentieth century among church historians. Colin Inkster and the Rev. A. C. Garrioch, mixed-blood scions of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) schools at Red River, both wrote nostalgically about missionary days in reminiscences which

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Company in 1670. The Church of England established a diocese of the same name there in 1849, but its boundaries were later confined to the Winnipeg and interlake region of Manitoba. The ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land, established in 1875, includes ten dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada in Northwestern Ontario, the prairie provinces, and the North West Territories.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1856; reprint, Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1957); Joseph James Hargrave, *Red River* (London: Stationers' Hall, 1871; reprint, Altona: Friesen Printers, 1977); Donald Gunn, *History of Manitoba: From the Earliest Settlement to 1835* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co., 1880).

<sup>11</sup> Egerton R. Young, *By Canoe and Dog Train Among the Cree and Salteaux Indians* (London, 1890), 137; John McLean, *James Evans: Inventor of the Syllabic System of the Cree Language* (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1890), 195.

appeared in the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> John H. Riddell's *Methodism in the Middle West*, published in 1946, was in much the same vein. Based on his own involvement in evangelism dating back to 1887, Riddell attempted "to give an account of an unselfish, ungrudging effort of one denomination to rescue a great area from heathen and economic paganism."<sup>13</sup> The trilogy, *A History of the Christian Church in Canada*, published between 1966 and 1972, consisted of volumes on the Church in the French, British, and Canadian eras respectively written by church historians H. H. Walsh, John S. Moir, and John Webster Grant. It contained some recognition of the importance of contemporary society to the patterns of religious development, or "at least...an indication that the left hand knew what the right hand was doing," but that recognition was still not sufficiently inclusive.<sup>14</sup> In the second volume, for instance, John S. Moir chronicled the history of the missions of Rupert's Land in a relatively dispassionate way, but a subtle Euro-Christian perspective was evident in his use of such terms as "perseverance" and "unselfish devotion" in reference to the missionaries. Aboriginal involvement in the enterprise was inadequately described. James Hunter was the only missionary mentioned at The Pas in northern Manitoba; yet the Cree schoolmaster, Henry Budd, had been active there under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society for four years before Hunter even arrived from England. The "native catechist" sent as the first mission

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<sup>12</sup> The term "mixed-blood," in this context, indicates "of mixed British and aboriginal descent" and distinguishes Inkster and Garrioch from the "Metis," who were of French-aboriginal descent and generally Roman Catholic in religion. Colin Inkster, "William Cochran," in *Leaders of the Canadian Church*, ed. William Bertal Heeney (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1920); Rev. A. C. Garrioch, *First Furrows: A History of the Early Settlement of the Red River Country, including that of Portage la Prairie* (Manitoba, 1923). The latter was not church history *per se*, but religion was a major focus.

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Riddell, *Methodism in the Middle West* (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1946), ix.

<sup>14</sup> Peake, "Reflections," 47.

worker to Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan, was not even named.<sup>15</sup>

A dramatic interpretive shift occurred in the 1984 publication of John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime*, which was marked by thoughtful consideration of aboriginal as well as Euro-Christian perspectives in missionary encounters.<sup>16</sup> The book met with mixed reviews. Historian Elwood Jones acknowledged that Grant had tackled "most of the important questions which had beleaguered the subject," but lamented that the book told "so little about Indians" and "avoided the major historiographical debates about Indian culture."<sup>17</sup> Philip Goldring, on the other hand, felt it was sensitive to both the missionary and the native, and offered a "religious alternative to the prevalent secular view of Indian missionary contact."<sup>18</sup> The debate illustrated the tension between secular and church historians, what Frank A. Peake conceptualized as the "two solitudes" in Canadian history. Peake explained this as a tendency among secular historians to ignore religion as a social force, and among church historians to describe religion in isolation from the world around it.<sup>19</sup> This observation was reiterated in 1991 by Barry Ferguson, who pointed out that recent surveys confirmed there was little explicit attention to religious history in contemporary historical writing. Apparently, secular historians had "relegated religion and churches either to the interests of old-fashioned

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<sup>15</sup> John S. Moir, *The Church in the British Era: From the British Conquest to Confederation*, gen. ed. John Webster Grant, Vol. 2, *History of the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), 202. That native catechist was James Settee. See National Archives of Canada (NAC), MG29, B15, Robert Bell Collection, vol. 32, file 68.

<sup>16</sup> Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*.

<sup>17</sup> Elwood Jones, review of John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534*, in *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 76 (2) (1984): 98.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Goldring, "Religion, Missions, and Native Culture," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 26 (2) (1984): 43.

<sup>19</sup> Peake, "Reflections," 46.

historians or to the distant past.”<sup>20</sup>

There were good reasons why this had occurred. During the nineteenth century, secular forces, such as higher criticism of the Bible and Darwinian evolution, gradually eroded belief in religion, and two world wars, the holocaust, and Hiroshima only accelerated the process in the twentieth. As religion declined, so did interest in old-style missions, a trend that was paralleled in Canadian history by a corresponding loss of interest in aboriginal people. After 1900, as Trigger pointed out in his 1986 article, historians increasingly turned their attention to constitutional history and left Indians to the anthropologists.<sup>21</sup> However, this was also problematic. According to Trigger, the fashions that had marred historical portrayals of native people were rooted in the twists and turns of anthropological representation. The relatively positive appraisal of native cultures, for instance, that typified eighteenth century Enlightenment thinking had been gradually replaced by the middle of the nineteenth with “derogatory evolutionary and racist views,” especially in American anthropology.<sup>22</sup> Toward the end of the century, however, these gave way to the “doctrine of cultural relativism,” as expounded by Franz Boas, who believed that each culture “developed to satisfy the collective needs and wishes of its people” and therefore had to be evaluated on the basis of “its own ethical and æsthetic principles, not by any universal standard.”<sup>23</sup> Trigger did not comment on the problems this doctrine created for cross-cultural comparison; instead, he criticized the

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<sup>20</sup> Barry Ferguson, “Secular History and Church History: An Introduction,” in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1991), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Trigger, 428-429.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 424-426.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 429.

Boasians for seeing native cultures as essentially “static” entities which, lacking any mechanism for coping with change, had begun to disintegrate from the moment of European contact. In the 1930s, when it became evident that native cultures were not going to disappear, that they could adapt to changing circumstances, anthropologists began to investigate that change as a process of acculturation. According to Trigger, by the 1950s, these studies had acquired enough “particularistic and historical features to emerge as a new branch of anthropology called ethnohistory,” and had shifted focus from the factors that promoted acculturation to those that fostered native cultural resistance and survival.<sup>24</sup>

This new focus developed in an atmosphere of skepticism, not only about Christianity, but about Western economic and political philosophy as well, and resulted in a much more negative appraisal of Christian missions than had been evident previously. Anthropologists became increasingly sensitive to the subjugation of indigenous peoples by European colonialism, and sympathetic to Native discontent over the displacement of traditional religious norms by proselytizing missionaries, whose teachings were viewed as one of the most destructive threats to the survival of native cultures. Citing the works of a number of these anthropologists, James P. Ronda noted that they represented the typical Christian mission as a “revolutionary enterprise” which required Native Americans “to become like Europeans in all aspects of life....in effect, to commit cultural suicide.”<sup>25</sup> This theme of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> James P. Ronda, “‘We Are Well As We Are’: An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions,” (1977) in *The Native Imprint: The Contribution of First Peoples to Canada's Character, Volume 1: To 1815*, ed. Olive Patricia Dickason (Athabasca University Educational Enterprises, 1995), 223. Ronda cited James Axtell, “The European Failure to Convert the Indians: An Autopsy,” *Proceedings of the Sixth Algonquian Conference, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series* (Ottawa, 1975); Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington, Ky., 1965); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1975), 43-57, 228-253; Neil Salisbury, “Red

missionaries as agents of colonialism is certainly evident in recent critiques of nineteenth century Christian missions in Rupert's Land. It influenced Winona Stevenson's study of her Cree-Assiniboine ancestor Askenootow (Charles Pratt), a CMS catechist in Saskatchewan between 1851 and 1884, and is pervasive in George van der Goes Ladd's treatment of the Reverend William Cockran, CMS missionary at Red River between 1825 and 1865.<sup>26</sup> Both Stevenson and Ladd invoked the writings of Frantz Fanon, a social philosopher of West Indian origin, who held the view that "Christian missions, 'by condemning the customs and religions of the natives as heathen and unhuman...bolster and uphold colonial racism [sic] ideology. At the same time they weaken the power of resistance of the indigenous population.'"<sup>27</sup>

Such negativity concerning missionaries *per se* is a perspective historian Frits Pannekoek described as the "secular trap which isolates the missionary as a singularly malevolent influence."<sup>28</sup> Certainly Stevenson's representation of missionaries and missions in general seems unduly harsh and one-sided, in spite of the fact that her essay is an otherwise sensitive and incisive portrayal of Askenootow's marginal status as a Native catechist. Analysis of his missionary journals is particularly jaundiced. From Stevenson's perspective, they were filled

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Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. Ser., 31 (1974): 27-54.

<sup>26</sup> Winona Stevenson, "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askenootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 304-329. George van der Goes Ladd, *Shall We Gather At The River?* (Toronto: CANEC [United Church Publishing House], 1986).

<sup>27</sup> Fanon as quoted by Stevenson, 310. Renate Zahar, *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) was the Fanon reference cited by Stevenson. Ladd cited Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

<sup>28</sup> Frits Pannekoek, "'Insidious Sources' and the Historical Interpretations of the Pre-1870 West," in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1870*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1991), 32. For evidence that Pannekoek himself has fallen into this trap, see Raymond M. Beaumont, "The Rev. William Cockran: The Man and the Image," *Manitoba History* 33 (Spring 1997): 5.

with “aggressive proselytism and self-righteous arrogance,” which left her “cringing, with mixed feelings of shame, confusion, and sadness.”<sup>29</sup> This is all the more poignant because she was writing about her great-grandfather, someone of whom she was otherwise very proud. Yet, given a different perspective, these same journals provide evidence, not of Askenootow’s self-abasement and subservience, but of his deep Christian humility, not of his arrogance, but of his absolute conviction in his religious beliefs. From this reading, he emerges, not as some pathetic figure ever appeasing or weakly resisting his masters, but as a man of integrity, whose life was consistently guided by his faith no matter how difficult the road.

Stevenson provides us with a sympathetic portrayal of Askenootow’s life, but considering her assumptions about the missionary enterprise, it is hard to see him as anything other than a victim of the colonial forces around him, forces which for Stevenson include European missionaries. This is a common problem among historians who fall into the “secular trap.” They tend not only to perceive missionaries as oppressors of indigenous people, but also to group them with the agents of colonialism, then assume that they share an overpowering unity of purpose.<sup>30</sup> Ladd’s writing suffers from these interpretive difficulties, as well as a polemical style and other methodological problems, issues that have been addressed elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> Suffice it to say here that the equation he asserted between colonialism and Euro-Christian missions to

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<sup>29</sup> Stevenson, 308.

<sup>30</sup> Stevenson, 310, argued that “Missionaries set out with the intention of radically transforming Indigenous societies, and knowingly or not, provided the religious and ideological rationale for the larger colonial enterprise.” However, missionaries did not confine their work to indigenous societies alone; they were bent on transforming *all* society. They operated within the limitations of a colonial system not of their making, and cannot be held accountable for those abuses and policies over which they had no control.

<sup>31</sup> Beaumont, “The Rev. William Cockran,” 7-12. For additional insights on secular bias in contemporary histories about missions, see Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Real People and the Children of Thunder* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 3-15, 368-371; and Goldring, 46-49.



aboriginal peoples is a gross oversimplification unsupported in the sources that he chose to make his case. Missionaries were culture-bound, to be sure, but as members of an evangelical Christian sub-culture, they were often defenders of subject peoples in opposition to the secular forces of British colonialism. Numerous examples from the writings of CMS missionary William Cockran illustrate that dissent, and a careful analysis of the career of James Evans demonstrates that he could speak out on behalf of aboriginal people as well as the evangelical cause.<sup>32</sup>

Sympathy for that cause, which has almost disappeared from secular history and anthropology, is also no longer much evident among church historians. It was absent in Ladd, who made his living as a United Church minister, and there is no hint of it in the works of Anglican minister and church historian, Frank A. Peake. Writing in 1988 about mission personnel and policy in nineteenth century Rupert's Land, Peake described the CMS missionaries as cultural imperialists with pretensions of class superiority, who took a paternalistic attitude toward their congregations, ignored the local culture, and "assumed that evangelization included assimilation and acculturation."<sup>33</sup> This assessment reflected current secular thinking about missions, not only in anthropology, but also within the church itself.

According to historian David B. Marshall, secularism began to creep into the church during

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<sup>32</sup> The motivation of missionaries like Evans and Cockran has been questioned because they were in the country under the auspices of the HBC, which was in effect the colonial government of Rupert's Land. However neither viewed himself as an agent of the Company; on the contrary, both Cockran and Evans were often at odds with it in defence of aboriginal people. Evans is best known for his opposition to the HBC regarding Sunday travel, less for his criticism of the Company's trade monopoly. On that issue, there was little he could do to disrupt the *status quo*, other than express his private views, but had he remained in Rupert's Land, he might eventually have taken a public stand against it.

<sup>33</sup> Frank A. Peake, "Church Missionary Society Personnel and Policy in Rupert's Land," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, 30 (2) (1988): 65. For an opposing viewpoint, see John H. Archer, "The Anglican Church and the Indian in the Northwest," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, 28 (1) (1986): 21.

the nineteenth century, as Canadian Protestant clergymen gradually began to accommodate their theology to contemporary social, cultural, and intellectual forces that were making for more secular congregations.<sup>34</sup> This led to fundamental shifts away from earlier concepts of the Kingdom of God. Christ was seen less as the Saviour, through whom personal salvation was possible, and more as a historical Jesus who provided an example for humanity to follow. As this trend gained momentum, preaching lost its supernatural context and evangelical imperative, and focussed more on morality and social justice.<sup>35</sup> Eventually, the gospel was "stripped of theological content and was based largely on sentimental emotionalism and moral platitudes. Religion became an empty shell."<sup>36</sup> Not much wonder then that Peake, as a modern clergyman, academic, and church historian, had so little in common with the evangelism of his predecessors. The distance in time and mind allowed him to evaluate that evangelism with a fresh perspective, but it also brought with it the risk that he would not understand it at all.

There is another risk, too. Marshall noted that secularization implied a growing sense of personal freedom, individualism, and tolerance for diversity, all of which are valued in a modern society.<sup>37</sup> However, as Charles Taylor pointed out in the 1991 Massey Lectures, each

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<sup>34</sup> His study was focused on the Methodist, Presbyterian, and, after 1925, United Churches. See David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3-24. Challenging John Webster Grant's position that secularization was a phenomenon of the 1960s that struck the churches from without, and Michael Gauvreau's thesis that evangelical Protestantism remained strong throughout the nineteenth century. Marshall argued that it was a slow and sometimes almost imperceptible process in which the churches participated. See Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 3-12, and for a critique of his thesis, see Marshall, 18-19.

<sup>35</sup> In other words, clergy referred less and less to the miraculous nature of Christ's life and ministry, as well as to the universal application of his atoning sacrifice.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 7.

has its attendant problems.<sup>38</sup> Modern liberalism, for example, envisions a society where individuals pursue self-fulfillment, an ideal with which few of us would argue. But, if self-fulfillment is sovereign, is one way of achieving it no better than another? Taylor argued that a yes to this question takes us down the path to moral relativism and can make us inarticulate when it comes to moral issues.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the doctrine of cultural relativism espoused by Franz Boas can prevent historians from making balanced critical assessments in cross-cultural analysis.<sup>40</sup> This is a problem in Karen Anderson's *Chain Her By One Foot*, a feminist critique of Jesuit missionary activity in seventeenth century New France, in which she argued that Huron and Montagnais women were better off in traditional society than in the Christian missions. The image of fanatical, even psychotic priests in juxtaposition to these fiercely libertarian women seemingly bolstered her argument, but Anderson's detached descriptions of aboriginal culture, especially Huron rituals of torture and cannibalism, led the reader to the unintended conclusion that women were probably better off as Catholics.<sup>41</sup> Because Anderson lacked a credible system for comparing cultures, her argument was unconvincing.

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<sup>38</sup> The 1991 Massey Lectures, "The Malaise of Modernity," were broadcast November 1991 as part of CBC Radio's *Ideas* series. See also Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord: House of Anansi Press, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> In the past, religion offered society a universal standard by which moral choices could be made and evaluated, but in a secular world, where religion is in decline and absolutes are in disrepute, people increasingly make moral choices on the basis of self-interest rather than an external code.

<sup>40</sup> The combined problem of moral and cultural relativism was illustrated in a cross-cultural context during an exchange on CBC *As It Happens* in 1994. An interview about female circumcision in the Third World prompted a number of outraged calls about the practice. These provoked a woman to phone in and chastise the others for making moral judgments about customs of another culture. She in her turn received a sustained blast from an immigrant woman who had suffered such an operation, which she argued was wrong by standards which transcended any cultural norm.

<sup>41</sup> Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (London: Routledge, 1991), 169-178. Nineteenth century evangelical missionaries would have been mystified by the inconsistency of Anderson's approach. At the heart of their proselytism among the aboriginal people of Rupert's Land, as well as among their European and mixed-blood neighbours, was a

Anderson could not make an impartial examination of both sides, because she perceived the missionary/aboriginal encounter as one-way cultural domination. In fact, the process was far more complex, as Philip Goldring pointed out in his review of four papers given at the 1984 Conference on Religion and Culture in Canada. In one of these papers, "The Ethnohistory of Missions in Southwestern Ontario," Douglas Leighton "offered a set of guidelines for writing missionary history" that resonated with general historiographical trends in its sensitivity to "both sides of the cultural exchange."<sup>42</sup> By so doing, he applied to theological expansion what had been evident for "at least a decade" in North American literature on the economic aspects of contact and trade.<sup>43</sup> Although not original to him, this was an important interpretive development. Implicit in the secular argument was an image of native people as victims, pawns of British economic and religious imperialism. This new position made them active participants in their own evangelism, just as Arthur J. Ray had made them active partners in the fur trade.<sup>44</sup> This point was underscored by Goldring, who noted that the other three papers showed that the Nishga, Cree, and Inuit "all lent a hand in their own conversion," a process, he added, which had been thoroughly discussed in the last two chapters of Grant's *Moon of Wintertime*.<sup>45</sup> In a more recent study along the same lines of inquiry, John S. Long argued that

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belief in a universal standard of conduct that could be applied to all people regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

<sup>42</sup> Goldring, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *'Give Us Good Measure': An Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

<sup>45</sup> Goldring, 48. The papers were Barry Gough, "Pioneer Missionaries to the Nishga: The Crosscurrents of Demon Rum and British Gunboats, 1860-1871"; Joyce M. Banks, "The Church Missionary Society Press at Moose Factory: 1853-1859"; and Karen Evans, "Edmund James Peck: His Contributions to Eskimo

the Cree were “actors, not merely victims” in the conversion process, and were in many instances able to retain traditional beliefs through a practical synthesis with Christian values.<sup>46</sup>

This idea of missionary/aboriginal encounter as a reciprocal process is a particularly useful interpretive tool because it necessarily broadens the parameters to include more than one side of the equation. Guided by this principal, the following study brings under serious scrutiny everyone connected in a significant way to the Rossville Mission, be they Cree, missionaries, or officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company. The aim is to illuminate their characters, warts and all, to better understand the roles they played in the events surrounding the Evans trial.<sup>47</sup> As we shall see, there were no “noble missionaries” and “savages” among them, or “noble natives” and “meddlesome missionaries” either. Such dichotomous stereotypes are simply unhelpful, as are the relationships implied between them.<sup>48</sup> Rather than being destructive, or even acculturative, as one-way transfers from missionary to aboriginal would suggest, they were marked by dynamic exchange, which altered both the missionaries and the Cree in subtle as well as obvious ways.<sup>49</sup>

These mutual exchanges involved a creative process, “not merely a destructive imposition,” as

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Literacy and Publishing.” They all appeared in the *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 26 (2) (1984).

<sup>46</sup> John S. Long, “The Anglican Church in Western James Bay: Positive Influence or Destructive Force?” in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1991), 104-112.

<sup>47</sup> The officers of the HBC were very much a part of the missionary/aboriginal encounter because they had sanctioned the mission in the first place and given it financial and moral support.

<sup>48</sup> Fienup-Riordan. 4. Reference here is to the “myth of the noble missionary bent on saving savage souls” and “the myth of the noble native ruined by ‘meddlesome missionaries.’”

<sup>49</sup> Those exchanges were as varied as the people involved in them, some obvious and rapid, others subtle and detectable only after a long period of gestation.

some anthropologists have recognized.<sup>50</sup> As we shall see, they cannot be explained at Norway House in purely colonialist terms, because they occurred with the willing support of the Cree, who welcomed the arrival of the missionaries in the summer of 1840.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, some had already been converted to Christianity by their relatives at Red River. There was nothing strange in this. The Cree at Norway House had been absorbing new ideas and practices in response to outside influences for more than a century since European contact, and probably much longer, proof that their cultural base was resilient enough to replace old formulae with new ways of thinking and being. In the process they remained Cree, but not quite the same Cree as those described by James Isham in the 1740s.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, they had been transformed by intercultural contact, a process that continues today, not only for them, but also for every other ethnic group in Canada. In fact, in this context, what happens is less the modification of one culture by another than it is the modification of both into new and increasingly similar forms. As a result, the modern-day Cree and the historians who document them probably have more in common with each other than either have with their nineteenth century ancestors.

This idea of cultural change requires further explanation in the Norway House context. Ann Fienup-Riordan described "native-missionary interaction" as "an encounter between different systems of meaning," resulting "neither in total commitment nor in total rejection of one by

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<sup>50</sup> Fienup-Riordan, 5. This recognition has come as anthropologists have reflected on how their assumptions about missionaries have affected their representations of them. *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> In 1840, many of the Norway House Cree were prepared to leave for Red River "unless some one came to teach them." Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), CMS 22, Class "C", C.1, North West America Mission Rupert's Land (John West) C.1:0, Original Letters, Journals & Papers (Incoming) 1822-1880, John Smithurst Journal, 25 December 1839-13 March 1840, entry for 2 February 1840, mf. A96.

<sup>52</sup> *James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743 and Notes and Observations on a Book Entitled A Voyage to Hudson's Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749*, ed. with an introduction by E. E. Rich assisted by A. M. Johnson (Toronto: The Champlain Society for The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949).

the other.” Rather, it was “a subtle internalization of selected cultural categories...sometimes intentional and deliberate and sometimes not.”<sup>53</sup> At Norway House, the missionaries offered a Christian alternative to the religious practices that had been traditionally observed in Cree culture and most chose to conform to them.<sup>54</sup> The degree to which they internalized the moral and ethical principles underlying those practices was probably much more variable, but it was a synthesis of sorts that combined old and new cultural forms into something different from both. The result was Christianity with a distinctive Cree cast to it.<sup>55</sup>

One, of course, can make too much of the distance between cultures. No matter how different they are, there are always points of intersection. As an example, both the missionaries and the Cree recognized the existence of spiritual forces that could do good or harm. The missionaries taught that Christianity had a better method of harnessing those forces than did traditional methods. The Cree listened, evaluated, and decided what to do according to their interests, understanding, and experience. They did so using criteria which by their cross-cultural application implied that same universality so anathema to the cultural relativist.<sup>56</sup>

Today those points of intersection have become more evident as rapid communication and

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<sup>53</sup> Fienup-Riordan, 8.

<sup>54</sup> When the Rossville Cree began to attend church and observe other Christian practices in the 1840s, they threw away the sacred objects they had formerly used. In recent years, there has been widespread resistance among their descendants to the reintroduction of these objects and the ceremonies associated with them.

<sup>55</sup> Nothing in traditional Methodism prepares the stranger for a Christian wake at Norway House. People gather at a home, usually for two successive evenings to hear the sermons and songs of the faithful. Each evening ends with a feast to which everyone in the community has contributed. Personal observation, 1989. The oratory, the length and communal nature of the celebration, the sharing of food are all reminders of pre-Christian Algonquian culture as described by Isham and other HBC journalists.

<sup>56</sup> The missionaries at Norway House and elsewhere in the north during the nineteenth century made comparisons, too, and they also changed, giving up the idea of sedentary agricultural villages when the boreal soils of the Canadian Shield proved uncooperative, and privileging the Cree language as a medium of written instruction when its practical advantages over English were understood.

technological innovation reduce the physical and cultural distance between peoples. Not only has cultural change intensified, but cultural convergence is also resulting in greater homogeneity around the world.<sup>57</sup> The missionary/aboriginal encounter at Norway House in 1840 involved the same cultural change in microcosm. There was nothing malevolent about it. It was the natural consequence of an intersecting desire, namely, of the missionary to teach, and of the Cree to be taught, and both parties were perfectly within their rights to pursue the course they did. The analysis that follows aims to achieve a balanced interpretation of that encounter, particularly as played out in the drama which unfolded at Rossville in February of 1846.

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<sup>57</sup> Of course, there is resistance to those forces. One is reminded of the rise of nationalism in places as diverse as Scotland, Yugoslavia, or the former Soviet Union, and of the popularity of multiculturalism in Canada.



*Of Evans, the Cree, and the HBC:  
A Historiographic Overview*

Norway House is an impressive community. Located along the shores of Little Playgreen Lake in the upper reaches of the Nelson River system, it boasts a population of over five thousand people, the majority of whom are members of Norway House Cree Nation, one of the largest reserves in Northern Manitoba. Recently, there has been a threefold expansion of those reserve lands, a recognition of community fishing rights on Lake Winnipeg, and a local building boom, all stemming from the implementation of the Northern Flood Agreement in December 1997.<sup>1</sup> Designed to compensate for flood damage to hunting and fishing caused by dam construction, the agreement has put new life into the local economy. There is optimism in the air, and an eye on future economic development, including eco-tourism and adventure tourism for those, in the words of a recent publication, "who want to experience and do, rather than rest and relax."<sup>2</sup>

There are plans to promote the unique historical and cultural features of the region, too. Founded as a fur trade post more than two hundred years ago, Norway House is one of the oldest communities in Manitoba. During much of the nineteenth century, it was also the main inland distribution centre of the Hudson's Bay Company, and surviving buildings in the old fort complex date back to the 1840s. It served as a religious centre as well. Rossville, the first

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<sup>1</sup> This agreement was negotiated between the Norway House Cree on the one side and provincial/federal governments and Manitoba Hydro on the other. Its ratification locally is still under dispute.

<sup>2</sup> Norway House Cree Nation, *Rowing Into the Millennium...A Vision for Norway House Cree Nation as a Healthy Community: Preparing for the Next Century* (Norway House: Norway House Cree Nation, 1998), 16.

Methodist mission in Western Canada, was located around a point and across the bay from the fort, about four kilometres away by water. Established in 1840 by the Reverend James Evans, under the joint auspices of the British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and Hudson's Bay Company, it became a flourishing Christian community and headquarters briefly for all Methodist missionary work in the Hudson Bay territories.<sup>3</sup> The first books in the Cree language were printed there, using a system of syllabic writing developed by Evans himself, and later adapted to write a variety of aboriginal languages across Northern Canada.<sup>4</sup>

Historic firsts such as the above can have a powerful impact long after they occur. In June 1998, for example, the itinerary of the biennial Rupert's Land Colloquium included a trip to Norway House, a two-day visit which coincided with the unveiling at the United Church in Rossville of a plaque commemorating the life of the Reverend James Evans. A number of historians attended the event, and for one of them, "It was a moving bicultural experience to see James Evans honoured in his own church and to hear the local people singing hymns in Cree which they read in syllabics from the hymnbook as well as in English."<sup>5</sup>

That sentiment is not new. It is deeply moving to be in the very place where great things have

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<sup>3</sup> Rossville was headquarters under the superintendency of James Evans, 1840-1846, and William Mason, 1846-1854. In 1854, the mission was transferred to the Canadian Methodists, and William Mason joined the Anglican Church Missionary Society. Thomas Hurlburt served at Rossville as superintendent from 1855 to 1857 and Robert Brooking from 1857 to 1860. George McDougall was Chairman of the Western Mission District from 1860 to 1868, with Rossville as his headquarters until 1863, when he moved to Victoria Mission in present-day Alberta. In 1868, Rossville became a circuit of the Red River District under the chairmanship of Rev. George Young. By 1887, this had become the Winnipeg District. See Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 177, 277; William H. Brooks, "Methodism in the Canadian West in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1972), 90, 93, 114, 118.

<sup>4</sup> Although contrary theories have arisen from time to time concerning the origins of Cree syllabics, no published evidence has ever convincingly challenged the view that Evans himself was their inventor. For a recent work on the subject, see Winona Stevenson, "Calling Badger and the Symbols of the Spirit Languages: The Cree Origins of the Syllabic System," *Oral History Forum* 19-20 (1999-2000): 19-24.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Swan, "Rupert's Land Colloquium, Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre and Norway House, June

happened, and certainly the syllabics represent a worthy achievement. But there is more. The Reverend James Evans epitomizes the heroic missionary ideal of selfless sacrifice for the salvation of others. This image, so reminiscent of the perfect Christ-like life, has had appeal locally and elsewhere for a long time. In 1940, for example, celebrations marking the one-hundredth anniversary of the mission were described as the James Evans Centenary. Forty-four ministers were present, forty-two of them United, one Anglican, and one Mennonite Brethren, but it was James Evans who took centre stage. In the special programmes and church services, involving the school children, local congregation, and visitors, his name was spoken with deep reverence. This truly was his memorial.<sup>6</sup> In 1955, he was honoured again when his ashes were sent from England and reinterred on the site of his mission church at Rossville.<sup>7</sup> A plain stone cairn was placed over his grave, a solemn testimony to the accomplishments of the man it celebrated. The Reverend James Evans had returned in triumph.

The return, however, stands out in sharp contrast to the departure. When he left Norway House in 1846, Evans was under a dark cloud. Not only had he alienated the Hudson's Bay Company, especially by his opposition to Sunday travel, but he had become estranged from members of his own congregation because of charges that he either had or had attempted to have unlawful relations with young women who resided at various times in his home. Moreover, he was barely on speaking terms with his subordinate, the Reverend William

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1998," *The Rupert's Land Newsletter* 5 (1998): 4, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. H. Neufeld, *1840-1940, The James Evans Centenary at Norway House, June 19th and 20th, 1940* (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1940) in University of Western Ontario (UWO), The D. B. Weldon Library. Regional Collection, Evans, Rev. James (1801-1846), Letters and Papers. 1829-1846. Item 4, mf. M580.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Burford Mason, *Travels in the Shining Island* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 1996), 71.

Mason, who had presided in February 1846 over the church court that Evans insisted be called to deal with the allegations. Mason had found Evans not guilty on the graver charges, but had appended a clause censuring him for conduct unbecoming a clergyman. Evans was upset that the censure, which he felt was a private matter between himself and Mason, had been included in the final minutes of the trial, but outraged when those minutes were then sent to the secretaries of the missionary society without his having read or approved them. Evans came to believe that Mason had acted deliberately. When he left Norway House in July, he was angry, dejected, and in poor health. He would be dead before the year was out.

It is difficult to reconcile these facts with the pristine images of Evans presented in 1998, or in 1955, or in the centenary celebrations of 1940, where references to his troubled last days were misleading in the extreme. In an address on that occasion, Indian Agent P. G. Lazenby represented Evans as a martyr, whose downfall had been engineered by the Hudson's Bay Company because of his vocal opposition to Sunday travel. His account of the trial was a mixture of half-truths and outright error.

It was a very sad time for the great hearted missionary, but he continued his way as best he could, against the obstacles set in his path; against growing opposition and persecution, until one day he was brought before a Company court, charged with a terrible crime, and he was convicted. The Company immediately requested the Missionary Society of the Church in England to remove James Evans, and citing his trial as the basis for their request. One can scarcely begin to imagine the feelings of James Evans...but there must have been some comfort for him in the knowledge that he was entirely innocent, and that the charges were entirely false....However, he was recalled to England, to give an account of his stewardship....To make the story short, the thorough investigation that was undertaken brought to light the fact that the evidence upon which James Evans had been convicted by the Company's court, had been secured through bribery and coercion, and eventually he was exonerated, and his name cleared of the stigma that had been so callously attached to it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> P. G. Lazenby. "The Conclusion of James Evans' Work at Norway House." 13-14, in UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 4.

In fact, there was no company court, his recall had already been determined before the charges were brought against him, and he was never cleared to the satisfaction of anyone privy to the circumstances of the case.

Lazenby can be forgiven for his eulogy because there was nothing in the historiography of the day to suggest otherwise. More than thirty years later, historian Frits Pannekoek could still describe the published works as little more than “hagiographies that have elevated Evans to Methodist sainthood. His morality and anti-Company agitation have been enveloped in an aura of sanctity.”<sup>9</sup> Examples are not hard to find. In describing events related to the trial, biographer and Methodist missionary John McLean wrote of Evans:

The faithful toiler, well-nigh heart-broken, was recalled, and at last the scene of his labors, where he had labored hard to lay the foundation of purity and material progress, had to be forsaken....Faithful servant of God, thou hast not labored in vain. nor art thou alone in thy sorrow and solitude!...Thy God shall defend thee, when foes are many and strong!<sup>10</sup>

Egerton R. Young, another biographer and Methodist missionary, was ebullient in his praises.

In burning zeal, in heroic efforts, in journeyings oft, in tact that never failed in many a trying hour, in success most marvellous, in a vivacity and sprightliness that never succumbed to discouragement, in a faith that never faltered, and in a solicitude for the spread of our blessed Christianity that never grew less, James Evans stands among us without a peer.”<sup>11</sup>

Evans was the darling of Methodist missiology, the “praying master” to the Cree at Norway House and inventor of Cree syllabics, who had sacrificed all to take salvation to the heathen of Hudson Bay. There was no room for controversy in describing his heroic exploits. Predictably, neither Young nor McLean hinted at anything amiss in Evans’ conduct during the controversies attached to his name. Their emphasis was Evans the faithful, not Evans the

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<sup>9</sup> Frits Pannekoek, “The Rev. James Evans and the Social Antagonisms of the Fur Trade Society, 1840-1846,” *Canadian Plains Studies* 3, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1974), 1.

<sup>10</sup> McLean, *James Evans*, 195.

<sup>11</sup> Young, *By Canoe and Dog Train*, 137.

fallen, a stance that precluded ambiguity or critical analysis. It was a generosity they denied George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, whom they blamed for much of the trouble faced by the missionary. In McLean's view, "Strong influences were brought to bear against him, supported, and in some instances instigated, through the Governor."<sup>12</sup> Young was even more scathing in his denunciation of Simpson, saying, "a system of persecution began, the most cold-blooded and heartless, by a man lost to all sense of shame and honour; a man who was one of the greatest libertines of the century."<sup>13</sup>

In an oblique reference to Mason, McLean maintained that Company efforts to discredit Evans had the assistance of "one of the missionaries who, filled with jealousy, had joined hands with the conspirators, and, in a foul manner, sought to destroy the reputation of a true Man."<sup>14</sup> Young echoed this sentiment with a modification or two, saying, "one of the young missionaries for a time fell under the baneful spell of the governor, and jealous at the marvellous influence and popularity of Mr. Evans, became the traducer of one who had been his friend, and whom, as [he] afterward confessed, he knew to be innocent."<sup>15</sup>

Of the women, who had been his chief accusers, practically nothing was said. Indeed, McLean made no reference at all to their gender. He simply stated that "some of the Indians testified against the man who sought to do them good" and called them "False witnesses...who swore to the truth of the charges."<sup>16</sup> According to McLean, they did not act of their own accord, but

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<sup>12</sup> McLean, *James Evans*, 195.

