Hybrid Churches of Canada:
A Space for Religious '*Inculturation*'?

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Abstract

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This thesis explores Christian missionary churches built or reconstructed in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s that express a fusion between Christianity and traditional Native spirituality. This fusion involves an appropriation of spiritual messages and a symbolic juxtaposition of religious imagery apparent in the architecture and visual furnishings of the church, as well as the liturgical practices of its congregation. My research focuses on three particular communities in Canada that are home to Christian parishes possessing a strong Native presence. The hybrid features of these churches can be seen as a move towards religious inculturation, which for Christianity means redefining their systems of representation and broadening their embrace. I consider each church's individual missionary history and their approaches to evangelism and examine the churches as a site of ongoing colonial struggle. I argue that rather than resolving the problematic past of missionary history, these churches act as a space for discussion surrounding the ongoing process of working through the irreconcilable past of missionary invasion as well as the enduring confusion regarding the convoluted iconographic language expressed through their teachings.

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INTRODUCTION

It may seem that the role of religion in contemporary Canadian culture has become increasingly obsolete in the face of extreme globalization and demanding secularism. The presence of missionary religions in former European colonies occupy a particularly difficult position as they are confronted with the added challenge of reconciling the traumas they caused through enforced residential schools, displacement policies, and the denial of traditional cultural activity. In the twenty first century, the Christian church has initiated a paradigm of spiritual inculturation with a view to refining their missionary efforts. Throughout this thesis I use the term 'inculturation' to describe the efforts of one culture to communicate their religious message to another in such a way as to blend the two religious traditions without weakening or diluting the essence of either. For Christianity, this has meant a redefinition of the Christian system of representation in a manner which acknowledges and addresses contemporary issues in order to broaden their outreach.

This thesis will consider the ways in which the concept of inculturation manifests in the visual, social, political and spiritual realm, through the examination of three particular communities in Canada. Within each region, I have chosen churches that express a fusion between Christianity and traditional Native spirituality. This fusion involves an appropriation of spiritual traditions and rituals and a juxtaposition of religious and symbolic imagery apparent in the architecture and furnishings of the church, as well as the liturgical practices of its congregation. The hybrid features of these parishes can be seen as a move by the Church towards religious inculturation. Elements such as architecture, art, colour, ritual, vestments, sculpture, and carving that honour both Christian and indigenous traditions are not merely a syncretism of two separate belief systems but represent the *object* of inculturation. By examining the churches

as a site of ongoing colonial struggle between two co-existing cultures, I will investigate what kind of message the church conveys to the community at large and the potential benefits and dangers inherent in that message. By exploring the convoluted iconographic language expressed through its teachings, I argue that rather than resolving the problematic nature of missionary histories, these churches act as a space in which to negotiate the irreconcilable past of colonial invasion. By considering the individual missionary history and approaches to evangelism of these three communities, I argue that changes and adaptations in missionary ideology correspond with the emergence of a new type of post-colonial attitude that embraces Native spirituality while touting it as a nationalist symbol.

Identity and Identification

The terms used to define the Aboriginal people of North America are essential features in the development of individual and collective identity. Early European settlers commonly misinterpreted the nature and character of indigenous political structures or attempted to obstruct political networks that prevented their colonial objectives. This frequently led to erroneous designations which the settlers used to distinguish the indigenous people they encountered and which remain sources of confusion and misunderstanding today. In many case, the repetition of these disparaging titles was the result of assimilation with bordering communities.[1] The term 'Indian' reveals the initial explorer's primary misunderstanding that they had come into contact with the East Indies. The word 'Indian' is still employed in some cases today, however, titles such as 'First Nations,' 'Native' and 'Aboriginal' are generally favoured as they express more precisely the "primacy of the indigenous peoples as occupiers of the North American content."[2] Despite this terminological reshaping, it is still felt that, in the phrase 'Native American Art,' the

[1] Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 18.
[2] Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 19.

words 'Native American' express the authoritarian imposition of Western concepts of social, political and cultural identity that are unfamiliar and irrelevant to Aboriginal people.[3]

The Government of Canada has officially characterized the elemental system of organization as the 'band' ('tribe,' in the United States). Granting these labels may have divergent significations in classical anthropological study, both are currently employed as descriptors of distinct Aboriginal communities and are usually contiguous with the reserves to which indigenous populations have been appointed to since the mid-nineteenth century. Nonetheless, both 'tribe' and 'band' are false categorizations of previous collective indigenous groups that are just as valuable. There were countless intricate and advanced structures of military, economic and political interrelationships being utilized far prior to the appearance of European settlers in North America.[4] The regulation of Aboriginal groups through governmental systems of legal identification in Canada and the United States are forms of inventory and a standard strategy of colonial control and oppression. It is also a method of exclusion that refutes Aboriginal status to many individuals who descend from lineages no more or less mixed than some who are accepted and identified as 'First Nations' according to government requirements that originated from obsolete ethnic beliefs, patrilineal preference or geographical separation.[5] However, in contrast, present-day scholarly theories and concepts regarding identity emphasize the significance of unique subjectiveness and individuality cultivated through family history and personal experience.[6] Still, legal categorizations persist, maintaining an invidious hold on indigenous people.

[3] Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 19.
[4] Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 19.
[5] "In Canada, for example, until 1985 the children of white fathers and Native mothers were legally regarded as white (and lost their treaty rights), while those of Native father and white mothers were considered Native. In the US the ancestry necessary for enrollment is determined by the individual tribes according to the 'blood quantum' or percentage of a person's Indian ancestry each establishes." Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 241.
[6] Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 20.

Theoretical Approach

This study will consider Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, difference and ambivalence, which he develops in *The Location of Culture* (1994), as a theoretical approach to understanding cultural exchanges between missionary forces in Canada and Aboriginal people. His ideas serve as a structural framework to organize my thoughts surrounding the negotiations that take place within the religious institutions I will explore.[7] Along with Bhabha, the work of anthropologist Alfred Gell will support the foundations for my argument. In *Art and Agency* (1998), Gell proposes a theory of visual culture in which art is considered a mode of instrumental action. That is to say, he demonstrates how art can influence the thoughts, beliefs and actions of a culture. This approach to art allows the reader to consider how power and agency are ingrained in and displayed through artwork and architecture during periods of communication, contestation or debate between indigenous and missionary groups.[8] Gauvin Bailey's analysis of early non-European missions of the Society of Jesus throughout Asia and Latin America and the mission art produced in response to the encounter, provides a useful model for examining the transitions between Jesuit missionaries and indigenous communities. His text, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (1999), serves as a template by which I compare the Jesuit presence in Canada with their experiences in other European colonies.[9] These fundamental texts, among others, present the primary theories which I adopt and utilize to support my discussion surrounding the interactions, exchanges and communications between the Church and the Aboriginal community in Canada.

