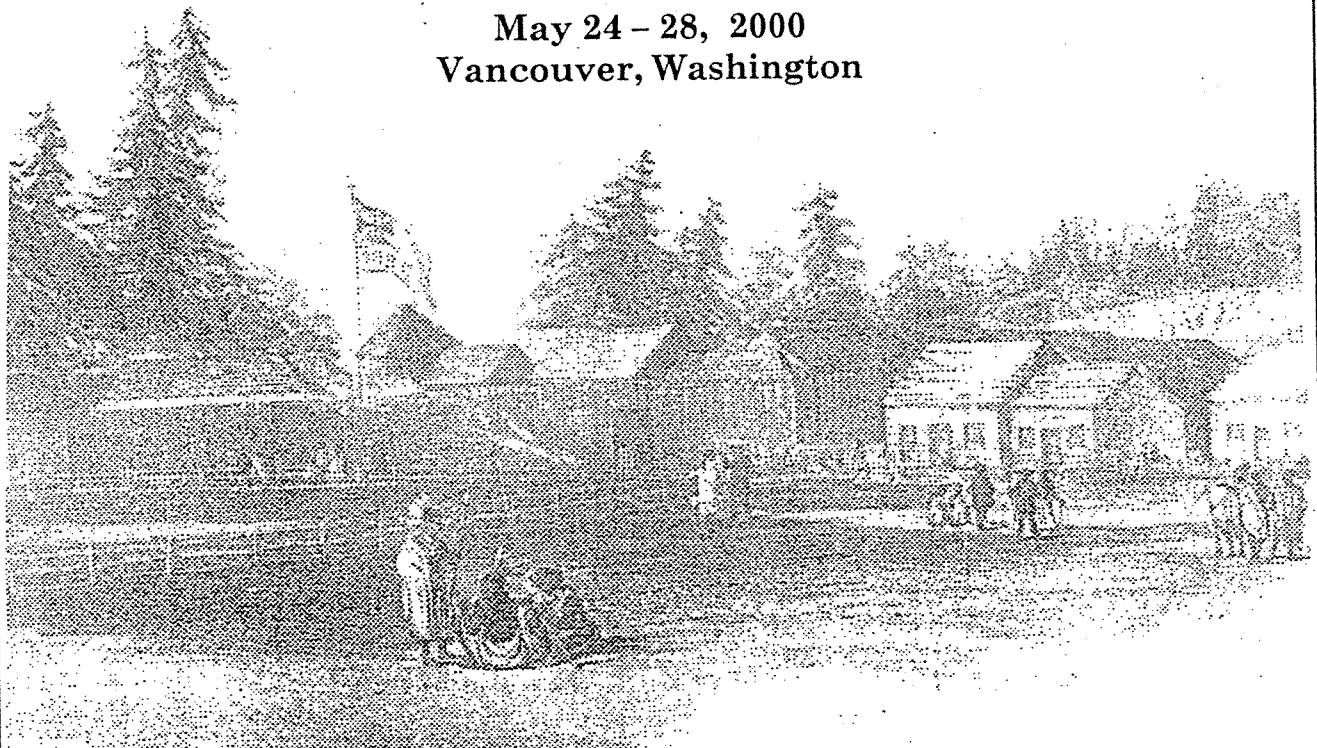


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Fort Vancouver, 1845, by Capt. Henry J. Warre, Oregon Historical Society #9257 (cropped view)

compiled by David G. Malaher

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Title: Francois Beaulieu II: The Origins of the Metis in the Far Northwest

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Introduction:

Francois Beaulieu II was born early in the period of direct contact between Euro-Canadian traders and the Athapaskan speaking people of the Mackenzie River basin in the late 18th century. Throughout his turbulent life, he stood at a number of cross roads of change in the far northwest. Francois Beaulieu broke the stereotype of the Metis 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, but stood before the storm of change and forged, by will, those around him. Beaulieu is a transitional figure, who bridged the old world of the late 18th century independent *coureurs de bois*, the years of competition between the Northwest Company (NWC) and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the HBC monopoly, and the late 19th century Metis free trader. His struggle against the control of the giants of the fur trade benefitted the people he led and more broadly helped shape the relations between the Europeans and the Aborigines in the Mackenzie River drainage.

