

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada

Agenda Paper

Title: François Beaulieu II: Son of the last *coureurs de bois* in the Far Northwest

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Introduction

Beaulieu

François Beaulieu was one of the founding fathers of the Métis in the Northwest Territories. Métis historian Adrien-Gabriel Morice referred to him as the "...dean of the French Métis in the Canadian Northwest" (1908: 15-16). The significance of François Beaulieu goes beyond the man however, for it was as head of the Beaulieu family and as a Chipewyan-Métis trading chief that his example established a pattern of Métis leadership that endured beyond his time.

Métis history in the Northwest Territories is family history on a grand scale. Given this, there is no more appropriate way to introduce the story of the Métis of the Mackenzie River than to recall the life of François Beaulieu II¹, referred to by the Oblates as "Le patriarche" of the Beaulieu clan. The Beaulieu are one of the great and enduring Métis and Dene families of the far northwest.

To understand why the life of François Beaulieu is potentially of national historic significance, it is necessary to examine how, in life, he stood at a cross road of change in the far northwest. François Beaulieu broke the stereotype of the Métis canoe man who lived his life as a beast of burden for the European traders. He was not a passive man awash in the events of his time. François Beaulieu stood before the storm of change and forged, by will, those around him. Beaulieu was a transitional figure who bridged the old world of the late 18th century independent *coureurs de bois*, from whom he descended, through the years of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) monopoly with late 19th century Métis free traders. His struggle against the control of the giants of the fur trade benefitted the people he led. More broadly, Beaulieu helped shape the

¹ Today descendants of François Beaulieu commonly differentiate him from his father, who guided Sir Alexander Mackenzie, by the "II" notation. He is variously referred to in the historic literature as "Le patriarche" and "le vieux", or "old man" Beaulieu.

relations between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples with whom they traded in the Mackenzie River drainage.

He is reputed to have been born near Great Slave Lake in 1771, the year after Samuel Hearne became the first European to visit the lake (Morice 1908: 15-16). Conceived by the union of a Chipewyan mother and a *coureurs de bois* father, François described his father as being of French and Cree origins. He grew up at the cusp of direct European contact with the Athapaskan speaking Dene² people of the Mackenzie River drainage. Beaulieu was, in his time, a *Northwester*, Hudson's Bay man, free trader, Chipewyan chief and Métis leader.

When François Beaulieu II died in 1872 at Salt River, near modern Fort Smith, Canada had been confederated for five years and his old nemesis the Hudson's Bay Company had given up its rights to Rupert's Land three years earlier. While the far north was a relatively quiet place by the 1870's following the turmoil of European contact and competition in the fur trade, the shadow of those great historic events would continue to shape the future of the Northwest Territories.

François Beaulieu was a key player whose influence spanned the critical century from contact to nationhood. When he was born, the land was primordial, governed by the ancient relationship between the Dene and the animals. By the time he died, the future of the Mackenzie River was destined to fall to the evolving nation-state known as Canada. The Métis, perhaps unwittingly, played a significant role in ensuring the dominance of Canada in the western Arctic. This occurred in significant part as a result of the kinship links formed between the Métis and the Dene, and the ancient link of the northern Métis with their relatives to the south on the prairies and east toward the Great Lakes. While the great fur trade companies supplied an economic tie to Canada, the Métis provided one in kinship.

The Study of Metis History in the Far Northwest

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) made a series of recommendations to the National Historic Sites Directorate of Canada (NHSD), after a review of the commemoration of Northern Native History, in February of 1989 (Goldring 1990: 1). Two of these recommendations form the basis of what has been an ongoing collaboration between the NHSD and the Métis Heritage Association (MHA) of the Northwest Territories over the last nine years. The relevant recommendations to NHSD were:

- To commit more resources to research and planning for northern Aboriginal commemorations; and
- To develop thematic frameworks for Subarctic Native history (Goldring 1990: 1).

²

The Dene are comprised of the Chipewyan, Yellowknife, Dogrib, Slavey, Mountain, Sahtu, Hare and Gwich'in.

lead to the limited circulation of *Picking up the Threads: Metis History in the Mackenzie Basin* (Métis Heritage Association and Parks Canada 1998). This volume has laid the ground work for the ongoing study of Métis social history in the Mackenzie River Basin.

After further consultation between the Métis community and Parks Canada in 1998, it was decided to send a paper forward to the HSMBC that goes to the heart of some of the themes introduced in *Picking up the Threads*... A biography of François Beaulieu II was chosen as the topic of the first HSMBC submission on the Mackenzie River Basin Métis because he is a central figure in northern Métis history. The Salt River First Nation and the Fort Smith Metis Local were consulted during the preparation of this paper and both strongly support this submission. Both organizations have large numbers of Beaulieu descendants in their membership rolls.

Métis and Dene people in the north understand the continuing significance François Beaulieu II. He is the subject of research by several avocational historians who are taking the initiative and recording the oral legacy of him as part of their family histories. For many Métis in the Northwest Territories, descending from François Beaulieu is to trace your lineage to a founding father (Allerston 1999: 49-50). Influential in his own time, the true significance of François Beaulieu II is his enduring presence in the Far Northwest 128 years after his death, according to descendant Frank Laviolette (1999 pers. comm.). The HSMBC is being asked to consider a figure who stands on his own historic merits, and who's story embodies many significant themes of Métis history.