<sup>13</sup> Egerton R. Young, *The Apostle of the North, Rev. James Evans* (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1899), 233.

<sup>14</sup> McLean, *James Evans*, 193.

<sup>15</sup> Young, *The Apostle of the North*, 235.

<sup>16</sup> McLean, *James Evans*, 193, 195.

at the instigation of the Company, which was to blame for everything. Young at least identified them as women, but in a fit of hyperbole also denied them any agency in the matter. In his words, "Some poor timid women were terrorised into swearing falsely against one of the purest minded of men."<sup>17</sup>

Imbued though they were with evangelical fervour, both McLean and Young at least acknowledged problems surrounding James Evans. Within a couple of decades, however, emphasis had shifted away entirely from controversy to a focus on his contributions, especially to his role in developing Cree syllabics and promoting Christian missions to the Indians. Certainly this was the tenor of Lorne Pierce's little book, which was designed for use by Canada's schoolchildren.<sup>18</sup> Scholars, too, showed little interest in the more controversial aspects of Evans' ministry. Their only contribution in those years was the publication of some of his correspondence dating from the time before he arrived at Rossville.<sup>19</sup> It was not until Nan Shipley's *The James Evans Story* in 1966 that the events relating to the trial at Rossville again came under serious consideration. Although it reads like historical fiction, Shipley made bold claims for her book. In the preface, she asserted:

This is a true story. There has been no deviation from any date or event recorded in the original letters, diaries and journals kept by the characters involved. By their own words they have either condemned or condoned their actions.

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<sup>17</sup> Young, *The Apostle of the North*, 233.

<sup>18</sup> Lorne Pierce, *James Evans* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1926), 1-30.

<sup>19</sup> James Evans, *Selections from the Papers of James Evans, Missionary to the Indians*, intro. Fred Landon, reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's *Papers and Records* 26 (1930), and James Evans, *Letters of Rev. James Evans, Methodist Missionary, written during his Journey to and Residence in the Lake Superior Region 1838-1839*, intro. Fred Landon, reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's *Papers and Records* 28 (1932).

There is very little invented dialogue. It has been incorporated almost verbatim from the documents recording the thoughts and emotions of the men and women whose lives built this story.<sup>20</sup>

Although her book was written as a popular history with neither footnotes nor bibliography, such an introduction sets up the reader to expect the truth about the events surrounding the trial. Like McLean and Young, Shipley was out to vindicate Evans, but she was more explicit than they in naming Mason, who was thoroughly vilified in her narrative, as the principal source of Evans' troubles. She also went further in assessing the involvement of the women who accused Evans. Margaret Sinclair, for instance, was portrayed as a cold, calculating, fallen woman, whose illicit love affairs brought Evans' censure and her vicious revenge.<sup>21</sup>

Shipley's account of the trial was the most detailed to that date, but it was difficult to assess. John Cameron Reid, whose thesis on James Evans appeared in 1970, felt the book would "do a great deal to set the story of the Reverend James Evans before the general public," but "the uncertainty of the source of many passages" made them "virtually of no use to the scholar."<sup>22</sup> Frits Pannekoek, whose own analysis of the trial appeared in 1974, hedged a little, saying, "While Shipley's case is not without merit, she includes neither footnotes nor bibliography. Too often her story smacks of fiction rather than fact."<sup>23</sup>

Pannekoek rejected the thesis that Mason had conspired against Evans, but he moved into Shipley's camp on the question of the young women's duplicity. He also rejected the interpretation that Evans' downfall had been engineered by the Hudson's Bay Company.

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<sup>20</sup> Nan Shipley, *The James Evans Story* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966), preface.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., esp. pp. 146, 173, 181, 183-184, 189-190, for examples of Shipley's characterization of Sinclair.

<sup>22</sup> John Cameron Reid, "James Evans, Missionary (1801-1846)" (M. Th. thesis, University of Winnipeg, 1970), 71-72.

<sup>23</sup> Pannekoek, "The Rev. James Evans," 2.



Instead, he attributed it to social antagonisms within fur trade society, which isolated and eventually destroyed Evans' reputation. His argument was referenced, using primary sources, but further scrutiny raises serious questions about his use and interpretation of those sources.<sup>24</sup> For instance, when assessing the involvement of "Maggie [Margaret Sinclair] and her friends," Pannekoek acknowledged that "evidence is so fragmentary that no definitive judgments can be made," but then repeated the conjecture that "Evans had forced Maggie to marry the Indian father of her child" and that Mason obtained a deathbed reversal of her accusation against Evans.<sup>25</sup> There is no evidence from the sources cited to support either of these allegations.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, they gave legitimacy to Pannekoek's surmise that "Maggie thought Evans's morals unduly strict, and she probably delighted at his acute discomfort over something she regarded as inconsequential."<sup>27</sup>

Historian William H. Brooks avoided such speculation. Certainly the most comprehensive study of the trial to date, Brooks' doctoral dissertation was completed in 1972. In it, he carefully traced the evolution of Evans' troubles with the Hudson's Bay Company and

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<sup>24</sup> This is a serious problem in Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1991). For analysis challenging Pannekoek's use of sources in that book, see Raymond M. Beaumont, "The Rev. William Cockran," 2-15. For a critical review of the thesis based on those sources in *A Snug Little Flock*, see Gerhard Ens, "Clerical Determinism in Red River," *The Literary Review of Canada* (July 1992): 10-12.

<sup>25</sup> Pannekoek, "The Rev. James Evans," 14. In fact, Margaret Sinclair married John Maminawatum, 27 July 1844, and their son, William Mason Maminawatum, was born in early November 1845. See PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 13, Oxford House Wesleyan Methodist Register of Marriages, 1855-1893, and Norway House Marriages, 1840-1846, entry 67; PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, Norway House Wesleyan Methodist Register of Baptisms, 1840-1889, entry 549.

<sup>26</sup> The CMS source cited by Pannekoek is too vague to be useful, and the other, a letter from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives (WMMSA), supports neither of his assertions. It contains a reference to the death of Margaret's husband, but nothing about her own alleged deathbed confession. On the contrary, it affirms that she did *not* recant. The reference could not have been more ill-chosen.

<sup>27</sup> Pannekoek, "The Rev. James Evans," 14. This statement conjures up a disturbing stereotype of native women and may tell us more about Pannekoek's assumptions than it does about Margaret's motives.

convincingly demonstrated that his recall was precipitated by Governor George Simpson, assisted by Donald Ross. He also proved that the sexual scandal which exploded into public debate at Rossville in the spring of 1846 had nothing to do with that recall, even though it was exploited as a kind of insurance policy by Simpson to ensure that Evans would never return.<sup>28</sup> Brooks did not explicitly attach blame to anyone - the evidence was too confusing and contradictory for that - but his references from contemporary diaries and correspondence revealed the hypocrisy and vindictiveness of both Ross and Simpson, the evasiveness of William Mason, and the overbearing volatility of James Evans himself. Unwittingly each had disclosed significant details about himself in his own writing. However, Brooks also relied on the same sources to assess the credibility of Evans' chief accusers, who left behind no diaries or letters to explain their actions or shed light on their characters. The secondary nature of the sources made them less valuable as evidence, but by highlighting them without qualification Brooks gave them unwarranted authority. At the conclusion of his analysis, for instance, he quoted and paraphrased the arguments of Robert Alder, Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, whose letter to George Simpson on 1 December 1846 was written to justify Evans' innocence.

He noted that the Indian witnesses at the trial 'show that they either have no regard for truth, or else they are utterly ignorant of the difference between truth and falsehood.' He showed how the testimony of people like Maggy varied from one moment to the next. Such conflicting evidence weighted against Evans' excellent record could have little real value.<sup>29</sup>

By using such references without comment at the end of his analysis, Brooks was condemning the young women as effectively as Pannekoek had. He was simply less obvious.

Neither Pannekoek nor Brooks had access to Mason's transcript of the trial, which was

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<sup>28</sup> Brooks. "Methodism in the Canadian West." 54-72 and 377-403.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 403.

discovered by the Reverend Gerald Hutchinson in 1973 at the Wesleyan Missionary Society Archives in London, England. Consisting of fifty lengthy pages, the document “offered fresh evidence for the first time to complete the story of Evans’ last year,” and became the basis of Hutchinson’s own account of the trial published in 1977.<sup>30</sup> Like Brooks, Hutchinson cleared the Hudson’s Bay Company of any involvement in the scandal at Rossville, Evans’ recall having already been secured by George Simpson because of his repeated interference in the fur trade. He also exonerated Mason, emphatically declaring that, “in spite of their quarreling from time to time...there is not the slightest evidence that William Mason had been anything but loyal to his superintendent.”<sup>31</sup>

In Hutchinson’s view, responsibility fell largely on Evans himself who had by 1846 “degenerated from what Donald Ross had first described as ‘a perfect gem of a man’ to what he later called ‘a talented, restless man’ and finally ‘the king of hypocrites.’”<sup>32</sup> This interpretive shift was heavily influenced by the transcript, which Hutchinson initially found “shocking and puzzling,” but quoted at length, particularly from the statements of the young women. Although these were “confusing and unsatisfactory,” Hutchinson justified his use of them because “certain areas of agreement appeared.”<sup>33</sup> Except for their testimonies, however, the young women remained very much in the background, passive participants in the drama unfolding around them. Nothing about their origins, circumstances, characters, or credibility

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<sup>30</sup> Gerald M. Hutchinson, “James Evans’ Last Year,” *The Bulletin* 26 (1977) and *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 19 (1 & 2) (1977): 48. The transcript in my possession was acquired through Reverend Hutchinson and is a photocopy of the original fifty-page document sent by Mason on 5 March 1846. This was itself a copy of the original trial documents, which were sent to London later in the year.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 48 and 51.

was clearly delineated. Like the others who had written about the trial, Hutchinson's focus was James Evans, rather than the young native women or the Cree community from which they came.

Hutchinson's analysis certainly influenced the 1981 thesis of John Stewart Murdoch, who described it as "the most diligent and empathetic study of James Evans' decline" to date.<sup>34</sup> Murdoch was primarily interested in the educational implications of Cree syllabics, but he devoted a chapter to James Evans' missionary career, including his "final years" from 1843 to 1846. Although he was in essential agreement with Hutchinson's "depiction of the missionary's decline and eventual demise," Murdoch explained it in terms of "cultural isolation" which produced "a very clear and painful pattern of disorientation and acculturative stress."<sup>35</sup> Like Hutchinson, he ignored the local Cree community and the young women who were Evans' accusers, but in an insightful, if at times speculative, analysis of the missionary's own words and actions, he argued that cross-cultural contact had produced a crisis of meaning in the man, that he "had borrowed so extensively from the Cree that he was no longer as secure in his Euro-Canadian beliefs and social skills."<sup>36</sup>

Vera Fast responded to Murdoch's thesis in her 1984 study of early Protestant missionaries in Hudson's Bay.<sup>37</sup> She acknowledged that his interpretation had "elements of value," but she

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<sup>34</sup> John Stewart Murdoch, "Syllabics: A Successful Educational Innovation" (M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1981), 137. Murdoch ably critiqued Pannekoek's treatment of James Evans, but it is hard to credit his conclusion that Nan Shipley had been "far more diligent in seeking out primary sources of information." Ibid., 133-135.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 142-151.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>37</sup> Vera Kathrin Fast, "The Protestant Missionary and Fur Trade Society: Initial Contact in the Hudson's Bay Territory, 1820-1850" (Ph. D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1984).

took issue with his assertion that Evans' "zeal, no longer well governed by a Euro-Canadian sense of propriety, carried him into ruinous conflict with his peers." Fast pointed out that it had been the Cree themselves, "whose culture he had supposedly assimilated" who had first accused Evans, and that the chief witness against him had never recanted.<sup>38</sup> Although her study was neither devoted to Evans *per se* nor to an analysis of the trial, she concluded that Hutchinson had "most accurately assessed both the man and his tragic situation."<sup>39</sup> However, without additional data on the local Cree and the young women who brought charges against Evans in the first place, her conclusion added little to the debate.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, this lack has marred all previous research on the trial. Even when there has been some credit given to Cree perspectives, it has not been based on any comprehensive study of the local community. Murdoch's thesis of "cultural isolation," for instance, would be more credible, if he had illustrated it in context. There were difference between traditional Cree and Euro-Canadian values, to be sure, but there is nothing in Murdoch's study to indicate the degree to which such differences affected relations at Rossville, or even if such a dichotomy existed there. Moreover, the examples he cited of "acculturative stress suffered by James

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 79-80. Fast, 79, claimed Murdoch, 148, had suggested that, "Evans had adapted to many aspects of the Cree life-style, and that while his 'intimacy with Cree females in a typical Cree setting would not be acceptable' when considered from a Euro-Canadian viewpoint, *it was perfectly legitimate from the natives' perspective*." This was a misreading. Just prior to the section Fast quoted, Murdoch said, "It would seem reasonable that if [sic] in adapting to Cree language, James Evans also adapted to many of the Cree styles of expression. In doing so, he would put himself into a conflict between his Cree practices and *the Cree expectations of him as a Euro-Canadian preacher* [Emphasis added]."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>40</sup> More recent works add nothing new. Roger Burford Mason's *Travels in the Shining Island*, published in 1996, is essentially a modern rehash of Nan Shipley and illustrates again the fine line between historical fiction and fictional history. Neil Semple's book on Canadian Methodism, published the same year, contains a paragraph on Evans, but nothing on the trial. Although he cited Hutchinson, Semple stated erroneously that, "By 1845 it [Hudson's Bay Company] was glad to use his alleged sexual misconduct with a native servant to have him censured." The scandal did not enter the correspondence until 1846, when the

Evans'' can as easily be interpreted as expressions of loneliness and depression typical of anyone separated from family or friends.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Hutchinson's analysis of the trial minutes suffered because he did not know the young women or the community of Rossville as well as he knew Evans. His research was comprehensive, but its primary focus was on what Evans was doing and what people were writing about him, just as we would expect from a clergyman interested in the history of his church. However, because Hutchinson knew so little about Evans' accusers, their charges took on added importance. With nothing to temper their impact, he concluded that where there was smoke, there must be fire, even though, in Murdoch's words, "there were no events or specific pieces of evidence cited during the trial which writers have been able to use in clear proof of immoral acts."<sup>42</sup> Certainly it may be difficult to impute blame to any one participant in the Rossville Scandal, but broadening the scope of the inquiry to include the Cree community and the young women who were Evans' chief accusers should at least open the door to a deeper understanding of what might have happened. Coming to grips with the complexities of the case could lead ultimately to a re-evaluation of this unique time in Norway House history. If that translates into greater compassion for all those involved, it will indeed be cause for celebration.

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HBC had already secured Evans's recall. Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 175.

<sup>41</sup> See Murdoch, 138-151, and 337-345.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 146.

## 2

### *The Norway House Cree: Culture and Conversion*

To comprehend the circumstances surrounding the trial of James Evans, one needs to understand the cultural context in which it took place. However, in the trial minutes compiled by the Reverend William Mason, there is only one reference to the local community, namely that, “The Nakuwao’s, the Majekekwanab’s & the Mamanuwartum’s families and relations constitute the greater part of the inhabitants of the Village.”<sup>1</sup> An afterthought perhaps, it highlighted the extensive family connections of the three young women at the centre of the charges against Evans. However, it did nothing to explain how those families may have influenced the dynamics of the trial. Indeed, little serious attention has been paid to their role in any event associated with the formation or expansion of the Methodist mission at Norway House between 1840 and 1846. Who were these people? What was their history? Why and how did they come to be involved in the mission in the first place?

To appreciate the part they played, one must understand two things about these families and their relatives at Rossville. First, their values had been undergoing change for more than a hundred years before the missionaries arrived among them, and second, they co-operated fully in the religious changes that swept the region during the 1840s. In other words, they were Cree, but not quite the same Cree culturally as those who had first welcomed the traders on Hudson Bay, and they were not just recipients of the Gospel; they had actively sought it out and just as diligently spread it to their neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> WMMSA, Mason to Secretaries, February 1846, trial transcript, 3.

The transformation of their religious values was the culmination of a process that had its genesis many years earlier along the shores of Hudson Bay. Indeed, as soon as the first permanent fur trade posts were established at places like York Factory in 1714 and Churchill in 1719, the stage was set for exchange, not just of goods, but of ideas as well. For the Cree, the effects were quickly visible in their material culture, but changes were not so easily detected in the way they conceptualized the world; in fact, existing evidence suggests they remained intellectually and spiritually conservative throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Still, for the "Home Guard Cree," who remained nearby after all the "trading Indians" returned to their winter quarters, change was probably more rapid.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, the long and monotonous winters offered them ample opportunity to teach their domestic and hunting skills to HBC personnel, even as they taught some of them Cree, and once that linguistic barrier was overcome, ideas on both sides could be shared, discussed, and at times challenged.<sup>4</sup>

Miscegenation was also a factor. In some instances, Company officers accepted the wives of Cree traders as companions for a season or two in order to strengthen trade ties, a

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<sup>2</sup> See *Isham's Observations*. Although James Isham did not write directly about their beliefs, a traditional Cree worldview is implied in his description of customs among the home guard. Nevertheless, by the 1740s there were already observable differences between the burial practices of "upland Indians" as compared to those who "resort[ed] to the English factories," suggesting that traditional cultural patterns were already being altered, ever so subtly, through contact with foreign influences. Joseph Robson, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay, From 1733 to 1736, and 1744 to 1747* (London: J. Payne and J. Bouquet, 1752), 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> The "Home Guard" hunted close enough to the fort to come in regularly with their furs or other trade goods. The European traders relied on them for fresh meat and occasionally hired them for temporary work. The "trading Indians" made the trip to the fort once a year from a greater distance to exchange their furs for supplies.

<sup>4</sup> David Thompson's reminiscences provide glimpses into this process. As a young man on a journey between Churchill and York Factory in September 1785, he argued with his Cree companions when they claimed their singing had calmed the winds at the Nelson River. Some twenty years later at Rocky Mountain House, after hearing the term, "Mark of Life" or "*Peemah tisoo nan oo Chegun*," applied to the rainbow, he asked the old men why they had kept this name secret from him. Their answer was revealing. "'You white men always laugh and treat with contempt what we have heard and learned from our fathers, and why should we expose ourselves to be laughed at?'" *David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812*, ed. Richard Glover (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), 23, 79.



circumstance which may explain the origins of Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, ancestor to the Maminawatums.<sup>5</sup> However, longer-term marital relationships were the norm in both Cree and European culture, and it is likely that they were more common in cross-cultural contact than the early records show.<sup>6</sup> Samuel Jacobs, for example, was the son of HBC officer Ferdinand Jacobs and Missenobenoe, a sister of Moses Norton, chief at Churchill between 1762 and 1773, and in all likelihood daughter of Richard Norton, chief at the same place between 1731 and 1741.<sup>7</sup> As a second generation mixed-blood, young Jacobs could attest to the growing stability of fur trade relationships, but educated in England and later employed in the East India Company, he was lost to the country.<sup>8</sup> His sister, Thucotch, on the other hand, remained in Hudson Bay and in 1790 she was reportedly married to "one of York['s] best Indian Home Guards."<sup>9</sup> Wash-e-soo-E'Squew did the same, although her half-sisters both married fur trade

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<sup>5</sup> She was a daughter of HBC officer Mathew Cocking and Ke-che-cho-wick, either the wife, daughter, or sister of a leading hunter named Kechecow-Ethin with whom Wash-e-soo-E'Squew had a long association. See Raymond Beaumont, "Origins and Influences: The Family Ties of the Reverend Henry Budd," *Prairie Forum* 17 (2) (1992): 178-181. Wife-lending was a traditional Cree practice, used to cement a friendship or a trade relationship and governed by rules that were clearly defined. See David G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1979), 149-150.

<sup>6</sup> By the 1740s, the offspring of such relationships were "pretty Numerous." See *Isham's Observations*, 79.

<sup>7</sup> For his mother's name, see his christening record, 29 November 1759, at St. Sepulchre, London, England. (International Genealogical Index at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)). Samuel was identified as a nephew of Moses Norton in the latter's will, dated 27 May 1769, which also mentioned Norton's sister *Mes-see-tah-ka-pow* [*Mes e te ca pow*]. According to linguist David Pentland, *Missenobenoe* and *Mes-see-tah-ka-pow* are two quite different names. Personal communication, 25 January 2000. Therefore, it is likely that they represent two different women.

<sup>8</sup> Shirlee Anne Smith, "Ferdinand Jacobs," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 384. Samuel Jacobs was among a growing population of mixed-blood people with strong attachments to the fort and their European heritage. Sometimes called Hudson Bay people, they stood apart from their relatives among the Home Guard Cree, who were more closely attached to their mothers' culture. Many worked for generations in the HBC after hiring restrictions were lifted.

<sup>9</sup> PAM, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), A.11/117, fo. 60d, London Inward Correspondence from HBC Posts, York Factory, 1787-1797, letter dated 4 September 1790, mf. 189.

men.<sup>10</sup> All of these women received annuities from their fathers' estates, legacies that reinforced bonds with their European forebears, as well as with a way of life quite different from that of traditional Cree culture.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the Council at York requested that part of the Cocking daughters' annuity be "laid out in Ginger Bread, Nuts etc. as they have no other means of obtaining these little luxuries, with which the paternal fondness of a Father formally [sic] provided them."<sup>12</sup>

Not all the children of the fur trade were as fortunate. Most were born to fathers of limited means who, prior to the establishment of the Red River Settlement in 1812, were given no choice but to return to Britain after their contracts ended.<sup>13</sup> Those who had been in Hudson Bay for a number of years often left behind "helpless widows and children," as they were euphemistically called, who were attached to the posts where their husbands and fathers had served.<sup>14</sup> If no private arrangements had been made with friends to look after these families, the post manager often fed and clothed them, expecting that they either hunt or do odd jobs in return.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, some "widows" found new husbands at the fort, while others found them among the Home Guard, and their daughters had the same options. However, until labour shortages at the end of the eighteenth century forced the HBC to reconsider its hiring policies,

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<sup>10</sup> Ke-che-cow-e-com-e-coot was married first to Thomas Stayner, then to John Pocock Holmes. Mith-coo-coo-man-E'Squew, or Aggathas, was one of the wives of William Hemmings Cook.

<sup>11</sup> Thucotch's annuity was £10 and the Cocking sisters £6 each to be shared with their mothers. For nearly thirty years, they annually traded the equivalent for such practical items like blankets, kettles, and twine.

<sup>12</sup> PAM. HBCA. B.239/b/79, fo. 28d, York Factory Correspondence, 1794-1809, mf. 1M258.

<sup>13</sup> The Company would not allow them to remain in the country because of fear they would become a burden on its establishments, or worse still, join the opposition fur traders.

<sup>14</sup> The euphemism was used to create the impression that these women were the widows of deceased hunters rather than the deserted wives of husbands very much alive in Great Britain.

<sup>15</sup> PAM. HBCA. B.198/a/22, fo. 10-10d, Severn Post Journal, 1777-1778, mf. 1M133.

their sons, with few exceptions, had no choice but to join the ranks of the Home Guard. They were rarely named in the records, but in a letter to George Sutherland on 14 August 1795, Thomas Stayner listed seventeen Churchill Home Guards who had deserted to York Factory, four of whom had English names.<sup>16</sup> The implications were far-reaching. Nearly sixty years later, the Reverend Henry Budd, himself a Home Guard grandson of Matthew Cocking, wrote, "The Muskego crees are more mixed up with the whitepeople [sic] and they learn much of their ways and habits," so much so that "They seem quite ripe to receive the Gospel wherever they are met with."<sup>17</sup>

Among those "ways and habits" which the Swampy Cree readily accepted was the Englishman's addiction to "spirituous liquors," a problem which had reached scandalous proportions in England during the eighteenth century and prompted a social and religious revulsion against that abuse in the nineteenth.<sup>18</sup> In Hudson Bay, it probably did more than any other single innovation to erode the traditional values that kept the social fabric of the Cree community intact, and explained in part the cultural decline that opened a window of opportunity for Christian missionaries a century later. Although difficult to assess the degree to which it influenced that decline, the amount of commentary on the abuse of alcohol among

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<sup>16</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.42/b/37, fo.12, Churchill Correspondence, 1795-1796, mf. 1M178. The names were Pom es cow athinew, Turkey, Nechowethow, Ethabiscum, Thomas Isham, Keshecow athine, Ukemow keshick, Samashish, Jamahagun, James Wood, Bob, Sukesquatim, You ham, Okisk, Cauquoshish, John Moore, Mistannish.

<sup>17</sup> PAM, CMS 9, Class "C", C.1. C.1/0, letter from Henry Budd to Rev. J. Tucker, dated at Nepowewin, 13 January 1853, mf. A83.

<sup>18</sup> A good source of information on alcohol consumption among aboriginal peoples in colonial America is Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995). The cover illustration of an Englishman offering a bottle of rum to an Indian replicates the seventeenth-century emblem of the Distillers Company of London. It is apt because it also provides a glimpse of the attitudes toward drink underlying the liquor trade at that time. For a description of those attitudes and the patterns of alcohol consumption associated with them in Britain between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, see pages 19-20.

the Swampy Cree, in an age when overindulgence was the norm, suggests that it must have been substantial.<sup>19</sup> Certainly Colin Robertson's description of its effects at York Factory in the fall of 1816 would lead to that conclusion.

The poor creatures that arrive here have not even a shelter from the inclemency of the weather, you see them stranding and laying under the Porch of the trading room, shivering with cold and often asking you for something to eat, for they are so fond of spirits, that they trade or give away every ounce of provisions they bring.<sup>20</sup>

Alcohol certainly played its part in their misery, and had done so for a couple of generations or more, but worsening environmental conditions also contributed to their distress and helped to explain why many of them had moved inland by 1840.<sup>21</sup> Such conditions prevailed between 1811 and 1813, when sixty families, "consisting of the best Hunters belonging to the River," joined others from the region that had gone earlier to such places as Cross Lake, Swan River, and Norway House.<sup>22</sup> This geographic dislocation may have further weakened their loyalty to

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<sup>19</sup> Binge drinking occurred at the posts, along the transportation routes to the interior, and anywhere else traders came into contact with Native hunters. As early as the 1740s, its negative consequences were apparent among the Swampy Cree whose proximity to the HBC posts on Hudson Bay gave them greater access to liquor than those further away. See *Isham's Observations*, 103, 106. However, that inequity was addressed with the arrival of Canadian traders on the prairies around 1750. By the time the Swampy Cree began to move inland toward the end of the eighteenth century, liquor was readily available from both Canadian and HBC traders. This in part explains the heavy drinking among the Swampy Cree that frustrated Malchom Ross's expedition to Cumberland House in 1786. See PAM, HBCA, B.49/a/18, *Cumberland House Journal, 1786-1787*, mf. 1M39. As competition intensified after 1800, the availability of liquor increased even further. At Cumberland House, for example, where many Swampy Cree migrated, the fur trade was almost brought to a standstill in 1812 as both the North West Company and the HBC plied the local hunters with liquor in order to acquire their furs. See B.154/a/5, fo. 12-12d, *Norway House Post Journal, 1812-1813*, letter from J. Sutherland to Wm. Sinclair dated 2 Oct. 1812, mf. 1M106.

<sup>20</sup> PAM, HBCA, E.10/1, pp. 516-517, Colin Robertson, *Diaries, 1814-1817*, entry for 15 September 1816, mf. 4M121. For other references on the negative impact of alcohol, see Henry Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay, By The Dobbs Galley and California, In the Years 1746 and 1747* (London: 1748), 187; David Thompson's *Narrative, 1784-1812*, 36; PAM, HBCA, B.239/b/81, fo. 8d-9, *York Factory Correspondence, 1810-1811*, letter from Wm. Hemmings Cook, York Factory, to Wm. Sinclair, 8 June 1811, mf. 1M258.

<sup>21</sup> Robertson blamed "tyrannical and short sighted" HBC policies, but unusually cold weather and food shortages were probably more significant factors. For evidence, see PAM, MG 2, A1, 1:54-55, *Selkirk Papers*, Letter from Miles Macdonell to Lord Selkirk, dated 1 October 1811 at York Factory, mf. 171; PAM, HBCA, B.239/a/124, fo. 58d, 59d, *York Factory Post Journal, 1812-1816*, mf. 1M163.

<sup>22</sup> PAM, HBCA, E.10/1, pp. 516-517, Colin Robertson, *Diaries, 1814-1817*, entry for 15 September 1816, mf. 4M121. A few Swampy Cree relocated to the Upper Nelson and Lower Saskatchewan regions during the 1750s and 1760s to take advantage of the fur trade, and more went there after 1781-1782 to replace the

traditional values, which had already been eroded by long association with the traders and the adverse conditions to which they had been recently exposed. It also opened the door to new ideas and ways of doing things for which they were now psychologically prepared.<sup>23</sup>

Donald Ross, Chief Factor at Norway House, had them in mind in 1844 when he wrote that "part of the Indians of this Post were in some measure civilized before the Missionaries came among them, were anxious for instruction and received it with attention and thankfulness."<sup>24</sup> They were among the "26 families" recorded by James Sutherland in the Jack River [Norway House] District Report of 1815, some of which came "from the sea coast about York Factory and the others from the head waters of Severn River."<sup>25</sup> The 1823 Census gave more details on them. Those "from the sea coast about York Factory," described now as "Maskegons," were located along the Nelson River between Cross Lake and Lake Winnipeg and at Limestone Lake to the southwest. Those "from the head waters of Severn River" probably included one or all of three "tribes," the "Pelican," "Moose Indian," and "Kingfisher," located mainly to the east and southeast of Nelson River.

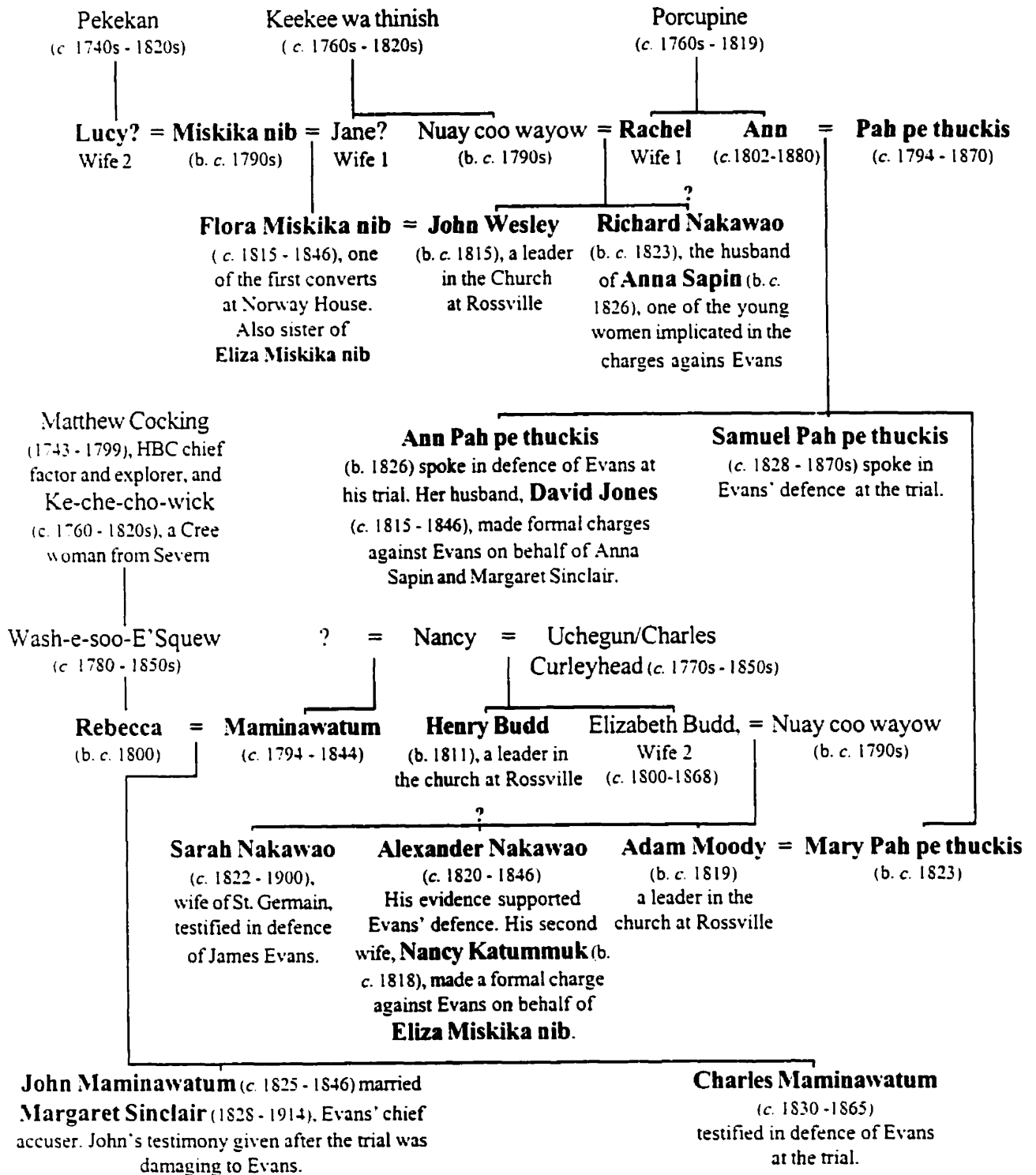
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original populations destroyed by the smallpox epidemic.

<sup>23</sup> Dislocation, like travel, exposes people to new ideas and ways of doing things. As some farm immigrants to Canada have discovered, returning to "the old country" after many years away can be a shock. Agricultural methods, nostalgically remembered, become oppressively conservative and old-fashioned from a perspective that has been exposed to alternative, and often more efficient, ways of doing things. Similarly, traditional thinking and ideology have to be re-evaluated, as one young man discovered when he returned to his isolated home reserve in Northern Manitoba after several years in the cosmopolitan centres of Toronto and New York. Personal communication, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5/12, p. 172, Governor George Simpson - Correspondence Inward, 1844, letter from Donald Ross to George Simpson, Norway House, 14 August 1844, mf. 3M67.

<sup>25</sup> Jack River flows into the Nelson where Norway House is today. A post by the same name was located there between 1796 and 1815. PAM, HBCA, B.154 e/1, fo. 5d, Norway House District Report, 1815, mf. 1M781.



***Relationships of Individuals (in bold face) connected with the Rossville Mission and/or the Trial of 1846***

Because of their proximity to Norway House, it was mainly the Maskegons or Swampy Cree who became associated with the Rossville Mission. The one family of Pelicans among them consisted of "Pekekan," his son "Nec aw nee," and son-in-law, "Miskika nib," whose polygynous marriages connected them to most of the nearby Cree.<sup>26</sup> Miskika nib, for instance, had two wives, one of them a daughter of Pekekan, the other a daughter of "Keekee wa thinish," a leading Cree hunter at Cross Lake. Miskika nib's numerous children included Flora, an early Christian convert at Norway House, and Eliza Majekekwanab, one of the young women involved in the charges against Evans.