[7] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
[8] Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[9] Bailey, Gauvin A. *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

Case Studies

This thesis will address three particular communities in Canada. Within in each community, I focus on parishes that were established in the latter half of the twentieth century in response to post-Vatican II reformation and the restoration of indigenous culture, that demonstrate the new initiatives of the Christian Church toward inculturation. In Chapter 2, I explore the community in West Bay on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Here, many Anishinaabeg[10] people of M'Chigeeng First Nations congregate weekly at the Church of Immaculate Conception, a space which celebrates indigenous traditions and culture through the liturgy as well as the visual décor. Immaculate Conception is a fascinating example of the concept of spiritual syncretism manifested in a hybrid church. However, a much more intricate and problematic reality lies beneath this apparent illustration of religious 'inculturation'.

Chapter 3 will investigate the Métis community in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Winnipeg has the largest Métis population in Canada yet the expression of Aboriginal culture is quite different here than in West Bay. At Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, I analyze the Native furnishings and ceremonial objects as well as the Church's celebration of and relationship with the holy figure of Kateri Tekakwitha. However, at another end of the city, Precious Blood Parish, designed by Métis artist Étienne Gaboury, might seem to embody a highly Native presence at first glance, with its teepee-like formation. Yet information available about the symbolism of the structure in fact denounces any native influence. The result is a curious discussion of artist intention versus viewer perception.

[10] Anishnaabeg or Anishinabek refers to a group aboriginal peoples from the Algonquin regions of Canada. They are a sect of Odawa, Ojibwe or Pottowatomi tribes. Throughout this paper, the terms 'aboriginal,' 'Native,' and 'Indian' are used to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada who occupied the land prior to colonial settlement, as well as their descendants. 'First Nations' has become a preferred self-labelled term among most scholars and is widely used to highlight a separate identity and a status of inherent sovereignty. Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), xi.

My final Chapter will focus on Eskasoni First Nations and Potlotek First Nations in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Ninety-five percent of the Mi'kmaq people of Nova Scotia consider themselves to be Roman Catholic.[11] I observe the ways which they explore their faith both as Catholics and as Mi'kmaqs, and how they incorporate unorthodox traditions to complicate the model of inculturation even further. Through these three case studies, I attempt to draw conclusions about the aims of and motivations behind religious inculturation. By observing the strategies of inculturation in practice, I will consider which ones appear to be constructive and destructive to the prosperity of the community.

Methodology

Throughout this thesis, I will analyze these churches by providing a short history of missionary settlement in the area and the development of the community. I use the churches in these communities as a space and material structure by which to trace the influence of First Nations culture and heritage and I make strategic comparisons between other churches in the region and the ones that constitute the focus of my study, in order to observe shifts in aesthetic styles. I will address key texts on the specific history of missionary churches, including Raymond Huel's *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*[12] and John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime*[13], which give comprehensive overviews of the encounter between Christian missionaries and indigenous populations and describes the introduction of Christianity to the indigenous people of the various regions of Canada. Michael Stogre's *That the World May*

[11] Robert A. Campbell, "Bridging Sacred Canopies: Mi'kmaq Spirituality and Catholicism." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 18:2 (1998): 303.
[12] Huel, Raymond. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, Western Canadian Publishers, 1996).
[13] Grant, John W., *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights[14], which is a thorough review of contemporary Papal teachings on inculturation, will serve as an important source to establish changes in the approach to Christian missionization in the sixties and seventies. I also utilize Jesuit and Oblate missionary documents and archives, church archives, and cultural community information such as newspapers, local events, and festivals.

In order to analyze the church as a social space, my thesis also includes discussions with the individuals involved in the planning, construction and furnishing of the churches, as well as those members of the community who organize significant social and spiritual events. Through interviews with priests, aboriginal elders, parish councils, artists, architects and individuals involved in Aboriginal organizations and/or religious groups, I will highlight their opinions and insights on issues such as the role of the Church in their community, the messages communicated by the Church and the advantages and weaknesses of the objective of inculturation. Their thoughts and deliberations will allow the reader to get a glimpse of the contemporary perspective on where inculturation lies today and if the efforts of the Church towards inculturation so far have been successful or not.

Defining *Culture*

There are many ways to think about the term inculturation, from 'social blending' or hybridity, to the more problematic idea that the missionaries were introducing and imposing 'culture' on the 'non-cultured' indigenous people. In order to have a meaningful discussion about 'inculturation', I must first discus the definition of *culture* and the different ways in which it is used. Notable scholars who have taken on the arduous task of defining and tracing the history, handling and semiotic usage of the term 'culture', exceptionally prominent in the mid-twentieth

[14] Stogre, Michael. *That The World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights* (Quebec: Éditions Paulines, 1992).

century, include Albert Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in their significant work *Culture: a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*[15] (1952) and Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*[16] (1958). In its early conception, 'culture' emerged as a "noun of *process*".[17] It was initially understood as the culture (as in 'civilization') of crops or animals (raising and developing) which extends to the culture (as in 'active cultivation') of human thought.[18] Importantly, Johann Gottfried Herder was the first to employ the plural form, 'cultures' as an intentionally distinct from any singular form, or as is now regarded as an undeviating perception of 'civilization'.[19] In the late eighteenth century, particularly in German and in English, 'culture' developed into a "noun of *configuration* or *generalization*" of the essence and attitude that influenced the 'whole way of life' of a particular group of people.[20] The progression of a more comprehensive and pluralist expression of 'culture' became increasingly utilized in the establishment of comparative anthropology in the nineteenth century and since has carried on the signification of "a whole and distinctive way of life".[21]

In his book, *The Sociology of Culture*, Raymond Williams outlines the expansion of the term in the later nineteenth century to include a broader connotation of 'culture' as it relates to the *mind*. He recognizes a variety of designations from "(i) *a developed state of mind* – as in 'a person of culture', 'a cultured person' to (ii) *the process of this development* – as in 'cultural interests', 'cultural activities' to (iii) *the means of these processes* – as in culture as 'the arts' and

[15] Kroeber, A.L. and Kluckhohn, Clyde. *Culture: a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1952).
[16] Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society* (London: Chattoo and Windus, 1958).
[17] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.
[18] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.
[19] Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968).
[20] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.
[21] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.

'humane intellectual works'."[22] Currently the most recognized and commonly relied on definition is the later, the *means of the processes*, although all are acknowledged and accepted, in general. These distinctions, however, exist side-by-side somewhat uncomfortably, with the expanding sociological and anthropological handling of the term that denotes the 'whole way of life' of a particular community or social collective.[23]

The main complications of the term arise as the consequence of certain forms of confluences of emphasis. Williams identifies two major types: (a) a prioritizing of the '*informing spirit*' of an entire way of life of a people, which is exhibited over a series of social interests, behaviors and actions. Yet this confluence is most prominent in 'specifically cultural' interests, behaviors and actions, such as institutions of art, languages, material objects and scholarly endeavors. The second type of convergence of interest which Williams describes, (b) is a stronger prominence towards '*a whole social order*'. He refers to an order which a distinct society, through types of intellectual and artistic production, is regarded as the definite or indefinite result of a system principally comprised of other interests, behaviors and actions than those included in (a).[24] For the purposes of this thesis, what is important to take into account is that the processes of inculturation do not simply apply to the spiritual life of those involved. The concept of inculturation discussed here will consider the 'whole way of life' of a people; from the economic, to political, to social implications which are involved in, converge and intersect under the umbrella *culture*. I will focus on the spiritual and religious implications of the communities, however, these experiences cannot be taken as separate entities but are all interrelated.