This paper provides the Board with the opportunity to consider a different genre of northern Aboriginal historical commemoration from the landscapes and sites of the Gwich'in, Sahtu, and Inuit. Beaulieu offers the chance to address an individual Aboriginal leader within the context of his times. The Beaulieu proposal could, if acceptable to the HSMBC, provide balance and a broader perspective to the growing package of northern Aboriginal commemorations.

Biography of François Beaulieu

The Opening of Great Slave Lake

The European origins of the earliest Métis families at Great Slave Lake in the Mackenzie River Basin of the Northwest Territories, appear to be in the fur trade prior to the defeat of New France in 1763. The *coureurs de bois*, who found their way to Great Slave Lake ahead of the North West Company in the late 18th century, had family and trade ties to Quebec and the mixed-heritage populations of the Great Lakes. *Coureurs de bois* descendants in the Mackenzie River Basin mixed with western Canadian ("Red River") Métis and later Northern Métis families from the Hudson's Bay Company period of Scottish and Dene descent (Devine 1998: 1, Payment 1998: 71- 72, Petitot 1875: 18). The Northern Métis of the Mackenzie River Basin are of mixed Aboriginal heritage, but generally they trace their families either to Dene or Cree origins (Devine 1998:1).

Beaulieu, Poitras, Cayen, Le Camarade de Mandeville, Lafleur, Charlois, frères Tourangeau et autres...ne se soucièrent jamais de revendiquer l'honneur et la gloire d'avoir découvert et habité les premiers ces régions reculées et inhospitalières [...these men "never bothered to claim the honour and the glory of having been the first to discover and inhabit these remote and inhospitable regions"] (Petitot 1891: 78, Devine 1998: 16).

During this period François Beaulieu (I) met Ethiba, a woman of Chipewyan and Cree descent, the mother of François Beaulieu II (McCarthy 1998: 109-114). According to Bishop Vital Grandin, while wintering with François Beaulieu II at Salt River in 1856 and learning to speak Chipewyan, Beaulieu was born between 1771 and 1774 (Breton 1960: 99, Petitot 1883, Morice 1908: 15-16). McCarthy, citing Father Alexandre Taché who baptized Beaulieu in 1848, indicated that at that time Beaulieu was 55 years old³.

Some of the *coureurs de bois* who stayed behind in the Northwest after the withdrawal of the Company of the Sioux, seemed to have become part of the "Indian trade" that funneled furs along English River to Fort Churchill in the years after the British regained control of Fort Churchill, following the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 (Counts 1997: 13-15, Rae 1963: 54). This trade began in 1715-16, when Captain James Knight was guided onto the barrenlands by the Chipewyan woman Thanadelthur (Jumping Martin) who encouraged her people to come to the fort to trade (Van Kirk 1980: 66, Petitot 1976: 14-15) (see accompanying Coutts agenda paper).

By the 1770's the "pedlars from Quebec" had returned to the Northwest, joined by Scottish merchants who now controlled the fur trade. Peter Pond arrived at Lake Athabasca in 1778 (Rae 1963: 75). The Beaulieu family was reported to be living on the Slave River at this time (Coues 1965: 266) (see Figure 6). Cree at Lake Athabasca told Pond about Great Slave Lake during this first visit. He is credited with being the first European to refer to it as Great Slave Lake (Rae 1963: 75). When Samuel Hearne visited Great Slave Lake, traveling with Matonabee and English Chief on his return from the mouth of the Coppermine River in 1771, he referred to it as Great Athapuscow Lake (Hearne 1971: 223, Lamb 1970: 163, Davis 1995: 291, Devine 1998: 24, MacGregor 1974: 16). Pond's informants were Cree.

Pond returned and wintered along the Athabasca River in 1783 (Rae 1963: 80). By that time the hold of the Chipewyan middlemen trading with Fort Churchill may have started to slip due to the

³ The journals of Hudson's Bay Company trader John Clarke indicated Beaulieu was 15 in 1808, and infer Beaulieu was born around 1793 (McCarthy 1995: 110 and 228). This later date does not correlate, however, with Beaulieu's own testimony to either Grandin or Petitot concerning events that he claims to have witnessed early in his life. Further, both Grandin and Petitot knew Beaulieu for longer periods of time than Taché and were, therefore, probably in a better position to evaluate his life history.

Yellowknife and Dogrib relatives north of Great Slave Lake (McCarthy 1995: 110, Menez Nd: 4-5). It is not known exactly what role François Beaulieu II's uncle, Jacques Beaulieu, continued to play in his upbringing, but François was living in Jacques camp at Big Island when they met Pond's men in the mid-1780's. Jacques Beaulieu is reported to have been an interpreter in the Great Slave Lake Region in 1784 (Morice 1908: 16). Historian A.S. Morton notes that the Beaulieu family had been associated with the Slave River since 1778 (1939: 671, Coues 1965). Further, François Beaulieu II's step-father, the Rat, seems to have had ties to the Salt River (see Figures 1, 2, 6 and 7). Despite trading trips away that often lasted for several years at a time, the Salt River, down the Slave River from modern Fort Smith, was François Beaulieu II's home ground.