Keekee wa thinish had a son named "Nuay coo wayow," one of whose wives was probably a daughter of Porcupine, who hunted at Limestone Lake southwest of Norway House. The other was Elizabeth Budd, whose father, "Uchegun" *alias* Curleyhead, apparently arrived in the area from York Factory in about 1811. Nuay coo wayow's family was deeply involved in the religious changes at Norway House. His sons Adam Moody, who had been converted at Red River, and "Boodjum" *alias* John Wesley, whose wife Flora was mentioned above, became leaders in the church. Two others were connected with the trial. One of them, Richard Nakawao, was married to Anna Sapin, who alleged that Evans had made improper advances toward her. The other was Alexander Nakawao, whose evidence supported Evans' version of events. To complicate matters even further, he later married Nancy Katummuk, one of the church members who brought formal charges against Evans on behalf of Eliza Miskika nib.

"Pah pe thuckis," another Cree hunter whose family became deeply involved in the Christian movement, arrived at Norway House during the exodus from the low country around York

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<sup>26</sup> The names in quotation marks follow the spelling used in the 1823 Norway House Census. See PAM, HBCA, B.154 e-2, fo. 12d-13. Norway House District Report, 1823. For documentation on the origins and

Factory in 1811-1812. He remained behind, in all likelihood because of his marriage to a daughter of Porcupine, while most of his relatives moved on to Red Deer River, Moose Lake, and finally Cumberland House. Among them was "Wapusk," either father or uncle to Pah pe thuckis, with whom he lived briefly in the winter of 1818-1819 before returning permanently to Norway House. Pah pe thuckis and his wife became active supporters of the mission. Their son Samuel lived with the Evans family at the same time as Margaret Sinclair and testified in defence of the missionary. Their daughter Ann worked in Evans' home prior to her marriage to David Jones and also spoke in support of Evans at the trial. Her husband, on the other hand, laid charges against Evans on behalf of Margaret Sinclair and Anna Sapin.

Uchegun *alias* Curleyhead settled in the vicinity of Norway House at about the same time as Pah pe thuckis. Besides his daughter Elizabeth, who was married to Nuay coo wayow, he had a son Henry Curleyhead or Budd, who became one of the leading Christian converts in the mission.<sup>27</sup> He also had a stepson, Maminawatum, married to a daughter of Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, who had arrived at Norway House from York Factory with her family and relations in about 1815. One of their sons, John Maminawatum, was married to Margaret Sinclair, Evans' chief accuser. Although he was not directly involved in the trial, he played a significant role in the conflict between Evans and Mason in its aftermath.

The above families were those most intimately connected with the Rossville Mission. Connected by blood or marriage, they were "ripe to receive the Gospel" when it became available to them because they had become, according to Donald Ross, "in some measure

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relationships of these and other families who became deeply involved in the mission. see Appendix.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Curleyhead or Budd of Norway House is not to be confused with the Reverend Henry Budd. Henry Curleyhead assumed the name "Budd" after he became a Christian, in part because he had been



civilised,” the state Reverend Henry Budd defined as “more mixed up with the whitepeople.”<sup>28</sup> This was in fact literally true. Uchegun and his wife, for example, were identified as “half-breeds” on their son Henry Budd’s scrip application, and their daughter, Elizabeth Budd, one of the wives of Nuay coo wayow, was described in the same way on the claim of her daughter, Sarah.<sup>29</sup> Descendants of Pah pe thuckis claimed scrip because of the European heritage of his wife, who was one of Porcupine’s daughters.<sup>30</sup> Even a daughter of Miskika nib applied for scrip on the grounds that both her parents were of mixed origin.<sup>31</sup> Since her mother was either a daughter of Keekee wa thunish or Pekekan, it suggests that even these old families had blood ties with the Europeans.

This should not be surprising, because most of these people were part of or closely connected to the York Factory Home Guard, with whom they shared the same economic and social problems. In 1815, for example, James Sutherland wrote that “their means of Subsistance” were “very precarious and few of them able by their Hunts to clothe themselves and family comfortably.”<sup>32</sup> This circumstance he attributed to their “Sloth and Idleness” rather than the

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taught by Henry Budd of Red River, who later became an Anglican minister. The families of the two men were closely related by marriage.

<sup>28</sup> PAM, CMS 9, Class “C”, C.1, C.1/0, Budd to Tucker, 13 January 1853, mf. A83.

<sup>29</sup> NAC Record Group (RG), Department of the Interior (15), Dominion Land Administration (D), Dominion Lands Branch (II), Land Records, Half-Breeds and Original White Settlers (8), Applications of 1886-1901, 1906 made by North West Half-Breeds (c), v. 1338, Brecklaw-Budd, Claim 2122, Henry Budd, Norway House, 23 August 1887, mf. C-14954; NAC, RG 15, D II, 8 (c), v. 1342, Cook-Cyr, Claim 2111, Sarah Crate, Norway House, 22 August 1887, mf. C-14961.

<sup>30</sup> See NAC, RG 15, D II, 8, North West Half-Breeds and Original White Settlers, Registers and Indexes (m), v.1508, application of Samuel Paupanekis or Williams, affidavit 361232, mf. C-11878.

<sup>31</sup> This was Eliza, ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (May-chi-ki-h-kwah-nay-p[b]) one of the young women involved in the charges against James Evans in February 1846. See NAC, RG 15, D II 8 (c), v. 1361, Munroe-Northwest, Claim 1837, Eliza Nabais, wife of John Nabais, dated 26 July 1887, Cumberland House, mf. C-14993.

<sup>32</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154 e 1, fo. 5d, Norway House District Report, 1815.

poverty of the country; indeed, in his view, nothing could rouse them “but the cravings of hunger or a hope of being able to purchase spirituous Liquour.”<sup>33</sup> Although excessively critical, Sutherland’s remarks on the influence of alcohol among them resonate with those of a more sympathetic observer like Robertson. Likewise, the “Horrors of famine,” to which he also alluded, were well documented in his own day, as well as in the following decade. Joseph McGillivray wrote, for instance, about a case of starvation and possible cannibalism in the same district during the winter of 1822-1823.<sup>34</sup> And Colin Robertson similarly described the deaths of a Norway House hunter named “Ne nouch” and most of his family in the winter of 1823-1824.<sup>35</sup>

Instances like these reinforced insecurities about the effectiveness of traditional practices to alleviate economic distress, which had already caused most of the hunters at Norway House to relocate at least once. Nevertheless, economic crisis alone was insufficient to explain the radical break from the past that was to characterise the next decades, because, in the absence of alternatives, uncertainty can actually strengthen old values as people fall back on the familiar to ease them through hard times. The difference now was that there were alternatives, one of which became available to a family at Norway House, when the Reverend John West

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/e/2, fo. 22d-23, Norway House District Report. 1823, mf. 1M781. A starving freeman named Calvet, who lived in a hut somewhere between Norway House and Berens River allegedly murdered and ate his wife. The only survivor of his family, a little girl, was taken by William McKay to Berens River Post.

<sup>35</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/e/3, fo. 2-2d, Norway House District Report. 1824, mf. 1M781. “Ne nouch” was undoubtedly “Namuch,” a Pelican connected to Pekekan and Miskika nib. His family, fourteen in number, left Norway House in October 1823 and only three young men and a boy returned the following spring. They claimed that they had been forced to kill their parents who seemingly acquired a taste for human flesh after the deaths of the younger children. Unlike the York Factory Cree, who in Isham’s day pitied families reduced to such straits, the Norway House Cree accused the survivors of murder. Colin Robertson wrote that feelings were so high that “it would not be surprising were they cut off during the summer.”

arrived there from York Factory in October 1820.<sup>36</sup> Newly appointed as chaplain to the HBC, West was on his way to Red River to commence the Protestant evangelisation of the native-born population there, as well as to establish a school to prepare promising young men for future service as missionaries to their own people. Travelling with him was his first student, a young lad named Pemuteuithinew, whom he had obtained at York Factory from Withewecappo, a man well-known to the Cree at Norway House.<sup>37</sup> Sometime during the next three days, he acquired his second, a boy named Sakachuwescum, whose widowed mother, Wash-e-soo-E'Squew, was living near the fort at the time.<sup>38</sup> This woman was not to see her son again after his departure with West until the fall of 1822 when she herself went south to Red River and settled at the mission "to make clothes, wash, cook, etc for the Children."<sup>39</sup> Little did she know at the time that Sakachuwescum, as the Reverend Henry Budd, would play a major role in the christianization of the Swampy Cree not only at Norway House, but also at Moose Lake and on the Saskatchewan River at The Pas and Cumberland House.

However, long before missions were established in any of these communities, Christianity was carried to them over a vast transportation network connecting every corner of HBC

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<sup>36</sup> West arrived at Norway House, October 4, and departed for Red River, October 7. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/9, fo. 6-6d, Norway House Post Journal, 1820-1821, mf. 1M106.

<sup>37</sup> Withewecappo, the boy's father, had hunted at Norway House on and off since 1816. See PAM, HBCA, B.239 d 188, fo. 14d-15, York Factory General Accounts, 1816-1817, mf. 1M162; PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/7, fo. 8d, Norway House Post Journal, 1818-1819, mf. 1M106; PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/8, p. 18, Norway House Post Journal, 1819-1820, mf. 1M106.

<sup>38</sup> Wash-e-soo-E'Squew was either at Norway House or at the old post of Jack River. On October 5, "William Leith with a Canadian and an Indian Boy [Sakachuwescum?] arrived [at Norway House] from Jack River with 100 fine white fish." See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a 9, fo. 6d.

<sup>39</sup> PAM, CMS 3, Class "C", C.1, C.1/M, Mission books, incoming letters, 1822-1876, C.1/M.1, 1822-1833, Item 23, p. 113, George Harbidge to Secretary, Church Missionary Society, 1 July 1824, and Item 15, p. 71, George Harbidge, Schoolmaster, Memorandums and Accounts of the Church Missionary Establishment, Red River Settlement, 1 October 1822-31 May 1823, mf. A77. Wash-e-soo-E'Squew was accompanied by at least one daughter, Nehowgatum, who was baptised "Sally Budd."

territory. As an inland depot of the Company, Norway House was at the crossroads of that network, which was especially busy during the summer transport season, when people were coming and going all the time. After 1820, these travellers increasingly included fervent Christian converts ever ready to proselytise among their friends and relatives. A Norway House family which undoubtedly came under their influence was that of Uchegun, or Charles Curleyhead, who was doubly connected to Wash-e-soo-E'Squew not only through his stepson Maminawatum, but also through his daughter Betsey. She had married "Cask," the widow's eldest son in about 1823 and moved with him to Red River sometime after April 1826.<sup>40</sup>

Cask, *alias* James Budd, died unbaptised in 1829, but he was being taught the faith at the time and "lived according to the knowledge he had of Christianity."<sup>41</sup> His wife Betsey and their four children were also under instruction and later baptised the same year, news that was undoubtedly passed on to the Maminawatums and Budds at Norway House the following spring.<sup>42</sup> Three years later, they would also have learned of the conversion of Wapusk, whose relationship to Pah pe thuckis has already been mentioned, a man Reverend David Jones

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<sup>40</sup> Cask was at Norway House in the spring of 1826 [PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/11, fo. 30, Norway House Post Journal, 1825-1826, mf. 1M106], but had been in Red River "for some time" when Reverend David T. Jones mentioned him, 28 November 1827 [PAM, CMS 3, Class "C", C.1, C.1/M, C.1/M.1, Item 63, p. 323, Rev. D. T. Jones Journal, 15 October 1826-25 October 1828, mf. A77]. His relationship to Uchegun can be traced in existing records. They were hunting together as early as 1822-1823 [PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/10, p. 39, 70, entries for 25 Dec. 1822 and 23 May 1823, mf. 1M106], which was about the time Cask took "Betsy," or Elizabeth, as his wife. She was born *circa* 1806, and identified later as the wife of William Johnston [in fact her second husband] and daughter of "James Budd." [NAC, RG 15, D II, 8 (m), v. 1506, p. 4, mf. C-11878]. To confuse matters further, Charlotte Budd, born in 1824, was described on her scrip record as a daughter of "Cask" and "Betsy Johnson," [NAC, RG 15, D II, 8 (m), v. 1507, p. 18, mf. C-11878], but on the 1870 Manitoba Census as a daughter of "Charles Budd" [1870 Census of Red River Settlement, p. 188, No. 362]. In fact, Charlotte was the daughter of Cask, alias James Budd, and her mother Betsey the daughter of Uchegun, alias Charles Budd or Curleyhead. The confusion increased because both families had taken the same surname.

<sup>41</sup> PAM, CMS 3, Class "C", C.1, C.1/M, C.1/M.1, Item 70, p. 374, Rev. William Cockran's Journal, 12 August 1828-1 June 1829, entry for 19 January 1829, mf. A77.

<sup>42</sup> PAM, HBCA, E.4/1a, fo.67/68, No. 114-118, Red River Settlement Baptisms, 1820-1841, mf. 4M104.

described as "very old and grey headed...a patriarch...surrounded by an immense family."<sup>43</sup> The baptism of Withewecappo and his family in 1834 would also have been duly noted. Collectively, these conversions had a significant impact on the people of Norway House, so much so that by February 1840, "Adam Cook," son of Nuay coo wayow, and "Henry Budd," son of Charles Curleyhead, were able to report to the Reverend John Smithurst on the eve of their own baptism at Red River that "including women and children" there were "between 200 & 300 Indians at Norway House all wishing to be taught the word of life."<sup>44</sup> The field was "white already to harvest," and when the missionaries finally arrived there in the summer of 1840, the people were ready to receive them.<sup>45</sup>

James Evans, the newly appointed superintendent of missions, should have been the first missionary at Norway House, especially since it was his assigned headquarters; however, he was delayed in Montreal after missing the spring brigade to Fort William, so that honour went to Robert Rundle, a young missionary recently landed from England.<sup>46</sup> Rundle had been assigned to the Upper Saskatchewan, but he had to wait for the fall brigade to return from York Factory before he could proceed on his journey. Though it was inconvenient to spend the summer at Norway House, this posed no serious impediment to the energetic young man, who began at once to preach the Gospel to its eager and receptive residents. By the time Evans

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<sup>43</sup> PAM. CMS 18, Class "C", C.1. C.1/0, Rev. David T. Jones, Journal Extracts, 11 August 1832-25 May 1833, entry for 3 October 1832, mf. A92.

<sup>44</sup> PAM. CMS 22, Class "C", C.1, C.1/0, Smithurst Journal, 25 December 1839-13 March 1840, entry for 2 February 1840, mf. A96.

<sup>45</sup> The Bible, King James Version, John 4: 35.

<sup>46</sup> Rundle arrived there June 5, Evans July 26. *The Rundle Journals, 1840-1848*, ed. Hugh A. Dempsey with introduction and notes by Gerald M. Hutchinson (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta and Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1977), 21, 31.

and his family arrived there in July, the work was well under way.

"About 100 Indians and Half Bloods" attended Rundle's first Cree service on June 14, after which he baptised an infant whose father told him "thro' the interpreter that he was desirous of being instructed in the Xtian religion."<sup>47</sup> This was Adam ᐃᐅ [Moo-di], the son of Nuay coo wayow, who had been baptised Adam "Cook" by John Smithurst at Red River in March.<sup>48</sup> Evidently, he and his uncle, Henry Budd, had not exaggerated the interest of the Norway House Cree in Christianity.<sup>49</sup> According to Rundle, they appeared "to be a people prepared for the Lord." Indeed, after the meeting that evening "across the river at the village," he recorded that "nearly every grown up person" in the vicinity was present, and "their attention...exceeded that of the afternoon."<sup>50</sup> A week later, they met again, this time in a house where "two rooms had been converted into one for the purpose of accommodating the congregation," and once more Rundle was impressed by "the eagerness they manifested."<sup>51</sup> Similar entries in his journal throughout the summer testified to the intense interest of the Cree in his message. They had waited a long time for a missionary to come among them.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>48</sup> PAM, M275, MG7, B5-1, St. Peter's (Dynevour), Register 1, Baptisms, 9 Oct 1839-1 Aug 1877, entry. 7. The baptismal record of his daughter, Margaret, listed her parents as "Adam and Mary Moodie" (PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entry 4). They were more specifically identified as "Adam Cook ᐃᐅ [Moo-di] and "Mary <<ᐃᐅᐅ [Pah-pah-nah-ki-s] on their marriage record (PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 13, entry 7).

<sup>49</sup> Adam's mother must have been Elizabeth Budd, Nuay coo wayow's second wife, who was an older sister of Henry Budd or Curleyhead. Had he been a son of the first wife, who evidence suggests was a daughter of Porcupine, he would have been unlikely to marry a parallel cousin, like Mary <<ᐃᐅᐅ [Pah-pah-nah-ki-s], whose mother was also a daughter of Porcupine.

<sup>50</sup> *The Rundle Journals*, 23. The morning and afternoon services had been held at the fort, but the evening meeting was at the "Old Village" located right across the river on West Island, near where the HBC cemetery is today. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/46, fo. 2d, Norway House Post Journal, 1846-1847, mf. 1M109.

<sup>51</sup> *The Rundle Journals*, 24.

Rundle's method of instruction was straightforward. With the help of an interpreter, he preached "the great doctrine of Xt crucified" to every Cree who would listen.<sup>52</sup>

I told them how sin came into the world; we were all sinners & God was a Holy Being. Sin was therefore opposed to His Nature. We all deserved Hell but that God out of his love toward [us] sent His Son to die in our stead.<sup>53</sup>

The Cree were receptive. Like many of the early saints, they had been humbled by their circumstances, which made them more willing perhaps to acknowledge their own shortcomings and consider Christ as a means of redress. Moreover, His message was not completely foreign to them. Their traditional values had taught them that spiritual forces had to be appeased, so that their lives could be preserved in this life. Now Rundle taught them that the ultimate spiritual force to be appeased was God, through whose Son their lives could be preserved in the life to come.<sup>54</sup>

Salvation did not come easily. Even though individuals requested baptism as early as his first meeting with them, Rundle delayed that ordinance until they understood "more fully the importance of the ceremony."<sup>55</sup> However, he wanted more than understanding alone; he wanted a transformation of their hearts as well.

I have...insisted on a change of heart as a necessary gratification for Heaven & without that the Spirit can do nothing. My constant advice has been for them to pray at once for the Spirit for God has graciously promised the Spirit to all who ask Him for it.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> His interpreter was Thomas Hassal, whom Rundle identified incorrectly as "Thomas Haswell." Ibid., 27, 34.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>54</sup> The pre-Christian Cree believed in a supreme, all-powerful Creator called *Kice manito*, or Great Spirit, who could only be approached indirectly through spirit helpers. See Mandelbaum, 157, 301. Consequently, the concept of a Heavenly Father whom they could approach through Jesus Christ would have been comprehensible to them.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 30.







person lost in the wilderness or locating the next meal. However, since there were often theatrical aspects connected with its performance, the Shaking Tent seems to have served as entertainment, too, for its participants.<sup>66</sup> Fur trader George Nelson described in detail one such ceremony he witnessed at Lac la Ronge in June 1823.<sup>67</sup> So disturbed was he by what he saw and heard that he drew back to the familiar, "to that almighty Power that deigned to sacrifice his only Son for us for our Salvation!"<sup>68</sup> Not surprisingly, he inclined toward the conclusion that the Shaking Tent was inspired by the Devil, a view shared by the five Scots whose similar experience was recorded by David Thompson.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever the inspiration, the Shaking Tent and other ancient practices were formidable obstacles to Christian conversion. Not only were they familiar to the Cree, but the powers associated with them were impressive. No missionary of himself could defeat them. Indeed, from that perspective, the battle between Christianity and traditional religious practices was more than the imposition of one set of cultural beliefs on another; it was war between unseen

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<sup>66</sup> Essentially, the Shaking Tent involved the following. A shaman was tightly bound and placed inside a specially constructed tent, where he immediately began calling the spirits in a song-like prayer. They arrived suddenly and dramatically. The shaman's bindings came flying out and the tent began to shake. Then the spirits spoke through the shaman, making jokes or giving advice to the assembled audience, even answering questions posed by them. An excellent reference on the Shaking Tent is Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, *"The Orders of the Dreamed": George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1988, Reprint 1990).

<sup>67</sup> For Nelson's account of this event, see Brown and Brightman, *"The Orders of the Dreamed"*, 102-107.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 107. Nelson had helped to bind the man and had also assisted in an unsuccessful attempt to put him through a narrow entry to the tent. However, as soon as the assembled began to sing, "the man entered in an instance!...he appeared to me to slide in by something that was neither invisible [sic] nor discernible...from the time we had done hunting for the twine that tied his fingers, not quite 5 minutes elapsed, and not 1½ minutes before his blanket and the cords were thrown out to us! – not one of them, apparently (i.e., one knot) untied." *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. *David Thompson's Narrative*, 81. Thompson's description of the Shaking Tent was similar to Nelson's, but he maintained it was "mere jugglery." *Ibid.*, 80-81.

powers.<sup>70</sup> The struggle was exemplified in the conversion of an “aged Indian,” who told his story to the Reverend William Cockran at Red River in 1856. Years earlier, when he became a Christian, he had no difficulties at first,

But soon the being who had ruled me in former times, appeared in the visions of the night & demanded the usual sacrafice [sic], which I had offered at certain seasons. I was long harassed by such visits, and my mind was in great trouble about my future course. At last my father appeared to me who died when I was a boy. And he addressed me “my Son, this Religion which you are now following, is a serious thing. It is a great thing. It is a good thing, follow it closely and you will receive a great reward.”<sup>71</sup>

Although not as dramatic as this, the experiences of Flora Wesley and “Old Wack-a-can” were just as significant, not only to them personally, but also to the fledgling Christian community that developed at Norway House in the summer of 1840. In only three months, more than eighty people were baptised there, including eighteen adults and fifty-one children from the Cree village across the river from the fort.<sup>72</sup> Rundle was certainly a catalyst to this remarkable religious transformation, but the motivation for it came initially from the Cree themselves whose support of the mission never wavered, neither in the formative years between 1840 and 1845 nor in the dark days of 1846, when it faced its greatest challenge.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Secular scholars can have difficulty grappling with this perspective, especially when the theoretical framework that drives their research is dominated by the assumptions of positivism, a system of thought that takes into account nothing that cannot be verified empirically.

<sup>71</sup> At another time he was deeply troubled about his sins. “I could neither work, nor sleep on account of them. One day I sat on the ground resting my arms upon my Knees, and my head in my hands, in deep thought about my state. I heard a voice “ask your father in heaven, to send his Spirit to wash your Soul in the blood of his son.” See PAC. CMS 11, Class “C”. C.1, C.10, Letter No. 30. William Cockran to Committee, CMS, dated Indian Settlement, 6 August 1856. mf. A85.

<sup>72</sup> The rest were HBC personnel and their children, passing through Norway House that summer. See PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 3-58, 280-281, Norway House Wesleyan Methodist Register of Baptisms, 1840-1889. This source must be used with caution. Some of Rundle’s baptisms are not recorded, others seem to have been attributed to James Evans, and still others contain factual errors. It must have been compiled at a later date from notes jotted down at the time of baptism, with syllabics added in places by someone familiar with that system of writing.

### 3

#### *Mission Beginnings: Christianity Takes Hold*

If the local Cree were anxious for a mission to be established at Norway House, Chief Factor Donald Ross was equally so, but it was business, not religious fervour, that was the main catalyst for his interest. The Cree had been very useful to the HBC, the more industrious among them being good hunters and “in other respects....very serviceable – in Tripping – going with Packets and acting as Guides.”<sup>1</sup> However, as early as 1831, Ross had reported that only “four or five families” remained attached to the post, the rest having “for some years past been gradually moving off towards Moose Lake, Swan River and Red River.”<sup>2</sup> By 1836, he was even more forthright:

Our close vicinity to Red River, has of late years rendered it a matter of no small difficulty to prevent the whole native population from emigrating to that Settlement, the encouragement held out by the missions is of so very enticing a character, that I believe a very few years hence, will find this section of the country entirely depopulated.<sup>3</sup>

This problem weighed heavily on Governor George Simpson, the man in charge of Company affairs in North America, who well understood the implications. If this movement were allowed to continue, it could become a pattern throughout fur trade country and be the utter ruin of the HBC. A solution had to be found, and indeed one was not long in coming, albeit from an unusual quarter. In the summer of 1838, the Reverend James Evans, already well known for his missionary work among the Ojibway of Upper Canada, went west to evangelize

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<sup>1</sup> PAM. HBCA. B.154/e.4, fo. 1d, Norway House Report, 1830-1831, mf. 1M781.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> PAM. HBCA. B.154/e.10, Norway House Report, 1835-1836, mf. 1M781.

the Ojibway of Lake Superior. The following spring, Simpson met him at Michipicoten while travelling west with the Red River Brigade, and the two men discussed the possibility of establishing Methodist missions in HBC territory.<sup>4</sup> Later that year, Evans visited Red River and left a written proposal on the matter for the governor's consideration.<sup>5</sup> Although not religious, Simpson looked upon Evans' plan with favour, realizing that strategically placed missions could help slow the exodus of good hunters from remote outposts for religious and educational opportunities at Red River. Consequently, he submitted the proposal to the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, and it was approved in January 1840.

The ensuing correspondence between Simpson and the British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society led in March to the ordination of three young men and their appointment as chaplains to the Company under the superintendence of James Evans. Two Ojibway schoolmasters, Peter Jacobs and Henry Bird Steinhauer, were also appointed to act as assistants. In April, the three missionaries arrived at Montreal from England, and by late fall everyone was in his respective station, George Barnley at Moose Factory, William Mason with Steinhauer at Lac la Pluie, Jacobs at Fort Alexander, and Robert Rundle at Fort Edmonton. By this time, Evans was also comfortably settled with his family at Norway House, headquarters of the mission, having assumed control on July 26 from Rundle, who left with the fall boats for the Upper Saskatchewan on September 7.<sup>6</sup>

Evans preached his first sermon just six hours after his arrival, then in the following week

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<sup>4</sup> Murdoch, 107-109.

<sup>5</sup> Evans did not actually see Simpson, who was away on business, but he wrote two letters to the governor outlining his ideas. Ibid., 109.

<sup>6</sup> *The Rundle Journals*, 31, 36.

settled his family at the fort, preached three more times at the village, and accompanied Donald Ross to see the proposed site of the new village before leaving himself for York Factory, August 1.<sup>7</sup> While on that trip, he performed twenty-three baptisms, fourteen at Oxford House and nine at York Factory, mostly of HBC personnel and their families.<sup>8</sup> Back at Norway House, Rundle was almost as busy, baptising two individuals on August 6, seven on August 10, and five more August 20, including both Benjamin and John Sinclair, who were to become leaders in the Church.<sup>9</sup> After his return to Norway House, September 5, Evans baptised only nine more people in the next three months, devoting most of his time instead to perfecting a syllabic writing system, constructing a makeshift press out of a discarded fur press, and printing the first hymns in the Cree language.<sup>10</sup> Then, on December 14, he set out on his second missionary journey.<sup>11</sup> With letters of introduction from Donald Ross, he travelled to a number of HBC posts, including Moose Lake, Cumberland House, and Fort Pelly, where he married and baptised both young and old.<sup>12</sup> Then he travelled south to the Red River Settlement, Fort Alexander, and Berens River, before heading home. On his return to Norway House in March, he was able to add forty new names to his register.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>8</sup> PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 89-97, 116-129.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., entries 83-88, 98-102, 130-131, and 281. Entries nos. 83-88, 98-102, and 281 are attributed to Evans, but at least three of them are Rundle's. See *The Rundle Papers*, 33. With two exceptions, the rest are of Norway House residents apparently baptized by Rundle while Evans was away. For additional information on Benjamin and John Sinclair, see Appendix.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., entries 103-111; Murdoch, 114.

<sup>11</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/b.1, fo. 9d, Norway House Correspondence, 1840-1845. Donald Ross to the Governor, Chief Factors, Chief Traders, Northern Department, 30 December 1840, mf. 1M217.

<sup>12</sup> For those letters, see *ibid.*, fo. 6d-8.

<sup>13</sup> PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 133-172. They were mostly HBC personnel and their families from Moose Lake, Cumberland House, Shoal River, Fort Pelly, Beaver Creek, and Berens River.

That long journey must have convinced Evans that he needed assistance at Norway House while he was travelling in his role as superintendent, and Peter Jacobs was instructed to leave Fort Alexander in the spring and proceed to Norway House to act as the schoolmaster there. Arriving with his family, June 27, Jacobs assumed preaching duties, after Evans and his wife left for York Factory, July 8.<sup>14</sup> However, his work was not confined to preaching alone. Shortly after returning from York Factory, September 13, Evans recorded that Jacobs had “removed to Rossville” where he was “labouring hard & with great encouragement, to get the houses built for the Indians” before winter set in.<sup>15</sup> In Evans’ words, Jacobs “with his Rule & Square....lays out the frame work & oversees the erection of not less than nine houses - several of which are in an advanced state toward completion.” These houses were “generally about 20 by 18 feet but some...larger” and constructed of “timber neatly squared” by the Cree themselves, who had “indeed done every thing except the laying out.”<sup>16</sup>

Evidently other houses had already been completed, because Jacobs and his family had “rented one of the Indian Houses for his accommodation” when he went on September 2, “to reside in the new Indian Village.”<sup>17</sup> Named Rossville in honour of Donald Ross, this settlement was located “at the mouth of the principal branch of the river, about two miles below the Fort,” a site Ross had recommended to Evans in July 1840 because, as he wrote to Governor Simpson in August, it “had by far the most productive fishery in the vicinity” and

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<sup>14</sup> PAM. HBCA, B.154/a/37, fo. 7, 9d, Norway House Post Journal, 1841-1842, mf. 1M109. Evans had arrived at Norway House on June 27 shortly after Jacobs, having made a second trip to Red River to pick up his daughter, who had been in school there that winter.

<sup>15</sup> UWO. Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 259, Diary: 25 August 1841 - 8 April 1842.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> PAM. HBCA, B.154/a/37, fo. 17.

more extensive ground "capable of cultivation" than was available at the old village."<sup>18</sup> Nor did the involvement of the Hudson's Bay Company end there. At the council meeting of June 1841, it was resolved that

a place of public worship be erected at the Indian Village in the vicinity of Norway House for the Wesleyan Mission, 40 feet in length by 30 feet in width, with a School House of 30 ft by 24, and a residence for Mr. Jacobs, the Schoolmaster, and that accommodation be provided for the Revd. Mr. Evans within the Establishment at Norway House.<sup>19</sup>

This was an enormous undertaking, considering the labour demands at the fort, but during the winter, Mr. Jacobs' residence was completed and the first steps taken for the construction of the schoolhouse and church.<sup>20</sup> Then, in May, Evans' house at the fort was enlarged with additions at either end, a job that occupied several men for more than six weeks.<sup>21</sup> Few of the local Cree were involved in this building boom, except in the construction of their own houses, because they were otherwise engaged, either as boatmen during the summer transport season, fishermen for their own subsistence during the fall, or as hunters during the winter.<sup>22</sup> Evans was also little involved as he was away for several months, leaving on 16 September 1841, just three days after his return with the Saskatchewan Brigade from York Factory, to visit "the Posts on the Saskatchewan, Lesser Slave Lake, Peace River, Fort Chipewyan, English River and Cumberland." He did not

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<sup>18</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/b/1, fo. 5. Donald Ross to George Simpson, 3 August 1840.

<sup>19</sup> LWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 113, Extracts of Council Minutes, Northern Department.

<sup>20</sup> See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/37, where the daily activities of the HBC labourers were meticulously recorded. Other construction included a new men's house and a large vessel, as well as the usual repairs and refurbishing, and explains the addition of two "rough carpenters" to the fort's personnel that winter.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 46. Evans moved into his renovated house, 13 June 1842. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/39, fo. 4, Norway House Post Journal, 1842-1843, mf. 1M109.

<sup>22</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/37, fo. 21d. 27d.



return until 14 April 1842.<sup>23</sup>

This trip was interesting on a number of counts. In the first place, Evans did not accompany the brigade on its departure from Norway House, but left the following day in “a small Canoe manned by his Interpreter – and two Indians.”<sup>24</sup> He was able to do so because the Hudson’s Bay Company had at its council meeting earlier that year resolved to “provide missionaries with a half-sized canoe manned by three persons,” in spite of the fact that Ross had as early as August 1840 expressed doubts that such could be provided, “when required.”<sup>25</sup> In all likelihood, his about-face was meant to appease Evans, whose distaste for Sunday travel would have been well known to him.<sup>26</sup> In fact, it only delayed the troubles to come.

Troubles, however, were far from Evans’ mind that winter.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, his letters home to Norway House, although expressing his longing for his wife and daughter, were positive and full of humour.<sup>28</sup> He taught the Gospel everywhere he went, baptising a hundred and twelve people in total while he was away.<sup>29</sup> On his return trip, he stopped at Cumberland House,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., fo. 18d, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., fo. 18d.

<sup>25</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 113; PAM, HBCA, B.154/b/1, fo. 3d, Ross to Simpson, 3 August 1840.

<sup>26</sup> Evans was never known for his reticence on matters of principle. The Saskatchewan Brigade left Norway House on a Wednesday, but Evans had been forced to travel on three different Sundays during the trip south from York Factory and did not want to do so again. On September 12, he wrote in his diary, “by God’s grace I do it no more. If I cannot get a Canoe to Cumberland I shall remain at home.” UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 259.

<sup>27</sup> Rundle was having some difficulty with the Company, but Evans did not see this as troublesome. UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 111, Evans to his wife Mary, Lesser Slave Lake, 8 December 1841.

<sup>28</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Items 109-110, dated at Fort Assiniboin, 22 November, and Lesser Slave Lake, 1 December 1841.

<sup>29</sup> PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 203-279, 282-317.

where several families had “renounced their paganism & resolved to seek for the Truth” mainly through the influence of Thomas Sapa, a Cree man whom Evans had baptised the previous winter.<sup>30</sup> At Moose Lake, he “found the people few in number, but striving...to serve God.”<sup>31</sup> And after his arrival at Norway House, he was gladdened to learn that the Rossville Christians continued “faithful, and exemplary, and industrious” with “eleven substantial houses well framed, all their own labour,” and nearly everyone able to read the syllabics.<sup>32</sup>

Little of the progress at Rossville could be attributed to Evans’ direct influence because he had travelled for fifteen of the twenty-one months he had been stationed at Norway House, and when he was there, he was living at the fort. Consequently, much of the missionary work had to be carried on by the Cree themselves. Indeed, the two major baptismal services of 1841 were timed to take advantage of Evans’ brief stays in the community.<sup>33</sup> He may have interviewed the thirteen adult candidates, but friends and relatives taught them.<sup>34</sup>

Evans spent the summer of 1842 at Norway House and was in a particularly good mood in

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<sup>30</sup> Evans did not identify him by name, but Thomas Sapa, or Sapin, was the “one indian” baptised at Cumberland the previous winter. See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 259, entry for 1 April 1842. For the baptisms of Sapa and his family, see PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 143-144, 153-155. Sapa later took his family to Norway House for religious instruction. His daughter Anna, who lived for a time in the Evans household, was one of the young women involved in the charges against Evans.

<sup>31</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 259.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Item 124, Evans to his brother Ephraim, July 1842.

<sup>33</sup> The first of these was July 7, just ten days after his return from Red River and the day before his journey to York Factory. The second was September 15, two days after his return from York Factory and the day before his departure for the Saskatchewan. PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 174-185, 195-202.