[22] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.
[23] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.
[24] Williams, Raymond. *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 12.

Inculturation and its Discontents

The elaboration of the terminology associated with 'culture' brings us to the more problematic term: *inculturation*. For decades, post-colonial scholars and theologians have debated what constitutes effective and suitable forms of inculturation. In his article "Inculturation and Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?" Peter Schineller, Jesuit priest and theologian, affirms the necessity for inculturation in modern Christian missionary approaches. He rejects the term "syncretism," insisting that it has an inherently disparaging, derogatory, and belittling effect because it implies borrowing features of a different religion without critically assessing them through the religious models and conventions of Christianity. He warns that this form of inculturation fundamentally weakens the integrity of the Christian doctrine.[25] Theresa Smith points out the strong objection, particularly on the part of non-Christian Aboriginals, toward notions of syncretism that implement an "Inidianized" Christianity. She believes that Schineller's explanation is in fact an inadequate form of inculturation as it represents a "top-down" approach, in which church leaders evaluate the qualities and values of certain attributes of native cultures according to their own social and anthropological criteria.[26] Aboriginal theologians such as George Tinker are more likely to judge Christianity through the criteria of a Native world-view, showing a concern for the loss of indigenous cultural integrity rather than a desire to preserve the true principals of the Christian spirit. Tinker asserts that,

> Today there can be no genuine American Indian theology that does not take our indigenous traditions seriously. This means, of course, that our reading of the gospel and our understanding of faithfulness will represent a radical disjuncture from the theologies and histories of the Western churches of Europe and America as we pay attention to our stories and memories instead of to theirs.[27]

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[25] Peter Schineller, "Inculturation and Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* April (1992): 50-53.
[26] Theresa S. Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception: Inculturation and Identity among the Anishnaabeg of Manitoulin Island," *American Indian Quarterly* 20 (1996): 517.
[27] George Tinker, "Spirituality, Native American Personhood, Sovereignty and Solidarity," *The Ecumenical Review* 44:3 (1992), 319.

Conversely, there also exists a widespread opinion from both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike that declare an opposition to both syncretism and inculturation. Many "Traditionalists" from Manitoulin tribes and communities see the efforts at inculturation in the Catholic churches to be one which sets out to establish perimeters surrounding the extent of Aboriginal influence on Christian practices and beliefs.[28] These groups choose to remain outside the sphere of the Church as they believe that these attempts at inculturation demonstrated through mission churches such as Immaculate Conception produce a dilution of both religions. For the Traditionalists, the Catholic Church's gradual inclusion of Native symbols, practices and beliefs is translated as an act of theft or degradation of their culture and simply disguised under the ambitions of 'inculturation.' Many Anishnaabeg people have expressed their denunciation of the concept of syncretism, "not as an historically pejorative term but as a problematic reality."[29] Traditionalists such as Leland and Kitty Bell, both Ojibwe elders and members of the traditional medicine society, or midewewin of Manitoulin, believe that the priests at institutions like Immaculate Conception as well as those who participate in the religious services are utilizing Anishnaabeg rituals without complying to the sacred regulations and proscriptions which they implement in their own midewewin rituals. Many of these traditionalists have intentionally taken a stance outside of the church because they believe that their people come from generations of Christian Anishnaabeg who, in the early years of missionary activity, were obliged to give up their medicine bundles to the Jesuit priests and to abandon their "demonic" ways. For those trying to reclaim the lost elements of their ancestral culture, the idea of inculturation must surely seem like an unusual and perturbing contradiction.[30] Yet considering the Christian faith of so

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[28] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 516.
[29] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 517.
[30] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 523.

many First Nations people today, it is clear that the forms of inculturation undertaken by the Church have been effective in addressing the uneasy sentiment pervading the efforts at inculturation.

Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights

In the aftermath of post-Vatican II (1962-1965) reformation and the growing revival of indigenous culture, the missionary churches across the country began recanting their old forms of proselytization and moving towards an inclusive discussion with Aboriginal elders and community members. The religious doctrines preached during masses as well as church ceremonies and sacraments have begun to integrate the needs of both the Aboriginal and Christian congregation. An apologetic sentiment was shared by a large part of the Roman Catholic community, including Pope John Paul II, who, addressing Native Americans in 1986, in Phoenix, Arizona, stated:

> The early encounter between your traditional cultures and the European way of life ... was a harsh and painful reality for your peoples. The cultural oppression, the injustices, the disruption of your life and your traditional societies must be acknowledged.... I encourage you, as Native people, belonging to different tribes and nations in the East, South, West and North, to preserve and keep alive your cultures, your languages, the values and customs which have served you well in the past and which provide a solid foundation for the future..., these things benefit not only yourselves but the entire human family. This sharing of cultural riches must also include the Church native cultures are called to participate in and enhance.[31]

In the 1980s, Pope John Paul II traveled throughout Canada, the United States and Latin America, addressing various issues of Aboriginal rights, focusing on religious autonomy. His speeches recorded from these apostolic visits reflect a new approach to evangelization. It marked a shift in the overall attitude of the Jesuits towards evangelism and introduced methods which seemingly promoted inculturation. This new form of missionizing intended to present spiritually

[31] John Paul II, "Address to the Native Peoples at Phoenix, Arizona, Sept. 14, 1987," *Origins*, 17 (1987): 297. See also Stogre, *That The World May Believe*, 233-34.

syncretic teachings under the direction of Aboriginal Christians. It declared a dedication to restoring Native spiritual symbolism and traditional ways of life and to encourage an engagement with God by using their own celebrations and practices.[32]

During the course of this thesis, the most problematic challenge is coming to solid, concrete deductions and resolutions regarding the effects of inculturation. There are many factors leading to the esoteric nature of the concept in terms of the difficulties encountered when researching inculturation in each distinct location and recognizing how it affects the communities. For example, as mentioned, the notion of inculturation is still a fairly recent idea that has not yet been comprehensively explored by scholars thus there exists some disagreement in clearly defining it. During my research it became clear that people have varying opinions about its nature, some expressing positive support and others expressing a general skepticism about the true underlying agenda of the Church in its efforts towards inculturation. Adding to the complexity of this subject, inculturation manifests differently in every environment and in every church according to individual concerns and interests. The scope of this thesis does not allow for an all-inclusive understanding of inculturation, however, it is possible to draw some conclusions in regards to its impact on the art nexus of the religious spaces that represent the spiritual dynamic of the communities I examine. My objective for this thesis is not necessarily to determine a universal approach to inculturation, yet considering its impact on Native spirituality in Canada as well as its relevance to our perception of indigenous cultural preservation in general, I believe it is crucial to open up the field of study and lay the foundation for further analysis.