François Beaulieu II was born at the time of the first direct contact by European traders with the Chipewyan, Yellowknife, Dogrib and Slavey on their home turf around Great Slave Lake. As a child, he would have witnessed the end of the long distance Mackenzie River Basin "Indian trade" with Fort Churchill that had brought his father north. It was replaced by the growth of a local trade with the Europeans, dispersed among regional fur posts that spread north from Lake Athabasca to Great Slave Lake. This change saw the long distance "Indian" trade control of the Chipewyan to Churchill threatened by direct European access to what had been the hinterland of the Mackenzie. Alexander MacKenzie was reluctant to trust most of the Chipewyan as middlemen for he felt they would carry the greater part of their furs to Hudson's Bay (Lamb 1970: 438). In 1791, Mackenzie commented on the need to have "...an Indian of consequence, chief amongst the Red Knives, even the English Chief, as none of their own people have sufficient authority..." (Lamb 1970: 444). Mackenzie considered the Slavey [Dogrib] not to be of consequence and commented that: "...their trade being entirely in Martens [sic], so that they may either come themselves or allow the Red-Knives to be their carriers..." (Lamb 1970: 444). Mackenzie's actions helped set up reliable Chipewyan (such as English Chief), Yellowknife, and old *coureurs de bois* (like François's uncle Jacques Beaulieu) as the middlemen who facilitated much of the Great Slave Lake trade for the North West Company. The "post hunters" for the new posts often assumed the role of the middleman in the fur trade.

The initial European posts, built by Leroux and Grant in 1786 on Great Slave Lake, were placed on the east side of the Slave River delta to take advantage of the northerly "old Indian" route around Great Slave Lake (Rae 1963: 99) (see Figure 6). This track crossed the east arm of Great Slave Lake to the north shore. From there it proceeded north up the Marian and Camsell Rivers to Great Bear Lake, or west through Lac la Martre to the Willowlake River and the Mackenzie River (see Figures 4, 5, and 6). To ease the burdens of travel for the Aboriginal groups north of Great Slave Lake, Leroux moved to Lac la Martre in 1789, north of Great Slave Lake (Lamb 1970: 173, Rae 1963: 98) (see Figure 5). The new post intercepted the trade with Slavey (Martin Lake Dogrib) and Beaver from the fur rich Horn Plateau along the Willowlake River route to the central Mackenzie River, as well as the trail known to the Dogrib as *Ida'a*, to Great Bear Lake (Rae 1963: 123, Andrews and Zoe 1998) (see Figures 4, 5 and 6). Based on an agreement struck with the Yellowknife in 1789 by Alexander Mackenzie, a post known as "Old" Fort Providence was built in 1790, near the modern city of Yellowknife. This post serviced the Yellowknife

as leaders with near absolute authority, who used robust, loyal young men to enforce their will (Smith 1982: 65). Many Aboriginal trappers saw the benefit of following a "trading chief" who was an 'effective' bargainer, got them better prices, threw feasts and helped people in hard times (Helm, Rogers and Smith 1981: 15).

In 1806-07, a young Beaulieu had been appointed to work for John Clarke on Great Bear Lake. In one account, he left service with Clarke after a reprimand and returned to live with the Dene. In another version, North West Company trader W.F. Wentzel wrote that Beaulieu's son, who had deserted from Mr. Clarke below the Old Rocky Mountain Fort, arrived at Fort of the Forks (Fort Simpson) with nine Mountain or Slavey Indians under Chief Grand Chefre. Beaulieu alleged that he had been debauched by some Dogrib belonging to General Montgomery's band. (Wentzel 1807). Wentzel did not provide a first name.

During the next few years, while Beaulieu temporarily dropped out of sight, the Yellowknife Chief Akaitcho and his followers became the post hunters for "old" Fort Providence on Yellowknife Bay. This position allowed Akaitcho to tighten the hold of the Yellowknife over trade with the Dogrib along the route to Great Bear Lake. Between 1812 and 1822, the Yellowknife plundered, bullied and occasionally murdered the Dogrib to extract a tribute in furs (Hanks 1996a, Helm and Gillespie 1981: 14, Back 1825).

* As a young man François Beaulieu was known as a powerful man who was feared. He was purported to have made a habit of seizing beautiful and influential women from their husbands and was known to have killed those who tried to stop him (Abel 1993: 86).

Interpreter

François Beaulieu re-emerged in 1816, when he was hired as an interpreter for the North West Company in the Athabasca District. He returned to the North West Company the year after it withdrew its operations along the Mackenzie River. Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman, Great Bear Lake Post, and Fort Simpson (Fort of the Forks) were all abandoned in one year so that the North West Company could concentrate its resources on Lake Athabasca (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 39). This was the height of the struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company in the Athabasca region.