<sup>34</sup> Among the adults were Sarah ᑎᑕᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ [Nay-kah-wah-w], William and Paul ᑎᑕᑦᑎᑦ [Nee-kaa-ni], James ᑎᑕᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ [Kway-s-Kway-s-kah-oo], John and Jessy ᑎᑕᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ [May-mi-nah-waa-tah-m]. Evans may have had some influence on Sarah’s conversion. In a letter to his wife, 30 September 1841, he asked to be remembered “also to Sarah & tell her to be a good girl.” See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 105. Sarah Nakawao, whose family was closely associated with the HBC, was a servant in the Evans’ household for two years, leaving in April 1843 in order to get married. She spoke at the trial in his defence.

July when he wrote his brother Ephraim. In the previous month, he had baptised thirty-eight people, many of them leaders of the community, the HBC continued to give the mission "every support," and he was "hearty, and healthy as ever."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, his greatest complaint was the "want of christian fellowship & especially of ministerial society."<sup>36</sup> By August, however, his tone had changed because of difficulties with William Mason at Lac La Pluie and the Secretaries back home, and possibly because his schoolmaster, Peter Jacobs, was about to leave on a speaking tour in England. In a second letter to his brother, he complained "I am unfit for this, there is too much care & anxiety, too much travelling, & I have too little grace."<sup>37</sup> Still, there was no indication of hostility towards the Hudson's Bay Company. Evans' house at the fort had been completed in June, construction of the school began on June 21, and the foundation for the church was laid on October 3.<sup>38</sup> Relations with the company never seemed better. Nevertheless, Evans' views on Sunday travel had become widely known, and Governor Simpson had drawn this to the attention of Robert Alder, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London, who wrote Evans on 1 December 1842, advising him to be circumspect in his words and actions regarding Sabbath travel and seek "by

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<sup>35</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 124. These baptisms occurred 6 June 1842. See also PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 319-320, 322-345, 366-367, 407-412, 545-548. Among the converts were "Isaac" ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ [May-mi-nah-waa-tah-m], whose wife "Rebecca" was a sister of the Rev. Henry Budd; William ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ [Pah-pah-nah-ki-s], whose son Edward became a Methodist missionary; and Eliza ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (May-chi-ki-h-kwah-nay-p[b]), who was later implicated in the charges against Evans.

<sup>36</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 124. Still, there were hints of discomfort. His wife Mary's health was "not very good" and "the country is poor, completely impoverished, no animals, no furs, a dreary climate, even now we have frosts almost every night, & cold rains by day our potatoes are rotten in the ground, and the labours of our poor people this spring will certainly go for just nothing, fish is our sole dependance, & if that should fail, they will certainly suffer."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Item 127, Evans to his brother Ephraim, 2 August 1842. The Secretaries of the Society had neglected to send him paper via the Montreal Express, necessitating another tedious trip to York Factory, and his young missionaries were causing him grief. Mason was not named in this letter, but he had been the recipient of Evans' censure earlier in the year. Ibid., Item 125, Evans to Mason, 8 July 1842.

<sup>38</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/39, fo. 4-5, 18.

private communications with the Governor & officers in charge, to introduce a better state of things.”<sup>39</sup>

In fact, “private communications” had been his policy, or so he claimed in a letter to Ephraim, 3 July 1843, but it had backfired.<sup>40</sup> According to report, however, two of the officers he had persuaded to rest during the “voyage of 1842” had been “severely censured” by the Governor, and Evans himself had “just received something like a reprimand from Sir George.”<sup>41</sup> Still burning at the reproof, he angrily wrote that labour on the Lord’s Day was “utterly at variance with Christianity at least with Wesleyan christianity” and such he would in future “preach & inculcate both publicly & privately or retire.” Having “hitherto maintained a cautious silence,” he now told his brother of overworked HBC employees, high prices charged Indians for their “little necessities” and low prices received for their furs. Evidently in a fighting mood, Evans asserted, “I trust in the Providential way, & I shall struggle hard before I leave the field to sin & Satan.”<sup>42</sup> Indicative of the growing rift, Evans added that he and his family were “just on the eve of removing to the Indian Village of Rossville, where they hoped “to be more useful to the Indians.” However, according to that inveterate gossip, Letitia Hargrave, the underlying

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<sup>39</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 136. Alder’s remarks to Evans were diplomatic and cautious, but far less so concerning William Mason, who had left Lac La Pluie without permission and travelled to Red River, apparently in search of a wife.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Item 157.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. This was particularly galling because Evans had discussed the matter of Sunday travel with Simpson in 1841 and been led to believe then that “some steps would be taken to mitigate the evil.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. He did write Simpson, July 28, but stopped short of open defiance on the matter of Sunday travel. In his terse and often condescending reply, the governor remarked, “As to your proceedings in opposition to Sunday travelling, I am happy to see, that I have been to a great extent misinformed.” See P.A.M. HBCA. D.4/64, fo. 114d-115. Governor George Simpson - Correspondence Outward, 1844, Simpson to Evans, 20 June 1844, mf. 3M21.

cause of the move was tension between the Evans and Ross families.<sup>43</sup> That was why the Company was building the Evanses a mission house “35 X 28 feet with a Kitchen stove & ice house &c” at Rossville, after having accommodated them at “the best house at the fort.”<sup>44</sup>

In spite of these frictions, the mission was prospering. Baptisms among the local Cree continued at a high rate.<sup>45</sup> The school “frequently mustered 67 scholars &...averaged more than 50 during the year.”<sup>46</sup> Construction on the church was progressing, and more houses were being built. Even the missionary force was increased. Jacobs had not returned as expected, having been sent instead to work with Steinhauer at Lac La Pluie, but Mason was transferred to Norway House, where Evans hoped to provide him with a “little Missionary instruction.”<sup>47</sup> To the relief of all concerned, the young man had been married that summer at Red River with the blessing of the Society and arrived with his bride at Norway House, August 20, while Evans and his daughter were on a trip to York Factory.<sup>48</sup> The timing was

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<sup>43</sup> *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret A. MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society 28, 1947), Letter 41. Letitia Hargrave to Mrs. Dugald Mactavish, 10 September 1843, pp. 157-158. Letitia Hargrave was the wife of Chief Factor James Hargrave of York Factory. Her remarks on the dispute illustrate how ridiculous gossip can be. For example, she passed on a comment allegedly made by George Gladman that Mrs. Evans “consumed between 30 & 40 kegs of butter, each weighing 56 lbs.” *Ibid.*, 157. Gladman probably said three or four. Five firkins [56 lbs. ea.], 2 Half firkins, 5 tinnets [ten lbs. ea] and 27 lbs. butter were listed under “General charges p. Wesleyan Mission” in 1842-1843. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/d/85, fo. 18d. Norway House Transfers, 1842-1843, mf. 1M547.

<sup>44</sup> UWO. Evans. Letters and Papers. Item 157, and *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 158. Apparently, Evans and his family moved to Rossville in early July, perhaps to rented accommodations, because his furniture was not taken from the fort to his new residence until November 28, presumably when construction had been completed. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a./41, p. 48. Norway House Post Journal, 1843-1844, mf. 1M109.

<sup>45</sup> Forty-one people were baptised at Rossville in 1843, seventeen of them adults. PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 360-362, 365, 368-406.

<sup>46</sup> UWO. Evans. Letters and Papers. Item 157.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* Mason was certainly in need of it. Evans had many reasons to complain about the younger missionary’s work at Lac La Pluie, the most serious charge against him being the desertion of his missionary post to travel to Red River, which he did, not once, but at least three times.

<sup>48</sup> Mason’s wife was Sophia Thomas. In his letter to his brother, Evans described her as “a half caste young

good because a house had just been readied for him at Rossville under the direction of Thomas Hassal, who wrote Evans on August 25 that Mason seemed "to be very well pleased with the House and also Our Village."<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, Evans was well pleased with his trip to York Factory, no trace of trouble evident in the humorous letter he wrote his wife along the way.<sup>50</sup> Letitia Hargrave, however, remarked that she had never seen anyone "so much changed," perhaps a sign that stress was beginning to take its toll, although there was little indication of it in the winter of 1843-1844.<sup>51</sup> His own house at Rossville was completed in November, progress was being made on the church, and relations with Donald Ross were cordial.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, he had received word from Peter Jacobs in early fall, indicating that the long awaited "Type and Printing apparatus" for transcribing the syllabics was on its way.<sup>53</sup> The first few months of 1844 appeared quiet, although Mason

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lady of excellent education a daughter of a deceased Governor [Thomas Thomas] of the Territory, with a bonus of £1000. Eh! She is a good pious girl, & speaks 'Indian' too." See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 157. Evans was away from Norway House from August 3 until September 16. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/41, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 164. The house, which had been formerly occupied by Jacobs and his family, had by the summer of 1844 lost some of its appeal. See WMMSA, Box No. 13, File 13g, Hudson's Bay Territories, 1843-1845, Item 13, Mason to Alder, dated Ross Ville, 20 August 1844.

<sup>50</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 160. The letter was written "5 Miles from the Painted Stone, 6th August 1843." In his second letter to her from "Fall River" on August 17, he remarked. "I hope Maggie is a good girl and that the Swampy women at the Point are taking care to hoe the potatoes & to keep things clean about their houses." This was the first reference to "Maggie" in Evans' correspondence and doubtless referred to Margaret Sinclair who was the central figure in the charges brought against him in February 1846. *Ibid.*, Item 163.

<sup>51</sup> *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 158.

<sup>52</sup> On Wednesday, 31 January 1844, for instance, Donald Ross concluded a friendly letter to Evans, "if all is well I shall hope to have the pleasure of seeing her [Mrs. Evans] - and smoking a Cigar with you on Friday evening." See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 169.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Item 165, Jacobs to Evans, Lac la Pluie, Fort Frances, 19 September 1843.

was beginning to chafe under Evans' supervision.<sup>54</sup> In a carefully-worded letter to Simpson in May Evans discussed the possibility that the young man, whose services were "altogether unnecessary" at Norway House, be put in charge of a new mission, either at Lac Seul in the south, or at Isle a la Crosse or Athabasca in the north, in the event that Rundle did not go home to England that year.<sup>55</sup> There was no indication of trouble in that letter or Evans' report in July on the progress of the mission. Rossville now boasted thirty houses, a schoolhouse, and workshop, and the fields of barley, potatoes, and turnips looked promising. There were one hundred and twenty-one church members in eleven classes, each with an assistant leader in training to replace the leaders "as they may be called to more extensive usefulness." The school had sixty students, "about half of whom read and write both English and Indian," and Thomas Hassal, his interpreter and schoolmaster, had proven so effective in his calling that Evans had licensed him as a "Local Preacher."<sup>56</sup> He also reported that it had been his intention to send Mason to replace Rundle, but now he was staying at Rossville while Evans and Hassal rushed off to Isle a la Crosse, where a "Romish Priest" intended to winter.<sup>57</sup>

In fact, he had originally planned to send Mason with Hassal to Isle a la Crosse, but Ross had refused them passage in the fall boats, claiming that he had no authority to establish a new

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<sup>54</sup> By June Mason was undermining Evans' position. In a letter to George Simpson on 21 June 1844, George Gladman, the officer in charge of Norway House during Ross's absence at Red River, passed on a number of complaints *he had heard* about Evans' interference in the local fur trade. Significantly, he added, "My information is sub rosa [secret or confidential] from Mr. Mason." See PAM, HBCA, D.5/11, fo. 321, Governor George Simpson – Correspondence Inward, 1843-1844, Gladman to Simpson, mf. 3M66.

<sup>55</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5 11, fo. 228, Evans to Simpson, 16 May 1844, mf. 3M66. He was careful not to tell Simpson what to do, but he made his own viewpoint abundantly clear.

<sup>56</sup> For Hassal's license, see LWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 175, dated at Rossville, 17 May 1844.

<sup>57</sup> Extracts of a letter from the Rev. James Evans, General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Missions in the Hudson's Bay Territories, to the Secretaries, July 1844, obtained by correspondence from Reverend Gerald Hutchinson, December 1993.

mission.<sup>58</sup> At about this time, Evans also received a curt and condescending letter from Simpson in which he approved the new mission at Lac Seul, but “decidedly” recommended that Mr. Jacobs be sent there instead of Mason, and made no decision on the proposed northern mission.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps angered by this response, Evans got into another dispute with Ross, this time over cordwood.<sup>60</sup> The two men were still at odds when Evans and Hassal finally set off on August 1. In a private letter to Simpson on August 15, Ross gave vent to his feelings about missionaries in general and Evans in particular, who he believed was as often motivated by his own selfish concerns as he was by the “good cause.”<sup>61</sup> It also rankled that the

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<sup>58</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5/11, fo. 344, Ross to Simpson, 29 June 1844, mf 3M66; D.5/12, fo. 173, Evans to Ross, Rossville, 29 June 1844, and fo. 173d, Ross to Evans, 2 July 1844, mf. 3M67. Ross sent these letters to Simpson, saying the Evans must have written his for the “Secretaries of their Society” as “the matter had previously been disposed of in a verbal communication between us.” See PAM, HBCA, D.5/12, fo. 171, Ross to Simpson (official), 14 August 1844, mf 3M67.

<sup>59</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.4/64, fo. 115d-116, Simpson to Evans, 20 June 1844. Simpson’s recommendation meant the closure of the mission at Lac La Pluie where Jacobs did not have “even the hope of effecting anything” and left the issue of what to do with Mason unresolved. Ross maintained that Evans had this letter prior to his request for a boat. See Note 61.

<sup>60</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 172, Ross to Evans, 21 July 1844. Ross had told him sufficient cordwood had been cut for the mission, so when Evans sent two notes, one for twelve and the other for twenty cords, an exasperated Ross asked who was paying, because he could not take it upon himself “to pay them on account of the Company.”

<sup>61</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5/12, fo. 174, Ross to Simpson, 15 August 1844. Ross claimed that Evans had Simpson’s letter [June 20] before requesting a boat for Mason and Hassal on June 29, so he knew that the question of a northern mission had been deferred. Nevertheless, Evans’ desire to get rid of Mason, with whom he had quarrelled some days earlier, caused him to press the issue with Ross. Moreover, Evans’ decision to go himself was motivated, not by missionary zeal, but by a letter from John McLean, who requested the Evanses to meet him “at the Portage” [Portage la Loche] the following summer, so that he could marry their daughter, Clara. There was some truth in Ross’s allegations. Clara was engaged to marry McLean the following summer See D.5/12, fo. 46, Evans to Simpson, 19 July 1844, mf. 3M66. And Evans and Mason did not get along. Evans had originally planned to send Mason not to establish a new mission, but to replace Rundle, whose four-year term expired that year. When Rundle decided to remain at his station, however, Mason was available to go elsewhere. Evans’ decision to send him to establish a mission at Isle a la Crosse was prompted by the unexpected arrival of a Roman Catholic priest at Norway House. Since the priest was on his way to winter at Isle a la Crosse and travel on the following spring to the very places Evans had visited in 1841 and 1842, Evans felt the matter was sufficiently urgent to request Ross’s assistance. When that was not forthcoming, Evans decided to go himself. As superintendent of missions, he was well within his rights to do so, not for personal reasons, because marriage arrangements could be made as easily by letter, but by fear that those he had previously baptised would be lost to Catholicism. See Extracts of a letter from the Rev. James Evans, obtained by correspondence from Reverend Gerald



Company had to "again keep up and support two distinct Establishments for the year," even though the Mission House built in 1843 was sufficiently large for both the Evans and Mason families, "could they but so arrange it among themselves."<sup>62</sup> Mason also complained to Alder on the same matter, but for quite different reasons. Mrs. Evans and her daughter were in possession of the Mission House, part of which was closed, while he and his wife had only two small rooms and a kitchen. Yet Evans had asked them to board and lodge Henry Steinhauer, who was being transferred from Lac La Pluie.<sup>63</sup> Mason was restrained in his letter to Alder, but according to Letitia Hargrave, he spent the entire ten days he was at York Factory that summer "reviling Evans for telling fibs, cheating the Indians, aspersing the Comp<sup>y</sup> & cheating him of his allowances from the Wesley<sup>n</sup> Society."<sup>64</sup> Even allowing for Letitia's embellishments, it was a sad commentary on the relationship between the two men.

Things got worse. On September 11, while travelling to Isle a la Crosse, Evans accidentally shot and killed his interpreter, Thomas Hassal, a tragic incident, which forced his immediate return to Norway House.<sup>65</sup> At Evans' request, Ross agreed "to enquire into the circumstances of the case by examining John Oig and Samuel PapatheKess," witnesses to the accident,

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Hutchinson, December 1993.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., D.5/12, fo. 171d. Ross to Simpson, 14 August 1844. This was unfair. He had not been able to abide the Evanses at the fort, when they lived in two separate houses. It was unreasonable to expect the Masons to actually live with the Evanses, when the men "never agreed very well." See D.5/12, fo. 174d, Ross to Simpson (private), 15 August 1844.

<sup>63</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 13. Interestingly, in this letter, Mason described Ross as "a friend to the Red man's temporal and spiritual interests, his kindness & attention are uninterrupted."

<sup>64</sup> Mason left Norway House June 29 and returned July 23. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/43, fo. 3d, 6d, Norway House - Post Journal, 1844-1845, mf. 1M109. *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, Letter 48, Hargrave to Florence Mactavish, 9 September 1844, p. 188.

<sup>65</sup> Evans was devastated. In his letter to Colin Campbell, 17 September 1844, from Lac La Ronge, he wrote, "My poor faithful Interpreter & friend & fellow labourer in the gospel whose like I shall never get in this country is gone for ever. and by my own hand. My mind will, I fear, never recover itself." UWO.

whose testimony confirmed Evans' account.<sup>66</sup> Once cleared of any wrongdoing, he returned to work, only to revisit an old frustration. In a letter from Alder, dated 25 May 1844, he learned that the Hudson's Bay Company had refused to allow the printing press and syllabic types to be sent into the country.<sup>67</sup> Even more galling was Alder's advice that Evans himself secure Simpson's support for his "pious and benevolent design."<sup>68</sup> In his reply, December 14, Evans turned that task back to Alder, saying, "please to write by the spring express – and make such arrangements as shall secure to us at once in some shape the benefit of the press & types."<sup>69</sup> He also informed Alder that Simpson had authorized the mission at Lac Seul, but when passing through Lac La Pluie had told Jacobs that "the time for establishing a mission there had not arrived."<sup>70</sup> This, with the account of his blighted hopes at Isle a la Crosse and the death of Hassal, made for a most depressing letter. He did mention the work of Samuel McKenzie at Lac La Ronge, who had already taught some of the Cree there to read and write in their own language, but there was not one word on Mason's September trip to Oxford

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Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 190.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Item 191, Ross to Evans, 5 October 1844. Later, Letitia Hargrave wrote, "There were 2 Indians & their depositions were quite distinct & corroborate Mr E." *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, Letter 49. Hargrave to Mrs. Dugald Mactavish, 24 November 1844, p. 191. However, in June and later in July 1846, Simpson asked Ross to investigate again to see if Evans had in fact murdered Hassal. See Chapter 5.

<sup>67</sup> LWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 177. This was the press that Jacobs had seen in London all packed up and ready to go.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Some idea of Alder's character can be gleaned from Simpson's reply to Ross's letter of August 15. "Your details respecting Evans and Thibeault are both instructive and amusing and Alder being a very liberal good tempered man of the world, I mean to shew them to him." Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC), AE, R73, La5, Pt.V., Ross Papers, Simpson to Ross, 2 December 1844, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> LWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 195.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Had he read Simpson's reply to Ross's private letter of August 15, Evans would have understood the governor's behaviour. Simpson wrote, "I think you have not overdrawn Evans character. We have been a great deal too smooth & pliable with that Gentleman and must now keep him within the bounds of the original directions." PABC, AE, R73, La5, Pt.V., Ross Papers, Simpson to Ross, 2 December 1844, p. 2.

House, where he baptised twenty-four adults and the same number of children.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the only bright spot in Evans' letter was Rossville, where Steinhauer was "doing well" as the schoolmaster, and the people were "attached to the cause" and "generally growing in grace."

That attachment would be sorely tested in 1845, which began as quietly as the previous year. Then in May a series of events precipitated a crisis which put the local leaders of the church into direct conflict with the HBC. It started with a request by Evans to travel with Ross on his annual trip to Red River, but when the latter would not guarantee full observance of the Sabbath along the way, Evans decided to go on his own. As a result of his action, Ross's boat crew, which included five leaders, two assistant leaders, and three other members of Evan's congregation, all refused to engage as they had done in the past. The ensuing confrontation was described by both Ross and Evans, whose interpretations of events amply demonstrated the enormous gulf between them.<sup>72</sup> Ross, for his part, could not conceive of the Cree resisting his will of their own volition; it had to be a "combination" orchestrated by the missionaries.<sup>73</sup> Certainly they vigorously defended the actions of Ross's crew, even going so far as to collect affidavits from Johnny Oig and Henry Budd concerning their conversations with Ross, in the event that there was "public scrutiny" of the case.<sup>74</sup> Ross dismissed these affidavits because

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<sup>71</sup> Oxford House had by far the greatest number of baptisms in 1844. There were only fourteen that year at Norway House, twelve of them children, suggesting that the major work of evangelization had been completed. On his trip west, Evans had performed thirty-two baptisms, most of them children.

<sup>72</sup> For Ross's accounts, see PAM, HBCA, D.5/14, fo. 32-35d, Governor George Simpson - Correspondence Inward, 1845, Ross to Simpson, Norway House, 20 May 1845, mf. 3M69. For Evans' version, see UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 208, Evans summary of events, 22 May 1845.

<sup>73</sup> D.5/14, fo. 33d. Ross ruled firmly at Norway House. When Old Necanie stole some fish from the HBC, he was taken to the fort where Ross "gave him a good fright by exhibiting a pair of Hand Cuffs." The old man "begged hard for mercy and on promising to behave honestly for the future" he was allowed to leave. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/23, fo. 49, Norway House Post Journal, 1832-1833, mf. 1M107.

<sup>74</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5/14, fo. 36-40d, Evans to Ross, 19 May 1845.

“the minds of the poor Indians were so thoroughly worked upon, and excited, that they could neither give me any very clear explanation of their own ideas, nor by any possibility convey to others a correct account of what I said to them.”<sup>75</sup> In fact, the affidavits reflected the implications of their conversation with Ross much better than he was willing to admit.<sup>76</sup> Not realizing that they themselves had initially made the decision to resist, Ross also failed to recognize how much courage it took for these men to challenge his authority.<sup>77</sup> The pressure on them was enormous, so much so, that Budd later the same day relented and agreed once more to engage.<sup>78</sup> Then, after a sleepless night and many tears of remorse, he sought Evans’ advice and reversed his earlier decision.<sup>79</sup>

In a private letter to Ross, Evans said he rejoiced that the people had taken a “decided stand.”

“The act is their own – but from our instructions and costs them many a painful feeling.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., fo. 33d, Ross to Simpson, 20 May 1845.

<sup>76</sup> Ross quibbled that he “had never said, either to Johnny Oig or Henry Budd, that it was positively my intention to travel on Sunday, or that if they accompanied me they must travel on Sunday.” Ibid, fo. 34. But that was precisely the point. By not giving a direct answer, he was in effect saying that he *might* travel on Sunday, and the Cree knew all too well that under the right circumstances that meant, *would* travel. Of course, if that were the case, it meant they “must travel,” too, because they manned the boats.

<sup>77</sup> Henry Budd, for instance, began his affidavit with, “I never refused to obey you since I was a child.” HBCA, D.5/14, fo. 40d.

<sup>78</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 208. He was one of four who succumbed to pressure. As Budd had explained to Evans, “I was persuaded by my friends - who told me that my wife & family - together with my aged father who has been very kindly & frequently supplied with both food & clothing from the Fort - would all suffer through my refusing. That I should never again find any employment that ammunition & indeed every thing would be denied me & that I should suffer together with all around me”

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. The other three also reversed their decision. For Ross’s version of events, see PAM. HBCA, D.5/14, fo. 34-34d.

<sup>80</sup> PAM. HBCA, D.5/14, fo. 52. Evans to Ross (private), 19 May 1845. Ross disputed this assertion because he believed the Christian tripmen had acted under pressure from the missionaries. In fact, their refusal was more complex than that. On May 11, two of these men decided on their own not to engage with Ross, when they learned from John McKay, the mission interpreter, that Evans would not go to Red River with Ross if he travelled on Sunday. Evans passed on this conversation to Ross the following day, adding that the missionaries could not encourage the tripmen to engage, when they had previously taught them that

Indeed, they had been converted to a Methodist understanding of Sabbath day observance and had acted on that conviction, with the support and approval of the missionaries.<sup>81</sup> Ross could not understand this, nor the fact that his displeasure alone could be perceived as a form of coercion by a group of men who had never before openly opposed the might of the Hudson's Bay Company. That opposition was also a small step toward independence from its political and economic authority, the natural outgrowth of five years of missionary instruction, during which they had begun to believe that with faith in God and themselves, they could build a community, in essence take control of their lives.<sup>82</sup> A powerful force had been unleashed, and as James Evans would soon realize, it was to have implications not only for the HBC, but for the missionaries themselves, who were about to face a crisis greater than any they had faced in the previous five years.

William Mason seemed oblivious to any such crisis as he wrote his annual report in December 1845. It had been a year of "trial & affliction," to be sure, but he felt the Mission was "in a prosperous state – the dark clouds that threatened us have been all dispersed, & God has restored peace to his Zion."<sup>83</sup> This of course was an illusion. The refusal of the Rossville

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Sabbath travel was "contrary to the Law of God." After Ross sent word on May 15 that he wanted to see certain men the following day, Evans and Mason called the congregation together at the school to discuss the matter. There was pressure on the tripmen in this meeting, but it came less from the missionaries than it did from the tripmen themselves. Some spoke of their voyage to Red River the previous year and "of being shamed as the[y] expressed it before all their friends at the Indian Mission near the Colony & the inhabitants of the Settlement" because they had travelled on the Sabbath during their trip. They "blamed themselves for engaging without knowing whether or not they would be required to travel on Sundays." See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 208.

<sup>81</sup> Strict Sabbath observance was a mark of the Methodist movement which "condemned any violation of the sanctity of the sabbath." See Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 67, 357-358.

<sup>82</sup> Evans preferred self-reliance as an alternative to the paternalistic system of the HBC. He was proud that the Cree had not "received so much as a nail" for their "excellent roomy houses all the workmanship of their own hands." UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 125. Evans to Mason, 8 July 1842.

<sup>83</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 27, Mason to Secretaries, dated Rossville, 22 December 1845.

Christians to engage for the spring trip to Red River was a direct challenge to HBC authority and resulted in a counterattack on several fronts.<sup>84</sup> Mason had felt its sting in June during an altercation with George Gladman, who was in charge of Norway House while Ross was away at Red River.<sup>85</sup> At about the same time, Gladman had also interrogated several people in an effort to implicate Evans in anti-company activity, but failed to find anything. Shortly thereafter, Simpson informed Evans that, effective June 1, the HBC would allow a maximum of £200 Sterling as its share of the expenses for the Norway House Mission, an arrangement unsatisfactory to Evans because of the additional cost of having two missionaries stationed there.<sup>86</sup> Then in July, relationships between the fort and the mission hit a new low in a curt exchange between Evans and Ross over the accommodation of Betsey Hassal, whose scandalous behaviour had become well known throughout the community.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, Ross's position had hardened considerably since the spring, and by August, he had decided that Evans needed to be removed.<sup>88</sup> To effect that result, he sent off to Simpson "some statements

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<sup>84</sup> However, Simpson had already written Alder for Evans' recall on May 16. See WMMSA 13, 13g, 20. He had lost patience with Evans because of his previous efforts to promote Sabbath day observance by HBC tripmen. Simpson knew the economic implications, as did Evans, who pointed out that Sabbath observance by the boatmen "would at once take out of the pocket of the Fur traders annually not less than Thirteen Thousand days work of at least sixteen hours each, there being employed not less than One Thousand men for three months every summer who never observe the Sabbath." See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 216, Evans to Society, 18 July 1845.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., Item 209, Mason to Evans, Rossville, 14 June 1845.

<sup>86</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 22, Simpson to Evans, with enclosed instructions to Donald Ross, both dated 20 June 1845. Evans had requested that Mason be sent to take charge at Lac la Ronge as two missionaries were unnecessary at Norway House. Ibid., 17, Evans to Simpson, Fort Garry, 10 June 1845.

<sup>87</sup> The widow of Thomas Hassal. Betsey had left her children at Rossville and was "remaining day and night in the encampment at the Fort." Evans wanted the HBC to take responsibility for her, or send her back to look after her children. See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Items 213-214, Letters between Ross and Evans, 11 July 1845.

<sup>88</sup> Simpson was one step ahead of him. He had already recommended to the Society and the HBC that Evans be recalled. See WMMSA 13, 13g, 20, Simpson to Alder, 16 May 1845; Ibid., 21, Simpson to Governor and Council, 20 June 1845.

connected with the sayings and doings of this truly troublesome and restless man, which may perhaps be useful in dislodging him from the station which he at present so unworthily fills.”<sup>89</sup> Innuendo like this was evident throughout the letter, especially in Ross’s claim that he “could have procured a whole quire of Indian evidence even of a stronger character than these statements contain, but until the poor Indians are taught the necessity of speaking the truth, their evidence can be of little value.”<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, others apparently considered this kind of evidence of enough significance to spread it throughout fur trade country. Certainly Letitia Hargrave had heard it, and she was much more explicit as to its content, source, and probable truth. In September, she wrote,

People. that is the Norway H<sup>c</sup> people say that Evans has gone daft – We saw no symptoms of it. What is worse they asperse his character & say that his conduct is immoral. I am sure it is not true. The man’s mind may have got a shake by that fearful accident, but he appears perfectly collected – I may just as well say that it is asserted that the whole village of Rossville has been converted into a seraglio by him.<sup>91</sup>

The conflict between Ross and the missionaries, Evans in particular, was an open secret at Norway House. If Ross did not repeat the accusations himself at that time, his evident bias and status as chief factor certainly fostered an atmosphere in which such stories could be circulated

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<sup>89</sup> PABC, A.E. R73, R736, Ross Papers, Private letter from Ross to Simpson, 6 August 1845. Ross did not explicitly record what those statements were. However, attached to this letter was another written the previous day in which Ross reported a disagreement with Evans over the allocation of the HBC grant for the operation of Rossville Mission. Ross also perceived the missionaries as “taking advantage” of “the present unfortunate circumstances of the country,” an allusion to the free trade movement at Red River which was threatening the HBC monopoly. He wrote, “The minds of the Indians, not only here, but all around, are completely unhinged on the subject of trade, and opposition visions of unlimited indulgence in their favorite ‘fire water’, and prices before unheard of for their furs are constantly before their thoughts and the theme and topic of conversations.” In Ross’s view, the missionaries were “busy emissaries” of those sentiments, and none “more mischievously” than Evans.

<sup>90</sup> He also wrote that the missionaries “seem to be thoroughly despised...not so much from their opposition to our interests, I believe, *as from their personal characters and conduct in other respects.*” and the Wesleyan Mission would have been much better off in his view, “had a man of *pure pious and holy character* been at the head of their affair [emphasis added].”

<sup>91</sup> *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, Letter 52, Hargrave to Mrs. Dugald Mactavish, 5 September 1845, 208.

and believed.<sup>92</sup>

In October that conflict flared up once more, as Ross repeated accusations for which Gladman had been seeking evidence in the spring, namely that Evans had “stated publically that the Indians had a right to do what they pleased with their furs after they had paid their debts to the Hon: Company.”<sup>93</sup> Evans denied the charges in a spirited defence, but Ross maintained his ground in spite of Evans’ protestations.<sup>94</sup> The two men had seemingly reached an impasse. At the root of their disagreement was “Indian evidence.” Ross had previously stated that it could be “of little value” until the Indians had been taught “the necessity of speaking the truth,” implying that untruths were commonplace at Norway House. However, his willingness to accept the word of “Thomas Mesataquon and others” concerning the allegations against Evans suggested that he did not apply this generalization in all cases. Furthermore, he had carried on the interrogation of Mesataquon in the presence of William Mason and Henry Steinhauer, which he felt gave it added weight.<sup>95</sup>

Evans attacked that evidence on two fronts. Firstly, Mesataquon and the others were labouring under a “false impression” based on “misconception or misinformation.”<sup>96</sup> This was a reasonable possibility. Errors in communication could readily occur at Norway House where

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<sup>92</sup> Evidence suggests that reticence, if it ever existed, did not last. See Chapter 5, n. 12.

<sup>93</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154.b/3, fo. 8d-9. Norway House Correspondence, 1845-1848, Evans to Ross, 13 October 1845, mf. 1M217.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. and fo. 9d, Ross to Evans, 14 October 1845. Evans wrote again, 17 October 1845, informing Ross that he had corrected “the false impression under which Mesetaquon and others have laboured.” See WMMSA 13, 13g, 25. For Evans’ rough notes for his response to Ross’s October 14 letter, as well as a letter from Henry B. Steinhauer and affidavit from John McKay, both dated 25 May 1845 [evidently prompted by similar charges in the spring], see WMMSA 13, 13g, 17.

<sup>95</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154.b/3, fo. 9d.

<sup>96</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 25; PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/3, fo. 9.



two very different languages were spoken with few people proficient in both. His second objection that the investigation had been conducted improperly followed directly from the first. "Had the question been put in a proper shape to the Indians before Masetaquon," he asserted, "as was about to be done by Mr. Steinhauer...without other interference, this correspondence would have been avoided."<sup>97</sup> In other words, it was not enough simply to ask a question. There had to be additional questions to ensure that the first was understood. Similarly, the meaning of any answer had to be clarified in the same way, as well as probed to determine its accuracy and relevance. Without those controls, the evidence could be manipulated for any end.

These disagreements were absent from Mason's December report. The mission was prospering. There were 110 "full & accredited" members and about 200 regularly attending services, the gardens had produced a bountiful harvest of "1000 Bushels of Potatoes," and at long last they had "received the Press by the Fall boats."<sup>98</sup> However, dark clouds loomed on the horizon. Even as he wrote, measures were being taken in Montreal to punish the missionaries for the May crisis, and a week later, in a private letter to Ross, Simpson wrote confidently, "I think the recall of Mr. Evans is certain, and that Mason will have a Rap over the knuckles for leaguings with him against you."<sup>99</sup> Such decisions, made so far away from Norway House, could not affect the lives of either Evans or Mason until the spring of 1846. In the meantime, a local storm was ready to descend on Rossville in all its fury.

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<sup>97</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 17, Evans' rough notes for reply to Ross's letter of 14 October 1845.

<sup>98</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 27, Mason to Secretaries, 22 December 1845.

<sup>99</sup> PABC, AE, R73, La5, Ross Papers, Simpson to Ross, 29 December 1845.

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*Rossville, February 1846*

If in December 1845 William Mason was unaware of the storm approaching Rossville, he was certainly in the thick of it when it arrived. Indeed, he was at the centre of the sensational events surrounding the trial of James Evans, and the trial transcript which forms the basis of this study is the copy he sent to the Wesleyan Missionary Society on 5 March 1846. That document also establishes that it was Mason himself who initiated the investigation that brought the whole affair out into the open. However, as he explained in his preamble, events forced the issue.