[32] Kenneth A. David and John C. Boonstra, "Themes to Challenge the Mission of the Church," *International Review of Mission* 81:324 (1992): 600.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will discuss the knowledge and ideas that will help build the context surrounding the topic of inculturation, its relevance to religious hybridity between Christianity and Native spirituality and how this manifests in the church space. I will introduce the concept of "agency" in connection with visual images and objects, by examining the work of social anthropologist Alfred Gell in order to show the extent of the influence that the objects and spaces which surround us, have on our minds, our beliefs and our actions. I will then substantiate the need for an anthropological approach to the subject of religious inculturation and explain how this can be accomplished. Next, a discussion of postcolonial theory offers insight into some of the issues surrounding how previous institutions have dealt with native art and primitive art; the ways in which scholars and critics analyze and evaluate the historical, cultural and artistic significance of native art and the problematics of the "Western"/"non-Western" dichotomy. I will consider the work of Homi K. Bhabha, and his development of the notions of hybridity, interstices, negotiation and ambivalence and how these elaborate the processes of inculturation. A look into Gauvin Bailey's project on hybrid art follows, as does an examination of figure of the trickster as Allan Ryan discusses it in connection with contemporary Aboriginal art. I conclude the literature review with an overview of the debate surrounding definitions of inculturation and how I apply the term in the following chapters.

Agency of the Art Object

The visual features of churches and places of worship have agency over those who view them, even to the nonreligious. These spaces influence the way religions are understood and this influence also permeates into the realm of actions. An anthropological theory of art can explain how the function of art does not solely consist of meaning and communication, it is about *doing*.

Churches are about doing in the sense that they have both real and symbolic effect on their communities. They have physical influence on individuals as they systematically bring people together and stimulate ritual. Art objects can be understood to assert agency over viewers in the ways that they elicit action. The religious spaces under consideration illustrate the processes of inculturation through this agency when they allow the elements of Native spirituality to come to the fore.

Relying on the work of social anthropologist Alfred Gell I will demonstrate how the religious spaces under examination are considered not only as physical structures but as modes of instrumental action. In his book, *Art and Agency* (1998), Gell widely broadens the category of the art object and approaches art through its role as a social agent. He argues that the present aesthetic and anthropological theories take an overly passive point of view. He proposes an original anthropological theory of visual art, in which art is considered as a form of active operation. Art is seen as the construction of things in order to intervene on the thoughts, beliefs and actions of others. Religious art and architecture has been used as a tool to demonstrate values, strengthen faith and idolize holy figures, yet its uses become much more intricate in an inculturated space.

Gell's influential essay, 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology' (1992) foreshadows some of the major arguments which he focuses on in *Art and Agency*. [33] In 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology,' Gell suggests that the issue of the efficacy of the art object can be understood without giving in to the aura of charm and appeal of those objects if one conceptualizes art as a particular type of technology.[34] Notably, Gell proposes a view of art objects as tools "for securing the acquiescence

[33] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) vii.
[34] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, viii.

of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed."[35] Gell explains that the 'enchantment' of technology arises through the outcome of operations of systems of scarcely understandable virtuosity, which epitomize an idyllic magical capability. Agency is realised through technical virtuosity. Gell distinguishes objects as works of art if they are the result of a technical process, specifically the type of technical process which requires the skill of an artist. He explains,

> A major deficiency of the aesthetic approach is that art objects are not the only aesthetically valued objects around: there are beautiful horses, beautiful people, beautiful sunsets, and so on; but art objects are the only objects around which are *beautifully made*, or *made beautiful*. There seems every justification, therefore, for considering art objects initially as those objects which demonstrate a certain technically achieved level of excellence, 'excellence' being a function, not of their characteristics simply as objects, but of their characteristics as *made* objects, as products of techniques.[36]

This is what has the potential to 'enchant' the viewer.[37] The churches under examination must be acknowledged as a type of enchanting technology in order to recognize their influence on the development of inculturation.

Gell's approach to the anthropology of art is to construct a theory of agency and to view art as a vehicle of this agency.[38] He considers the way in which art acts on the viewer. He suggests that art provokes a sense of living presence in the viewer. Works of art may provoke the viewer in certain ways, eliciting feelings of desire, fear, love or hate, giving the impression of a personal relationship. There is an element of the interaction between art and its viewer that corresponds with a human to human interaction. Gell identifies this element as *agency*; the ability to persuade the viewer to think that they are interacting with living agents rather than dead matter. It is common for scholars and art historians to conceive of the role of art as one that

[35] Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 43.
[36] Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," 162-163.
[37] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, ix.
[38] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, ix.

concerns meaning and communication. Gell proposes, however, that art is about *doing*, in which sense he is referring to *agency*. This theory demonstrates a notion that is intrinsic to the concept of inculturation, that religious spaces are not 'symbols' but indexes of agency and should be interpreted as such.[39] This theory will enable me to explain how the architectural design of a church might evoke in viewers a sense of acceptance, warmth or faith, and in turn how these feelings develop into action, whether it is ritual and liturgical action or the activity of community gathering or distancing.

Central to Gell's anthropological theory are the notions of indexes, prototypes, artists and recipients and their relation to the concept of agency. Agency is mediated by the *index*. For Gell, indexes denote real material objects that stimulate reactions, meanings, assumptions and interpretations. Indexes stand in relation to other artists, recipients and prototypes in a variety of ways.[40] *Prototypes* refer to either the people or material items which indexes represent or signify, through either visual imitation or a purely symbolic nature.[41] Viewers of art who are, or are at least expected to be, influenced in some way by the indexes, represent what Gell identifies as *recipients*.[42] Finally, *artists* are those believed to be the actual agent or originator of the quality, character and physical properties of the index.[43] For example, the emperor Augustus represents the prototype for the index which is now known as the *Prima Porta* sculpture; the recipients are those present at a court case in a basilica where one of the many copies of this work were located; the artist's technical skill to produce the impression of a lifelike human by suggesting sight, speech and movement inspires awe and admiration in the public. So not only do artists demonstrate agency by creating and producing art, but these objects themselves also influence

[39] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 253.
[40] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 13.
[41] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 25.
[42] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 24.
[43] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 23.

the agency of the prototypes they represent or depict as well as the agency of the recipients who view the objects. Thus artists may invoke agency in viewers yet they are not all-encompassing creators of Western common sense beliefs and ideas.[44] Each depiction of an idol or religious figure in some way bears elements of its artist; of their social context, their world-view and their conception of the subject they have represented. Each index will speak for its prototype in a distinctly unique way to produce a diverse variety of messages and subsequent actions of its recipients.

One of Gell's major arguments is that art objects convey a certain technology to realize particular goals, above all to implicate patients in the intentionalities and affiliations pursued or imposed by agents. He emphasizes that "the formal complexity and the technical virtuosity" that indexes display, is in fact not subsidiary to his theory but an entirely essential component. Fundamental to his argument is the idea that works of art exhibit a type of mental incomprehensibility; they frustrate, torment, tease or provoke the viewer. Idols are particularly significant as they represent a person or divine being which undergoes some kind of action or which possesses the power to act upon others. Iconic objects should be recognized as "indexes of agency" and understood as inhabiting a space within the systems of human social and political agency virtually equal to the status of human beings themselves.[45] This notion is especially relevant when analyzing sacred objects and spaces. Every liturgical object within the Church is an index of agency and manifests a form of rational incomprehensibility which allows its sacrality to become transferable when used in ceremony.