Beaulieu was invited by Nor'Westers to join in a plot to kill his old boss John Clarke, now employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Clarke had originally come north with the North West Company, but he had changed his allegiance to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1814 (Williams 1975: 167). After establishing Fort Wedderburn, in opposition to Fort Chipewyan, Clarke was taken prisoner by the North West Company (Davis 1995: 1, 10-13). According to John Clarke's journal, he heard on June 16, 1817 that the North West Company planned to place him on an island where Beaulieu would kill him. Two days later he overheard Beaulieu tell James Sutherland that he had been offered Clarke's property as payment to kill him. The trader at Fort Chipewyan had apparently already given Beaulieu a new set of clothes as a down

River, west to Great Bear Lake and east onto the central barrenlands along the Coppermine and Lockhart rivers. Akaitcho's power had grown significantly after the 1817 post closures along the Mackenzie River, leaving "old" Fort Providence as the only post in the country north of Great Slave Lake. This also appears to be the time when François Beaulieu, now recognized by the Métis and his mother's Chipewyan relatives as a Chief, firmly established himself at Martin Lake (Lac la Martre) and consolidated the trade with the Dogrib and Slavey from Big Island north to Great Bear Lake. The North West Company 1817 establishment of Fort Alexander at the mouth of the Willowlake River may have been in response to traders like Beaulieu (see Figure 5). "The Camarade de Mandeville" (*Catoelthel*), son of another *coureur de bois*, was the chief of a Chipewyan band that traded from Fort Resolution into the Thelon and Lockhart rivers (Smith 1982: 65, Helm and Gillespie 1981: 21-22, Hanks 1996a). These men were recognized as both traders and war chiefs. All three men had taken numerous wives, whom they used to cement their trade relations with local bands. François Beaulieu was reported to have had between three and seven wives (Menez Nd).

Recognition of individuals by the trading companies as Trading Chiefs was a device frequently used to ensure trapper loyalty to specific posts. There was no assurance that the title and privileges would be recognized at another post (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 43). The post closures in the wake of the 1821 amalgamation of the North West Company with the Hudson's Bay Company destabilized the balance of power around Great Slave Lake. When "Old" Fort Providence was closed in 1823, Akaitcho lost a significant element of his power base as he no longer had a point of trade in his territory (Hanks 1996a, Bellman and Hanks 1998). Having lost his position as post hunter, and being forced to expand his supply line to trade at Fort Resolution on the south side of Great Slave Lake, Akaitcho and his followers could no longer exercise as much control over the fur trade north and northeast of Great Slave Lake (Hanks 1996a). Akaitcho's Chipewyan kin already controlled the local trade at Fort Resolution when Fort Providence closed. Perhaps, sensing Akaitcho's apparent vulnerability following the closure of "Old" Fort Providence in 1823, the Dogrib took revenge on Akaitcho's brother, White Capot or "Long Legs"; when a party of 34 Yellowknife were murdered by the Dogrib near Hottah Lake, south of Great Bear Lake (Hanks 1996a, Back 1825, Franklin 1971: 10, Gillespie 1981: 286-87). In another battle on Great Bear Lake the same year, Akaitcho's son was killed when the Yellowknife raided a band of Bear Lake Indians at Dog Point on Great Bear Lake (Hanks 1996a)⁵. Hudson's Bay Company traders W.F. Wentzel and J.M. McLeod reported in 1824 that Akaitcho had collected a strong party to make war on the Hare Indians and Dogrib, at the same time the Martin Lake Dogrib and the Fort Norman Slavey were intent upon destroying the Yellowknife (HBCA B.200/a/4, Hanks 1996a). The fighting had subsided by 1825 when the Second Franklin Expedition passed through the country (Back 1825).

⁵ Dog Point is within the Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills National Historic Site.

son, François Beaulieu II, assisted the first two Franklin expeditions, was one of Father Emile Petitot's principal informants, and provided natural history specimens to the Smithsonian's Robert Kennicott (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 46-50, Lindsay 1993: 172). François Beaulieu II's son, Joseph "King" Beaulieu, guided the adventurer Waburton Pike on the barrenlands northeast of Great Slave Lake. Great grandson, "Souci" (Joseph) Beaulieu, guided Dominion Lands surveyor Guy Blanchet to the Coppermine River in the 1920's (Blanchet 1922/1924, Overvold 1976: 57). Many of the French names on the map northeast of Yellowknife - Lac de Gras, Point du Misery, Lac du Sauvage, and the Beaulieu River are credited to Pike's reports of names provided to him by King Beaulieu (Pike 1892, Randy Freeman 1999 pers. comm.).

It is from the journals of Captain Sir John Franklin (Davis 1998), Admiral Sir George Back (1825), Dr. Sir John Richardson, and Father Emile Petitot, that we learn some of the finer details of François Beaulieu's life. Beaulieu, in particular, was one of Petitot's principal ethnographic and historic informants. It is from the writings of Emile Petitot that we gained our greatest insights into François Beaulieu II the man, for it is to Petitot that Beaulieu told his life history (1875, 1883, 1886, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1976).⁶

François Beaulieu's role with the first Franklin Expedition was limited to that of advisor.⁷ Midshipman George Back described Lt. John Franklin's first meeting with Beaulieu at Fort Chipewyan in 1819 (Houston 1994: 60). Beaulieu drew a charcoal map on the floor for Franklin

⁶ Petitot wrote that he possessed François Beaulieu's journal (1893). Either Petitot is speaking figuratively of notes he took during his conversations with Beaulieu or, perhaps, François Beaulieu really was literate in either French or English and did keep journals. The question of whether or not Beaulieu was literate is an interesting one that has still not been satisfactorily resolved. He certainly had the opportunity to learn to write during the winter of 1825 -1826 when he was at Fort Franklin (now Deline) as Sir John Franklin's interpreter. Franklin and his officers ran a school for the men that winter to help pass the time (Hanks 1996a). Unfortunately, Franklin is silent on whether or not Beaulieu attended, but it would be in character for a man as perceptive as Beaulieu to have taken the opportunity to learn to read and write. Later he sent his daughter Catherine Beaulieu to be educated in Red River by the Grey Nuns (Kermoal 1998: 152). In the mid-1850's when Beaulieu taught Father Grandin Chipewyan, the priest may have reciprocated by teaching him to write.