For several weeks past reports of a very bad character have been circulating through the Village. Not one of our members informed me of the circumstances of the case, nor did I give credit to any of the rumours. The first member who mentioned the case to me was Mr. H. B. Stienhauer [sic] – he said on one occasion that he had heard of a bad affair which if it be true would ruin the whole of our Cause. I asked him what it was he could not say at present. “Who was the person implicated”? He replied, “Mr. Evans”.<sup>1</sup>

When Mason had that conversation, he did not say, but on February 3, he met Steinhauer's informant, David Jones, and confronted him concerning the stories he had been circulating throughout the community.<sup>2</sup> After their conversation, Mason "took the first opportunity to acquaint Mr. Evans of the reports," then "had a long conversation with him on the best method

<sup>1</sup> WMMSA, Mason to Secretaries, trial transcript, 3 February 1846, 1. Although aware for several weeks of the seriousness of the reports circulating in Rossville, Mason apparently could not face the implications until his interview with Jones on February 3 forced his hand. In any case, Evans was already well aware of the rumours. See trial transcript, 1, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. They met in the printing office, but it is not clear whether it was a chance or arranged meeting. Jones named some "some females" who claimed Evans "had had or had tried to have unlawful connections with them" while they were living in his home. Jones believed them "because females would not say such things of themselves if they were not true." A man of about "30 to 35 years of age," Jones was married to Ann <<<ᵒᵑ [Pah-pah-nah-ki-s]. He was an active church member who had received some education at Red River, although Mason said he had "nearly forgot all he learned." Ibid., 48.

to be pursued” concerning them.<sup>3</sup> They had just agreed that Mason would question the “implicated females,” when Steinhauer came into the office and in response to Evans’ inquiry confirmed that he had heard the reports.<sup>4</sup> Then he named his other informants, one of whom was Thomas Soowahyet, Mason’s “servant man,” who “was told it by Nancy Katammuk who received it directly from one of the implicated females.”<sup>5</sup>

After his meeting with Evans, Mason returned home and interviewed both Thomas and Nancy whose statements confirmed what he had “previously heard.”<sup>6</sup> Steinhauer acted as interpreter then and again that evening when Eliza Majekekwanab came to the house to give her statement.<sup>7</sup> She began by saying that it was “the habit of Mr. Evans” to go to “the place where she and another girl [Hannah Goostahk]” were sleeping, pull off their bedclothes, and sometimes lie down to tease and play with them.<sup>8</sup> Next she described an incident, which occurred when she went upstairs where the moss was kept.<sup>9</sup> She said that Evans followed, caught hold of her, threw her down on the moss, and lifted up her clothes. She called out while trying to keep him off and claimed Alexander Nakuwao heard her, came up and asked, “Am I

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2. The “implicated females” were “Eliza ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Majekekwanab,” “Hannah ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Goostahk,” “Alice McKay,” “Margaret ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Mamanuwartum formerly Maggy Sinclair,” and “Anna Sapin.” Eliza and Alice, a “Scotch female” from Red River, were both residing in the Evans home at this time.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2-3. Thomas had been Mason’s servant for two years; Nancy had lived with the Masons, probably as a maidservant, “for 8 months.” Ibid., 49.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2. Perhaps that is why they were not included with the transcript.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2-3. She was described as “a Mission Girl about 18 years, residing in the house of Mr. Evans, & a member of [the] Society.” Her full statement is found on pages 3-5.

<sup>8</sup> They slept in the kitchen. See trial transcript, 15.

<sup>9</sup> She described this incident, which probably occurred in the fall of 1845, when asked, “Have you any more to say?” Eliza was getting moss for caulking prior to “mudding” the exterior walls of the Evanses’ log house, a typical fall chore to make it snug for the winter.

the man you are calling for?" Evans let her go and tried to brush the moss off her back as she ran downstairs. "I knew at that time," she said, "Mr. Evans tried to do bad to me." She and the girl who was serving with her in the kitchen agreed that if Evans ever came in the night and did anything to them that was improper, they would "leave the place and tell it."

Another incident occurred one evening when Evans sent Eliza to the church to get a pair of snuffers.<sup>10</sup> A girl [Hannah Goostahtahk] and a boy [Martin Pupahnukis] accompanied her, the boy carrying the candle.<sup>11</sup> When they got there, the candle went out, so the two girls waited in the porch while Martin went inside. When he returned with the snuffers, they went outside and "played awhile by the door." All at once they noticed the door open, and Hannah went to close it. They stood awhile longer, then the door opened again, and Eliza closed it, saying, "There must be someone in there." As they started running home, they saw Evans come out of the church and run past them and into the house. They went to the kitchen which also served as Eliza's and Hannah's sleeping place, and after a while Evans looked in, saw who was there, and went out again. He returned with a whip and gave the boy a thrashing. According to Eliza, Evans asked Martin if he knew why he was being whipped, the boy said he did, then Evans said, "You are the only one that knows it."<sup>12</sup> Later that night Evans came again and pulled the blankets away from them. She said, "Go away for shame, you are foolish; you thrashed a boy

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<sup>10</sup> A scissor-like instrument for removing the snuff or charred portion of a candlewick.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah was named in Eliza's statement, but Martin, a boy of twelve, was not identified until the trial.

<sup>12</sup> The transcript provides a confusing account of this incident. Indeed, Evans' alleged comment makes no sense. Certainly he knew why he was punishing Martin, and Eliza thought she did, too. To add to the confusion, the transcript provides no explanation as to why Evans was in the church after he had specifically sent Eliza there for the snuffers. This might have provided some clues concerning Martin's punishment. Whatever his reasons, the incident does give us a glimpse of how far Evans was prepared to go in his supervision of the young Cree men and women living under his charge. Considering the freedom they had enjoyed in traditional Cree and fur trade society, they must have found his regimen oppressive.

for playing with us, now you come to play with us.”<sup>13</sup> Then he lay down and began to play with the other girl [Hannah], saying, “When you get a man this is the way he will do to you.” Eliza said she then covered herself with a blanket and did not see what else he did. Asked if she had anything further to add about the incident, she said no, but stated that Evans had met earlier that very evening with her and Eliza Seeseeb, telling them, “Perhaps Mr. Mason will call and ask you something, do not you say anything.”<sup>14</sup>

The following morning, February 4, Mason interviewed Alexander Nakuwao in the presence of Steinhauer for confirmation of Eliza’s story.<sup>15</sup> Nakuwao admitted being there “at the time they were taking in potatoes with Adam Moody, but he never saw Mr. Evans and Eliza alone together.” He also said he never heard her call out nor did he remember ever saying ‘Am I the man you are calling for?’”<sup>16</sup> Later that day, Mason together with his wife and Steinhauer dined at the HBC fort at Norway House “lest...staying away might be attributed to a wrong cause.”<sup>17</sup> He also went to the printing office and talked to Evans about what to do next. After

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<sup>13</sup> In Eliza’s view, Martin and Evans were doing the same things. In Cree culture, familiar conversation or joking between members of the opposite sex was often a prelude to serious courtship, especially between persons of marriageable age. See A. Irving Hallowell, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Ethnography Into History*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 54-56. Familiar with Algonquian culture and language, Evans must have known this and perhaps punished Martin, although only a boy, for going beyond acceptable “play” with Eliza and Hannah. On the other hand, Evans seems to have understood his own “play” with the girls as teasing, as that by an older of a younger person or child, and attributed nothing sexual to it. Indeed, he reportedly believed that the mission rule “never to be seen alone with young females” applied only to the unmarried missionaries. See trial transcript, 30. Because of the subtlety of these distinctions in Evans’ mind, it is little wonder that the young women were confused, especially in view of his remark to Hannah, which they recalled and even he acknowledged went too far.

<sup>14</sup> Eliza Seeseeb was another teenaged girl living with the Evanses at the time.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 5. Anything added later to the transcript was set apart by brackets. See Ibid., 23, 25. Alex’s testimony fits this category. Evans noticed it was missing when he reviewed the evidence on February 9 and reminded Mason on February 12 to send it along with the other documents to Donald Ross. Steinhauer had to transcribe it from memory at Mason’s request, not having written it down at the time. Ibid., 29, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Trial transcript, 5. The potato harvest is another evidence that the incident occurred in the fall of 1845.

<sup>17</sup> There was still tension evident between the mission and the HBC over events of the previous summer.

considerable discussion, it was decided "to bring the case to a trial" with Mason acting as "Judge and Committee."<sup>18</sup> Evans also indicated that it would be "contrary to the Wesleyan Discipline" for anyone but Mason to act in that capacity unless it was a person "of equal standing" with Evans in the Church.<sup>19</sup> "After much reluctance," Mason consented, "thinking it would all circumstances considered be most conducive to the glory of God." Evidently feeling the stress, he later wrote, "this day has been a day of mental anguish."<sup>20</sup>

The next morning, February 5, Mason took statements from "Anna Sapin" and "Margaret Mamanuwartum" with Steinhauer again acting as interpreter. The contents were shocking. Indeed, Mason wrote, "Nothing but a sense of duty could ever induce me to send such statements home."<sup>21</sup> Anna said that Evans came often "in the nights," and that "he wanted to do bad" to her. Apparently, one time he touched her feet, she kicked him, and he covered her. Either that time or another, he pulled off the covers and began to wrestle with her. At another time he came carrying a candle in the middle of the night, and she awoke as she felt him at her feet in the act of lifting up her clothes. She "started and turned herself" and Evans "got up" and told her to cover herself again. She wanted to leave the household but Evans would not let her go, so she told her brother, and he came for her. She also said Margaret told her Evans had

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<sup>18</sup> Trial transcript, 5-6. According to the transcript, Evans said, "I cannot wait for two years for the thing to be decided at home for how can I preach while the people believe such things of me, and it is impossible to send for our brethren their stations are so distant....you must be both Judge and Committee in the case for I consider no other person but you my Peer, and I will be judged by my Peers."

<sup>19</sup> It may be that Evans wanted to exclude Ross who was a Company magistrate. However, on February 10, he wrote, "Had I the power so to do I would ask Mr. Ross in whose judgment I have the greatest confidence to investigate the whole affair as a Magistrate but being the accused I am placed beyond this."

<sup>20</sup> Trial transcript, 6. Evans apparently increased that pressure by telling Mason he was confident that he would return a verdict of 'not guilty' if the evidence was wanting, and if otherwise, Evans would ever after respect him for having done his duty, but would "appeal to Conference."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

often come in the night and “knew” her. Margaret’s statement was even more incriminating. She said Evans came “often” in the nights and lifted up her clothes, and “did bad” to her “many times” after Eliza [Seeseeb] was asleep. Here she wept. She could not remember how many times, but it was in the study where she slept. She did not want to do it, but he was always angry when she said no. He hurt her much the first time he did it, but he told her she would never have a child. She said she felt in her heart that it was bad, but he told her not to tell and made promises to give her “some things.”<sup>22</sup>

The trial began later in the morning “a short time” after Anna and Margaret had given their statements. There were three charges against James Evans. The first two, brought forward by David Jones, accused him of (1): “an act of fornication on the person of Margaret Mamanuwartum formerly Maggie Sinclair,” and (2): “several attempts at fornication on the person of Anna Sapin.” The third charge brought forward by Thomas Sooquawetum and Nancy Katummuk was for “several attempts at fornication on the person of Eliza Majekekwanab.” Evans pleaded not guilty to all of them.

Mason began by examining Margaret on the first charge. Most of his questions were phrased from the statement she had just given him and in such a way that they could be answered with a simple yes or no.<sup>23</sup> However, when asked something that was not in her statement, such as what Evans said “when he came” to her, she made no reply.<sup>24</sup> At the end of her testimony,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 9. This was significant, because it made it much easier for her to maintain her story, if in fact she was lying. The only deviation was that she testified Evans came to her “in the morning” when her statement said he came to her “in the nights.”

<sup>24</sup> Seemingly, she could not or would not articulate anything beyond her earlier statement. Indeed, when Mason persisted with his next question, “Did he speak?” all she could say was, “Yes he spoke.”

Mason asked, "Are you sure that what you have told us this morning is true, and perfect truth?" Margaret said, "Yes," at which point Evans interjected, "It is a lie, and you are a wicked bad girl."<sup>25</sup> He then began his cross-examination by asking if she had told Nancy Budd that he had promised to give her something every summer. She replied, "Yes." He next asked, "Did Mrs. Evans ask you that question?" "Yes," she said again. "And what did you say?" continued Evans. "No," she answered, "because you told me not to talk."<sup>26</sup> Evans then asked her if she had once reported to him that people were saying bad things about him, and that she told them she "knew Mr. Evans was a good man, that they were telling lies."<sup>27</sup> She admitted that she had told him that. When Evans asked her if he said or did anything bad when she passed on her report, she said no. He then said to her, "Did I not say to you – You are a good girl Maggy for coming to tell me?"<sup>28</sup> She said, "Yes." At this point, Mason interjected. Apparently seeing the contradiction in her testimony, he asked if she remembered while she was telling Evans he was a good man that "he had had connections with her" and that she was telling him what was not the truth. Again, she answered, "Yes."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Evans' interjection would never have been tolerated in a regular court, but this was a church court conducted by amateurs, and there was little in its proceedings or in the recording of those proceedings that could be seen as proper legal practice.

<sup>26</sup> Evans' strategy was to discredit the witness by showing her to have lied on other occasions. He did not respond directly to her explanation that he had told her not to talk, at least no response is mentioned in the transcript, although it does record that he denied a similar allegation by Eliza. Trial transcript, 13.

<sup>27</sup> She told Evans about the rumours at the time she came and asked him to write a letter for her. Apparently, she had further told the people she "would go and tell Mr. Evans," adding that she had lived with "Mr. & Mrs. Evans for a long time" and she "would never believe...what the people said he did."

<sup>28</sup> Throughout the trial, Evans used this strategy to discredit the witnesses against him. How could they tell such stories about him, when he had always admonished them to be good girls?

<sup>29</sup> This answer was the only response she could make, if she wanted to maintain her story about Evans. However, by "admitting" she had lied in the past, she also reduced her credibility as a witness.



Mason next examined Anna Sapin on the second charge.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Margaret, she elaborated in some detail when answering the questions, but there were glaring discrepancies between that testimony and the statement she had given Mason earlier in the morning.<sup>31</sup> She had said then that Evans came *often* in the nights and provided details concerning what seemed to be two and perhaps three instances.<sup>32</sup> In her testimony, she was ambiguous about how often he came, and at least two of those instances now became one.<sup>33</sup> In fact, what appeared to be a *third* in the statement also seemed in her testimony to be part of the first.<sup>34</sup> When Mason asked her about that so-called third instance, if Evans ever came to her with a candle in his hand, she replied, "Yes, that time only." As if to make sure, Mason next asked, "Did he come to you more than once?" Her reply was, "only once." His final question was, "The time he came to you did he lift up your clothes?" She said, "Yes. He did and in the act of lifting up my clothes I awoke and drew up myself." This confirmed her statement that when Evans came with the candle, "I felt him lifting up my clothes, and in the act I awoke." However, Mason had earlier in her testimony asked, "Did he touch your feet?" in a direct reference to the "first" incident mentioned in the statement, and she had replied, "Yes – and *when waking me I drew myself up*

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<sup>30</sup> Trial transcript, 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Her statement made more claims. For instance, Evans "wanted to do bad" to her, when he touched her feet, she "kicked" him, he "came and pulled away the blanket and then began to wrestle" with her. In her testimony, she "thought that [Evans wanted to "do bad" to her], but then he did not do anything," there was no mention of kicking him, and "wrestle" became "play."

<sup>32</sup> However, ambiguity may have been less her fault than the ineptitude of the people taking her evidence.

<sup>33</sup> This is relatively easy to ascertain, because Mason's questions followed the text of the statement chronologically. When the statement and testimony are compared, it is evident that she was speaking of a single instance in which Evans allegedly touched her feet, she drew herself up, then he covered her up with a blanket, and he left.

<sup>34</sup> After questioning her about that first instance, Mason asked her, "Did he ever come to you again any other night?" According to the transcript, she replied, "I do not know that he ever did." This contradicted her original statement that "at another time" he came with a candle in his hand.

[emphasis added]. This was additional proof that she was speaking about *one* incident, and as for the claim that Evans lifted up her clothes, during the cross-examination that followed she directly contradicted what she had said earlier in that regard.<sup>35</sup>

Evans began his cross-examination by challenging Anna on her reasons for leaving his house. She had said she left because of what Evans was doing; he asked if it was not because she was displeased with Alice McKay.<sup>36</sup> She denied it. Then he asked if Margaret had told her that “Mr. Evans did lie with her?” She replied, “Yes. What she told I told.” His remaining questions involved the instance when he allegedly came with the candle. In her answers, she admitted that, except for his coat, he was clothed when he came to her, he did not wrestle with her, he threw something on her, told her to cover herself, and “went away with the candle.” Finally, he asked her, “Did I pull off the blanket, or lift up your clothes when you awoke?” She replied, “No.” “Did I say anything to you, but tell you to cover yourself?” “No,” was her reply, “What I have already said is the thing, and is all.”

After Anna’s testimony, Eliza Majekekwanab was called to testify on the third charge.<sup>37</sup> As he had done in his examination of Margaret and Anna, Mason asked the questions in chronological order from the statement Eliza had earlier given. He reviewed her allegation that it was Evans’ habit to go [to the kitchen] where she and Hannah Goostahtahk slept and

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<sup>35</sup> In her defence, she may have been confused by the word, “clothes” in the question posed by Mason. “Blankets” and “bed clothes” were both mentioned in the trial transcript. See Eliza’s statement for an example. Possibly Anna was able to give a definitive “No,” when Evans distinguished between the two in his more specific question, “Did I pull off the *blanket*, or lift up your *clothes*, when you awoke?” There was no ambiguity in Evans’ question, so evasiveness was more difficult. On the other hand, her statement quoted her as saying, “Mr. Evans troubled me in the nights – he came and *pulled* away the blanket [emphasis added].”

<sup>36</sup> Alice McKay, a young Scottish woman, had been brought from Red River by Evans in 1845 to teach spinning to the school children and young women. She was still at Evans’ house at the time of the trial.

<sup>37</sup> Trial transcript, 11-13.

“sometimes lie down to teaze and play” with them, then he moved to the incident when Evans allegedly threw her down on the moss and lifted up her clothes, and finally to the incident at the church and the subsequent whipping of the boy, who was now identified as “Martin Pupahnukis.” According to the transcript, at this point Evans interjected, “All that is very true.”<sup>38</sup> Mason then asked if “on the same night near morning” Evans had “again” gone to their bed and pulled the blankets from them.<sup>39</sup> Evans remained silent as Eliza repeated her earlier statements concerning Evans’ conduct at that time, including his incriminating remark to Hannah. However, when she said that he told Eliza Seeseeb and her not to say anything, Evans flatly denied it. When Mason repeated the question, all she could say was, “He said so at first afterward he told me to tell everything.”

During cross-examination by Evans, Eliza admitted that Evans had “many a time” spoken to her about the talk concerning her and “Barnard,” how she ought to take care of herself and be a good girl.<sup>40</sup> She also admitted that Evans had said nothing bad during the incident with the moss, but when he suggested that her clothes flew up, rather than being lifted up, she stuck to her earlier testimony. She also denied saying it for the benefit of Nancy Katummuk, when they discussed moving to “Masetakwn’s [sic].”<sup>41</sup> Nothing more was recorded, except Mason’s

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<sup>38</sup> It is unclear to what this statement referred. Evans certainly did not agree with all Eliza’s testimony up to this point because he disputed aspects of it in his cross-examination.

<sup>39</sup> The word “again” confirms their bed was in the kitchen.

<sup>40</sup> Evidently there were rumours concerning a relationship between Eliza and Bernard Rogan Ross, who was a young apprentice clerk at the HBC fort.

<sup>41</sup> Apparently, Nancy said that she would leave the Masons, if Eliza left the Evanses, so that they could go and live at Thomas Masetaquan’s house. Evidently, both women were dissatisfied with their situations.

statement that “during the above examination I desired Alexander Nakuwao to be sent for, but my wish was not complied with.”<sup>42</sup>

The second witness called on the third charge was Hannah Goostahtahk.<sup>43</sup> During Mason’s interrogation, she remembered the incident with the snuffers and Evans coming to their bed the following morning. To a general question about Evans coming in the night to her, she replied, “only in the mornings to make the fires.” When asked what Eliza had said to Evans, she said that she did not hear, but when Mason prodded her memory, she replied that they both said, “Are you not ashamed to come here?” When he asked if Evans had then lain down with her and began to play with her, she at first said, “Yes, he laid down.” Then she backtracked, saying, “He was going to lay down but did not.” At first, she testified that he said nothing to her, but when Mason asked, “Did he not say that when you get Thomas Sooquawetum this is the way he will do to you?” she acknowledged that he had said so.<sup>44</sup> She also said he had put his arm around her neck, but she could not remember if she thought he intended bad at the time. Under cross-examination by Evans, she denied that he had tried to do anything bad to her while she was living in his house. She also denied that he had done or shown anything bad at the time he put his arm around her, nor had she seen him do anything bad with Eliza.<sup>45</sup> She agreed that Evans had told them to be good girls, that he said he would

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<sup>42</sup> Trial transcript, 13. This insertion was in brackets, indicating it had been added later. On March 5, when he finally saw a copy of the transcript Mason said he sent home, Evans was furious. He may have been referring to this passage among others, when he said that he had been misrepresented as exercising authority over Mason during the trial. See Chapter 5, n. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Trial transcript, 14-15. There was no preliminary statement from her, possibly because she had made no charges against Evans. Perhaps a reluctant witness, she occasionally needed prompting before answering.

<sup>44</sup> This is the first reference to Thomas Sooquawetum in this context, and suggests a more subtle meaning than “when you get a *man* this is the way he will do with you [emphasis added].” Was Evans teasing her about someone she either liked or was sure to dislike?

<sup>45</sup> Significantly, Evans admitted he put his arm “round” her. Trial transcript, 14.

try to assist them by and by. She also agreed that she and Eliza had wanted to leave, not because Evans had done anything wrong, but because the people were saying bad things about them.<sup>46</sup> She acknowledged that Evans had asked Eliza and her in the presence of his wife and Margaret “Masetagwn” if he had ever done anything bad to them, or if what was said in the village was true. Then he asked, “Did you not say that all the talk was nothing, that it was nothing but play?” She replied that they said they were lies.<sup>47</sup> Evans closed his cross-examination by asking questions of both Hannah and Eliza. In response, they agreed he was in the habit of checking the fires in the kitchen where they slept and sometimes covered them up with blankets or went for a buffalo robe to cover them. They also agreed he got up before the rest of the household to make the fires in the morning. With that, the first day of the trial ended.

After attending the usual prayer meeting, Mason and Steinhauer were up until twelve o’clock, compiling the minutes of the trial.<sup>48</sup> Sometime during that first day of the trial, Mason also took statements at Evans’ request from three women “who had formerly lived as Servants in his [Evans’] house.”<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, one of them was Ann Jones, whose husband David had preferred charges against Evans.<sup>50</sup> She stated that she had lived in Evans’ house “not half a

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<sup>46</sup> This explains Evans’ comment. “I suppose this is the reason why both my girls wanted to leave my house,” made when Mason first brought the matter up to him, February 3. Hannah did in fact leave.

<sup>47</sup> What constituted “play” in the minds of Evans and those who spoke for and against him at the trial was never spelled out clearly in the trial transcript. According to Eliza’s statement, she and Hannah could not distinguish between what Evans did and what he punished Martin for, but here Hannah admitted that they did not equate it with what was said of Evans in the village.

<sup>48</sup> Trial transcript, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>50</sup> Ann was the daughter of William <<ᑭᑭᑭᑭ [Pah-pah-nah-ki-s] and older sister of “Martin Pupahnukis” who received the whipping from Evans. She must have worked for Evans in the winter of 1840-1841, because she said it was when he “first came.” She was about seventeen years of age and unmarried at the

winter,” but she “never did see him do anything that was bad,” only “laughing and playing but nothing further.”<sup>51</sup> Sarah St. Germain, who had lived in Evans’ house for two years, could not say that she “ever saw him do anything that was bad,” and added, “He played with me but never beyond that.”<sup>52</sup> Mary Ka-ahkesas could not remember how long she had lived with Mr. Evans, but she too “never saw him do bad.”<sup>53</sup> Eliza Seeseeb also gave a statement of some kind, “but she told direct falsehoods,” so Mason “did not think her testimony worth taking.”<sup>54</sup>

On the second day of the trial, February 6, Evans resumed his cross-examination of Margaret “Mamanuwartum.”<sup>55</sup> He asked if she had told Alice [McKay] to tell him, because she did not like to tell it herself, that the people were speaking bad of him. Margaret replied that she had and had already told him so.<sup>56</sup> When asked why she did that, she replied, “For nothing.” Then he asked if this was the same reason she had told Nancy Budd [about the promise to give her something], and she replied yes. He next called on Alice McKay, who confirmed the story,

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time. See PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entry 102. Ann could have seen little of Evans that winter because he was away from 14 December until the following March.

<sup>51</sup> Both Ann and Sarah made a distinction between innocent “play” and “anything that was bad.” Whatever the bounds were, they believed he had not crossed them.

<sup>52</sup> Sarah was a sister of Alexander Nakuwao and niece of Henry Budd. She had worked for Evans from 1841 to 1843, while they were still living at the fort. She left his service at about the age of twenty-one years, when she married HBC labourer Jacques St. Germain on 17 April 1843. Indeed, Evans paid “Sarah Neckaway” 10 shillings, on April 10. (See PAM, HBCA, B.154/d/91, p. 3, Norway House Servants book Debts, 1843-1844, mf. 1M548.)

<sup>53</sup> This woman was Mary ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (May-chi-ki-h-kwah-nay-p[b]), either a sister or half-sister to Flora Wesley and Eliza ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ. She was baptised in 1840 at the age of thirteen years, making her about seventeen when she married Amos “Keakesas” in 1844. Since she probably worked in the Evans home prior to her marriage, she must have been young at the time.

<sup>54</sup> “Eliza Seeseep’s evidence” later became a bone of contention between him and Evans. See Chapter 5.

<sup>55</sup> Trial transcript, 17-18. The more correct ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ (May-May-ni-wah-tah-m) was also used in the text.

<sup>56</sup> The transcript quotes her as saying, “Yes I have said all that and I told you that I had told Alice.” wording that suggests a growing annoyance at Evans’ line of questioning. Her comment “For nothing” was anything but cooperative.

including Margaret's statement that she knew Evans was a good man and would never believe the things people were saying about him. Then he turned to Margaret and confronted her with a story she had told Evans, Mrs. Evans, and their daughter Clara that Jack Ballandyne of Moose Lake often left his bed and wife and came to sleep with her.<sup>57</sup> She admitted it, but denied he had done anything. Evans then turned to his wife and asked her if Margaret had told that story, and she said yes.<sup>58</sup> At this point Mason interjected, "Maggie, what did you think Jack Ballandyne wanted to do when he came to your bed so often?" She replied that he told her what he wanted to do. As Mason queried, she admitted Ballandyne came often, although he did not stay long. She was sharing her bed with a "French girl" of about thirteen years of age who was aware of the visits, but it was Margaret, and not the girl, who made them known.<sup>59</sup>

Evans then questioned Eliza Majekekwanab again. She admitted lying to Tahtahmao, Eliza Seeseeb's mother, as well as to "the girls," when she said that she had seen Evans and Alice McKay sleeping together.<sup>60</sup> Although seemingly redundant, Mason interjected with the same questions, and she answered them in the same way. His direction became clear, however, with the next question, "Did you not say last night that you never told Tahtahmao, That you never

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<sup>57</sup> Jack Ballendine was the HBC postmaster at Moose Lake, and Margaret was there in December 1840, when she was baptised by Evans.

<sup>58</sup> This is the first indication in the transcript that Mrs. Evans was present during the trial. Clara had married by this time and had moved to eastern Canada with her husband John McLean, but the reference is a reminder that she was still living with her parents at Rossville while Margaret was there.

<sup>59</sup> The "French girl" was actually Metis, and it was Evans who interjected that she was 13. Her name was Mary Baby, a daughter of Baptiste Baby, the HBC fisherman at Moose Lake. She was about 10 years old, when she was baptised in 1840; therefore, she would have been around thirteen in the summer of 1843 when Margaret became a servant in the Evans household. See PAM, R145, GR1212. Item 10, entry 133.

<sup>60</sup> "The girls" were never clearly identified.

told them [the girls] such a thing?"<sup>61</sup> Eliza admitted she had said so; then Evans posed the question to Tahtahmao, who confirmed that Eliza had in fact denied telling her. He next cross-examined Eliza about the time he threw her on the moss. She admitted later going to the room where they were eating and Mrs. Evans observing she was covered with moss. She also admitted that Evans told her to clean the moss off her clothes, that she then said he was the one that did it, and that she ran out laughing. Turning to Alice McKay, Evans asked if she remembered his saying then that he had thrown Eliza on the moss. Alice responded, "Yes."<sup>62</sup>

In order to further discredit Margaret's testimony, Evans called on Tahtahmao and her daughter, Eliza Seeseeb. Both affirmed they had never seen or heard of his doing anything bad at the times when they lived in his home. Eliza admitted that she always slept with Margaret in the bunk bed. She also admitted she was sick then and often unable to sleep, but never saw or heard Evans come to Maggie's bed to sleep with her. When asked if she thought the bunk bed was so large that a man could come and sleep with Maggie and she not know it, she replied no. Evans then turned to Margaret and asked her pointedly if she had slept in the bunk bed with Eliza. When she said yes, a puzzled Mason asked her if she had not the previous day told them she slept in the study, and Evans had done "bad" to her there. When she said yes, he asked her directly if she had actually slept in the study. She admitted that she had not, and Evans interjected, "She never slept in the study but in the Indian Room." With that, Mason said, "Maggy, you are telling us lies. You said so yesterday, and now you contradict yourself."

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<sup>61</sup> Trial transcript, 18. This new testimony must have been gathered and discussed the previous evening, but there is no mention of it anywhere in the transcript. Evidently Mason heard Eliza say that she had never told Tahtahmao, but the circumstances under which he heard it were never made clear.

<sup>62</sup> Trial transcript, 18-19.



Evans then turned to David Jones and said, "Do you hear what she says?" David replied, "Yes, I hear she is telling lies now."<sup>63</sup>

Evans then called Samuel Pahpahnahkis, who had also lived for a time in the Evans home. He testified, "I never saw, and never heard anything that was bad that Mr. Evans ever did, or said." When Evans asked, "Did she [Margaret] ever complain that I was bad with her?" Samuel replied, "She never told me anything." However, when Evans asked if she had wanted "to do bad" with Samuel in the kitchen, he denied it. Evans persisted. "Did not both myself and Mrs. Evans often tell you when you complained how bad she did to turn her out of the kitchen?" he asked. "Yes," replied Samuel, "I know her character well, and Mrs. Evans told me not to allow her (Maggy) to come into the kitchen, I knew she was not a good woman."<sup>64</sup> Mason now cross-examined Margaret for the last time, reminding her that she had earlier testified that she had tried to prevent Evans' advances. Now he asked, "Did you call out?" "No," she replied. "Did you try to awake Eliza?" "No," once again. "Could you not wake Eliza?" "Yes," she replied.

At this point, David Jones said, "I have more evidence to bring yet"; then, after a few words between him and Evans, "Charles Mamanuwartum" was sent for.<sup>65</sup> Charles explained he had

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 20. Mason's exchange with Margaret, Evans' interjection about the Indian room, and Evans' exchange with Jones were in brackets. Mason explained that he remembered them later "when he was sick in bed & when Mr Evans came to see me I told him of them, - & they were put down in there [sic] proper place."

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 21. Evidently, Samuel had complained about Margaret's coming to the kitchen, where he slept, and making a nuisance of herself. He seemed to have a low opinion of her character, but he denied that she wanted to do anything "bad" with him.

<sup>65</sup> It is difficult to understand why Jones wanted Charles cross-examined, other than the fact his evidence substantiated Anna's claim that Evans had come to her room with a candle. It was quite clear from his evidence that Charles was in Evans' camp. Ibid., 22-23.

been talking that morning with David Jones and gave a synopsis of what he had said.<sup>66</sup> Apparently, he was sleeping in the Indian room when he suddenly awoke, noticed a light, and looked through a knothole in the partition into the study where Anna was sleeping. He said Evans had a candle in his hand and sat down somewhere in the room. Anna drew up her legs, then Evans told her to cover herself and went away.<sup>67</sup> He was only there a little while, and Anna was asleep. Cross-examined first by Mason, then by Evans, Charles said he had never seen Evans do anything bad, either to Anna or the other girls, and Anna had never told him so. He had looked through the hole not because he was thinking bad himself or thought Evans intended bad, but because he saw the light there. Finally, Evans asked, "Did you not know me often to go in the mornings to awaken the girls and yourself?" "Yes," he replied, "I know that he (Mr. Evans) does & sometimes came to awaken me." The cross-examination of the witnesses was over, but before the trial ended, David Jones once again intervened.

[Here David Jones again stated that he had another person to bring forward I asked him who it was he replied Maggy - Maggy!! -Yes Maggy told me herself that Mr Evans knew her the time he took her alone to the sawing tent He called for her at Napasse's house and took her in his Carriol she positively told me that Well David do you wish to bring up Maggy again the Court is open, we will hear all she was to say if you choose to bring it forward - No I don't wish to bring it forward.]

The latter statement was taken down from memory as well as those in brackets --

[David Jones then referred to a promise which he said Mr Evans had made him sometime ago to pay him for interpreting. Mr Evans did not remember ever making such a promise, but said, 'David, if you can bring to my recollection that I ever made such a promise I will certainly pay you.']<sup>68</sup>

The trial now over, Mason returned a verdict of not guilty on the first charge of "fornication on the person of Margaret Mamanuwartum," but deferred his decision on the second and third

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<sup>66</sup> Recorded later from brief notes and memory by Mason and Steinhauer, possibly in consultation with Evans, this synopsis is unlikely to be a direct quotation of what Charles said.

<sup>67</sup> There was no cross-examination regarding Charles' initial statement that "Anna drew up her legs." The closest Mason got was his question, "You did not see him take off her blanket?" to which Charles replied, "No."

<sup>68</sup> Trial transcript, 23-24. No "latter statement...taken down from memory" is evident in the transcript.

charges of “several attempts to commit fornication” on the persons of Anna Sapin and Eliza Majekekwanab until the following Monday, when he found Evans not guilty on both. However, to the third he added, “but I conceive that I should ill discharge my duty should I not state that I think you have acted imprudently, and unbecoming the high, and responsible office you hold in the Church of God.”<sup>69</sup> This offended Evans, who immediately wrote back for a copy of the evidence on which Mason had made his decision, telling him he would “appeal to the Conference....on the appended clause of the verdict given on the Third charge.”<sup>70</sup>

Mason sent the “Evidences, faithfully copied” and later that day met with Evans concerning the appended clause. According to the transcript, Mason stood his ground, saying that his conscience would not allow him to be silent, and although he had attached his sentiments to the third charge, “it was not only to that case he intended them.”<sup>71</sup> Evans said, “I think you are out of order... You can write me your sentiments in a letter and I will thank you, and keep the letter, and after I am no more it may be published, or you can tell me now wherein you think I have done wrong.”<sup>72</sup> Mason then told him,

Well I think you have acted imprudently, - 1<sup>st</sup> In keeping Maggy so long as your servant knowing her character. - 2<sup>nd</sup> In being with her alone. here I mentioned to him the advice we received from Dr Alder before we left England “never to be seen alone with young females” to this Mr. Evans answered “yes he told you that because you were young men.” 3<sup>rd</sup> I think you are to blame in making use of that expression which you did to Hannah Goostahtahk. - 4<sup>th</sup> Also in being too familiar with the Girls.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.. The foregoing exchange was put in brackets, indicating that it was added later.