It is important to mention that these religious spaces will be examined not only from an art historical framework but an anthropological one as well and Gell's focus on anthropology is a

[44] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, ix.
[45] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, x.

central component to my methodological development. Gell believes that recently, many academic fields, including anthropology, have been focusing too much attention on *meaning*, and emphasizes the necessity to examine current culture, custom and practice. The application of community-observation field-work allows anthropologists to engage in contemporary society in an immediate and direct environment and to investigate the visuality of a culture and its practices. By means of extended community involvement and observation, anthropologists may reveal multiplex meanings through the connected study of language, art and myth.[46] Thus it is necessary to consider an anthropological viewpoint for the purposes of this project since anthropology illustrates how architecture is a product of as well as an influence on every element of society including processes of inculturation.[47] The following chapters will outline relevant historical elements of settlement and missionary activity within each individual community or area yet will also explore how this history and the development of the churches in these areas are connected to individuals' current experiences, largely through field work observations.

Since Gell's theory of art is essentially anthropological, he emphasizes the *art nexus*, the network or system of social connections in which works of art are rooted; this network is what Gell fundamentally describes as agency. It does not reflect on art through the cultural lens of its aesthetic or formal worth or significance within the society that created it, nor does his theory view art objects or signs as visual puzzles to be decoded or as a symbolic language that must be translated. Gell describes works of art rather in a performative sense, as structures of activity, aimed to transform the world instead of attempting to uncover its symbolic scheme. This is why Gell views works of art comparable and correspondent to humans, or more accurately, to social

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[46] Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.
[47] Coote and Shelton, *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, 4.

agents.[48] It is within the art nexus that I will locate the churches under examination, not simply through the context in which they were originally produced but also the ways in which they have shaped and continue to shape the communities who engage with them. The evaluation of the spaces extends beyond formal analysis to uncover how they and the objects they hold invigorate belief and thus elicit ritual action which can be observed through the liturgy.

Ultimately, Gell theorizes that actions and their subsequent effects in fact do not represent forms of individual will. Rather, they express the outcome of the complex and mediated practices of the agents and recipients who engage with them.[49] Thus the objects and rituals which will be interpreted through the lens of inculturation are not to be understood as the product or outcome of the church's move towards inculturation. They are to be understood as the operation through which inculturation manifests itself within the church. They are the *object* rather than the *product* of inculturation. For the purposes of my research, Gell's theory provides a conceptual framework for thinking of the ways in which power and agency are ingrained in and displayed through artwork and architecture during periods of communication, contestation or debate between First Nations and missionary groups.

Postcolonialism and the Analysis of Art

Since this thesis considers the nature of Native spirituality and the ways it has shaped and been shaped by the encroachment of other cultures, it is important to show the ways in which this study contributes to the field of postcolonialism. Conceptions of the world and of visual culture have been drastically shaped by processes of colonization and decolonization over the past century and new ways of conducting a postcolonial visual analysis have been proposed by scholars around the world. Alfred Gell, for example, states that one cannot distinguish between

[48] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 7-11.
[49] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, ix.

'West' and 'non-West' artifacts or systems when thinking about an anthropology of art as this is a point of view that does not take into account workings of all art but imposes a dichotomous categorization.[50] Gell asserts that art theories are only valuable and useful if they are applicable to *all* art, across all cultures and time periods.[51] Thus in this thesis I will not discuss the artistic styles of the images and objects as belonging to either a native or 'Western' versus a non-native or 'non-Western' category. My objective is not necessarily to formally analyze the aesthetic elements of works but rather to analyze the society and the context in which they emerged, their role within that context and how that role may have changed over time.

In order to incorporate a postcolonial perspective of indigenous art, it is useful to consider the ways in which recent scholars deal with notions of 'Primitive Art'. Sally Price gives a significant critique of the Western-produced generalized concept of 'Primitive' art from her book, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (1989). Price urges that this type of work be assessed by Western viewers following the same critical rubric through which Western art is evaluated. She declares that non-Western artists should be given the same level of credit and respect as Western artists, rather than being regarded as primitive beings of the earth simply portraying their 'instinctive' urges, or, alternately, submissive partisans of some strict ancestral or 'tribal' style of art. This widespread perception of 'Primitive' visual culture could have been how the early missionaries in Canada understood or felt about the indigenous visual motifs they encountered. Price affirms that every society has their own 'culture-specific aesthetic,' and that the primary mission of the anthropology of art is to characterize the distinctive elements of each culture's fundamental aesthetic in order for their artistic contributions to be accurately and appropriately

[50] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 1-5.
[51] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 1.

analyzed.[52] Gell, however, does not wish to redefine or debate existing theories of art, but instead wishes to articulate a theory of art consistently suitable to the framework of anthropology, according to the idea that anthropological theories are considered primarily as theories of *social* interactions.[53] As Anthony Forge points out in *Primitive Art & Society*, most studies on "primitive art" have demonstrated that often, objects are not depictions *of* anything, but rather they appear to be *about* relationships. Each object or tool, regardless of how simple or complex, displays features whose interrelationships carry information and meaning about the society which they arose from, above the object itself.[54] In my study, like Gell, I am interested in the *social* relationships surrounding spaces and objects – the relationships that people have with them and also how these spaces and objects influence social and cultural relationships.

During the early encounter between European settlers and the indigenous tribes, objects of indigenous visual culture were driven into unfortunate conditions through their discovery by Europe. Indigenous art was often extorted from its location and stripped of its social meaning to be placed under the cultural, political, economic, social and ideological rubric of the European cannon. This form of cultural imperialism has caused overwhelming corruption and devastation to indigenous heritage. In order to truly grasp this concept, I must begin by directing my focus, not on the indigenous art itself, but on the cultures that have developed and defined this aesthetic rather than attempting to fit it into the European dominated art historical cannon. [55] It is only by doing so that I may redirect the value placed on native art and use the knowledge and discoveries acquired to actually benefit Aboriginal culture rather than continuing to redefine an 'Other'. There must be an effort to produce a visual analysis that will elevate it from the realm of the

[52] Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 4.
[53] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 5.
[54] Anthony Forge, ed., *Primitve Art & Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), xviii.
[55] Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places.* 5.

‘Native’ or ‘primitive’ stereotype by showing how socially influential it can be, how it can be used to empower a culture and stimulate faith.

One of the features of the late twentieth century that has contributed to this form of cultural imperialism is the increasing ease with which society can now access all of world’s cultures. Many are fortunate to experience the accessibility, speed and inexpensiveness of modern traveling, which has made it possible to reach the most distant and secluded areas of human civilization. Our ability to explore the world has produced a false impression of ownership over it, yet from the Western viewpoint, this attitude is more often perceived as a “planetwide closeness, permeated with the flavour of Unity, Equality, and Brotherly Love.”[56] However, this misleading sense of ‘equality’ granted to non-Westerners, as well as the art they produce, does not reflect some natural desire for global fairness and egalitarianism, but rather is the outcome of apparent Western compassion and consideration. This formulation often manifests in the presentation of ‘Primitive Art’ within elite Western art institutions and museums, which are commonly publicized with comparable sentiments of pride and benevolence.[57] This rhetoric has allowed for a fabricated feeling of superiority by displaying non-European societies as the ‘Other’ and maintaining an emphasis on the division between cultures.