⁷ Franklin arrived in the Mackenzie district to hire men for his first expedition at the height of the competitive fur trade period (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 47). With the help of Wentzel and Smith, Franklin obtained the assistance of the Yellowknife Chief Akaitcho and his band. The local voyageurs Baptiste de Mandeville and Beaulieu's future father-in-law, Pierre St. Germain, agreed to accompany Franklin's first expedition (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 47).

the equivalent of £52, despite the 1823 decision by the HBC that interpreters should be paid no more than 25 pounds (Keith 1997: 244). At the time, Beaulieu was known as the leader of the Martin Lake Chipewyan. He had extensive knowledge of the country and Dogrib, Slavey and Hare people of Great Bear Lake (HBCA B.39/b/3, fo. 61). After Akaitcho declined to accompany the expedition, Beaulieu's duties were expanded to include those of post hunter (Franklin 1971: 9-10). For François Beaulieu it was a return to the place where, 25 years earlier as a young man, he had been Alexander McKenzie's⁸ post hunter. By hiring Beaulieu and his band, Franklin continued an exploration tradition of using Chipewyan and/or Yellowknife guides that had begun with Samuel Hearne.

Akaitcho's reticence to accompany Franklin stems from ill-will that was still felt by the Dene at Great Bear Lake, after the war with the Dogrib and the Slavey in 1823 and 1824. His perhaps calculated risk of revenge by the Great Bear Lake people, outweighed the renewed prestige he would obtain from working with the expedition (Hanks 1996a). Franklin found the Dogrib hunters were still despondent, as they mourned relatives who had been killed the year before in battles with the Yellowknife (Davis 1998: 157). Given the state of the country, Beaulieu's influence with both the Dogrib and the Yellowknife probably prevented any incidents during the expedition.

Fort Franklin was built on the site of an old North West Company fur trade post that had been located at the northwest corner of the Keith Arm of Great Bear Lake, at the site of the present day community of Deline (see Figure 4). The Deline Fishery, now a National Historic Site was, according to Chief Factor Edward Smith:

...the only place in the Mackenzie River where such a numerous party--equal to all of the Company's Servants in the River--can winter with any appearance or certainty of a full supply [sic] of fresh Provisions for winter consumption...(HBCA B.200/b/2, fo. 1).

Peter Warren Dease, François Beaulieu and his family, 15 Canadiens, and four Chipewyan hunters arrived at the site of Fort Franklin on July 27, 1825 (Franklin 1971: 51). Drift ice in the Mackenzie River had slowed the Dease party's passage down from Big Island House at the outlet of Great Slave Lake (see Figures 3,4 and 5). A band of 10 Dogrib hunters and their families were waiting for Dease and Beaulieu when they arrived at the fort (Lea 1923/24: 31 - 32). The Martin Lake Dogrib and the Dogrib at Great Bear Lake were, at that time, inseparable groups (Helm 1981: 295). Beaulieu would have been considered a trading chief by both groups. The presence of the Chipewyan and Dogrib hunters must have been a relief for Dease, as Edward Smith had been quite concerned when the Yellowknife had declined to hunt for the expedition (HBCA B.200/b/2, fo. 3).

⁸

This is not "the" Alexander Mackenzie; this gentleman spelled his name without the "a" in Mackenzie.

1998: 176). Franklin was emphatic that once at the Dease River, Beaulieu and his Canadiens were not to move until the appointed date (Davis 1998: 377).

The Richardson party abandoned their boats at Bloody Falls near the mouth of the Coppermine on August 9, 1826, and walked overland to Great Bear Lake (Richardson 1971b: 270). Richardson's return followed the route from the Coppermine River that Beaulieu had previously recommended to Franklin before his first expedition six years earlier. Richardson, Kendall, nine British seamen, their Inuit interpreter Ooligbuck and a group of Hare Indians they had met, arrived at the Dease River on August 18, 1826 (Richardson, 1971b: 278).

Beaulieu arrived late on August 24 amid gun fire and friendly shouts, with four Canadiens, four Chipewyan hunters, and ten Dogrib hunters with their families. His party numbered nearly 30. He told Richardson that he had indeed left Fort Franklin on the 6th, but bad weather and adverse winds had impeded his progress. Richardson, while proclaiming Beaulieu trustworthy, later suggested to Franklin that Beaulieu was uncertain about the fate of the party, and therefore dallied hunting on his way to what might be a pointless errand. As a result, he missed his appointed rendezvous on the 20th by four days, and lost the fowling-piece (Davis 1998: 382-383, Richardson 1971b: 278). Fearing Beaulieu's late arrival was a sign of misfortune, Richardson had already sent some of his party west toward Haldanes River, by foot with a Hare guide (Richardson 1971b: 282). If Beaulieu had failed to arrive, the 500 kilometer walk around the lake to Fort Franklin would have taken Richardson three weeks through near freezing conditions.