<sup>73</sup> Trial transcript. 30. For all his youth and inexperience, Mason had gone straight to the heart of the matter. Not only had Evans demonstrated a lack of judgment and discretion, but he was also blameworthy for the remark he made to Hannah and for his familiarity with the young women. Wisely, Mason made no

Weeping, Evans said, "I stand reproved before you and I thank you for your remarks." Then Mason rewrote the verdict on the third charge "leaving out the appended clause."<sup>74</sup>

On Tuesday, February 10, the people of Rossville gathered together to hear the verdict on the charges. According to the transcript, they came reluctantly. "Only a few females" responded to the bell, and when Steinhauer was sent to get them, they still did not come. Finally, Mason went himself, and they then came to the church.<sup>75</sup> As he addressed the congregation, he acknowledged that when he first heard some of the statements, he thought there was guilt, but he had investigated the matter "for the satisfaction of all parties, and by the request of Mr. Evans himself" and wanted to state publicly that he thought him not guilty of all the charges. He also reminded them that "many speak evil things when at the same time you do not believe them to be true, this is very wrong, and ought not to be." When his turn came to speak, Evans admitted that there was some truth in what had been said of his behaviour.

I have played with the girls, and with the women too when they came to my house, but I never intended or thought evil, though evil has been said of it. If I had wished to do any thing I should not have played with them before my family openly, and everywhere. I have never done these things in secret.<sup>76</sup>

Seemingly, the crisis had been resolved, and that afternoon the Masons, Evanses, and Steinhauer dined together. After dinner, "the enquiry was proposed what should be done with

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specific mention of the incident with the moss because motivation in that instance could be debated. However, Evans had crossed a line in his behaviour with Hannah. As blind as he appeared to be in such matters, even Evans had to acknowledge his error.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Mason sent the verdicts to Evans the following morning, apparently leaving out the appended clause in that copy.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 31. Steinhauer felt they were wrong "in going after them in that way, they should be left to please themselves whether they come or not." Mason responded, "Yes, this is the first time I have ever seen them manifest anything like this."

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 32. Evans' use of the word "play" without elaboration implies that both he and his congregation shared a consensus on its meaning in this context.

the documents.”<sup>77</sup> Mason thought they should go to England on the basis of “the 18 section page 59 parag. 4” of the Canada Wesleyan Discipline. After reading it, Evans agreed with him. They next discussed the propriety of sending a copy of the documents to Donald Ross, who had requested them on the behalf of the HBC “whose chaplain he considered Mr. Evans was.” According to the transcript, Evans objected, saying, “It would be betraying the interests of our Connection and out of order.”

Mason wrote Ross of the decision that same day and begged him “as a friend” to withdraw his request.<sup>78</sup> Ross did so reluctantly, but insisted that he be allowed “a perusal of the whole” as a member of the congregation.<sup>79</sup> Again Mason went for advice to Evans, who said he would write him [Mason] on the matter. Mason “now perceived that the interests of all our Missions in this country were more or less at stake & especially the future usefulness of Mr. Evans at this place.”<sup>80</sup> After a sleepless night apparently worrying about the fate of the mission, and the onset of chest pains the following morning, he went to see Ross for medical advice, then returned home and went to bed. Evans visited him briefly, then sent a letter in which he stated his opinion that “under ordinary circumstances” it would be improper to give Ross the documents for his “private perusal,” since Wesleyan Discipline required that all documents be retained until a decision could be made by Conference. However, “in this unhappy hour”

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<sup>77</sup> Trial transcript. 33. Mason may have raised the issue, since he happened to have in his pocket the “Canada Wesleyan Discipline.” on which the subsequent discussion was based. However, both he and Evans were keenly interested in acting in accordance with accepted Methodist procedure.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 34. To his credit, Mason took full responsibility for that decision.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 35. Ross refused to accept Mason’s argument that the documents were the property of the English Conference simply because of the “footing on which the Wesleyan Missionaries in this country stand with the Hon’ble Hudson’s Bay Company, their Officers, and servants.” Ibid., 34.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 35. It is unknown whether Mason shared this insight with Evans before he sent off the transcript.

Evans had not “the most distant wish” to withhold the evidence from Ross. If Mason decided to give it to him, Evans would not complain to Conference about it, and if he decided not to, Evans had no objection to his suggesting that Ross himself “call the parties who have given the Evidence and examine them.”<sup>81</sup> In the meantime, having seen how deeply distressed Mason was, Ross wrote a letter that afternoon and withdrew his request to see the documents.

Ross’s letter revived Mason’s spirits, but the next morning, February 12, after rereading Evans’ letter, he wrote again to his superintendent for advice on what he should do. Evans wrote back immediately and told him to send Ross “the Evidence, together with the Charges, Examinations, Verdicts & Correspondence on the subject.”<sup>82</sup> Apparently convinced, Mason made a copy of everything with the assistance of Steinhauer, and at Evans’ suggestion added Alex Nakuwao’s evidence, previously forgotten, but written up now by Steinhauer. Evans also told Mason that he “need not send his letter nor the Verdict with the appended clause.”<sup>83</sup>

On February 13, Evans brought Mason a signed statement from David Jones, declaring he now believed that what had been said of Evans was false. This Mason immediately sent to Ross, who shortly returned all of the documents, along with a letter in which he stated, “the evidence seems to me of a more than ordinary contradictory nature, and all that I can now say, is, that I am well disposed to think for the best.”<sup>84</sup> The following day, February 14, Mason recorded, “My mind together with my body has been greatly afflicted for myself, for my

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 39. Evans said he didn’t think the “Fathers of our Church” would be “so strenuous in enforcing the discipline of Methodism,” considering “the peculiarity & trying circumstances” of their circumstances.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 40. The letter must have been the one Evans sent, February 9, questioning the appended clause.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

fellow labourer, and more than all for the cause of God," but "I...am greatly indebted to the Kindness of Donald Ross Esq<sup>r</sup> for his promptly interposing in my behalf & in the behalf of the good cause."<sup>85</sup>

Although relieved that Ross's response had been so favourable, Mason was soon to be afflicted again. On Sunday, February 15, Evans asked him to read, prior to the service at the fort, the address he [Mason] had given to the Rossville congregation after the trial, along with David Jones' statement of February 13 "should you think it useful." Mason questioned "the propriety," of so doing, and the two men decided to refer the matter to Ross, who said, "No No I cannot allow it."<sup>86</sup> Mason and Evans managed to get through the service, but it was difficult for both of them.<sup>87</sup> Later that afternoon, Mason preached "to the Indians" and claimed that "All the inhabitants of the village were present."<sup>88</sup> He also attended the evening prayer meeting "led by Ben Sinclair a Local Preacher," then returned home and "had family prayers at which Johnny Mamanuwartum was present." Following those prayers, Johnny gave a statement to Mason, "which Mrs. Mason interpreted."<sup>89</sup> Its contents were incriminating. Johnny maintained that Evans had forced him to marry Margaret Sinclair. Evans allegedly raised the issue privately with him, telling him that "Maggie" had said Johnny was "the only

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 44. Mason felt it was out of order because, "there would not be a single Member of Society present" and "secondly because of his [Evans'] own feeling &c &c." Ross gave no reason for his refusal.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 45. Evans wept at times, and at the dinner afterwards with Ross, Mason "ate very little and suffered much afterward," his digestive organs "so affected as to cause an entire loss of appetite."

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., Evans later wondered if this statement was intended to give the impression that when he was preaching, it was otherwise. In any case, he wrote, "This is not true for there were many absent as there are always, the houses never being left with out some one in each." UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260. Journal, 2 March – 1 April 1846, entry for 4 March 1846.

<sup>89</sup> For his entire statement, see trial transcript, 45-47.

one" she loved. Johnny replied, apparently with some feeling, that he did not love her. He wished to "serve God and live good" and didn't think she cared about it. Evans persisted, telling him not to be angry or afraid, and promised, "If you want to build a house I will lend you any of my servant men & Johnny MacKay shall assist you to square the logs." Johnny said he discussed the matter with his widowed mother, at Evans' suggestion, but she withheld her approval because, "Maggie was a giddy girl and would not make me a good wife." Before leaving to work on the boats, he claimed he again spoke with Evans on the matter, telling him not to publish the banns because of his mother's disapproval.<sup>90</sup> Evans later spoke with her, although the statement did not indicate whether or not she changed her mind, and the banns were read three times, seemingly while Johnny was away. On his return, he claimed he again told Evans on the day of his marriage that the banns should not have been read without his consent. He affirmed, "What I say is the truth, he has cheated me of what he promised me....what my wife says I believe to be true."<sup>91</sup>

Significantly, Mason sent a copy of this statement to Evans, but he never told him that he was including it among the papers he sent back to England.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, that copy may also have included other statements, which were never shown to Evans. The first of these was attributed to Johnny, evidently a later addition because it was set apart by brackets.<sup>93</sup> The second was a

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<sup>90</sup> The banns were public announcements, usually at three successive church services, of a proposed marriage, so that anyone with just cause could register his or her opposition to the union.

<sup>91</sup> The marriage took place on 27 July 1844. PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 13, No. 67.

<sup>92</sup> Noting Mason's own doubts about the truthfulness of the statement [see note 94 below], Evans later wrote, "How could you after that send it off *privately* [emphasis added]." See WMMSA, Box No. 14, File 14g, Hudson's Bay Territories, 1846-1848, Item 8, Evans to Mason, 19 May 1846.

<sup>93</sup> Trial transcript, 47. It read, "John Mamanuwartum also said [If I had done what Mr. Evans had done to a girl I should certainly think I ought to give her something.]" This may have been included either to show that Johnny's motives were not all that honourable or to reinforce the suspicion that Evans was guilty.



positive comment on Johnny's character that tended to add weight to his report.<sup>94</sup> Following these two sentences, Mason wrote, "I have sent a copy of the above statements to Mr. Evans who will doubtless explain the whole to you in his correspondence."<sup>95</sup> Then, after giving short sketches of David Jones, Thomas Sooquawetum, and Nancy Katamuk, he brought the document to a close with a few concluding remarks. In them, he claimed, "I have not in any instance taken a single step in the affair without the knowledge or concurrence or direction of my Superintendent," adding that "any defects" in his procedure were due to his "inexperience, want of precedents, from...being alone, and the accused's inferior." It was disarmingly humble, particularly in view of the fact that much of what he said was true, but as subsequent events were to reveal, it was also not the whole story.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. The statement read, "Johnny Mamanuwartum is a steady industrious young man, has been a consistent member of our Society for several years, and was never known to be guilty of telling falsehoods." Evans is unlikely to have approved a remark that added credibility to a statement he hotly disputed. Moreover, in his May 19 letter to Mason, Evans wrote, "Did you not tell me that what Johnny told you, after writing that paper, convinced you that his motive was bad & that he had a design - & that you should never have mentioned it had I not enquired about what he said?" If true, Mason's unqualified character reference seems inappropriate here.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 47-48. In spite of his assertion, it is debatable whether Mason showed Evans exactly the same statements he sent home to the secretaries. Evans did not read Mason's transcript prior to its being sent, and he did not know beforehand that Mason had included the appended clause and Johnny's statement. It is also possible that he never saw any of the bracketed additions, for example, Mason's account of the interview he had with Evans on the appended clause. Ibid., 29-30.

*The Plot Thickens:  
Was Someone Pulling the Strings?*

William Mason's role in the Rossville Scandal was not as neutral as he would have had his superiors believe, even though that was not immediately obvious in the documents he sent home. Certainly he had not kept his superintendent informed every step of the way, as he claimed. When Evans discovered on March 5 that Mason had sent the transcript off to Red River without having read the final copy to him, he was furious.<sup>1</sup> "Sent your papers!" he exclaimed, "What and never either read them as you promised, nor gave me copies, nor told me they were going." Mason replied, "I never promised you a copy." "No Sir," responded Evans, "but you said I should hear what you wrote." Evans then insisted that Mason read a copy of what he had sent. The young man did so reluctantly, and for good reason. Evans' temper flared again, and he later wrote, "I was very severe as he proceeded – and I must give him greater credit than myself that he kept pretty cool."<sup>2</sup> Evans was upset to learn that this copy contained the appended clause, which had been removed from the version he had previously received, and that it also contained Mason's "private reproof" concerning that

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<sup>1</sup> See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 5 March 1846. The transcript had been sent that morning with the HBC packet of letters and memoranda bound for Red River via Berens River. Evans had not as yet prepared his papers and affidavits, thinking they would go together with Mason's in the spring packet to Red River. Mason's sending them now meant there was a possibility they would be sent on in the spring from Red River before the spring packet arrived there from Norway House. In that case, the transcripts would reach London *without* Evans' explanations and defence, and the Secretaries could be prejudiced irreparably against him. If that were not bad enough, Mason now suggested the possibility of their going on during the winter from Red River to England via St. Peter's [Minnesota]. That would ensure their arrival in London even earlier than expected.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Consisting of rough notes, portions of which have been scratched out, and written with a frankness Evans usually reserved for letters to his brother Ephraim, this journal provides invaluable insights concerning Evans' mindset, views, and activity in the weeks following the trial. Consistent with other sources, Evans is volatile, Mason evasive, and Steinhauer vainly attempting to please them both.

clause.<sup>3</sup> Evans was also angry that “Eliza Seeseep’s evidence” had been “quashed,” and that the size of the bunk bed had not been included, although Steinhauer and Mason measured it.<sup>4</sup> In addition, he asserted he had been misrepresented as “exercising authority” over Mason during the trial.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, Evans had neither read nor approved some parts of the transcript prior to Mason’s sending it off.

Mason was in a difficult position. He conducted the trial in the shadow of his superintendent, who was also the accused, a situation that was bearable as long as he believed Evans to be innocent. However, when he heard Johnny Maminawatum’s testimony, he began to have serious doubts. Suspicious aroused, he made a copy of the transcript, most of which had already been shared with Evans, then added incriminating information, some in brackets, some not, which he did not share. Anticipating Evans’ reaction to these changes, he quietly sent the revised transcript via the mail packet for Red River and only informed Evans after the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Some idea of why Evans objected to their inclusion can be gleaned from his response to Mason’s account of David Jones’ character, which Mason read to him on March 4. Evans felt it was “too severe” and “the word design...too strong,” then added “you should have stated a fact and allowed the conference to draw its own inferences.” For the appended clause, see trial transcript, 27-28; for the “private reproof,” part of which is in brackets, see *ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> LWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 5 March 1846. Evans may have been referring to Eliza’s statement on February 5 that went unrecorded because Mason said she “told direct falsehoods,” but it is more likely that he meant her testimony the following day, when the size of the bunk bed was addressed. Trial transcript, 16, 19-20. For Evans, this evidence was crucial because Eliza had testified that the bunk bed was too small for Evans to have come there without her knowing it. In his letter to Ross, February 13, Evans wrote, “Had Eliza Seeseep, who was near death recently died, I know not what would have saved me...Had the girls not slept in the bunk bed but on the floor or *on a larger bed stead* even Eliza’s life would have been useless to me in the cause of religion [emphasis added].” PAM, HBCA, D.5/17, fo. 80d, Governor George Simpson – Correspondence Inward, 1846. Evans to Ross, 14 February 1846. mf. 3M73.

<sup>5</sup> LWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 5 March 1846. The accusation followed the statement, “You have stabbed me in the shoulders on the Conference floor, by sending home a verdict different from that you gave to my face.” Apparently Evans was referring to Mason’s *bracketed* version of his meeting with Evans on February 9 over the appended clause, and reacting to what could be interpreted as his exercising *undue* authority during that meeting. He told Mason, “I deny it as being palpably false. & I will bring you to account for it...You have injured me irreparably & I fall into disgrace & retire under obloquy through your misrepresentations & falsehoods.”

fact concerning what he had done. Such deviousness had its precedents. As early as 1842, HBC officer Nicol Finlayson, who considered Mason a friend, reported to Evans two instances when the young missionary had not quite told the truth.<sup>6</sup> In the same letter, he also apologized for earlier censuring Evans over his alleged displeasure at Mason's passing the previous winter at Fort Alexander.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Evans was upset about Mason's travel to Red River.<sup>8</sup> He made at least three unauthorized trips there, evidently in search of a wife, and was reprimanded for his dereliction of duty by both Evans and Alder.<sup>9</sup> After his transfer to Norway House in 1843, he quarrelled with Evans and complained about him behind his back, even though he apparently joined forces with him during the crisis of 1845 and worked with him again during the early stages of the trial, when the very survival of the mission seemed threatened. However, that support was seriously compromised by his behaviour after the trial and challenges Hutchinson's assertion that there was not "the slightest evidence that William Mason had been anything but loyal to his superintendent."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Item 137, Finlayson to Evans, 10 December 1842. Mason excused himself for an unauthorized trip to Martins Falls "by saying he had gone after some Osnaburgh Indians," but Finlayson learned later that the trip had been planned before he left Lac La Pluie. Also, concerning Mason's denial that he suggested to an HBC officer that Lac Seul be made mission headquarters, Finlayson wrote, "I scarcely think that Mr. Chas. McKenzie would commit himself without some such proposal being made to him."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Apparently that was the reason Mason gave in August 1842 to Finlayson, who wrote that the young man was "much annoyed at learning he had incurred your [Evans'] displeasure." Ibid., Item 134, Finlayson to Evans, 14 September 1842. Considering the timing of his remarks to Finlayson, Mason must have been referring to Evans' letter of July 8, which did not mention Fort Alexander, but did contain strong advice from Evans on the steps Mason had taken the previous winter in order to obtain a wife. Ibid., Item 125.

<sup>8</sup> In his detailed report to the Secretaries on his summer travels in 1841. Mason glossed over his visit to Red River with a single sentence. See WMMSA Box No. 12, File 12i. Hudson's Bay Territories, 1841-1842, Item 13, Mason to Secretaries, 10-11 August 1841.

<sup>9</sup> See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 136, R. Alder to J. Evans, 1 December 1842. Alder wrote, "After what has taken place at Lac La Pluie I do not wonder that you wish to have missionaries sent who are married, in order that they stay at home; & instead of hunting for a wife hunt for souls." In a letter to Evans, Mason said, "You must excuse me communicating to you what is said to me on the subject by the Secretaries. I shall doubtless carry the impressions to the grave." Ibid., Item 142, Mason to Evans, 28 February 1843.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1. It can be argued that even if Mason were disloyal, he rightly sacrificed loyalty for the truth.

As the rift between the two men widened, Mason gravitated towards Ross, whose own attitude toward Evans had hardened after the dispute over Sunday travel in 1845. Indeed, if Ross did not actually start the ugly rumours that began to circulate about Evans, he did nothing to discourage them.<sup>11</sup> He was also willing to exploit them for his own purposes.<sup>12</sup> He never forgave Evans for his support of the Christian tripmen, in part because he was unable to make the fine distinction that Evans could between his private friendships and professional responsibilities.<sup>13</sup> This may explain why he refused to co-operate, when Evans tried to find out if Mason had deliberately withheld the information that the packet could go to London.<sup>14</sup> It was never clear as to who told what to whom concerning the packet, but apparently Ross had made a verbal statement contradicting Mason's version of events and Evans asked him to put it in writing.<sup>15</sup> Ross refused, saying, "it is my intention not to enter further on the subject with

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However, Evans did not tell him to suppress the truth. In his view, Mason had erred in at least three respects, (1) not reading the final transcript to Evans as he had promised, so that Evans could prepare his defence before the missionary society; (2) not limiting his remarks to the facts of the case (i.e. additions suggesting that David Jones' actions were motivated by a "design" and that Evans was exercising authority over Mason during the trial), and (3) censuring Evans for his conduct, which Evans asserted was the prerogative of the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 72-73.

<sup>12</sup> On 1 April 1846. Evans learned of one such instance from David Jones. Apparently, Ross had asked Jones if he believed what was said about Evans and "expressed his conviction that it was true...that David did not know the particulars." He added that Evans "had always opposed him (Mr Ross) that he was obliged to travel on Sundays and that he must do so next spring to be at Red Riv. before the Governor." See UWO. Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 1 April 1846.

<sup>13</sup> This distinction was clear to Evans, but could be confusing to others. In a letter to Ross on Sunday travel, he emphasized that he wrote officially as superintendent of missions and understood Ross's conduct as that "of a responsible officer in the Hon. Co's Service....We trust then that our personal friendships will be considered as altogether distinct and uninterrupted: thus we shall be the better qualified to consider the matter calmly & to decide with greater probability of arriving at just conclusions than when mingled with our personal interests and feelings." See PAM. HBCA, D.5/14, fo. 36d, Evans to Ross, 19 May 1845.

<sup>14</sup> Evans actually questioned Mason's claim that the packet might go beyond Red River, saying, "No one knew I believe or I would have heard of it." UWO. Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 5 March 1846. Evans suspected that Mason invented that excuse to justify his haste in getting the transcripts away.

<sup>15</sup> PAM. HBCA, D.5 17, fo. 82d, Evans to Ross, 30 March 1846.

you or Mr. Mason either verbally or in writing.”<sup>16</sup> It was not in the company’s interest, and therefore not in his interest, to vindicate a man who had caused so much commotion at Norway House.

When Ross refused to give him an affidavit implicating Mason, Evans that same day took matters into his own hands, wrote out eleven charges against his subordinate, and sent them to Mason and the Secretaries.<sup>17</sup> On April 1, he got an affidavit from Jenny Koo-s-ta-ta[y]-w, who claimed Margaret Maminawatum had told her she had lied to Mason, regretted it, and wanted to confess it, but was too ashamed to face Evans.<sup>18</sup> On May 19, he wrote Mason, who had gone to Red River for health reasons, and told him he now had an affidavit from John McKay proving “the palpable & unqualified falsehoods contained in the document you call ‘Johnny Mamanuwartum’s statement’” and that John himself had denied the salient points before Steinhauer.<sup>19</sup> Stung by the tone of the letter, Mason replied on May 27, “I decline having any more conversation or correspondence with you on the painful subject, until the decisions of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., fo. 83d, Ross to Evans, 30 March 1846. In fact, Ross immediately informed Mason concerning Evans’ request. One of Mason’s counter charges against Evans was “His speaking evil of me to Mr. Ross when I was at Red River, which induced that gentleman to write stating that Mr. Evans is fully bent on ruining Mr. Mason.” See WMMSA 14, 14g, 14, Mason to Secretaries, 23 September 1846.

<sup>17</sup> The charges were written on March 30. Mason received them at Upper Fort Garry on April 10, sent a copy of them to Ross on April 18, and at about the same time sent a copy with his rebuttal to the Secretaries. He sent a further response to them on 23 September 1846, after his return to Rossville.

<sup>18</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5 17, fo. 83d-84, Evans to Ross, 31 March 1846, and UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 28 March and 1 April 1846. Jenny made this statement after Evans withheld her ticket to the love feast because she had danced at the fort. The love feast in Methodism was an important social event that combined a community meal and a religious service. To be excluded from it was the equivalent of shunning. Under those circumstances, Jenny’s statement is suspect. Similarly, Margaret’s later statement to Mason has to be questioned on the same grounds. See n. 29.

<sup>19</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 8, Evans to Mason, 19 May 1846. Evans claimed that “Johnny had declared before Henry that he never told you that he came to see me and told me not to publish him – nor that, on his return he ever said I did it without his consent.”

Conference are received.”<sup>20</sup>

In the meantime, Simpson’s negotiations for Evans’ removal had paid off, and Alder’s letter recalling him was already on its way. Evans received it in June and was overjoyed to learn he was to return to England for consultations on the work of the missions.<sup>21</sup> Mason was to be left in charge of Rossville “for the present,” and on his return from Red River, he received necessary instructions from Evans, as Alder had requested.<sup>22</sup> Then Evans wound up his own affairs and on June 29 departed with his wife for England, unaware that Simpson was even then taking steps to ensure that he never returned.<sup>23</sup>

On June 25, Simpson wrote Ross asking him to interview Mason about the death of Thomas Hassal, whom Evans had accidentally shot and killed in September 1844. Indicative of the extent to which things were out of hand, Simpson now suspected, on the basis of remarks that Mason had recently made at Red River, that Evans had been intimate with Hassal’s wife and had murdered him on that account.<sup>24</sup> In July he sent another letter containing a series of detailed questions about that incident and asked Ross to conduct an investigation into Hassal’s

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Item 10, Mason to Evans, 27 May 1846. A copy of this letter was included in Mason’s letter to the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London on 13 June 1846.

<sup>21</sup> He was so happy, he wrote a poem, the last line of which read, “O how happy, O how happy: I am still in Hudson Bay. O how happy O how happy: Shall I be to get away.” See UWO, Evans, Papers Re: Theological Subjects, Language, Linguistics, Lectures on Various Subjects, 1829-1846, Section 2 Poems, Part 1 Notebook, p. 2, mf. M1364. For Alder’s letter, see UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 229, Alder to Evans, 31 March 1846.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Mason was back on June 13 or shortly before. See WMMSA 14, 14g, 10, Mason to Secretaries, 13 June 1846.

<sup>23</sup> PAM, HBCA, B. 154.b.3. fo. 17, Donald Ross to John McKenzie, Fort William, mf. 1M217.

<sup>24</sup> PABC, AE, R73, La5, Ross Collection, Simpson to Ross, 25 June 1846. Simpson claimed “No doubt exists that he was intimate with the man’s wife & Mason, from some remarks that fell from him to Mr. Christie is aware that Evans & the Interpreter had no good feeling toward each other arising from that cause.”

death.<sup>25</sup> It evidently produced nothing, as Simpson made no reference to it in his August letter to Alder, which contained a report of his own investigation of the Rossville affair, statements from three of the young women, including Margaret Sinclair, and his conclusion that “the grave charges they have brought against Mr. Evans” were “unfortunately, but too well founded.”<sup>26</sup>

In September Mason finally answered Evans’ charges.<sup>27</sup> In October, he told Ross that old Tahtahmao, Eliza Seeseeb’s mother, had confessed to her class leader, Ben Sinclair, that she had hidden the “truth.”<sup>28</sup> Then in his annual report on the progress of the mission, written to the Secretaries on 15 December 1846, he summarized the post-trial developments at Rossville, saying “Maggie” had “stated her sorrow for having done bad, and for concealing it so long.” She appeared “to have been much persecuted, by those who ought to have acted in a more Christian manner” and “it appears she has never drawn back her word - & circumstances & evidence have now clearly proved that she told nothing but the truth.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.4/68, fo. 124d-125. Governor George Simpson - Correspondence Outward, 1846-1847, Simpson to Ross, 7 July 1846, mf. 3M23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., fo. 155, Simpson to Alder, York Factory, 13 August 1846. The statements of the three young women, unnamed except for Margaret, have not been located.

<sup>27</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 14, Mason to Secretaries, 23 Sep. 1846. His arguments were unconvincing. As before, he quibbled on minor points and avoided the larger issues that so infuriated Evans. He argued that Evans only questioned his subordinate’s “uprightness” when Mason “would not comply with his [Evans’] wishes to alter the true statement of facts relative to his own misconduct.” In fact, nowhere is there any evidence that Evans asked Mason to alter any of the facts. The appended clause, which Evans did ask him to remove, was not a fact, but a judgment.

<sup>28</sup> PABC, AE, R73, M38, Ross Collection, Mason to Ross, 5 October 1846. Strangely, Mason never explained what that “truth” was. Tahtahmao’s only testimony at the trial was that her daughter had said nothing bad to her about Evans, but that Eliza Majekekwanab had told her a false story, which Eliza herself admitted. “Old Tahtahmao’s confessions” were reported in October, four months after her daughter, Eliza Seeseeb, who died on June 30, allegedly confessed to her mother from her deathbed that she had lied. If the “truth” was that Tahtahmao had hidden her daughter’s confession, it added nothing to the investigation.

<sup>29</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 15, Mason to Secretaries, 15 Dec. 1846. Margaret’s confession occurred as she was applying for a ticket of admission to the love feast, and while Mason was speaking to her “of the evil nature of her



Mason also reported over thirty deaths, including three of those who were involved in some way with the trial.<sup>30</sup> The first was Eliza Seeseeb, who confessed to her mother before she died that she had lied because Mr. Evans had told her not to tell.<sup>31</sup> The second was David Jones, who Mason recorded had been "prevailed upon by Mr E. to change his opinion & write out a certificate to that effect," but who confessed before his death "to Sir George Simpson, Mr. Ross and more than once to myself," that in his opinion Evans was guilty. The third, John Maminawatum, died December 14. Mason claimed "the young man was both deceived, & coerced, & threatened with incarceration [by Evans] if he did not sign" a paper nullifying his earlier statement, and that Steinhauer, who interpreted on that occasion, affirmed that "such was actually the case." Mason also dismissed a statement Evans obtained from John McKay, because McKay had told him "he only interpreted once for the late Johny Mamanuwartum."<sup>32</sup>

Attached to Mason's report to the Secretaries was a letter written at his request on 15 December 1846 by Henry Steinhauer.<sup>33</sup> It was a confessional of sorts. Steinhauer claimed that he had been duped by Evans' frequent protestations of innocence and led to sign documents,

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crimes" and administering warnings and reproof. She had been excluded from the love feast since her expulsion from the Society by Evans.

<sup>30</sup> None of the three died of the measles epidemic, which accounted for twenty-nine deaths.

<sup>31</sup> Eliza Seeseeb was the young woman whose pre-trial testimony Mason did not think worth taking because "she told direct falsehoods." At the trial, she testified that she slept in a bunk bed with Margaret Sinclair but never saw Evans do anything with her. In her deathbed confession, she said she had seen Evans go to Eliza Majekekwanab's bed and that he "lay with" her. Since the two Elizas were living at the Evanses in February 1846, this alleged incident had to have occurred just prior to the trial, when the two girls were sharing an unspecified room and sleeping in separate beds. Yet there is nothing about it in the trial transcript. If Eliza Seeseeb was telling the truth, why did Eliza Majekekwanab not charge Evans with fornication, or at least call upon Eliza Seeseeb as a witness to his attempted fornication with her?

<sup>32</sup> However, that "once" was the time Johnny came to be "published" [the banns] and to be married, according to Henry Steinhauer's statement, and to Mason's own letter, 13 June 1846, so it was important to Evans' defence. (See WMMSA 14, 14g, 10 and 16) Apparently, Mason had earlier expressed some doubts about Johnny's story. See note 94, page 99.

<sup>33</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 16. Steinhauer to Mason, 15 December 1846.

which he was "now truly sorry for having signed."<sup>34</sup> Although he was the interpreter, Steinhauer had not been present "in the recantation of these wretched girls."<sup>35</sup> He believed this was by Evans' design, but had never thought about it until he was out hunting with some of the villagers. One of the men asked him if "Maggie had unsaid all she had said of Mr E." Steinhauer replied that he did not know. Then another said that Eliza Majekekwanab claimed, "All is true, we only said they were all nothing because we pitied Mr. E." All at once, he began to see more clearly, and even more so after "the Summer's investigation."<sup>36</sup> He now believed Johnny had been pressured into marrying Margaret because Evans had also approached Steinhauer right after the trial about marrying Eliza Majekekwanab.<sup>37</sup> He maintained that Johnny only recanted after being threatened with prison by Evans "for saying things that were not true." He realized he had been led astray, but "Mr E exercised his influence tyrannically" as Mason and everyone who had any intercourse with him knew "since a clearer light has been thrown upon the subject."

This must have been a hard letter for Steinhauer to write. He was a sensitive man, who found any kind of stress enormously difficult. When he fell from grace at Lac La Pluie in January 1843, for instance, "for a whole week he scarce eat or drank, & his blinds were drawn night

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<sup>34</sup> Steinhauer may have been referring to Johnny's recantation for which he interpreted. This may have troubled him because Johnny, his brother-in-law since August, had died on December 14, the day before Steinhauer wrote this letter.

<sup>35</sup> It is unclear to whom he is referring here. Later in the letter, he mentioned recantation in connection with Margaret Sinclair and Eliza Majekekwanab, but there is no evidence that either changed their stories.

<sup>36</sup> This was a reference to Simpson's August cross-examination of the young women.

<sup>37</sup> Steinhauer was not interested. On 7 August 1846, he and Jessy Maminawatum, John's sister, were married at Rossville by William Mason. See PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 13, entry 93.

and day.”<sup>38</sup> During the investigation into Evans’ alleged misdeeds, he said, “There were times when I could scarcely hold my pencil in hand in endeavouring to note down the proceedings of the trial I trembled from head to foot.”<sup>39</sup> When under pressure, he also found it difficult to translate or to remember later what had been said.<sup>40</sup> Vulnerable to Evans’ pressure, he was equally vulnerable to the more subtle influence of Mason and Ross.<sup>41</sup> Yet, in spite of all, he could still say of Evans, “He has been to me better than my own father for upwards of 12 years cherished me under his own roof as his own son.”<sup>42</sup>

Whatever the case, it hardly mattered at that stage, for Evans had died suddenly at Keilby, England, 23 November 1846, while on a speaking tour for the church. He died vindicated, for the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society had upheld Mason’s original verdict of not guilty on each of the three charges. Alder wrote to Simpson with the details of that decision on December 1.<sup>43</sup> His letter is instructive. First of all, he and his colleague, Mr. Beecham, had available to them more written evidence than is available today.<sup>44</sup> On the basis

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<sup>38</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 142, Mason to Evans, 28 February 1843. Mason added, “We all feared least [sic] some worse disaster should overtake him. On one occasion, he was seen like a man insane tearing up the trees by the roots.” The cause of his remorse? He had been “persuaded by the Catholics to drink with them” and became so drunk, he had to be “carried home and put to bed.”

<sup>39</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Asked to translate for Evans after hearing the reports about him, Steinhauer said, “It was as much as I could do to stand, and the subject matter of this discourse was very good, but I could not interpret.” Of “certain parts of” Johnny’s statement, he said, “I don’t recollect it... though I have tried to remember it.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. As he said, “You [Mason] have told me you saw me going astray. Another Gentleman [Ross] whom we shall always mention in the highest terms, in conversing upon the subject, told me he saw the manoeuvres by which I was led astray.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. A remarkable admission after what he had written, it indicates how conflicted he was about Evans.

<sup>43</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5/18, fo. 420, Governor George Simpson - Correspondence Inward, 1846. Alder to Simpson, 1 December 1846, mf. 3M75.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. This study is based on the trial transcript and a variety of records from the HBCA, UWO, and WMMSA. However, Alder and Beecham also had the statements Simpson collected at Norway House during the summer of

of that evidence and conversations with Evans, they rejected the testimony of the witnesses because they either had “no regard for truth,” or else they were utterly “ignorant of the difference betwixt truth and falsehood.” Margaret’s evidence was particularly unbelievable.

How could we believe on the evidence of such a person that when she went on one occasion to light a fire in Mr. Evans’ Bed Room, he left his bed, and in an undressed state, acted with such indecency towards her that she cried out, that he repeated this conduct and even went further the following morning, and all this we are required to believe was done while Mrs. Evans was in Bed in the same Room (and that a small one) a quiet spectator of her Husband’s infidelity? This was the first occasion too, she says, upon which he took these liberties with her.<sup>45</sup>

Since this particular allegation never surfaced at the trial, it must have been given in testimony to Simpson, when he conducted his investigation at Norway House in August. Certainly, Alder’s next sentence implied this was the case.