The Opening of Great Slave Lake

The European origins of the earliest Metis families at Great Slave Lake in 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 Northwest Company in the late 18th century, had ties to the mixed-heritage populations of the Great Lakes and Quebec (Devine 1998: 1, Payment 1998: 71- 72, Petitot 1875: 18).

Francois Beaulieu II told Father Emile Petitot in 1863, that his father, also named Francois Beaulieu, had come to the northwest with the Company of the Sioux (Petitot 1875:18, 1887: 312). In another account he mentions his father was descended from the marriage of a *coureurs de bois* and a Cree woman. Whether he spoke of his father or grandfather, the connection remains valid. Petitot's account, based on information provided by Francois Beaulieu II, strongly suggests that a Beaulieu and other *homme libre* (free man) such as La Camarade de Mandeville, had made their way to Great Slave Lake before 1760 (Petitot 1887: 312, Payment 1998: 70 - 71).

During this period, the senior Francois Beaulieu (I) met Ethiba, a woman of Chipewyan and Cree decent, who is the mother of Francois Beaulieu II (McCarthy 1998: 109-114). According to Bishop Vital Grandin, who wintered with Francois Beaulieu II at Salt River in 1856, Beaulieu was born between 1771 and 1774 (Breton 1960: 99, Petitot 1883, Morice 1908: 15-16). Father Alexandre Tache who baptized Beaulieu in 1848, indicated at that time Beaulieu was 55 years old (McCarthy 1998: 109-114). The journals of Hudson Bay Company trader John Clarke indicated Beaulieu was 15 in 1808, inferring Beaulieu was born around 1793 (1995: 110 and 228). This later date does not correlate however, with Beaulieu's own testimony to both Grandin and Petitot concerning events

he witnessed early in his life. For instance, Francois Beaulieu II narrated to Petitot a first hand account of the arrival of Peter Pond's men at his uncle Jacques Beaulieu's camp at Big Island in the outlet of Great Slave Lake in the mid 1780's (Petitot 1886: 430). Further, both Grandin and Petitot knew Beaulieu for longer periods of time than Tache and were therefore probably in a better position to evaluate his life history.

Francois Beaulieu II was born near 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 "Indian trade" from the Mackenzie River basin with Fort Churchill that brought his father north. It was replaced by a local trade dispersed among regional fur posts that spread north from Lake Athabasca.

As a youth, Francois Beaulieu II would have seen the European traders shift from the old "Indian" route from Great Slave to Great Bear Lake via the Marion / Camsell River in favor of the more westerly Mackenzie River route north (Rae 1963: 87-11). As a free trader, Beaulieu would exploit European neglect of the traditional route to Great Bear Lake throughout his life.

Post Hunter

Some time between 1799 and 1805, Francois Beaulieu II was a post hunter for the Northwest Company when they opened Great Bear Lake "Castle" (Petitot 1893: 63, 1976: 25, Menez Nd: 4, Bellman and Hanks 1998: 38-39). Father Emile Petitot, citing the lost journals of Francois Beaulieu, described the founding of the post on Great Bear Lake in 1799 (Hanks 1996). According to Beaulieu:

In the spring of 1799, that is to say, ten years after the discovery of the Mackenzie River, another Mckenzie also employed by the Franco-Scottish Northwest Company, and whom the Canadiens had nicknamed "Big Neck"¹ to distinguish him from Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the explorer, constructed a trading post on the north shore of Keith Arm, on the shore of a little lake and in the woods of Hare Point -Kha-tcho-eta (Petitot 1893: 63, 197: 24 - 25).