After rendezvousing with Richardson, Peter Warren Dease had told Beaulieu to proceed south to the McTavish Arm of Great Bear Lake to hunt caribou and dry meat for the Fort. Richardson left the Haldanes River on the 28th and after a marathon paddle of over 400 kilometers, arrived back at Fort Franklin on September 1, 1826 (Richardson 1971b: 282 - 283, Davis 1998: 383).

When Franklin returned to the fort in late September, he found it poorly provisioned. The local Dogrib and Chipewyan from Great Slave Lake had apparently been reticent to hunt, because they feared that the Yellowknife were lurking in the woods around Great Bear Lake looking for another fight (Hanks 1996a). Franklin speculated that the lack of meat might also be attributed to the fact that he was low on trade goods (Franklin 1971: 290). François Beaulieu and his party arrived back at Fort Franklin on September 28th, with a supply of dry meat that eased the shortage of supplies at the Fort. His contract at an end, Beaulieu then asked Franklin's leave to depart for Martin Lake (Lac la Martre). Though Franklin described Beaulieu as their best hunter, Dease suggested that because Beaulieu had collected a number of useless followers the Fort would have to feed, it might be well to comply with his request (Franklin 1971: 288). While the HBC might not have considered Beaulieu's largesse a virtue, Métis elder Frank Laviolette indicates that it was François Beaulieu's willingness to take care of the weak, as well as the strong, that made him a great leader (1999, pers. comm.) Before François Beaulieu departed, Franklin furnished him with ammunition from the store to enable his party to hunt on their way to Martin Lake, where they intended to fish until spring (Franklin 1971: 288).

the trade at Great Slave Lake (Krech 1984: 132). In the wake of the conflict, Chipewyan-Métis traders from the Athabasca District to the southeast moved in to fill the void. The increased involvement of Chipewyan-Métis in the trade with the Dogrib and the Slavey was motivated by the beaver on Slavey lands. By the mid-1820's, traders described the Slavey and Dogrib as hemmed in by middleman traders from the Athabasca District (HBCA B.200/a/6, fo.4, Krech 1984: 132). Poitras, of Fort Chipewyan, and Mangeur de Lard, of Great Slave Lake, were two of the most prominent of the Athabasca District traders to move into the Trout River and Lac la Martre areas west of Great Slave Lake (Abel 1993: 90). The Chipewyan were motivated to move north by the decline of beaver in the Athabasca district (Krech 1984: 133).

François Beaulieu and his "Martin Lake" Chipewyan traded with the Dogrib and Slavey between the Horn Plateau near Lac la Martre and Great Bear Lake. By visiting the camps, he could offer trappers less and "save" them the long trip into Fort Norman or Fort Simpson. Beaulieu would then carry the furs south to Fort Resolution or Fort Chipewyan where he would receive more in exchange than he would have at a northern post (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 52). Hudson's Bay Company trader Edward Smith commented in the mid-1820's that the Chipewyan-Métis were getting trade goods in the Athabasca District at 50 percent of what they cost the Slavey at posts in Mackenzie River District (HBCA B.200/a/6, fo. 25-26 in Krech 1984: 133).

A group of nine Willowlake River Indians arrived at Fort Simpson in March of 1827 after an eleven day trip from Bedzebethaw's camp on Willowlake River. They reported that Beaulieu and the Chipewyans who had worked for the Franklin Expedition, had wintered there and carried off part of their hunt to the posts in the Athabasca (HBCA B.200/a/8, fo. 37d in Krech 1984:133). In 1828, Beaulieu was hunting with five families around Lac la Martre, including the Dogrib hunters Ehassogha, Hathyaude, and Dinnedah (HBCA B.181/a/7, fo. 10d-11d in Bellman and Hanks 1998: 59).

Under the monopoly, Company officers no longer felt the pressure to respond to the whims of the trading chiefs. Fort Resolution Factor Simon McGillivray noted in 1828 that:

Beaulieu left me in a huff about some imaginary affront, which I could not sift. He told me, before parting, he was not certain of coming here, but might probably go to Fort Simpson. If he is agreeable to Mr. Smith, I wish him an everlasting stay. The man's demands in Powder, is without bounds - he has never enough (HBCA B.181/a/9, fo. Nd, Bellman and Hanks 1998: 61).

Since Willowlake River was part of the Hudson's Bay Company's Mackenzie district, François Beaulieu caused concern when he took his furs south to Fort Chipewyan in the Athabasca district. Beaulieu's boyhood familiarity with the Lac la Martre-Willowlake River region, coupled with the respect people felt for him, gave him a substantial place in local society (McCarthy 1998:117). To try and control the situation, in 1829, the Hudson's Bay Company post in Fort Simpson hired Beaulieu to winter at Lac la Martre and had a verbal agreement with him to provide an annual allotment of goods worth £8 to £10 (HBCA B.200/e/9 fo.2, Krech 1984: 133). During the year

Beaulieu's 1851 advice to James Anderson that the post should be located north of Great Slave Lake near the mouth of the Lac la Martre River, at a location known as *L' Ile de la Montagne* (Menez Nd). "Old" Fort R   was opened in 1852 on an island in the northwest corner of the North Arm of Great Slave Lake. In 1854, Beaulieu showed Chief Factor James Anderson a route through the rapids on the Slave River above Fort Smith that safely avoided the Pelican Rapids (Menez Nd). The new route became known as the Mountain Portage. It remained in use until the portage road from Fort Fitzgerald to Fort Smith eliminated the need to run the rapids in the 20th century.

