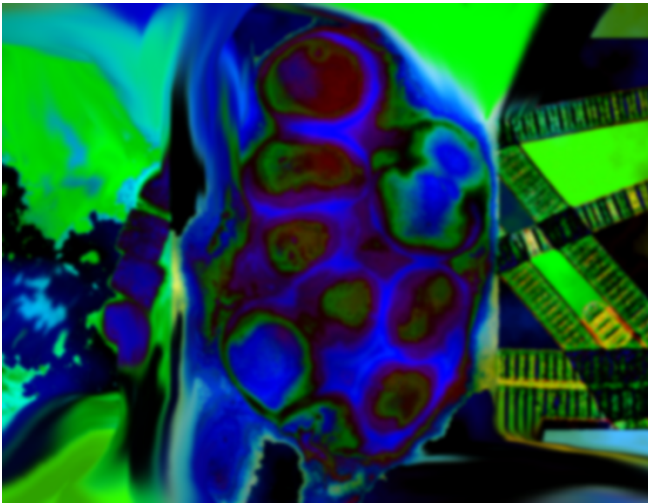


RESEARCH CONNECTION

Voyageurs and Métis

By Denis Combet, PhD, & Constance Cartmill, PhD



Why this research is important

This research emphasizes Canadian and local history, from the New France era to the rise of the Métis in the West. At a time when the history and culture of the First Nations are being reconsidered, acknowledging the negative impact of colonization, the texts published can somehow point to a more positive interaction between both worlds. Overall, those documents underlining the so-called superiority of the Europeans are often matched by the well-balanced strategies of their new Indigenous allies, especially in the writings of La Verendrye (1730–1750). Documents on the Métis underline their resilience and spirit.

What you need to know

This project aims to publish French documents on the life, culture and history of the voyageurs and Métis. Those writings explore the interaction between the Europeans and the First Nations around the Winnipeg Lake area, the Hudson Bay and beyond. Texts on the Métis' resilience reveal a complex image of Louis Riel during the resistance of Batoche and its aftermath.

How the research was conducted

All the narratives published can be found in the archives across Canada, the US, and France. In the *Archives of Manitoba*, we found documents on the early Hudson Bay Company. The *Archives of la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface* offered life stories from Métis Elders. The *Archives of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg* were central to our research on the life of some Western Métis communities before 1945.

What the researchers found

Texts from the New France era show a very complex interaction between First Nations and Europeans. Pierre-Esprit Radisson's experiences of living with the First Nations for many years made him the prototype of the Canadian voyageur. His journals (1682–1685) depict an individual who respected and mastered the customs of the First Nations. A common ground between both worlds is found in his original narratives. The writings on the

Batoche's resistance (1885), shows the tragedy of the Métis, victims of prejudice and injustice. The Métis were instrumental in shaping the West, and despite the dark years following the tragedy of Batoche, their resilience and spirit make them a key component of today's multicultural Canadian society.

How this research can be used

Our research provides a new perspective on the relationship between the Europeans and the First Nations. It can be utilized by researchers, academics, political institutions, students, and the general public. For instance, the journal of Father Gabriel Cloutier (1886), used by many scholars, has not yet been published. A bilingual publication will be well-received.

Based on the results of the research for the book *Voyageurs and Metis: From Pierre-Esprit Radisson to Louis Riel*, we could potentially create a university course on that topic.

About the researchers

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Publications based on this research

Cartmill, C., & Combet, D. (2024). « La Sagesse amérindienne et l'altérité spirituelle dans les récits de voyage de Pierre-Esprit Radisson et Bacqueville de la Potherie ». In J. Palacios, & A. Regent-Susini (Eds.), *Regards sur l'âme en Nouvelle-France, Histoires des spiritualités individuelles et collectives en espace colonial* (pp. 155–179). McGill-Queen's University Press.

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