As a post hunter, Beaulieu would have been in a good position to begin establishing himself as a middle man in the Great Bear Lake fur trade. His years at Great Bear Lake may have been the start of Beaulieu's career as a trading chief.

After 1804, the Northwest Company increasingly recognized Metis as trading chiefs (Yerbury 1986: 91). The Chipewyan and Yellowknife traders with whom Beaulieu was identified had a reputation for pillaging or at best paying little for the furs of those not aligned with them (Rae 1963: 91).

In 1806-07, a young Beaulieu was appointed to work for John Clarke on Great Bear Lake. In one

¹. "Long Neck" or "Grand Cou" in the NWC accounts.

account, he left service with Clarke after a reprimand and returned to live with the Dene. In another NWC Trader W.F. Wentzel wrote on November 8, 1807, 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. Wentzel does not provide a first name or an age. Beaulieu alleged that he had been debauched by some Dogrib belonging to General Montgomery's band. (Wentzel 1807).

During the next few years, Beaulieu temporarily drops out of sight. As a young man Francois Beaulieu was known as a powerful man who was feared. He was purported to have made a habit of seizing beautiful and powerful women from their husbands and was known to have killed those who tried to stop him (Abel 1993: 86).

Interpreter and Bully

By the mid-1810s, Beaulieu was reputed to be the NWC's chief enforcer on Great Slave Lake and had killed at least one man (Devine 1995: 7). He clearly re-emerges in 1816, when he was hired as an interpreter and a bully for the Northwest Company. Beaulieu was invited by Nor'Westers to join in a plot to kill John Clarke, now employed by the Hudson's Bay Company (Williams 1975: 167). According to John Clarke's journal, he heard on June 16, 1817 that the NWC 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 to kill him. The trader at Fort Chipewyan had apparently already given Beaulieu a new set of clothes as a down payment. Later that day, when Clarke gave Beaulieu a glass of spirits, Beaulieu told him that while he had killed Indians he had not yet killed a Whiteman. Clarke was reported to have told Beaulieu he hoped he would not start (HBCA B39/a/10 fo. 9b, McCarthy 1995: 228). The conspirators had apparently offered Beaulieu Clarke's wife, property and an annuity. Beaulieu refused and seems to have left the Northwest Company (McCarthy 1998: 116). Beaulieu's role was part of a larger attempt by NWC partners Archibald McLeod and Peter Skene Ogden to intimidate the Aboriginals trading with the Hudson's Bay Company in Ile a la Cross, the Athabasca and Great Slave Lake Region (Bumsted 1999: 168 - 170). This was the height of the struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company in the Athabasca region.

Francois Beaulieu's son Pierre told Father Duchaussois many years later that his father subsequently joined the Hudson's Bay Company after he killed:

...the trader of the Hudson's Bay Company who was suspected of responsibility for the drowning of the trader of the rival [Northwest] [C]ompany. Beaulieu was seized and bound before he could reload his gun. His captors advised him to change his defiant attitude and let the past be past, and take service under the Hudson's Bay Company as their bully, and name his own price. He agreed to serve the Company (Menez Nd).

Exploration of the Arctic

Francois Beaulieu II's role in European exploration of the western Subarctic and Arctic is important

on several levels. The most obvious is Beaulieu as an advisor and facilitator of exploration.

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 Francois Beaulieu II'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 Francois Beaulieu II the man, for it is to Petitot that Beaulieu told his life history (1875, 1883, 1886, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1976).

Francois Beaulieu II's role with the first Franklin Expedition was limited to advice. 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 of the route to the mouth of the Coppermine via Great Bear Lake. Beaulieu advised Franklin to proceed to the lower Coppermine River via the northeast corner of Great Bear Lake where the party would portage through the Dismal Lakes to the Coppermine. Beaulieu had descended the Coppermine to its mouth and felt that Franklin would be better to go by the Bear Lake route (Menez Nd, Frank Laviolette 1999, pers. comm.). Franklin puzzled over the different descriptions of the Arctic coast provided by Beaulieu, Blackmeat and the Yellowknife Chief Akaitcho (Masson 1960: 131,135). Franklin was ultimately influenced by Akaitcho's assurance concerning the bounty of caribou along the Yellowknife River route to the Coppermine River (Masson 1960: 131, 135).