By 1856, Fran  ois Beaulieu had again left the Company and moved his family to the mouth of the Salt River (Overvold 1976, Devine 1995: 12). The Beaulieu family established a farm, growing gardens and raising some cattle (McCarthy 1998: 117). Fran  ois, Joseph "King", and Antoine Beaulieu alarmed the Hudson's Bay Company in 1857 when they made a trip to Red River to trade (Overvold 1976, Goldring 1980: 25). Their foray caused the company to raise prices to try and counter the free trading activities of the Beaulieus (Overvold 1976). Fran  ois said he went to visit Bishop Tach  , but he had also brought out the furs he had collected over the winter of 1856-1857 to trade at Red River. Two free traders, James Todd and Alexander Wentzel accompanied Beaulieu on his return. Beaulieu also brought   300 worth of trade goods north with him (HBCA D5/44, fo. 172-173 in McCarthy 1998: 118). Bernard Ross, the Hudson's Bay Company Factor at Fort Simpson, viewed the trip as an Oblate plot, as Father Vital Grandin had spent the winter of 1856 with Beaulieu at Salt River to "learn the language" (HBCA D5.44, fo. 51-52 in McCarthy 1998: 119). Given Beaulieu's long history of free trading, he probably did not need much encouragement to make the trip (McCarthy 1998: 119). His connections to both the Catholic Church and the Red River traders made the Hudson's Bay traders very nervous (Devine 1995: 12). Following the trip, his old associate Mackenzie River District Manager, Chief Factor James Anderson, suggested in a letter to Robert Campbell that the Company establish a post at Salt River:

For the purpose of watching Beaulieu and of starving him to submission by occupying his fisheries - which are limited - and by employing Indians to kill all of the animals in the vicinity of Salt River (AB 40-An in Goldring 1980).

Fran  ois Beaulieu announced in the spring of 1858 that he planned to travel to Red River again. While the plan collapsed when his sons and Indian traders rebelled at the effort required to make the trip, the Hudson's Bay Company took notice (Abel 1993: 100). Governor George Simpson wrote to trader Bernard Ross at Fort Simpson that Beaulieu and his family at Salt River must be more closely watched and any attempts at opposition to the company must be stopped (Abel 1993: 100-101).

The Hudson's Bay Company briefly rehired Beaulieu in this period to keep him from competing with them, but he retired again in 1862 (HBCA B.154/z/1, fo. 15). Beaulieu's influence was so pervasive, that the Company finally established a post at Salt River and hired him again in 1863 to take charge of it. The Company also hired his son, Fran  ois Beaulieu (III), as a middleman on

1998). The combination served to loosen the hold of the Hudson's Bay Company on the people of the Mackenzie Basin River. Political scientist, Marina Devine believes that "...it is largely thanks to Beaulieu that there was an economic place for Métis as a people in the Mackenzie Basin in the 19th century, leading to their survival as a people into the 20th century" (pers. com. 1999).

François Beaulieu and the Roman Catholic Church

François Beaulieu was the most prominent of the 19th century Métis who became an ally of the Oblates in the Lake Athabasca and Mackenzie River Basin regions. Beaulieu was a very successful hunter reputed to possess strong traditional Chipewyan medicine. This tradition was passed on to his son, Johnny Beaulieu, who had a reputation as a healer. According to Johnny's grandson, Angus Beaulieu, traditional medicine and knowledge of healing were passed down in the family well into the 20th century (McCarthy 1998: 117). François Beaulieu's timely embrace of the church mirrored his success in life which was, in part, attributable to his ability to sense change and adapt.

Beaulieu would most certainly have been forced to attend French language New Testament lessons taught by Chief Factor James in 1823-24 at Fort Chipewyan, but they did not appear to have had any lasting effect (Keith 1997: 240). Twenty years later, in 1844, the Métis asked the Oblate Father, Abbé J.B. Thibeault of Red River to come north to preach to the Chipewyan and Métis at Ile à la Crosse (McCarthy 1998: 118). When word spread throughout the Athabasca, that next year Father Thibeault would visit Portage la Loche, François Beaulieu packed up his children and went to see: "That man from the land of his father, who taught men to live well" (McCarthy 1998: 118). François Beaulieu's son, Pierre, later told Father Duchaussois that a young Métis named Dubreuil, who worked for François Beaulieu at the Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Resolution, so impressed the older man with his daily religious devotions that Beaulieu decided he wanted to learn more about God. According to Pierre Beaulieu, it was Dubreuil who suggested that François go to Portage la Loche to hear Father Thibeault (Menez Nd, Overvold 1976: 101). Beaulieu was apparently greatly impressed by Taché's delivery of mass and respected his spiritual powers (McCarthy 1998: 118). "Beaulieu appeared determined to share in the spiritual power of his father's church, just as he already possessed those of his maternal heritage" (McCarthy 1998: 118). Thibeault baptized several of Beaulieu's children at that time but declined the sacrament for François, explaining that it could not be given to a man with multiple wives. The church insisted on monogamy (McCarthy 1998: 118).