In Gell’s view, the task of ‘indigenous aesthetics’ is fundamentally aimed at clarifying, perfecting and developing the artistic perceptions of the Western art viewer by offering a cultural framework within which to incorporate non-Western art and artifacts into the structure and classifications of the cannon of Western visual culture. This, to Gell, does not represent an anthropological theory of art as it does not successfully address issues of production and

[56] Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places.* 23.
[57] Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places.* 25.

circulation.[58] The reason why this type of 'indigenous aesthetics' fails to address the anthropological problem is that it is predisposed to exemplify the 'aesthetic response' separately from the cultural context in which it came into being.[59] What is relevant here is not necessarily aesthetics or viewer receptivity but it is how the spaces and objects provoke action and how they are used in ritual.

It is pertinent that postcolonial scholars today distance themselves from what the West has held as standard conceptions of native art or primitive art (not that these two are transposable) in order to address the challenges that come with the examination of a visual culture to which they may not belong. Forge notes that it is uncertain the extent to which scholars may uncover the meanings tied to an object or image which was created by a different culture than their own, or produced in a distant time period. Recent anthropology would advocate that it is not possible for a member of one culture to fully uncover the meaning of an object originating from another, without experiencing substantial involvement with that culture.[60] As mentioned, this is why observation-based field-work is beneficial and often necessary, particularly from an anthropological perspective, in order to get a full sense of the ways images and objects are used within a society. There also seems to be no indication of the existence of any actual universal symbols in the visual arts or in fact throughout any other form of communication.[61] Thus, throughout my work, I emphasize specificity when discussing the particular meanings associated with objects, symbols and figures, and highlight issues involved with origin and authenticity. This approach is especially relevant in terms of the concept of Pan-Indianism, a movement aimed at uniting indigenous tribes across North America, yet often leads to problematic

[58] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 3.
[59] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 4.
[60] Forge, ed., *Primitve Art & Society*, xiv.
[61] Forge, ed., *Primitve Art & Society*, xiv.

generalizations and a homogenisation of all Aboriginal culture. It can also be seen as an outcome of a Western world-view that tends to dichotomize categories by developing and enforcing a notion of the 'Other'. It is critical to keep all of this in mind when producing an analysis of art in a postcolonial context.

Hybridity, Interstices, Negotiation and Ambivalence

With Gell's proposal for an alternative view of postcolonial visual cultures, I will turn to the ways in which cultures are constructed, the outcomes of cultural encounter and cultural synthesis. The concept of hybridity is particularly significant for the analysis of religious inculturation. For this notion, I rely on the work of Homi K. Bhabha, a significant figure in the field of postcolonialism. The task that he takes on in *The Location of Culture*, written in 1994, is one that involves a new conception of cultural identity, national affiliation and social agency.[62] Through the exploration of concepts such as interstice, difference, ambivalence and negotiation, he offers a functional and effective theory of cultural hybridity. For the purposes of this study, Bhabha's text is particularly useful in providing a new understanding of the strategies of resistance of the colonized groups toward the dominance of the colonizer.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha engages the reader in a political discourse on the postcolonial world, suggesting to imagine culture to be in the realm of the *beyond*. This notion suggests neither a distancing from the past, nor a new future. The present can no longer be visualized as a rupture or bondage with the past and the future. What is important now is to explore the moments and processes that are formed in the expression of cultural differences.[63] These in-between spaces, these *interstices*, which are the dislocation and intersection of spheres of difference (sometimes despite common histories), represent the arena where singular and

[62] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1994.
[63] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1.

collective experiences of nationhood, community interests and cultural values are negotiated. These instances of cultural difference may be in agreement or in conflict; they may challenge our understandings of tradition, modernity, development and progress.[64] It is the interstitial space of the indigenous communities in postcolonial nations that gives rise to such religious hybrid spaces as the churches I will examine. Evaluating the interstitial moments is a fundamental task to recognizing the operations through which inculturation occurs in the communities explored in this study. This is accomplished by understanding how the cultures have encountered one another and the outcome of this encounter.

Bhabha attempts to move away from the idea that identities of difference are fixed on binary oppositions or polarities, since these are concerned with objects. Objects originating from various places at various moments in history begin to be stereotypically associated with particular societies and specific identities. This eventually leads to false representation of an entire social or ethnic group even though these objects may have little or no real connection to that group or do not provide any valuable information about the culture. This understanding results in a type of homogenization of discourse because it identifies those objects as pre-given, therefore homogenizing the entire community by giving it an artificial unity. The boundary of those objects is where scholars must be concerned. This boundary is what he calls the interstices; the interstitial discourse of binary oppositions. Thus the interstitial space is a boundary between fixed categories (gender, race, religion, etc.) which allows for cultural hybridity that encourages difference without immediately posing a hierarchy.[65] What happens in this interstitial space is a disruption of the very dichotomy that was brought about. It is not merely a unity or synthesis of the two objects, but what results in the interstitial space is the hybrid moment. This hybrid

[64] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.
[65] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 4.

moment disrupts the distinction between the two but offers a type of abrupt spontaneous newness which comes from neither object.[66] For those living in hybrid communities of varied backgrounds, attempting to negotiate the interstitial space can allow them to come to terms with a new cultural identity.

One of Bhabha's fundamental aims is outlined in this passage:

> For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees. It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing* in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out.[67]

But this middle passage (or interstice) that characterises the 'new' internationalism is not a smooth transition but is a process of displacement and disjunction. A sense of 'national' culture arises from the perspective of the powerless minorities gaining voice, a concept which is applied to my research and the history of decolonization in Canada. This work will consider the consequences of a certain concept of nationalism which gradually allows indigenous culture to become representative of a European colonized nation. As I will elaborate in further chapters, this type of inappropriate cultural celebration is not a form of allocating or returning power to indigenous culture nor is it a means of granting voice or agency.

Bhabha's work revises the notion of human community and his conclusions alter the way international connections are made. [68] He states that cultural critics must attempt to fully explore the "unprecedented parts that haunt the historical present" and to illustrate how historical agency is transforming through the signifying process.[69] For example, Bhabha describes what he calls a sense of "unhomeliness;" a non-literal feeling of dislocation with one's concept of 'home' and

[66] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1 – 6.
[67] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5.
[68] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 6.
[69] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 12.

this is portrayed in many contemporary fictions. He also expounds the concept using the example of feminism's explorations and disruptions of notions of private vs. public space.[70] One can experience an unhomely moment when individuals begin to associate personal traumas to the wider dislocation and incoherence of political existence. These feelings and moments have influenced much of the art produced in moments of exchange or contestation, revealing the course of cultural negotiation. The social practices which occur throughout the course of inculturation and the practices and rituals in which these communities engage might be an unconscious attempt to distance themselves from this concept of unhomeliness by creating a space where they feel culturally at ease, accepted and in power.