When Sir John Franklin returned to the northwest in 1825 for his second expedition, Hudson's Bay Company officers strongly urged him to winter on Great Bear Lake to avoid the difficulties of the first expedition. When trader Peter Warren Dease was assigned to provide for Franklin's party on Great Bear Lake, he requested that the expedition hire Francois Beaulieu II as their interpreter. Dease applied to Chief Factor James Keith to release Beaulieu and send him down from Fort Chipewyan (Davis 1998: 353, 360). Keith hired Beaulieu for Franklin at the rate of 1400 livres or the equivalent of 52 pounds sterling, 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, and had extensive knowledge of the country and Dogrib, Slavey and Hare people of Great Bear Lake (B.39/b/3, fo. 61). After Akaitcho declined to accompany the expedition, Beaulieu's duties were expanded to include post hunter (Franklin 1971: 9 - 10).

Peter Warren Dease, Francois Beaulieu and his family, 15 Canadiens, and four Chipewyan hunters arrived at the site of Fort Franklin on July 27, 1825 (Franklin 1971: 51). A band of Dogrib hunters were waiting for Dease and Beaulieu when they arrived (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.

When the fort was constructed, a separate house was built on the right hand side of the parade ground for Beaulieu and his family (Franklin 1971: 52, Hanks and Hammond 1988). The separate quarters were an indication of Beaulieu's status as interpreter for the expedition.

While the fort was under construction, a select party of Aboriginal hunters under the direction of Francois Beaulieu and accompanied by Dr. John Richardson, were sent to hunt caribou along the northeast shore of Great Bear Lake (Franklin 1971: 51, Richardson 1971a: ii, Hanks 1996).

Beaulieu was instructed to return to the north shore of Great Bear Lake in August 1826 to pick up Richardson after his summer journey along the Arctic coast. He was to leave Fort Franklin on August 6th for the trip to the mouth of the Dease River. If Richardson's party did not appear by September 20th, Beaulieu was to leave the boat stocked with supplies for Richardson and return by canoe to the Fort (Davis 1998: 176). Before leaving Fort Franklin in June, Dr. Richardson promised Francois Beaulieu a fowling-piece if he was waiting at the mouth of the Dease River when Richardson's party arrived (Richardson 1971b: 278).

Dr. Richardson's party arrived at the mouth of the Dease River from the Coppermine River on August 18, 1826 (Richardson, 1971b: 278). Beaulieu arrived late on August 24 amid gun fire and friendly shouts. He told Richardson that he had indeed left Fort Franklin on the 6th, but bad weather and adverse winds had impeded his progress. Beaulieu missed his appointed rendezvous on the 20th by four days, and lost his bet with Richardson for the shot gun (Davis 1998: 382 - 383, Richardson 1971b: 278).

Richardson followed the route from the Coppermine River that Beaulieu had previously recommended to Franklin before his first expedition six years earlier.

Francois 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). Before Francois 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).

Trading Chief

By the early 1820s, the great trading chiefs in the lands around Great Slave Lake included Akaitcho, Camarade de Mandeville and Francois Beaulieu. These men were recognized as both traders and war chiefs. All three men had taken numerous wives to cement their trade relations with the local bands. Francois 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). Between 1823 when Fort Providence closed and Akaitcho lost his point of trade and 1825 when Franklin arrived for his second expedition a trade war was fought between Akaitcho's band of Yellowknife and the Dogrib and Slavey (Hanks 1996, Back 1825, Franklin 1971: 10, Gillespie 1981: 286-87, HBCA B.200/a/6, Back 1825). Francois Beaulieu was entangled in the Yellowknife / Dogrib conflict. He told Petitot he had killed 12 of the enemy himself (Petitot 1887: 312-313). The question, however, is whose side

was Beaulieu on at the time. It is hinted that he fought along side the Yellowknife during the conflict, but from a trade perspective, it was Francois Beaulieu, with his connections to the Martin Lake Dogrib who would have most benefitted most from Akaitcho losing his position as a middle man (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 61).