The choice to stay with Catherine St. Germain may also speak to the Chipewyan and *coureurs de bois* roots of François Beaulieu's Métis identity. Catherine was the daughter of Pierre St. Germain, a "Red River Métis" who had come north in 1812 with the North West Company, and his Chipewyan wife, Thakaritthert (Menez Nd). St. Germain switched sides and joined the Hudson's Bay Company in 1819. He was an interpreter for the company at Fort Chipewyan until he joined the first Franklin expedition in 1821. Pierre St. Germain and François Beaulieu were closely associated throughout the 1820's and early 1830's, before St. Germain became a freeman and returned to Red River. Beaulieu married Catherine, according to the custom of the country,

The Growth of a Métis Identity in the Mackenzie District

François Beaulieu's famous quote speaks to the core of his perceived identity:

"I am only a Métis and a Métis born and bred in the woods like a pure Indian, without baptism or religion, like a Sybarite, like a desert sultan; but I am also a son of France, and I am filled with tremendous desire to avenge any wrong done a compatriot" (Savoie 1977).

Beaulieu was recognized in his day as a "Chipewyan half-breed." Like his contemporary, le Camarade de Mandeville, the son of a French Canadian trader of Norman descent, he was known in the early to mid-19th century as a Chipewyan trading chief (McCarthy 1998: 116 - 117). Eighty years later in 1900, J.A. Macrae, the Commissioner for Treaty 8, denied the application of the Chipewyans at Fort Resolution to make François's son Pierre, Chief. No one Macrae thought was Métis was allowed to take treaty (McCormack 1998: 186). What had been a common people were arbitrarily made two through the decisions of officials of the young Dominion of Canada. Today some of François Beaulieu's direct descendants are Treaty and some are Métis.

There is more however, if one is to try and place François Beaulieu within the context of Métis identity in the Mackenzie River Basin. First, Beaulieu is a challenge to anthropologist Richard Slobodin's often-cited, but erroneous, description of the Métis of the southern Mackenzie as "Red River Métis" (Slobodin 1966: 14). Based on the history of the Beaulieus and of other early Métis, such as the Poitras, Cayen, le Camarade de Mandeville, Lafleur, Charlois, and frères Tourangeau, the *coureurs de bois* ancestors of the Mackenzie Basin Métis moved north in the wake of the collapse of the French fur trade around 1760 (Petitot 1891: 78, Smith 1981: 685, Smith 1982: 68-70). The oldest Métis families in the Mackenzie developed parallel to the Métis on the prairies in the late 18th century. They originally had few connections to the "Red River Métis" (McCarthy 1998: 112, McCormack 1998: 178). The first Métis families in the Mackenzie River Basin, such as the Beaulieus and the Mandevilles, grew from the union of the *coureurs de bois* with Chipewyan women. By the 1820's outsiders, such as Hudson's Bay Governor George Simpson, viewed the northern Métis as a distinct people (Abel 1993: 86).

Ties with Métis to the south began to increase with the spread of the North West Company in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The union of François Beaulieu and Catherine St. Germain illustrates the mix of the old North West Company families. The subsequent marriage of their daughter, Catherine, to Joseph Bouvier illustrates a continuation of the practice to marry Métis Hudson's Bay Company men who came north from Red River along the York Boat routes in the 1830's and 1840's. It is correct to infer that by the mid-19th century the Métis of the southern Mackenzie River Basin had inter-married with, and were influenced by, their Red River cousins. As has been seen with the Beaulieus, it was not uncommon for northern Métis families to occasionally winter in the south and for some to retire there after 1821 (Payment 1998: 79).

While Beaulieu's trade links ran from Great Bear Lake to Lac la Biche and Ile à la Crosse, three locations stand out in Beaulieu's career as particularly prominent - the Beaulieu homestead at Salt River, his trading posts around Lac la Martre, and the interpreter's house at Fort Franklin by Great Bear Lake. The archaeological remains of the Beaulieu home on the Salt River Plains Indian Reserve 195, with its explicit association to the Beaulieu free trade empire, and the ruins of Fort Franklin with his unique role in the Second Franklin Expedition, are meaningfully associated with significant elements of François Beaulieu's life. The Delina Fishery and Fort Franklin were declared a National Historic Site in 1997. The Salt River First Nation and the Fort Smith Métis Local would like the HSMBC to investigate Salt River when a site is considered for commemoration.

Finally, and perhaps most important is his legacy, not the considerable influence he wielded during his life, but the lasting influence he has had on the people of the Mackenzie. François Beaulieu continues, to this day, as a significant historical presence in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. He is an outstanding representative of the Mackenzie River Basin Métis. His life illustrates the contribution that the Métis in the Far Northwest made in establishing the social links that helped bring Canada north. For many people in the Mackenzie region, to trace one's ancestry to François Beaulieu is much like a Scot tracing his ancestry to Robert the Bruce. You descend from a founding father.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada is being asked to consider declaring François Beaulieu a figure of national historical significance for his complex life and role as an outstanding early Métis leader in the Mackenzie River Basin. Beaulieu is a historic figure who stands on his own merits and whose story embodies important elements of many larger themes of Métis history.

Present Day Communities

Figure 2