The ways in which new cultural identities are constructed can be theorized through another one of Bhabha's concepts – that of *negotiation*. Negotiation can be understood as the process of coming to terms with one's own present cultural context through techniques of acceptance and rejection, creation and elimination. Processes of negotiation are what define hybrid cultural identities in a postcolonial discourse. Throughout *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha is continually interested in the relationship of binary oppositions. Rather than thinking of the interplay or the interaction between the two, one must think of it as a negotiation that challenges the very contents of the cultures themselves. Any discourse on culture is taking place in this third space which is the space of negotiation.[71] In this sense, negotiation is not a skill to be acquired but rather a cultural transition that is essential to a discussion of religious inculturation. The native tribes which the missionaries encountered eventually had to negotiate the terms of their existence during the turmoil of settlement and colonization.

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[70] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 10.
[71] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 28 – 33.

Bhabha also explores the way a stereotype functions as a false image in the postcolonial situation. He claims that you can only understand how that false image functions through *ambivalence*, another central term of post-colonial theory. Ambivalence is always conflicted; it is a tug and pull of desire and rejection between the colonized and the colonizer. There is an inherent contradiction in ambivalence that, according to Bhabha, is also inherent in post-colonial discourse. For him, cultural production is always most effective where it is ambivalent and this ambivalence is integral to his theory of hybridity.[72] I consider Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, negotiation, difference and ambivalence as a theoretical approach to understanding cultural exchanges between missionary forces in Canada and Aboriginal people. These ideas serve as a structural framework to organize my understanding and approach surrounding the negotiations that take place within the religious institutions I explore.

<u>Hybrid Art</u>

Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity brings me to the topic of hybrid art forms. The artwork produced in a society undergoing cultural change bears not only the qualities of its artist but also the context of its production: of the people who viewed and continue to view it and of the negotiations, differences and ambivalences that take place within this exchange. The subject of hybrid art is the main focus in the work of Jesuit specialist Gauvin Bailey. In *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773*, Bailey comprehensively explores the early non-European missions of the Society of Jesus throughout four separate geographical locations within Japan, China, India and Paraguay.[73] Bailey concentrates his investigation on the impact of European visual culture on the artistic practices of these societies and the mission art produced in response to the encounter. In a sense, this thesis explores the same subject as Bailey but within

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[72] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 66 – 83.

[73] Gauvin A. Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

different time periods and geographic regions. I employ similar methods and through my research, I have often encountered similar conclusions. Like Bailey, I wish to discover what attracted indigenous societies to Christianity in Canada, what persuaded them to adopt the image of Christ, and later, what influenced the non-Native communities to embrace traditional Native imagery and visual culture and incorporate it into their religious structures. (For the purposes of a thorough postcolonial analysis of mission art in Canada, a comprehensive project such as Bailey's should be conducted.)

What is particularly revealing in Bailey's work is the way in which the Jesuit missionaries carried over Renaissance and Baroque styles, approaches and techniques to help inspire Christian faith. To varying degrees, these artistic expressions subsequently influenced social and artistic traditions within the newly discovered regions they encountered. Despite the Jesuits' desire to convert indigenous people both spiritually and culturally, they proved to be surprisingly tolerant and even welcoming of foreign customs and lifestyles. They regularly adapted or modified their artistic practices in order to effectively connect with each individual society, exposing an unusual and complex example of cultural hybridization. Through his examination of this multifaceted paradigm of exchange, Bailey claims that the often misunderstood and unfamiliar artwork that flourished during the Jesuit missions in these areas became the first truly global art. Many works of art that I have encountered during my research trips also depict cultural symbols, figures or icons through the artistic and social worldview of another culture and thus reveal something truly insightful about the fusion of spiritual beliefs.

Bailey brings to light the significance of art that exists in the ambiguous space between two separate cultures or traditions and the fact that this type of work is frequently avoided or neglected by art historians. This is often due to scholars' reluctance to engage with the challenge

of art that is impossible to neatly classify within existing categories.[74] Bailey also underscores the common misconception that the Late Renaissance and Baroque are movements which remained geographically restricted within European borders and are thus an entirely Western occurrence. This conviction disregards the wider spread of these sixteenth and seventeenth century styles throughout Asia and Latin America, where they converged with the indigenous artistic cultures of that region while still retaining connections to European traditions. The extension of the Renaissance and Baroque beyond European limits took place largely through the efforts of an extremely committed Catholic missionary enterprise known as the Society of Jesus, or simply, the Jesuits. This highly active group facilitated the emergence of a remarkable artistic hybrid through the production, distribution and circulation of a variety of Catholic devotional artwork.[75] Bailey's study is of particular significance to this thesis as the Jesuits were one of the prevailing missionary forces in Canada and their influence will arise in later sections.

A major attribute of the Jesuit missions that Bailey exposes is that most art and architecture created for missionary purposes often involved the relatively agreeable and willing contribution of the indigenous communities. These works, which Bailey refers to as 'mission art', adopted many indigenous artistic styles and can therefore be described as hybrid. Mission art reveals the innovative possibilities of social confluence through its blending, ambiguity and overlap of the visual approaches and traditions of two different cultures; "art that is considerably more than the sum of its parts."[76] The accommodating nature of the Jesuit groups is apparent not only in the art produced during the missions but also within their social approach in general. Despite the popular yet problematic association of the Jesuit missionaries with a military organization, their function was not so much to act as God's faithful soldiers and conquer the

[74] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America,* 3.
[75] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 4.
[76] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 5.

non-Christian lands, than attempt to understand and mix in with the communities in a flexible and cooperative manner.[77] Like David Sweet, Bailey encourages us to view the exchanges between the missionary and the neophyte as "not simply an action but an *interaction* – not a 'conversion,'…but a 'conversation.'"[78]

This point of view is highly reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's use of the concept of cultural negotiation in its ability to disrupt our dichotomous understanding of notions such as colonizer/colonized, dominant/submissive or missionary/converted. The indigenous populations did not simply denounce their own spiritual beliefs and passively convert to a 'Europeanized Christianity', nor did the Jesuits enforce strict religious principles onto the lifestyles of the locals they encountered. Bailey examines how relationships of power between the two cultures reveal a much more complex situation than the reductive dichotomy of missionary/converted. This is precisely what I discovered throughout my research on the missionary settlements in Manitoulin, Winnipeg and Cape Breton. In no way do I suggest that there was a balanced power structure or that there wasn't significant cultural loss throughout colonization, but as I will demonstrate, the Jesuits often proved to be a useful tool for the preservation of indigenous land and heritage.