In 1829, news arrived in Fort Simpson via messengers from Francois Beaulieu at Lac la Martre that:

...the S. [Slave] Lake Chipewyans being that direction - with Ekycho Copper Indian Leader between whom the Slaves [term sometimes used to refer to the Martin Lake Dogrib] some words were exchanged not of a very conciliating nature the Chipewyans present became mediation [sic] and they separated with mutual reproaches for the past - and strong language [sic] implying another attack (HBCA B.200/a/11 fo. 13d. 14, Helm and Gillespie 1981: 22).

Helm and Gillespie suggest that "The Camarade de Mandeville" may have been the Chipewyan / Metis the Dogrib's refer to as *Katehwi*, who mediated the meeting that lead to the uneasy peace which Beaulieu reported (1981: 22). It has been alluded that this was the famous truce between Akaitcho and the Dogrib leader Edzo (Helm and Gillespie 1981: 22). Beaulieu was subsequently involved in brokering another peace in 1831, when he discouraged the Lac la Martre Dogrib from retaliating over Yellowknife provocations (Krech 1984: 133). The conflict between the Yellowknife and the Dogrib did not really pass until Akaitcho's death in 1838 (Hanks 1996).

Free Trader in an Age of Monopoly

Following the amalgamation of the Northwest Company with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, Governor George Simpson moved quickly to consolidate the trade and end the wanton competition between traders that had so eroded profits. The steadfast stand taken by Beaulieu against the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company over the next 50 years is a critical factor in the creation of an independent economic place for the Metis in the Northwest Territories. Time after time, year after year he out traded and ultimately beat the HBC at its own game.

Francois Beaulieu and his "Martin Lake" Chipewyan traded with the Dene between the Horn Plateau near Lac la Martre and Great Bear Lake. By visiting the camps he could offer each trapper less and "save" them the long trip into Fort Norman or Fort Simpson. Hudson's Bay Company trader Edward Smith, commented in the mid-1820's, that the Chipewyan/Metis were getting goods in the Athabasca at 50 percent of what they cost the Slavey at the Mackenzie River posts (HBCA B200./a/6 fos. 25-26, Krech 1984: 133). Beaulieu would then carry the furs south to Fort Resolution or Fort Chipewyan where he would receive more then he would have at a northern post (Bellman and Hanks 1998: 52).

To try to 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 eight to 10 pounds sterling at the men's rate (HBCA B.200/e/9 fo.2, Krech 1984: 133). During the year Beaulieu intervened to keep the peace between the Yellowknife and

Dogrib (Abel 1993: 94). In 1831, Beaulieu intervened again in the last reported fight between the Yellowknife and the Dogrib (HBCA B.200/a/13 fo. 12, Krech 1984: 133).

In 1833, to maintain the fur returns at Fort Simpson and prevent Beaulieu from taking the trade back south to the Athabasca district, the Hudson's Bay Company gave Beaulieu goods from the post worth 310 Made Beaver at a price one third below that charged to local Native traders (Abel 1993: 99). Trader John Stuart was so displeased with the arrangement that he urged the deal be terminated so that Beaulieu would no longer have the means to trade. Beaulieu replied to Stuart's threats by stating that he would simply move his trade to Fort Chipewyan where he could get better prices (Abel 1993: 99).

By the late 1830s, Beaulieu had expanded and established a meat trade to supply the boat brigades at Portage la Loche (Methy Portage), south of Fort Chipewyan. At Portage la Loche, Beaulieu had access to Metis free traders coming north from Red River.