Now my dear Sir George, is it to be credited that a Man, and that Man a man of sense – a Father as well as a Husband, and above all a Minister of the Gospel, would choose such occasions for commencing such wicked proceedings? Even admitting that he was capable of committing such enormities, it would be a difficult thing to persuade persons of this Country that an English Woman, and a Woman of spirit too as Mrs. Evans is, would have remained quietly in her Bed during these proceedings, and by her silence not merely connive at but encourage the sin of her Husband against herself as a Wife and a Mother as well as against God.<sup>46</sup>

Alder concluded his argument by citing Margaret’s alleged involvement with Jack Ballandyne at Moose Lake, with details added in all likelihood by Evans.

It is not difficult to conceive that an Indian woman who is reported to have admitted that she encouraged a married Indian repeatedly to leave the side of his wife at night for the purpose of committing adultery with her could easily invent such a tale.<sup>47</sup>

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1846 from the young women implicated in the case. These are not among Simpson’s papers at the HBCA, and are not included in the WMMSA records available on microfilm. The secretaries also had “Mr. Evans’ explanations and defence in reply to the allegations laid against him,” as well as “the testimony of certain parties in his favour” and “Certificates from different Individuals.” There is a possibility that these are still in the possession of the WMMSA, but have not as yet been made available to the public.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., fo. 421d-422.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., fo. 422.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. This conclusion was not based on evidence in the trial transcript, which stated nothing about Margaret’s initiating the alleged adulterous relationship. Moreover, Alder’s use of “Indian woman” and “a married Indian” suggest cultural assumptions about the morals of aboriginal people that are also not evident in the transcript. Alder must have obtained other information from Evans that further blackened Margaret’s reputation; however, Alder’s assessment of that information may have been coloured by his own biases about Native people, and of Native

Alder next explained that they had also taken into account Evans' long and unblemished career, the deposition of Jenny Koo-s-ta-ta[y]-w, and Ross's commentary on the trial minutes. No blame was imputed to Mason, but Alder felt he had been too bound by Methodist Laws and Usages, and that it would have been better, if "Mr. Chief Factor Ross had been present at least as an Assessor on so grave an occasion."<sup>48</sup> As for Evans' admitted familiarity with the young women who resided in his home, they "could not do otherwise than consider such conduct... unseemly and improper," especially in a person of his station. This was "faithfully and forcibly pointed out to Mr. Evans before his departure from London, and he saw and acknowledged its truth and propriety."<sup>49</sup>

Considering the evidence available to them at the time, the Secretaries could come to no other conclusion but to find Evans not guilty of the specified charges. However, their reasoning behind that decision was far from satisfactory in explaining either the events precipitating the trial or those which followed in its aftermath. Certainly Alder gave no hint in his letter to Simpson that he attributed the cause of Evans' troubles to anything but his own foolishness and the mischief of the young women. The roles of Ross, Simpson, and Mason were ignored or unrecognized. But as has already been shown, these three men were all very much involved. Indeed, Evans was close to the mark when he attributed his downfall to the combined efforts of the Hudson's Bay Company officers and his colleague, William Mason.

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women in particular. For evidence of this possibility, see Erica Smith, "'Gentlemen, This is no Ordinary Trial': Sexual Narratives in the Trial of the Reverend Corbett, Red River, 1863," *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 375-376. See also notes 54 below and Chapter 6, n. 33.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 424d. If the transcript was accurate, this was unfair. Mason was bound by Methodist usage, but so was Evans, and Mason may have interpreted Evans' willingness to be tried by Ross or the authorities at Red River as just so much rhetoric.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 425d.

There can be no question that Evans represented a threat to the interests of the Company at a time when its monopoly was being challenged in Red River and elsewhere. His opposition to Sunday travel had inspired his congregation to resist as well, a disturbing prospect to people like Ross and Simpson, who were accustomed to being obeyed. Consequently, when they decided to get rid of him, they pulled out all the stops. Rumours were encouraged and so-called "Indian evidence," which under ordinary circumstances they would have dismissed, now became the substance of accusation. They believed it, because they wanted to believe it. Mason was easily drawn into their web of influence. He fawned on authority, but resented its imposition, which necessarily put him at odds with Evans, who sometimes had to correct him. Conflict between the two men escalated after the trial, and Mason turned for support to Donald Ross, who cultivated friendship with the young missionary for his own ends. Like Ross and Simpson, he came to believe that Evans was guilty, and that belief motivated him to send the transcript and to conceal his action from Evans until the last possible moment. It cost him dearly. The stress of the trial and Evans' anger made him so ill that he went to Red River for medical treatment.<sup>50</sup> However, he may have conceived it a small price to pay to ensure that the evidence reached England.

Although there is little evidence that Simpson, Ross, and Mason colluded to bring about Evans' downfall at Rossville, their biases certainly helped to steer events in that direction. The tables turned, however, once Evans was in England and able to argue his case face-to-face with the Secretaries, who now had the transcript and related documents before them. Evans was exonerated, but the process raises legitimate questions about how fair that verdict was to the young women involved. Certainly they had no one to speak for them. Their evidence had

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<sup>50</sup> Mason left behind his wife Sophia, who was ill and pregnant, to take care of their daughter Sarah Jane, who was

been collected and recorded in a haphazard way, with many pertinent questions never asked.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, they had been subjected to interrogation by Evans himself, who was formidable when his temper was aroused. Evans also attempted to discredit them, Margaret and Eliza in particular, on the basis of their previous moral conduct. This strategy was similar in some respects to that employed by counsel James Ross at the 1863 trial of Reverend Griffith Owen Corbett, whose Native servant girl, Maria Thomas, was represented as a prostitute.<sup>52</sup> In her careful analysis of the Corbett case, Erica Smith drew attention to popular assumptions about chaste white and fallen native women that may have influenced Ross's defence.<sup>53</sup> It is difficult to determine whether or not these distinctions prejudiced the trial at Rossville in 1846, but they may have coloured Alder's interpretation of the evidence.<sup>54</sup> Certainly Evans' attempt to blacken the characters of the witnesses is a red flag to anyone familiar with similar cases today.<sup>55</sup> To show Margaret was lying about him at the trial, he contrasted her testimony with

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under two years of age. A second daughter, Mary Ross, was born a few days before his return.

<sup>51</sup> Steinhauer stated that it was impossible to take in "all the evidence as it came, while interpreting and endeavoring to note down the proceedings" of the trial, so that things forgotten had to be added later by both Steinhauer and Mason. See trial transcript, 25.

<sup>52</sup> Corbett, a Church of England clergyman at Headingley, was charged with attempting to abort the child he fathered by Maria Thomas. Found guilty, he was sentenced to six months in prison.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, "'Gentlemen, This is no Ordinary Trial,'" 364-380. James Ross, Corbett's counsel, apparently avoided ethnic connotations when representing Abigail Corbett as the faithful wife and Maria Thomas as the prostitute. However, in the context of Red River society, at least among those with social pretensions, Maria could be seen as a typical example of fallen Native women. Ibid., 375-379.

<sup>54</sup> There is little evidence of this dichotomy in the transcript or related documents from Rossville. After all, Steinhauer was Ojibway, and Mason's wife was of mixed Cree-British origin. Evans told Mason to interview the young women, but initially excluded Alice McKay, the Scottish teacher, perhaps because he perceived her to be a "chaste white woman." She was not questioned during the trial about the accusations against her, but she did speak in support of Evans during cross-examination. Alder, on the other hand, is a different matter. See n. 47.

<sup>55</sup> Discrediting the witnesses was the aim of the defence lawyer in the 1992 trial of Bishop Hubert O'Connor, when he demanded and obtained the health records of the Native women who accused the cleric of sexually abusing them at the residential school he administered near Williams Lake, British Columbia. In protest, one law professor said, "Is defence counsel to be permitted to go on a fishing expedition into the whole life of a person simply because she has come forward to say that she has been sexually assaulted? 'Relevance' is not a matter of

earlier statements to him that she knew he was a good man; however, another interpretation refined by modern understanding of such cases might be that she was attempting to “maintain the mutually desirable lie of a free and honourable association.”<sup>56</sup> Evans admitted to excesses of “playful” conduct that raised eyebrows in his own day and would be regarded even more suspiciously today in terms of what we now know about sexual abuse.<sup>57</sup> Simpson said Evans made light of his indiscretions, and devoted “his talent and his influence to rebut the graver charges alone.”<sup>58</sup> The first claim was unfair, but Evans’ strategy at the trial was indeed to deny the weightier charges and particularly focus his energies on discrediting Margaret.<sup>59</sup> He was helped by the statements of local women such as Sarah St. Germain, Mary Keakesas, and Ann Jones, women who may have been motivated by genuine belief in his innocence, but the unconscious forces of community denial may also have played their part.<sup>60</sup>

These considerations have to be weighed against what we know about Evans from other sources. Could he have violated his position of trust to such a degree in relationship to his accusers? John Murdoch certainly thought so. In spite of Evans’ unblemished career prior to his arrival at Norway House, Murdoch argued that Evans’ long association with the Ojibway

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neutral logic in this context but a highly contested concept steeped in sexual politics.” See Lisa Hobbs Birnie, “Sins of the Father,” *Saturday Night*, February 1994, 37 and 40.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 34. This is what Birnie maintained was going on when Stella Bennett [not her real name], who bore a child to Fr. Hubert O’Connor in 1967, sent cards to him until 1971.

<sup>57</sup> For current information on such abuse, see Tony Martens, *The Spirit Weeps: Characteristics and Dynamics of Incest and Child Sexual Abuse*, with A Native Perspective by Brenda Daily and Maggie Hodgson (Edmonton: Nechi Institute, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.4/68, fo. 55, Simpson to Alder, 15 June 1846. Among those indiscretions, Simpson mentioned the moss incident with Eliza Majekekwanab and the incident where Evans put his arm around Hannah Goostahtahk and made the suggestive remark involving Thomas Sooquawetum.

<sup>59</sup> Mason made a number of references in the trial transcript to the remorse demonstrated by Evans.

<sup>60</sup> See “Group Denial,” in Tony Martens, *Characteristics and Dynamics*, 116.



and Cree created acculturative stress that eventually resulted in a breakdown of his value system.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, it can be argued that it was the accumulated stress of his battles with the Hudson's Bay Company, conflict with William Mason, and depression over the death of Thomas Hassal that made him emotionally vulnerable to Margaret Sinclair, and that when his conscience could no longer stand the conflict, he pressed John Maminawatum to marry her.<sup>62</sup> Margaret, for her part, was alone among strangers and may have been open to the advances of a man who could improve her status and position in society, or like other young women in similar circumstances, emotionally incapable of resisting those advances or speaking against Evans until she was safely out of his house.<sup>63</sup>

Plausible as these arguments may appear, they cannot be proven on the basis of existing evidence. With all its flaws, the transcript was put together under the direction of William Mason, who had at least begun to change his mind about Evans' guilt before he sent the transcript to England. In the post-trial period, neither Ross nor Simpson was able to add anything significant to it. Indeed, the statement that Simpson took from Margaret in June was apparently less convincing than her testimony during the trial. Presumably, she gave that statement under the most favourable circumstances, which answers to some degree the

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<sup>61</sup> See Murdoch, 337-345. To explain Evans' alleged fall from grace, Murdoch cited extracts from Evans' letters between September 1838 and December 1848 as evidence of acculturative stress.

<sup>62</sup> For another example of Evans' alleged high-handedness, see Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties," Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980, 1991), 167. In this instance, Evans reputedly baptised Angelique Fisher "on condition that she would never again sleep with her husband until he promised to marry her according to Christian rite at first opportunity." Van Kirk cited PAM, HBCA, D.5/7, fo. 261-261d, 263, Governor George Simpson – Correspondence Inward, 1842, Alexander Fisher to Simpson, 15 September 1842, and Evans to Fisher, 1 March 1842. In fact, it was Fisher who made the allegation while complaining about his wife's adultery with William McMurray. Evans' letter gave no indication that his baptism of Mrs. Fisher had any conditions attached to it.

<sup>63</sup> It took Stella Bennett twenty-six years to speak out about Fr. Hubert O'Connor, and even then it was only because an RCMP officer confronted her with the rumoured relationship. Birnie, 36.

criticism that Evans' presence at the trial muffled her voice. In spite of the procedural flaws in the way the trial was conducted, it seems reasonable that Evans questioned the integrity of his accusers. Certainly the relevance of an accuser's past in cases of alleged sexual misconduct is still being debated today.<sup>64</sup> It was also reasonable that Evans focused his energies on rebutting the graver charges, simply because they were the only ones formally laid against him at the trial. He freely admitted his foolishness with respect to lesser indiscretions, like the moss incident and the remark he made to Hannah Goostahtahk.

There is also little evidence in Evans' general conduct to suggest an inclination to do any of the things of which he was accused. The extracts from Evans' correspondence cited by Murdoch as evidence of acculturative stress are unconvincing. Evans bemoaned the long separations he had to endure from a wife and daughter he dearly loved, but beyond his complaints about travel and the HBC, there is no evidence that contact with aboriginal people challenged his world view in any way, and certainly no proof in his correspondence that he suffered a moral and psychological collapse. In spite of the fact he was physically ill in his last year at Norway House, Evans maintained a spirited defence of his character on all fronts and gave every indication in his correspondence at the time of the trial and thereafter of being in perfect control of his faculties. That correspondence also reveals Evans as an honest and direct man, who stood by his convictions whatever the opposition. He loved to tease, and his playfulness and sense of humour, as well as his deep Christian conviction and devotion to aboriginal people, were demonstrated time and again in his letters and poetry.<sup>65</sup> He did

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<sup>64</sup> As already noted, this was an issue in the trial of Fr. Hubert O'Connor. See Birnie, 37 and 40.

<sup>65</sup> Evans' poems deserve a separate study. Some are serious, others humorous and light-hearted. Particularly noteworthy are his poems on slander. For examples of his Christian concern for aboriginal peoples, see "Son of the Forest. Where wilt thou roam?" and "For a season farewell, thou son of the forest." See LWO, Evans, Papers Re:

overstep accepted bounds in his play with the young women and was censured for that behaviour by both Mason and the Secretaries, but he freely admitted his folly with regret and distress to Mason, Ross, his congregation, and the Secretaries in London.

There can be no question that Evans was directly involved in the trial, or that the actions of Mason and the interference of Simpson and Ross greatly exacerbated the missionary's troubles, but there are still many unanswered questions about the nature and degree of Evans involvement with the young women and the Cree community of Rossville. No convincing evidence exists that Margaret Sinclair ever rescinded her story, and both Eliza Majekekwanab and Eliza Seeseeb affirmed after his departure that they believed Evans to be guilty. In view of these considerations, it seems appropriate now to shift the spotlight to Rossville and especially to the young women and others directly implicated in the charges against Evans. Perhaps by so doing, we can get answers that will finally put the Rossville scandal to rest.

*The Rossville Cree:  
Their Role in the Trial and Its Aftermath*

Unlike Evans, Mason, Ross, and Simpson, whose journals and correspondence reveal vital clues concerning their characters and involvement in the Rossville scandal, those who pressed charges against Evans left no records behind. As a result, the task of reconstructing their place in events is much more difficult, but not impossible, as the records are not totally silent about them. Prior to the trial, the very public disputes at times between Evans and Ross, on the one hand, and Evans and Mason, on the other, fostered an atmosphere of rumour and recrimination in which people took sides. It may be important that two of the three who laid charges against Evans were servants in Mason's home; considering their circumstances, Thomas Sooquawetum and Nancy Katummuk might be expected to be somewhat distanced from Evans. However, it is unlikely they acted by design; they probably believed the stories about him. Certainly they believed Eliza Majekekwanab, who probably visited Mason's household often to see her friend Nancy. David Jones is more enigmatic. Mason believed he "displayed more design...than any of the rest" during the trial, although Evans felt that assessment was "too severe."<sup>1</sup> Certainly he had an axe to grind with Evans over an alleged promise to pay him for interpreting.<sup>2</sup> According to Mason, Evans did pay Jones later, then got him to write out a document stating his belief that Evans was innocent.<sup>3</sup> Jones adhered to this

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<sup>1</sup> Trial transcript, 48; UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260, Journal, 4 March 1846.

<sup>2</sup> Trial transcript, 23.

<sup>3</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 14, Mason to Secretaries, 23 September 1846. Mason also wrote that John Mackay told him that when Evans wrote McKay about Johnny Maminawatum's marriage, he also offered him his old job again at £50 per year. See WMMSA 14, 14g, 10, Mason to Evans, 13 June 1846.

view until Evans left, then reverted to his former position that Evans was guilty.<sup>4</sup>

Determining what was going on the minds of the young women is also a difficult task, but careful analysis of the trial minutes in combination with other records reveals details on their backgrounds, characters, and credibility that can shed light on the nature of their involvement. Margaret Sinclair and Eliza Majekekwanab were the two key figures in the case. Margaret was a servant in the Evans household for about a year, arriving there in 1843 and remaining until the following summer, when she married John Maminawatum.<sup>5</sup> Eliza Seeseeb and Samuel Pahpahnahkis were also there at that time.<sup>6</sup> Anna Sapin came as a servant sometime later, probably during the summer of 1845 when Thomas Sapin arrived at Norway House from Cumberland House.<sup>7</sup> How long Anna stayed is unknown, but Alice McKay, the Scottish teacher, who arrived in the spring or summer of 1845, and Charles Maminawatum were living in the house while she was there. By the time of the trial, Anna had married Richard Nakawao. As for Eliza Majekekwanab and Hannah Goostahtahk, they were at the Evans house by the fall of 1845. Hannah left shortly before the trial, but Eliza Majekekwanab, Alice McKay, and Eliza Seeseeb were still there in February when the trial began.

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<sup>4</sup> WMMSA 14, 14g, 15, Mason to Secretaries, 15 December 1846.

<sup>5</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 163, Evans to Mary Evans, 17 August 1843; PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 13, entry 67.

<sup>6</sup> Eliza, age unknown, and Samuel, about fifteen years of age in 1843, may have been promising students Evans took into his home. Eliza Seeseeb and Eliza Majekekwanab were later described as "Mission girls" and Hannah Goostahtahk may have been one also. See trial transcript, 2, and WMMSA 14, 14g, 15. In 1845, Evans wrote, "I have taken three boys and two girls, into a somewhat more intimate connection with the Mission, than is the case with the children of the school generally, and propose paying more attention to their education." WMMSA 13, 13g, 17, Evans to Simpson, 10 June 1845. Both Martin Pupahnukis, aged about twelve or thirteen in 1846, and Charles Maminawatum, perhaps sixteen, may have been "Mission boys," although there is no evidence that Martin ever lived with the Evanses.

<sup>7</sup> Anna was probably Thomas Sapin's daughter.

Since their fathers had both worked for the HBC at Cumberland House, it is likely that Anna Sapin and Margaret Sinclair were well acquainted with each other prior to their arrival at Norway House, and as outsiders in the community, they may have been brought together by that bond. Certainly Margaret had told her story to Anna, who apparently reinterpreted her own experiences in the Evans household in the light of that information. Her allegations simply do not make sense otherwise. There were discrepancies between her statement and testimony, and a careful analysis of both reveals only one incident in which Evans allegedly tried to do “bad” with her. Moreover, on cross-examination, she contradicted everything she had previously said. Evidently, Evans had done nothing more than throw a blanket over her and tell her to cover herself up, an interpretation later supported by Charles Maminawatum, who was sleeping in the next room.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, even that conduct, however innocent it may have been, could have made her uncomfortable and caused her to leave the Evans home. Later, through Margaret’s influence and the rumours that were flying about the community, what had been anxieties became realities in her mind.

Little is known about Hannah Goostahtahk, other than she was “a very pious girl,” but for that reason alone, her evidence could have been very damaging to Evans, had she testified that his intentions were bad.<sup>9</sup> After all, he admitted to putting his arm around her neck, and making what could be interpreted as a suggestive remark. The fact she saw it only as play, and denied that he had done anything bad to her while she was in his house, was a boost to Evans’ defence. She also confirmed that he came in the mornings to check the fires in the kitchen

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<sup>8</sup> While they were in the Evans home, Anna slept in the study and Charles in the “Indian room.” Evans, his wife, and Alice McKay were also in the house and for at least part of the time Clara Evans as well.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah may have died during the measles epidemic that hit Norway House in the summer of 1846, although Mason made no mention of it in his letter of December 15.

where she and Eliza slept and that he often covered them with a blanket or buffalo robe.

Eliza Majekekwanab's testimony was potentially more harmful to Evans, because she insisted that Evans meant to do "bad," when he threw her down on the moss. However, her story lost credibility because Evans made no secret of the incident, and witnesses agreed that she had laughed about it at the time. Like Anna, she may also have re-interpreted the moss incident on the basis of the stories that were circulating in the community.<sup>10</sup> There is also the possibility that she viewed it from a traditional Cree perspective. The type of play in which Evans had indulged was only appropriate between people who were cross cousins and could be interpreted as the prelude to a more serious relationship.<sup>11</sup> As the daughter of a Cree hunter who had two wives, she would have been conditioned socially prior to her conversion to accept the possibility of a married man's advances to a single woman. If Evans' behaviour did not offend her at the time, it may have been because more orthodox Methodist perspectives in such matters had not had time to take root in her consciousness. On the other hand, she may have interpreted his actions based on her knowledge of traditional Cree courtship practices, then reassessed it from the Christian perspective that she had recently acquired.

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<sup>10</sup> Rumours that Alice and Evans had shared the same tent on their way from Red River the previous summer may also have been the inspiration behind the falsehood Eliza admitted telling about Evans and Alice McKay sleeping together. That story must have circulated widely because Simpson mentioned it in his letter to Alder, 15 June 1846. He added that "no third party" had been present during the trip, which generally took anywhere from "five to fourteen days," and "whatever may have been his intentions...not a single individual of the race, which he [Evans] came to instruct, either could or would really believe in his innocence." See PAM, HBCA, D.4/68, fo. 54d-55.

<sup>11</sup> In Cree kinship, everyone was either a cross cousin or parallel cousin to each other. Since one found a marriage partner only among those who were cross cousins, joking and tomfoolery, even with sexual connotations, were tolerated between them. However, when such talk occurred between people of different ages with no prospects of marriage, it was generally viewed as good-natured banter. See Hallowell, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba*, 54-56. It was probably in this sense that most people viewed the joking and tomfoolery of Evans, who would have been seen as a cross cousin to everyone in the community. However, the sexual connotations Eliza evidently saw in Evans' behaviour seem to have led her to conclude his intentions went beyond banter.

Perhaps the most complex personality involved in the trial was Margaret Sinclair. Her charges were also the most serious, and Evans was never able to get a retraction from her either during the trial or later. Apparently, she wavered shortly after Evans was found not guilty, and for a time it even appeared she was ready to confess; however, the growing rift between Evans and Mason and the antagonism of the HBC may have encouraged her to stand firm.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, once Evans was gone, and Mason in control, there was no good reason to admit she had done wrong. Nevertheless, although it may be impossible to find conclusive proof one way or the other about her culpability, existing records suggest at the very least that Margaret lacked credibility as a witness. The story she told at the trial certainly raised questions. She maintained that Evans came to the bunk bed where she and Eliza Seeseeb were sleeping and committed fornication with her “many times” without once waking Eliza.<sup>13</sup> Eliza’s testimony challenged that story, but even conceding her unreliability, there were at least three other people in the house who apparently never once woke up.<sup>14</sup> Also, the story Simpson apparently reported to Alder about fornication in the Evans’ bedroom seemed beyond belief.<sup>15</sup> Much more dramatic than the account she gave at the trial, it suggested that the more she repeated her tales, the more inflated they became. Moreover, she admitted lying to Nancy Budd and Mrs. Evans and even said she lied to Evans himself, when she told him she knew he was a

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<sup>12</sup> In a letter to Ross on 31 March 1846, Evans claimed that he was about to obtain an affidavit from a married woman [Jenny Koos-s-ta[y]-w] stating that Margaret had confessed to her that she had lied at the trial and that she wanted to confess to Evans himself, but she was too ashamed to face him. See PAM, HBCA, D.5 17, fo. 83d-84. On April 1, Evans obtained that affidavit, but when he sent for Margaret for hers, she refused to come. See UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 260.

<sup>13</sup> Trial transcript, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Mason had at one point dismissed Eliza’s testimony because she told “direct falsehoods.” Ibid., 16. Mrs. Evans, Clara Evans, Samuel Pahpahnahkis, and possibly others, were in the house at the time.

<sup>15</sup> This must have been the story Margaret gave Simpson when he conducted his own investigation in the late summer of 1846.



good man in spite of the bad things people were saying about him.<sup>16</sup>

It is also striking that the stories she told about her relationship with Jack Ballandyne, the postmaster at Moose Lake, so much resembled her testimony about Evans. In both cases, a married man left his own bed and wife and went to the bed Margaret was sharing with another young woman.<sup>17</sup> Whether the story involving Ballandyne was true or not, we will never know, but it was at least possible, because there is evidence that Margaret did at one time live in his house or was at least living in the same community. While on his way to Cumberland House in December 1840, James Evans passed through Moose Lake where he taught the HBC families and baptised seven children, including Ballandyne's four sons, a son and daughter of his fisherman, Baptiste Babue, and Margaret Sinclair, the daughter of Bakie and Elizabeth Sinclair.<sup>18</sup> Next he proceeded to Cumberland House where he taught more HBC families, including those of Thomas Sahpah [Sapin], and Bakie Sinclair, Margaret's father, and baptised a total of twenty children and adults on 3 January 1841.<sup>19</sup> He also performed a number of marriages.<sup>20</sup> Then, on his return to Moose Lake, he baptised and married Jack Ballandyne and Betsey Gunn.<sup>21</sup>

The sequence of these events is a vital clue to Ballandyne's domestic arrangements prior to his

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<sup>16</sup> Trial transcript, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> There were differences. In the one story, Ballandyne came and lay with Margaret but "he did not do anything." The other young woman was aware of his visits. See trial transcript, 17-18. In the other story, Evans committed adultery with Margaret without Eliza Seeseeb being aware of it. *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> See P.A.M. R145, GR1212, Item 10, entries 112-115, 133-135.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, entries 136-155.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Item 13, entries 14-18, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Item 10, entries 156-157; *Ibid.*, Item 13, entry 19.

becoming a Christian and also sheds light on at least one aspect of Margaret's story. Apparently, when his first wife, Betsey Gunn, could not have children, he took a second in the late 1820s named Polly Umpherville, and had four sons by her.<sup>22</sup> However, in December 1840, he "commenced the praying life" through Evans' influence.<sup>23</sup> He even accompanied the missionary party to Cumberland House, not only joining them "in the morning and evening worship," but also attending to his own individual prayers "when arising from & retiring to rest."<sup>24</sup> Why did he go? Evidently, Evans told him he could not be baptised, unless he gave up one of his wives. Consequently, he was probably taking Polly Umpherville to Cumberland House to arrange a marriage between her and Joseph McLellan, whom she knew well because he had earlier worked at Moose Lake under Ballandyne. Polly was about twenty-four years of age when she married McLellan, so she must have been a girl of twelve or thirteen when she became Ballandyne's second wife in 1827.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, when he took Mary Jebb as his third wife in 1853, he was about sixty-two years of age and she no more than a teenager.<sup>26</sup>

This pattern of taking much younger wives adds weight to Margaret's contention that

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<sup>22</sup> Although baptized as the children of Jack and Betsey Ballandine, Peter, Robert, and George all named Polly as their mother, when they applied for scrip. John Jr., the eldest son, was probably Polly's son, too, because there is a record, 31 May 1854, of his giving £1 to a Mrs. Umpherville, who was probably Mrs. Thomas Umpherville, Polly's mother, and by this reasoning, his grandmother. See PAM, HBCA, B.49 d/73, Cumberland House Accounts, Servants Inland Advances, 1853-1854, mf. 1M461.

<sup>23</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 93, Evans to Mary Evans, 26 December 1840.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Polly was married 3 January 1841. Her age was given on her baptismal record. See PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 10, entry 140. According to the June 1828 Census of Cumberland House, Ballandine had two wives and a child. See PAM, HBCA, B.49 d/24, p. 34, Cumberland House Accounts, 1827-1828, mf. 1M460.

<sup>26</sup> Mary was a daughter of George Jebb, or Kissa-Ookemahw, the "Great Chief," a fervent Christian leader at Moose Lake, who died in 1850, leaving behind a widow and four children, two of them "little girls." See PAM, CMS 17, Class "C", C.1. C.1/0, James Hunter, Journal, Cumberland Mission, commencing 3 August 1850, entry for 29 November 1850, mf. A91.

Ballandyne was attentive to her. She would have been about twelve years old in 1840, and therefore of marriageable age by the standards of that period and community. However, if he did, as she suggested, court her favour, his behaviour has to be judged within the context of his time and place. His father was an Orkneyman, but his mother was Cree, and there was no prohibition in that culture against taking more than one wife or even a much younger wife. Indeed, there is no convincing evidence that Ballandyne was a “bad” man, or that he ever acted in opposition to the cultural norms with which he had been raised. Certainly, after he became a Christian, he was devoted to his new religion, and worked diligently to promote the work at Moose Lake.<sup>27</sup> His wife Betsey was equally committed.<sup>28</sup> When she died in the spring of 1853, he was “swallowed up with grief” and the missionary James Hunter had to impress upon him “the duty of being resigned to the Divine will.”<sup>29</sup> Toward the end of that year, he married Mary Jebb as noted above, and they had nine or ten more children.<sup>30</sup> He died in 1879 at Cedar Lake at eighty-eight years of age.<sup>31</sup>

This picture of Ballandyne as a sensitive and deeply religious man is difficult to reconcile with

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<sup>27</sup> After a visit to Moose Lake, the Anglican missionary, James Hunter, wrote, “I met with a warm reception from my Kind friend Mr. John Ballendine and his family. He is very anxious for the spiritual good of the Indians; and, as he speaks Cree fluently, he has given the Indians many a faithful lecture when visiting his house for the purpose of trade: at all opportunities he has a word for them.” *Ibid.*, entry for 22 October 1850.

<sup>28</sup> Although an ill woman. Betsey accompanied John Umpherville and his wife to The Pas, “a distance of 60 Miles on purpose to receive the Lord’s supper.” *Ibid.*, James Hunter, *Journal, Cumberland Mission*, commencing 6 Aug 1852, entry for 25 December 1852, mf. A91.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 10 May 1853.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10, entry for 19 December 1853. The marriage was performed by the Reverend James Hunter of The Pas.

<sup>31</sup> Ballendine died at Cedar Lake, 31 March 1879, and was buried at Moose Lake, 2 Apr 1879. See PAM, HBCA, B.218/a/2, fo. 57, *Moose Lake Post Journal*, 1876-1879, mf. 1012.

the one painted of him in the trial transcript, which implied that he initiated an adulterous relationship with Margaret Sinclair while she was living at Moose Lake.<sup>32</sup> It also contrasts with Alder's portrayal of him as "a married Indian" who succumbed to adultery at Margaret's instigation.<sup>33</sup> In either case, there is a discrepancy between Margaret's story about Ballandyne, and what is known about him from other sources.<sup>34</sup> At the trial, Margaret claimed nothing happened between her and Ballandyne, but this contradicted the impression she seemingly left with James Evans and his wife when she told them about the incident.<sup>35</sup> Considered in conjunction with the apparent embellishments to her stories about Evans, these contradictions further erode Margaret's credibility as a witness. However, determining why she told and seemingly embellished these stories is more difficult to discern.

There is no question that Margaret was on the fringe of Rossville society. An outsider in that closely-knit, interrelated community, she was alone and vulnerable, just as she appeared to

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<sup>32</sup> Trial transcript, 17-18. Nowhere does it say in the transcript that Ballandyne committed adultery with Margaret, only that he "slept" or "laid" with her. The implication, however, was that adultery had occurred, particularly in view of Alder's remarks. See below.

<sup>33</sup> PAM, HBCA, D.5/18, fo. 422. There was nothing in the transcript to suggest that Margaret initiated the relationship with Ballandyne. Alder either assumed this on his own, or he based it on information obtained from Evans, after Evans returned to England in 1846. For additional insights on Alder's portrayal of both Ballandyne and Sinclair, see Chapter 5, n. 47.

<sup>34</sup> At least there is a discrepancy between the *interpretation others gave* to that story and what is known about Ballandyne's character. Margaret may have encouraged those interpretations by the way she told her story.

<sup>35</sup> Evans implied an adulterous relationship when he asked his wife at the trial if she had heard "Maggy say that Jack Ballandyne often left his bed and wife and came to her and laid with her." Trial transcript, 17. Margaret may indeed have left that impression, then when faced with the consequences, *admitted* that nothing in fact had happened between her and Ballandyne. In the last century, when houses were small and overcrowded, if there was a bedroom at all, it was often shared with others. Under such circumstances, illicit activities were difficult to hide. Devoted to his wife, and otherwise reputable, it is hard to believe that Ballandyne would fornicate with twelve year old Margaret, while thirteen year old Mary Baby lay right beside them and his wife and four sons were nearby.

have been ever since she left her parents' home at Cumberland House.<sup>36</sup> John Maminawatum's mother called her a "giddy girl" and Samuel Pahpahnahkis "knew she was not a good woman." Indeed, Samuel had complained about her behaviour, while they were both living with the Evanses.<sup>37</sup> Margaret also turned to the Evanses and shared stories of her past apparently in an attempt to gain their attention and support. She may even have been infatuated with Evans himself. His tomfoolery and promises of help in that circumstance could have been confused with the joking and gift-giving that initiated a courtship in Cree culture. On the other hand, the promise of gifts may have meant something entirely different to her.<sup>38</sup>

Although never fully addressed in the trial, Evans' alleged promise to give Margaret "something every summer" may have had more to do with her employment in the Evans' household than it did with courtship. There is no doubt that Margaret worked for about twelve months as a servant in the Evans' household, in all likelihood from the summer of 1843 until her marriage in July 1844.<sup>39</sup> However, there is no record that Evans paid her during that period, so that it is possible she was promised "something" informally as partial compensation for her work.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, because Evans made promises to help Eliza Majekekwanab and

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<sup>36</sup> Since Margaret acknowledged at the trial that Ballandyne "came often" to her bed, she must have been residing in the Ballandyne home, possibly as a servant or nursemaid for the children. She was definitely at Moose Lake in 1840, when she was twelve years old, and may have remained there until 1843, when she went to work for Evans.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel complained "often" to the Evanses about "how bad she did," and they had advised him to "turn her out of the kitchen." Trial transcript, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Gift giving was also the traditional Cree method of "mollifying an aggrieved person." See Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, 107. It is possible that Margaret had a grievance of some kind against Evans and was reacting in a traditional manner when she expected a gift in return. See also n. 49 below.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret "resided in Mr. Evan's [sic] house as Servant about 12 months." Trial transcript, 2.

<sup>40</sup> "Sarah Neckaway," Evans' servant, received ten shillings on 1 April 1843 from his private account, but there is no record of Margaret Sinclair receiving anything during 1843-1844. See PAM, HBCA, B.154 d 91, p. 3, Norway House Servants Book Debts, 1843-1844, mf. 1M548. However, in March and

Hannah Goostahtahk, and apparently promised assistance to John Maminawatum as well, it is possible that Margaret expected something more, too.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, that expectation may have motivated her to tell Evans that she had defended his name in the community, then to turn on him when that attempt to curry favour failed to produce the desired results.<sup>42</sup>

There was nothing unusual about Margaret's apparent use of indirection to gain influence over Evans. A similar strategy seemed to have been a factor in two other cases involving young women of about the same age as Margaret.<sup>43</sup> One occurred at Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba, in 1932, and involved an Ojibway girl named Shabwán, who began to manifest symptoms that greatly alarmed her family.<sup>44</sup> Anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell observed that her hysteria seemed carefully controlled, and it also had a sexual dimension that for a time included him. The other case involved a Cree girl of about the same age at Oxford House in 1829.<sup>45</sup> Colin Robertson, the HBC factor, described how the young woman used her fits to control those

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April 1845, nearly a year after she had left the Evans' household, "Maggie"" was paid six shillings and "Margaret Sinclair" four shillings from Evans' account. Ibid., B.154/d.98a, p. 216, Norway House Officers and Servants Accounts, 1844, mf. 1M548.