The Hudson's Bay Company, in an attempt to blunt Beaulieu's independent activities and bring him back into the fold, made him the Factor at Fort Resolution in 1848. While in this role he used his family contacts to open up the Dogrib trade for the company and to improve the route around the Slave River Rapids. His work was one of the factors that lead to the establishment of Fort Rae in 1852 (Devine 1995: 12). In 1854, he 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.

In addition to his involvement with the Hudson's Bay Company, Beaulieu was also a significant influence in the establishment of the Catholic Church in the western Arctic. Francois Beaulieu was baptized by Father Tache on September 25, 1848. At Christmas that year, Beaulieu's wife Catherine St. Germain was baptized. On December 30, 1848, their marriage was blessed by the Catholic Church (McCarthy 1998: 118). When Beaulieu was forced to pension off his other six wives to meet the requirements of the church, the women remained a part of the extended Beaulieu family. This was not simply a social decision, but one that potentially had major economic implications for Beaulieu, as wives provided the kin links that helped bind his trading empire together. According to Beaulieu descendants, the other wives, who were sent back to their families to be with their children, continued to be taken care of by Francois Beaulieu. The choice to stay with Catherine St. Germain may also speak to the Chipewyan and *coureurs de bois* roots of Francois Beaulieu's Metis identity. Catherine was the daughter of Pierre St. Germain, a "Red River Metis" who had come north in 1812 with the Northwest Company, and his Chipewyan wife Thakaritthert (Menez Nd).

Beaulieu blended his traditional powers gained from his mothers people with those of the church of his father. Ever pragmatic, he used the church as a tool in his on going struggles with the Hudson's Bay Company. His status as a lay leader helped consolidate his temporal authority with the strongly Catholic Red River Metis that were moving into the Athabasca and Mackenzie River Districts in the 1830's and 1840's to work on the boats (McCarthy 1998: 122). Beaulieu was referred to by the

priests as "le Patriarche".

By at least 1854, Beaulieu had ties to Metis traders who were circumventing the Hudson's Bay Company and trading with the Americans (Abel 1993: 99 - 100, Devine 1995: 8). In 1856, he 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).

Francois, and his two sons Joseph "King" and Antoine Beaulieu alarmed the Hudson's Bay Company in 1857 when they made a trip to Red River (Overvold 1976, Goldring 1980: 25). His foray caused the company to raise prices (Overvold 1976). Beaulieu said he went to visit Father Tache, 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 L 300 worth of trade goods north with him (HBCA D5.44 fo. 172 - 173 in McCarthy 1998: 118). 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 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-40An, Goldring 1980).

Francois Beaulieu announced in the spring of 1858 that he planned to travel to Red River again. While the planned collapsed when his sons and Indian traders rebelled, 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 rehired Beaulieu in this period, but he retired again in 1862 (HBCA B154/z/1 fo. 15). Beaulieu's influence was so pervasive, that the company finally established a post at Salt River and hired him in 1863 to take charge of it (HBCA B200/b/34 fo. 68, McCarthy 1998: 119). Beaulieu traveled to Great Bear Lake one last time in 1863 to trade. He apparently met Father Petitot at the lake near the site of Fort Franklin (Petitot 1893). The next year the company gave Beaulieu a virtual monopoly on the extraction of salt along with the management of the post (HBCA B.200/b/35 fos. 89d, 90, 95, 95d, 102, 103, 111-11d, Bellman and Hanks 1998: 62). According to trader W. Cornwallis King, the Hudson's Bay Company gave Beaulieu a grant of land along the Salt River in exchange for Beaulieu supplying salt to the company (Menez Nd).

In 1866, Beaulieu set out for Red River to ask the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company for a pension and to confirm his monopoly on the salt supply from Salt River. When he met Father Grandin at Ile a la Crosse, the priest persuaded him to turn back and then promised to speak to the company for him. Grandin was concerned that the Hudson's Bay Company would suspect the church

was encouraging an alliance between Beaulieu and the Red River free traders (AASB T3875, McCarthy 1998: 119).

Around this time, the Hudson's Bay Company hired Francois Beaulieu's son, Joseph "King" Beaulieu to manage a post known as Fond du Lac or King Post at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake near modern Fort Reliance (Menez Nd). This gave the Beaulieu family an exceptional hold on the fur trade in the Mackenzie District (Giraud 1986: 313).

When a fur brigade under the command of W.L. Hardisty rebelled near Salt River, the young officer sent for Beaulieu:

The old dictator came, pulled his long knife and pretended to shave his tobacco plug. "Get back to your boat and give no more trouble to your chief" he told the rebels who were in their boats. They feared Beaulieu's knife. Hardisty gave the old rascal a suitable present for his trouble (Menez Nd).

In 1866, when American free traders who were moving into the Athabasca District encouraged Beaulieu to collect fur for them, the Hudson's Bay Company quickly rehired him to visit camps and collect furs before the free traders could get to them (McCarthy 1998: 119). Independent to the end, in the winter of 1871-1872, Beaulieu attempted to obtain furs from Fort Providence and Fort Rae to trade to his son Joseph at Lac la Biche (HBCA B200/b/ 39 fo. 46). That winter Francois Beaulieu II fell ill and died of a fever and cough after five days of sickness (AASB T11274-6, McCarthy 1998: 119).

By the time of his death in 1872, Francois Beaulieu was head of a family fur trading empire that challenged the Hudson's Bay Company from Great Bear Lake to Lac la Biche in northern Alberta and Ile a la Crosse in northwestern Saskatchewan (Menez Nd). Beyond personal profit, the success of the Beaulieus had two major impacts on the Hudson's Bay Company's grip on the northern fur trade - it encouraged other Metis and Dene to become free traders and it offered employment opportunities outside of the company (Bellman and Hanks 1998). The combination served to loosen the hold of the Hudson's Bay on the people of the Mackenzie Basin River.

The Growth of a Metis Identity in the Mackenzie District

Francois Beaulieu's famous quote:

I am only a Metis and a Metis 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)

speaks to the core of his perceived identity. Beaulieu was recognized in his day as a Chipewyan half-breed. He, like his contemporary le Camarade de Mandeville, 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 Francois's son Pierre, Chief. No one Macrae thought was Metis was allowed to take treaty (McCormack 1998: 186). What had been variation of a common people were arbitrarily made two through the decisions of officials of the young Dominion of Canada.

There is more however, if one is to try and place Francois Beaulieu within the context of Metis identity in the Mackenzie River Basin. First, Beaulieu is a challenge to anthropologist Richard Slobodin's often cited but erroneous description of the Metis of the southern Mackenzie as "Red River Metis" (Slobodin 1966: 14). The oldest Metis families in the Mackenzie developed in parallel to the growth of the Metis to the south on the plains in the late 18th century. They originally had few connections to the "Red River Metis" (McCarthy 1998: 112, McCormack 1998: 178). The first Metis 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 Metis society as distinct (Abel 1993: 86).

Conclusion

As one of the preeminent Metis leaders of his age, Beaulieu's work, both for the fur companies and later as an independent trader, helped to establish the economic and social links between the people of the Mackenzie River Basin and what became Canada. His collaboration with the First and Second Franklin Expeditions, and later Father Emile Petitot, played a critical role in evolving European understanding of the western Arctic region. Beaulieu's role as champion of the Roman Catholic Church in the Athabasca and Mackenzie Districts, was a factor in the relatively rapid establishment of the church in the western Arctic. His influence as a free trader in the age of the fur trade monopoly was significant in helping to develop an independent economic base for the Metis of the far north.

Francois 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 Metis, 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 Metis and the Dene, and the ancient link of the northern Metis 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 Metis provided one in kinship.

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