<sup>41</sup> For the promises to Eliza, Hannah, and John, see trial transcript, 15, 46-47. Apparently, John believed that his wife should receive something, too. See n. 49 below for the details.

<sup>42</sup> In summary, Margaret may have felt entitled to a gift because (1) Evans had engaged in behaviour of a sexual nature or (2) because he had not paid her sufficiently for her work as a servant in his house or (3) he had made some general promise of assistance. In traditional Cree culture when a promise to give a gift was not kept, the aggrieved person had the right to take action. In such cases, those who had "joking-relationship" with the guilty party "teased and mocked him until he settled his debt." Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, 125. Margaret, as a classificatory cross cousin of Evans, had that joking-relationship with him and may have "teased and mocked" him in order to shame him into keeping his promise. When he did not respond, she took vengeance, which was a more serious method in Cree culture of dealing with a wrong.

<sup>43</sup> Margaret was about eighteen years of age at this time.

<sup>44</sup> A. Irving Hallowell, "Shabwán: A Dissocial Indian Girl," in *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 8 (1938), 329-340. Shabwán was an adolescent girl of about fifteen or sixteen years of age. Ibid., 330.

<sup>45</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.156:a11, fo.18, 22-24d, Oxford House Post Journal, 1828-1829. The young woman was Fanny Sinclair, who was about fifteen years of age at the time of the incident. Ibid., 23. Shortly thereafter, she married John Isbister, later the postmaster at Nelson House.

around her, including a young man she said God had told her she must marry. In both cases, the people surrounding the girls were completely taken in by their histrionics, a circumstance, which tended to increase their manifestation. However, when Hallowell challenged Shabwán's behaviour by calling her a tease, she began to snap out of her fit. Similarly, when the whole establishment at Oxford House was in commotion, and others were beginning to exhibit bizarre behaviour, Colin Robertson altered his strategy of appeasement and use firmness instead. When the girl threw another fit, he threatened her with a bucket of cold water. In his words, "she immediately revived, and did not after attempt to deceive."<sup>46</sup> At Rossville, too, some people were ready to believe Margaret's stories, regardless of how embellished they became. Unfortunately, no one in a position of authority, not Ross, Simpson, or Mason, effectively tested the truth of her claims, possibly because they were too useful to be discredited.<sup>47</sup>

Evans' forceful personality, which could be intimidating to mild-mannered subordinates, like Steinhauer, invited retaliation from men like Mason, who had been on the receiving end of his wrath, and from Ross and Simpson, whose authority he had challenged. Evans' strict supervision of the young men and women in his charge, as exemplified by the incident with the snuffers and his punishment of Martin Pupahnukis, must have encouraged resentment among them as well. Margaret, as servant, probably chafed at Evans' tight control, too, but his matchmaking may have antagonized her even more. Although Evans seems to have approached John Maminawatum at her instigation, it must have been humiliating to Margaret

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., fo.23d.

<sup>47</sup> For Ross and Simpson, the stories bolstered their efforts to have Evans removed from the country. For Mason, the stories justified his sending home the transcript without having read it to Evans.

when the young man was reluctant to marry her.<sup>48</sup> John eventually relented, but his resentment over his marriage and the promises he claimed Evans had made, but not kept, was evident in the statement he gave to Mason after the trial. In reference to his wife, John also expressed the view that Evans "ought to give her something" considering what he "had done" to her.<sup>49</sup> Evidently, John and Margaret had united in the face of Evans' highhandedness and broken promises. Evans was oblivious to these factors. In April 1846, he learned that while he was at Red River in December 1845, Ross had engaged men for his own journey there in the spring, among them Johnny Maminawatum, whose wife "Maggie had the promise of a passage in the first sloop to the settlement."<sup>50</sup> His suspicions fully aroused now, Evans added, "I read their movements like a book. The whole proceedure [sic] is to bring me before the Gov[ernor] and Council to give an ac/ of my religious & moral conduct."<sup>51</sup>

Whatever her motivation, Margaret's aggressive strategy resembled tactics reported elsewhere for girls of her age. In her incisive analysis of female violence, Patricia Pearson pointed out that the methods used by males and females diverge at the teenage years, when girls abandon

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<sup>48</sup> Trial transcript, 45-47. John made no secret of that reluctance. According to his statement, on the very day of his marriage and in Margaret's presence he complained directly to Evans that the banns had been published without his [John's] consent.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. John apparently said, "If I had done what Mr Evans had done to a girl I should certainly think I ought to give her something." This bracketed comment was evidently inserted later by Mason and probably represented the gist of what John said. Evidently John had been taught the traditional teaching that a wrong could be expiated by the giving of a gift. Concerning the promises, Evans allegedly said to John, "if you want to build a house, I will send you any of my servant men & John MacKay shall assist you to square the logs." Later in the statement, John said, "He has cheated me of what he promised me."

<sup>50</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 160, Journal. 1 April 1846. On 25 May 1846, "Messrs. Ross and Hargrave left for Red River. The crew included John Mamenawatum, Paulette, David, and Nataway (Berens River Indian)." See PAM, HBCA, B.154/a-45, fo. 32, Norway House Journal, 1845-1846, mf. 1M19.

<sup>51</sup> UWO, Evans, Letters and Papers, Item 160, Journal. 1 April 1846. Although Evans seems to have thought Margaret was going to Red River to testify against him before the governor, she may have in fact been going to visit her parents, who had retired to Red River.



physical aggression and revert to bullying, name-calling, and setting up and framing those they don't like. In Pearson's words, "They become masters of indirection" which is "a kind of social manipulation" where "the aggressor...makes use of the social structure in order to harm the target person."<sup>52</sup> Gossip, exchanging nasty notes, trying to win others to one's side, and excluding from groups were cited in one study as methods that teenage girls used to express anger or compete with rivals.<sup>53</sup>

Gossip was certainly commonplace at Norway House, as in the fur trade generally, and gave scope for embellished stories and fabrications. Sarah St. Germain was a particularly notorious storyteller. When Sarah and her husband were at Nelson House in the winter of 1844-1845, John Isbister, the post master, complained that she "had raised many reports to the injury and inconvenience of the company's business, and moreover to people innocent of her stories, my own family amongst the rest."<sup>54</sup> According to Isbister, she had also circulated the story that, "when she was a serving woman in the house of the Revd Mr Evans [1841-1843], a young man who was a clerk here in former days, Mr John Finlayson, was making love to Miss Evans, and passed whole nights in her bedroom with her, and many more such stuff."<sup>55</sup> Apparently, Sarah did not improve with the years. In 1865, A. G. Graham wrote Fort Garry concerning one of his retiring servants Charles Crate, "who to get rid of a bad wife [Sarah] is

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<sup>52</sup> Patricia Pearson, *When She Was Bad: Violent Women and the Myth of Innocence* (Toronto: Random House, 1997), 17.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> WMMSA 13, 13g, 19, John Isbister to James Evans, 14 June 1845. Ironically, Sarah's behaviour was not unlike that of John's own wife Fanny, who created so much commotion at Oxford House in 1828.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

now off with a large family to Red River.”<sup>56</sup> Apparently anticipating his speedy return, Graham wrote a few days later, “If he comes back without his family, and promises to have no more to do with his wretched wife you can send him back but not otherwise.”<sup>57</sup>

Like Sarah, Margaret appeared to embellish her stories to improbable lengths, but she may have had other problems as well. After the death of her husband, John Maminawatum, she remained in Norway House for a time, then left it and apparently her infant son as well.<sup>58</sup> At Red River on 10 December 1849, Margaret married Belonie Gibeault, the aging butler mentioned in Letitia Hargrave’s correspondence.<sup>59</sup> She had five more children, one of them a boy who took Lane as his surname when he became an adult, suggesting that he may have been given away, too.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this explains why Belonie stated in his will that if his wife Margaret married again and “neglect properly to provide for” his youngest daughters Mary and Flora, his executors were to take two-thirds of the income from his estate for their maintenance.<sup>61</sup> There is no evidence that she neglected them, however. Some years after the

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<sup>56</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/b/10, fo. 83, Norway House Correspondence Outward, 1864-1875, A. G. Graham to James R. Clare, 27 June 1865. Sarah married Crate in 1852, a year after the death of St. Germain.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., fo. 87, Graham to Clare, 15 July 1865.

<sup>58</sup> John died on 14 December 1846. See WMMSA 14, 14g, 15. Evidently, “William Mason,” John’s son by Margaret, was raised at Norway House. He moved with his wife and family to Fisher River in 1880-1881. Indicative of how little he knew about his family background, he named “Baker” [his grandfather Bakie Sinclair] and Margaret Sinclair as his parents when he married a second time in 1897. See University of Winnipeg, United Church Archives, Fisher River (Methodist) Baptisms, 1894-1908, entry 77.

<sup>59</sup> HBCA, E.4/2, Red River Settlement, Marriages, 1841-1851, entry 190, mf. 4M5; *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 60-61, 72-73, 158, 180-181.

<sup>60</sup> Edouard Gibeault was baptised in 1856 at St. François Xavier, but he was not with his family at Portage La Prairie in 1870, when the census was taken. Information on his surname change to Lane was obtained from Nellie LaRocque of the Metis Resource Centre in Winnipeg.

<sup>61</sup> PAM, HBCA, A.36/1b, Officers’ and Servants’ Wills, 1816-1873, mf. 425.

marriage of her youngest daughter, Margaret married Elliot Armstrong of Winnipeg.<sup>62</sup> According to the marriage record, he was forty-two and she was forty-six, but in fact she was closer to sixty. Indeed, the only time her age was recorded accurately on any official record was at the time of her death in 1914, when it was given as eighty-seven.<sup>63</sup>

According to Patricia Pearson, we live in a time when women are commonly viewed as “put upon, done to, afflicted,” the result in part of “Second Wave feminism, in which the systemic powerlessness of women is the transcendent theme, subsuming within it the intensity and passion of individual females, never allowing that one woman can be more powerful and harming than one man.”<sup>64</sup> Yet in February 1846, Margaret Sinclair seemingly exerted enough power to undermine the reputation of the Reverend James Evans and perhaps to shorten his life as well. Certainly such power has been demonstrated in recent instances as concern about sexual abuse of women and children has swept across the continent.<sup>65</sup> Assuming that victims would tell nothing but the truth in these matters, investigators at first accepted the stories, and continued to do so, even after some allegations had been exaggerated to unbelievable lengths.<sup>66</sup> In one case uncannily like the Rossville scandal, a Vancouver vice principal named Mike Kliman was initially found guilty of abusing two female students on the dubious claims

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<sup>62</sup> They were married, 2 February 1888, at St. Mary's Church, Portage la Prairie by Rev. Saml. Macmanine. See PAM, Diocese of Rupert's Land, St. Mary's, Portage la Prairie, 1855-1973.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Margaret died 28 December 1914 of pneumonia, and was buried at St. Mary's Cem. on the 30th.

<sup>64</sup> Pearson, 29-30.

<sup>65</sup> In many cases during the 1980s and 1990s, that power was often exerted through “recovered memory.” Moira Johnston, a Canadian journalist who covered the widely publicized *Ramona vs. Isabella* case in California, called the phenomenon “a mass psychogenic hysteria.” In her book *Spectral Evidence*, she “charts the recovered-memory trend as it climbs steeply until 1992, plunges in 1994, and levels off to a trickle today.” See Paula Brook, “The Trials of Mike K,” *Saturday Night* (September 1998), 28.

<sup>66</sup> Consider, for example, the Ingram case in Olympia, Washington, perhaps one of the most bizarre. See Lawrence Wright, “Remembering Satan – Part I and II,” *The New Yorker*, May 17 and 24, 1993.

of recovered memory.<sup>67</sup> Gradually, however, doubts began to be expressed, and some even noticed disturbing parallels between these and earlier cases like the Salem Witch Hunts.<sup>68</sup> But turning the tide was a slow process. In the Vancouver case, it took four years and two more trials to obtain an acquittal, then only after the credibility of the chief witness, the investigation by the police, and the scientific basis of recovered memory came into serious question.<sup>69</sup> However, that acquittal did not bring total vindication because the judge would not say that the alleged abuse did not take place, only that "the Crown had not proven that any abuse was perpetrated by Mr. Kliman."<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, even though both Mason and the Secretaries found Evans "not guilty," we can never be certain that he was innocent of the charges laid against him. In recent years, it has become common for clergymen to be charged and convicted for sexual misconduct involving their parishioners. Indeed, reports concerning such places as Mount Cashel in Newfoundland and St. Joseph's in British Columbia show how widespread the problem can be.<sup>71</sup> Concerning Evans' alleged misconduct, a case can be made that Margaret invented her stories to strike back at him for his highhandedness and broken promises. On the other hand, she may have embellished the truth in an ill-conceived attempt to make people believe what had really

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<sup>67</sup> Brook, 23. Challenging the testimony of the chief witness, Kliman's colleagues testified that "there was no portable blackboard in that tiny prep room, that it would not have fitted, and wasn't needed as there was a board mounted on the wall." *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>68</sup> See David Roberts, "The Martensville Horror: Was this a modern-day Salem?" *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday, 19 February 1994.

<sup>69</sup> Brook, 23-31.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> Sylvia Fraser, "Freud's Final Seduction," *Saturday Night*, March 1994, 21. Fraser quoted the Rev. Peter Loughheed of the United Church of Canada's task force as saying that "the church is a less safe place for the parishioner and women than the secular work place" and U.S. studies found "clergy were sexually exploiting their parishioners at twice the rate of the secular therapists."

happened to her. Ironically, her stories gave her little power apart from the willingness of Simpson, Ross, and Mason to believe them. Indeed, had it been in their interest to ignore or suppress her evidence, they would in all likelihood have done so, as recent cases of sexual abuse have shown others have done.<sup>72</sup> Taking the stand she did won her very little.<sup>73</sup>

In more recent cases of alleged abuse, and especially of aboriginal youth by clergy and others in positions of power, an adversarial relationship has existed between the victims and their abusers with the focus being on blame. This was evident in the trial held at Rossville in 1846, which was dominated by Mason and Evans. However, it is striking that after the trial the local leaders did not expel Margaret and the other young women. According to Mason, they justified that decision “on the ground of the peculiar circumstances under which they [the young women] had been induced to sin (though no justification of their sin) their repeated confessions, & manifested sorrow & promise of future good conduct.”<sup>74</sup> This emphasis on healing, rather than retribution, may have been prompted by Christ’s admonition to the adulterous woman and those who would condemn her.<sup>75</sup> However, it also resonated with Cree ways of restoring order and balance after a wrong had been committed.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> In reference to this problem in the investigation of Bishop Hubert O’Connor, Birnie wrote, “Who could forget the network of Catholic officials who’d kept the lid on the Mount Cashel affair?” Birnie, 37.

<sup>73</sup> Mason certainly had little respect for her. In July 1846, when his wife and baby were unwell, Mason wrote Ross, “I tried my best to get a nurse but none to be had even poor Maggy who is a last resource I was compelled to send for is ill.” PABC, AE, R73, M38, Mason to Ross, 7 July 1846. Also, when she came for her ticket to the love feast, Margaret “wept bitterly the whole time,” while Mason spoke to her “of the evil nature of her crimes and faithfully warned and reproved.” See WMMSA 14, 14g, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> The relevant verses are “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” and “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” The Bible, King James Version, John 8:3-11.

<sup>76</sup> As has been noted, in traditional Cree culture, a gift given by the offender to the offended was a means of restoring order. The young women at Rossville had offended the community by their “sin”: by their

Whether those leaders would have extended the same compassion to Evans we will never know, as he died a few months after the trial. However, it may be significant that not a single member left the church as a result of the allegations against him.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Evans' guilt or innocence was irrelevant to the survival of the church at Rossville, which in itself was a testimony of the kind of influence he exercised among the people there. It was to his credit that by 1846 a body of active lay people from the Cree community exerted real leadership roles within the congregation. In just six years, most of them had become literate in Cree as a result of the syllabics that Evans developed to allow them to read the scriptures in their own language. It was a matter of no small pride to Evans that under his and Peter Jacobs' guidance, they had been encouraged in self-reliance and the acquisition of new skills, so that they were able to build their own houses at Rossville with materials they supplied themselves. Evans also believed that people had to be economically independent, which prompted his interest in cottage industries that could improve the local standard of living. With that kind of direction, the confidence of the church grew, until the leading Christian tripmen were able to challenge the authority of the Hudson's Bay Company itself on the issue of Sabbath travel. These were significant accomplishments, and it is fitting that Evans' contributions to the community of Rossville and to the preservation of the Cree language have been memorialized by the plaque that was laid in his honour at Rossville in 1998.

The vindication of Evans' moral character, however, is another question. We will never know with certainty what happened between him and the young women who resided in his home in the years between 1843 and 1846. However, the aim of this study has been to broaden the

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"gift" of promised good conduct in the future, they gained forgiveness.

<sup>77</sup> WMMSA 14, 14G, 15.

scope of the investigation and allow for the different perspectives on the case, so that we can deepen our understanding of what may have occurred. No one has been exonerated by this process. Indeed, each participant in the drama seems to have been responsible to some degree for the events that occurred. Under such circumstances, it hardly seems reasonable to assign blame to any one person in particular. Certainly healing appeared uppermost in the minds of the local leaders of the church at Rossville in 1846 as they sought to help the young women get on with their lives.<sup>78</sup> That approach resonates with the direction being taken in similar cases today. In many aboriginal communities across the country where issues of sexual and physical abuse are being addressed, the healing circle is bringing abuser and abused together, so that they can become whole again.<sup>79</sup> No such circle existed at Rossville in 1846, nor was one possible when hurts were so deep and recent, but after a century and a half it is time for Evans to join Margaret and the others in the circle, so that the healing can begin.

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<sup>78</sup> Life moved on for all the people connected with the case. Eliza Majekekwanab, who was still living in the 1890s, married John Nabaisse and eventually moved to Cumberland House where her descendants still live. Margaret Sinclair's descendants can be found at Portage la Prairie, Fisher River, and elsewhere. Descendants of Jack Ballandyne still live at Moose Lake, Grand Rapids, and other points across Western Canada. One of his direct descendants is presently [2001] school board chair of Frontier School Division and a descendant of Margaret Sinclair's eldest son, William Mason Maminawatum, is chief superintendent in the same division.

<sup>79</sup> For example, at Hollow Water, Manitoba, the local people have initiated a programme of healing based on traditional teachings. See Bonnie Dickie, director, and Joe MacDonald, producer, *Hollow Water*, video, 44 min. (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2000)

## Appendix

### *Notes on the Origins and Relationships of Leading Cree Families at Norway House in the 1840s*

Documenting the specific origins and relationships of the Norway House Cree during the first half of the nineteenth century necessarily involves detailed analysis of multiple sources.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, such study reveals a great deal of information on particular families.<sup>2</sup> "Peke kan," for instance, who was an "Old fellow" in 1822, had many years earlier been an "Indian captain" connected with Henley House on the Upper Albany far to the east of Norway House.<sup>3</sup> By 1796 he was in the York Factory region, where he was described as "Bungee," which usually meant someone of Ojibway background.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the Pelicans probably occupied some middle ground between the Ojibway and Cree, much as the Oji-Cree of the Island Lake District do today, and since the territory of both roughly corresponded with that region, they were probably one and the same.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the case, there were only a few Pelicans near Norway

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<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted here include the records of the HBC, registers of the Wesleyan Methodist missions, and "Half-Breed" scrip applications filed with the Department of the Interior after 1870.

<sup>2</sup> Even more can be gleaned from the records in the context of traditional Cree cultural norms. The "Indian Debt Lists" at Norway House between 1812-1826, for instance, are much more useful when the matrilineal nature of marriage is understood. Rearrangement in the order of these lists, which were often grouped according to hunting party, suggests the movement of young men to their father-in-law's band at time of marriage. See notes 8 and 19.

<sup>3</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/10, p. 32. Norway House Post Journal, 1822-1823, mf. 1M106; Victor P. Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North: Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Centre, 1986), 28. The source cited by Lytwyn was PAM, HBCA, B.86/a/14, fo. 6, Henley House Post Journal, 1767-1768, mf. 1M60.

<sup>4</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.239/b/57, fo. 29d, York Factory Correspondence, 1795-1796, mf. 1M256. In a letter from J[oseph]. Colen to J[ohn]. Ballenden at Severn, 18 July 1796, it states, "No Bungee Indians have visited York this season except Peekekan and his Son."

<sup>5</sup> The "Pelicans from Lac Ouinipeck" were clearly distinguished from the "Ojibbaway" in the 1828 Cumberland House Census. PAM, HBCA, B.49/d 24, p. 35, Cumberland House Accounts, 1827-1828, mf. 1M460. For details on possible origins of the Pelicans, see Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North*, 125.



House in 1823. "Pekekan" and "Miskika nib," his "1<sup>st</sup> son," but in fact his son-in-law, were at Cross Lake, while "Nec aw nee," his "2<sup>nd</sup> son" was with a few other Pelicans, probably relatives, at Jack Lake.<sup>6</sup>

Why Pekekan and Miskika nib were living at Cross Lake is not immediately obvious, but the fact that Miskika nib had two wives provides a clue. According to Joseph Robson, whose account of life in Hudson Bay was published in 1752, it was customary "for the man upon his marriage to leave his own friends, and live with his wife's father," a practice also reported by Sutherland in 1815.<sup>7</sup> There was no hard and fast rule at Norway House as to how long a young man might stay with his in-laws, but all the relevant Indian Debt Lists from 1815 to 1822 link Miskika nib to "Kee kee wa thinish," who was also at Cross Lake in 1823.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in the same lists, Pekekan's name was right below his son-in-law in 1818-1819 and again in 1821-1822. Available evidence then suggests that Miskika nib took a daughter of Kee kee wa thinish as his first wife some time before 1815 and a daughter of Pekekan as his second in about 1818.

Kee kee wa thinish was the first name on the list of hunters Sutherland attached to his 1815 Report. Although Swampy Cree, he was not a member of the York Factory Home Guard in 1794, when his name was first mentioned in HBC correspondence. In the winter of 1794-

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<sup>6</sup> See PAM, HBCA, B.154/e/2, fo. 12d-13, Norway House District Report, 1823, mf. 1M781. For the relationship of "Mis-a Ka kanib" and Peke kan, see PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/10, p. 32, mf. 1M106.

<sup>7</sup> Robson, 52; PAM, HBCA, B.154/e.1, fo. 5d, Norway House District Report, 1815, mf. 1M781.

<sup>8</sup> When not in alphabetical order, the Indian Debt Lists appear to be organised according to hunting parties. See PAM, HBCA, B.154/d/2b (1814-1815); B.154/d/3b (1816-1817); B.154/d/5 (1817-1818), B.154/d/7(1818-1819), mf. 1M541, and B.154/d/11 (1821-1822), mf. 1M542, where Miskika nib is listed below Kee kee wa thinish. Because Kee kee wa thinish was Cree, and Miskika nib Pelican, they were probably in-laws.

1795, "Kekeekathinue and his followers" were in the vicinity of Cross Lake, apparently provisioning the HBC outpost there. However, by the following winter "KeKethine" had reportedly "drawn every Indian that he could to the Canadian House" of opposition trader, William McKay.<sup>9</sup> In 1823, the NWC was gone, but Kee kee wa thinish was still living at Cross Lake, with a wife and son. Two more sons were at Jack Lake. "Neman a sethenue," the "2<sup>nd</sup> son," was unmarried, but "Nuay coo wayow, the "1<sup>st</sup> son," was already the husband of two wives and the father of nine children.<sup>10</sup> His first wife may have been a daughter of Porcupine, a Norway House hunter, whose family trapped at Limestone Lake, while his second was a daughter of another local hunter named "Uchegun," or Curleyhead.<sup>11</sup>

In 1810-1811, "Ochegun" was listed on the York Factory Debt List, but by 1812-1813 he was on the Jack River list along with "Memmawatam," who was identified as his "1<sup>st</sup> Son" on the 1823 Census, when they were both hunting at "Lime Stone Lake."<sup>12</sup> In 1823,

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<sup>9</sup> See York Factory correspondence for details. PAM, HBCA, B.239/b/55, fo. 13, letter from Joseph Colen to Wm. H. Cook, 12 June 1794, and fo. 26, letter from Colen to John Allan, 25 July 1794, mf. 1M256; PAM, HBCA, B.239/b/79, fo. 4 and 8, letters from York Factory to London, 22 Sep 1794 and 16 Sep 1795, mf. 1M258; PAM, HBCA, B.239/b/57, fo. 13d, J. Tate to J. Colen, 26 May 1796, mf. 1M256.

<sup>10</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/e/2, fo. 12d. According to Cree custom, cross cousins could marry each other, but parallel cousins could not. By definition, a man's children were cross-cousins to his sister's children and parallel cousins to his brother's children, and vice versa. Nuay coo wayow was probably a son, rather than a son-in-law, of Kee kee wa thinish because "Boodjum" or John Wesley, his eldest son, married Flora, daughter of Miskika neb. Since Flora was born in 1815, her mother must have been the daughter of Miskika neb's first wife, who was herself a daughter of Kee kee wa thinish. Flora could not have married Boodjum, if his mother had been her mother's sister, because that would have made them parallel cousins. Therefore, Nuay coo wayow must have been her mother's brother *and* a son of Kee kee wa thinish as well.

<sup>11</sup> Nuay coo wayow was associated in the debt lists with Porcupine or members of his family in 1814/1815 and again in 1816/1817. In 1817/1818, he was listed by himself, and in 1818/1819 with Uchegun, whose sons later assumed "Budd" as their surname. In all likelihood, Nuay coo wayow took his second wife while a member of Uchegun's hunting party. This daughter of Uchegun was undoubtedly Elizabeth Budd, who was later named in the scrip application of her daughter, Sarah Crate.

<sup>12</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.239/d/153, fo. 11, mf. 1M680, and B.154/d/1, fo. 17d. Rather than a son of Ochegun [Curley head], Memenawatam was probably the "Stepson" mentioned in an 1830 reference. Certainly Memenawatam did not take "Curley Head" or "Budd" as his surname, as Curley Head's other sons did. See PAM, HBCA, B.154 a 18, fo. 4d, Norway House Post Journal, 11 June 1830 - 17 Nov 1831, mf. 1M107.

“Memenawatum” was married with a son and two daughters; however, the debt lists provide few clues as to the identity of his in-laws. In the years between 1813 and 1816, his name was missing from local records, suggesting that he may have been elsewhere, and when he was listed again in 1816-1817, he was with Ochegun. However, among the new names on the debt list that year were “Kishecaethin” and “Thomas Isham,” both of whom had been earlier associated at York Factory with Wash-e-soo-E’Squew, who was a widow with a family of six children by this time. In all likelihood, she arrived at Jack River in company with these people after April 1815.<sup>13</sup> Sometime during this period, one of her daughters became the wife of Memenawatum, and their first son was born in about 1818.<sup>14</sup>

Porcupine, another early hunter at Jack River, was not included on the first known debt list there in 1812-1813.<sup>15</sup> However, “Pepathekish,” who was Porcupine’s son-in-law, did appear along with “Cannegunne,” “Wappemusqua,” and “Weeascascam,” three hunters who were at Red Deer Lake with Alexander Kennedy in the fall of 1812.<sup>16</sup> Evidently, the 1812-1813 list included outstanding debt from the previous year, when Colin Robertson said the exodus from York Factory began. Since “Cannegannee” and “Wapusk” appeared on the York Factory Indian Debt List for 1810-1811, they must have been among the first wave of hunters leaving

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<sup>13</sup> Her eldest son, Cask, was still hunting at York Factory, 29 April 1815. See PAM, HBCA, B.239/d/169, York Factory Waste Book, 1814-1815, mf. 1M681.

<sup>14</sup> See Beaumont, “Origins and Influences,” 181.

<sup>15</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/d/1, fo. 17d-18. It may be that he had no debt, or had traded elsewhere that year.

<sup>16</sup> For the relationship of Pepathekish to Porcupine, see PAM, HBCA, B.154/a/8, p. 5, Norway House Post Journal, 1819-1820. For the hunters at Red Deer River, see PAM, HBCA, B.176/a/1, fo. 2, 4d, 6d, Red Deer River (Swan River) Post Journal, 1813, mf. 1M119.

that region and had stopped only briefly at Jack River before proceeding westward.<sup>17</sup> However, "Ochegun," "Ackingescum," and "Pepathekish," who were also on the York Factory List of 1810-1811, as well as the Jack River List of 1812-1813, remained behind.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, "Pepathekish, Porcupine, Porcupines Son" were in that order on the 1813-1814 debt list, suggesting that Pepathekish had already married a daughter of Porcupine.<sup>19</sup> Since Porcupine never appeared on the York Factory Debt List, it is likely he had been hunting for some time at Limestone Lake, which was located to the southwest of Jack River.<sup>20</sup> If Wapusk and his family took that route on their way west, Pepathekish may have simply stopped there, while his relatives proceeded to Red Deer River, where they remained until at least 1815.<sup>21</sup> "White Bear," which is the English translation of Wapusk, was also recorded among the hunters at Moose Lake in 1815 and at Cumberland House the following year.<sup>22</sup> In the summer of 1818, he went to Norway House "to See some of his relations there," and returned in August with "a young man whom he calls his son," later identified as "Papathekis."<sup>23</sup> This

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<sup>17</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.239/d/153, fo. 2, 4d, 17d. "Wapusk" was the equivalent of "Wappemusqua." There were two by that name at York Factory in 1810-1811, "Wapusk" and "Wapusk S[evern] R[iver]." The first, who came from Foxes Lake, was the "Wappemusqua" who went south. "Wapusk SR" died in the winter of 1812-1813. See PAM, HBCA, B.239/a/124, fo. 24, York Factory Post Journal, 1812-1816, mf. 1M163.

<sup>18</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.239/d/153, fo. 4, "Eganeasum"; fo. 11, "Ochegun"; and fo. 12, "Paputhakeeshish."

<sup>19</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.154/d/2a, fo. 21d-22, Norway House Account Book, 1813-1814, mf. 1M541.

<sup>20</sup> Porcupine's family was at Limestone Lake in 1819 and in 1823. If they were long time residents of the district, it is likely that they would have been there in 1813-1814 as well.

<sup>21</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.176/d/1, fo. 4d, Red Deer River (Swan River) Account Book, 1815, mf. 1M578.

<sup>22</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.49/e/1, Cumberland House District Report, 1815, mf. 777; PAM, HBCA, B.49/d/6, fo. 57, Cumberland House Account Book, 1815-1816, mf. 1M459.

<sup>23</sup> PAM, HBCA, B.49/a/34, fo. 9, Cumberland House Post Journal, 1818-1819, mf. 1M40. Papathekis was first named in the journal on 21 September 1818, and in association with Wapusk on 6 February 1819. The Cumberland House Report, 1819, identified "Pa pa the Kis, a good hunter & comes from Norway Ho." PAM, HBCA, B.49/e/2, fo. 2, Cumberland House District Report, 1819, mf. 1M777.

young man stayed with Wapusk only a year, then returned to Jack River in the fall of 1819 and remained in the Norway House District thereafter.

Relative latecomers to Norway House, John and Benjamin Sinclair originated in Oxford House, where they were listed as brothers on the 1838 Census.<sup>24</sup> Donald Ross described Benjamin as a brother of Fanny Isbister, wife of the postmaster at Nelson River, who was the “reputed” half-sister of James Sinclair of Red River, one of the known sons of Chief Factor William Sinclair of Oxford House.<sup>25</sup> Although Fanny, Benjamin, and possibly John, were also Sinclair’s children, they were raised by Aisseseppeau, one of the Home Guard chiefs at Oxford House. John and Benjamin were married at Norway House on 20 August 1840, John to Nancy  $\Delta\sigma\sigma^{\wedge}\rho^{\wedge}$  (I-ni-ni-s-kee-s] and Benjamin to Margaret  $\Delta\sigma\sigma^{\wedge}\rho^{\wedge}$  (I-ni-ni-s-kee-s].<sup>26</sup> Nancy and Margaret were daughters of Ethiniskees, a Cree Hunter at Oxford House, and “Sophie Collins.”<sup>27</sup> Evidently, their mother was a daughter of Chief Factor Joseph Colen of York Factory, an inference that is given added weight by the fact that her sons by Ethiniskees all assumed “Colen” as their surname in the 1850s.<sup>28</sup>

The foregoing examples illustrate what can be gleaned from the existing records of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries about some aboriginal families. Such investigation is

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<sup>24</sup> HBCA, B.239:z 10, York Factory Miscellaneous Items, Oxford House Indian Census, 1838, mf. 1M903.

<sup>25</sup> PABC, AE, R73, R736, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 6 August 1845. Evidently, William Sinclair had two families, one acknowledged and the other “reputed.”

<sup>26</sup> PAM, R145, GR1212, Item 13, entries 12 and 13.

<sup>27</sup> “I-ni-ni-s-kee-s” and Ethiniskees are dialectic variations of the same name, the first being the “N” and the second the “TH” dialect. When Margaret Sinclair took scrip, she described her father as a Cree Indian and her mother as a “half-breed” named “Sophie Collins.” See NAC, RG15, DII, 8 (b), Applications of 1885 made by North West Half Breeds, 1885, v. 1331, Petit-Tate, Claim 1213, Marguerite Sinclair, dated Victoria, 4 July 1885, mf. C-14941.

<sup>28</sup> See, PAM, HBCA, B.156 d 83, Oxford House Indian Ledger, 1855-1856, and B.156 d 86, Island Lake

particularly useful at places like Norway House where the cultural affiliations of the local Cree are somewhat ambiguous. For instance, knowledge of family relationships, particularly when they involve ties with HBC personnel, can be helpful in explaining why certain individuals were given opportunities while others were not. It is probably no coincidence that Henry Budd was one of the first Cree boys chosen to attend school at Red River in 1820. As the grandson of HBC officer Matthew Cocking and nephew of Chief Factor William Hemmings Cook, he had influential ties with the fur trade establishment. Family connections can also explain employment opportunities. After he became a missionary, the Reverend Henry Budd hired his nephews from the Muminawatum and Erasmus families to work for the mission at The Pas. Members of the Budd and Nakawao families may have been hired as labourers and hunters by the HBC at Norway House in part because of their mixed Cree-European ancestry and fur trade associations, which were reinforced by new marriage alliances with HBC personnel. Family connections can also illuminate the social and economic organization of the Cree community in former times. Analysis of the Indian debt lists at Norway House, for instance, with some knowledge of Cree cultural practices can be useful in explaining family ties in hunting parties. Since these generally consisted of closely related individuals and were often grouped by family in the debt lists, the arrangement of names can provide clues to relationships. Moreover, since it was the practice of young Cree men to take up residence with their in-laws for at least a year after marriage, any change in the order of names can indicate that a man has joined the hunting party of his father-in-law. In short, family ties help to explain much in fur trade and Cree culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and as anyone familiar with reserve politics can tell you, they still do today.

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Indian Debt Book, 1856-1857, mf. 1M569.

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