Bailey also discusses how influential images can be in overcoming language barriers. Just as Francis Xavier, leader of the first missionary of the Society of Jesus, used art as a mission tool, Jesuits all over Asia and Latin America considered art a vital instrument for conversion.[79] Before departing on their journeys, the Jesuits in Europe were immersed in the artistic innovations of the High Renaissance and had first-hand knowledge of the immense power of images as well as their capacity to be manipulated. Similar research on the visual cultures of

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[77] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 6.
[78] David Sweet, "The Ibero-American Frontier Mission in Native American History," in *The New Latin American History*,ed. Erick Langer and Robert H. Jackson. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 9.
[79] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 8.

indigenous societies, pre-European contact, also suggests that they too understood the strength and potential of images to shape minds and beliefs. At the same time, the power of these images could also be interpreted as threatening or promote a sense of resistance.[80] Art was prevalently employed as a way to engage with different cultures yet it was challenging for the Jesuits to use it to their benefit rather than their disadvantage. In the case of the Jesuit missions in Canada, it seems more emphatic the ways which Aboriginal people used their artistic traditions to engage with the Christians cultures that began settling on their lands rather than the other way around.

Bailey presents a primary explanation of hybrid art that takes into account the variety of cultures which encountered early modern European settlers. His second intention is to discover what it was about the Jesuits and Late Renaissance and Baroque art that appealed to the non-Europeans and explore the ways in which they responded to it. And lastly, he wishes to make sense of the ideological foundations of the entire missionary operation. He claims that, in the end, the Society of Jesus ultimately proved to be most successful in the realm of the cultural, not the spiritual.[81] This statement may not apply in exactly the same fashion for the Jesuits who were sent on missions throughout Canada as those in Asia and Latin America, however, it is evident that the Jesuit influence spread much further than simply the introduction of Christianity. The many Christian communities on Native reservations in Canada today attests to the lasting influence of the Jesuits and other missionary groups throughout the country. Of course the religion that they experience and practice is not the same version of Christianity that one might encounter in a non-Native setting. It reflects the specific cultural and spiritual needs of each particular community, in accord with their own indigenous heritage, traditions and worldview.

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[80] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 9.
[81] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 13.

Bailey systematically rejects the culturally suppressing connotations of the Jesuits in favor of a more humanist, even visionary outlook, and one which typifies the group as a fascinating example of hybridization. One of the reasons for this open-minded attitude was a purely practical motivation; the Jesuits generally understood that it was much less problematic to incorporate existing practices than to introduce new ones.[82] However, it is important to note that not all indigenous populations embraced the Jesuits, neither did they accept Christianity uniformly across different territories. In many cases, there is clear evidence of active resistance among the locals when introduced to the new religion, yet the Jesuits tended to cope with this hostility by altering their approach to suit the needs and lifestyles of the neophytes.[83] Regardless of the inconsistency of the outcome of these interactions, Bailey emphasizes the importance of taking into account both sides of this exchange and understanding the events through the relations of power at play.

One illuminating reality of these encounters that Bailey examines is the fact that, from the perspective of the 'encountered', the Jesuit missions were regarded as much more local events, incorporating small groups of people. The Jesuits were probably also not the first Europeans that the indigenous societies would have met, with travellers exploring regions in Asia and Latin America prior to the journeys of the missionaries. Therefore it is important to conceptualize the projects of the Jesuits more locally as well. Many tend to view these missions quite broadly as the meeting of two worlds, generalizing the events into vast abstractions, such as the 'Aztec Empire' encountering 'Europe'. The tendency to conflate a spiritual acceptance of Christianity with an acceptance of European authority and superiority over their native land is also a highly problematic outcome of this mentality. Bailey believes that once Christianity was

[82] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 17.
[83] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 18.

taken up by the indigenous societies, it could no longer be considered an expression of 'European' culture, as it implemented elements of indigenous culture in a variety of ways.[84] The result was not a European victory but a fusion of two separate spiritual customs and beliefs: a religious hybrid. As with most cases in Canada, what the Aboriginals and Europeans experienced during settlement was not an equal and balanced blending of traditions but a creation of something entirely new and different, rooted in the interstitial moment of encounter.

Bailey explores the question of *motive,* an essential element one must consider in order to fully grasp the meaning of this cultural convergence. Throughout his investigations within the four regions of Japan, China, India and Paraguay, he came upon much clash and resistance, but he also discovered harmonious relationships built between the Jesuits and non-Europeans. Individuals from both sides have shown a willingness to explore the unknown and experience the culture of the 'Other'.[85] Bailey presents the history of Jesuit missions in a radical new way, allowing readers to grasp the hybrid nature of not only the missionary enterprise but of European colonialism at large, which can be applied to their missions in North America as well. Like Bailey, I am interested in aspects that attracted indigenous societies to Christianity in Canada, what persuaded them to adopt the image of Christ, and later, what influenced the non-native communities to embrace traditional Native imagery and visual culture and incorporate it into their religious structures.

Native Art

It is essential for this study to theorize the art arising from the intersection between two cultures. But it is also useful to take a step back and consider the nature of contemporary Native art itself, indigenous artists' conception of their own position within the contemporary art world

[84] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 20.
[85] Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America*, 184.

and how this can relate to their understanding of Christianity or spirituality more generally. Allan Ryan specializes in contemporary Aboriginal art and his works bridges his interests in postmodern theory, postcolonial theory, comparative indigenous minorities, cultural representation in museums, and the field of humour studies. Many of these interests are incorporated in his book, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (1999).[86] In *The Trickster Shift*, Ryan investigates the powerful influence of the *Trickster* figure and its deep involvement in the cultural sensibility of indigneous life. The Trickster is characterized by a fundamentally comic humour and, as Ryan demonstrates, he proves to be a powerful presence in the work of notable contemporary Aboriginal artists. His humorous nature is characterized by a sense of playful mockery, enlightening associations and witty social commentary.[87] The author draws on a vast array of trickster interpretations by artists, curators, historians, writers and actors to help build our understanding of his impact on Aboriginal culture and juxtaposes them with his own commentary. I am particularly interested in the concept of the trickster in its ability to reveal the great cultural self-awareness of indigenous people and to counteract views of their passivity.

The concept of *irony* is a crucial component to understanding the trickster figure and its position as a role model and hero. But it is also, Ryan argues, crucial to understanding Aboriginal culture at large and especially contemporary Aboriginal artistic traditions. What the function of irony accomplishes is that it brings together highly distinct contraries into one single formation so that the opposites seem to suddenly belong as one.[88] This understanding of irony is particularly interesting to me because it is relatable to Homi K. Bhabha's description of

[86] Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art,* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999.
[87] Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), xi.
[88] Ryan, The Trickster Shift, 8.

interstitial spaces and the interstitial discourse of binary oppositions. Irony seems to exist within this interstitial space because it allows for a disruption of normative dichotomies and binary opposites. Thus the Trickster can be seen as moving through this space by employing irony as a strategic approach to interrupt the rigidity of closed systems.[89] The works which Ryan examines indicate that Aboriginal people recognize the power and impact that images and objects can have by displaying subtle and ambiguous symbols and messages about contemporary indigneous life. Keeping in mind the elusiveness of the native art and architecture I encounter in this thesis and the underlying meanings they may carry will allow me to better understand how these works are a driving force behind the advancement of inculturation. Allan Ryan might see this cultural expression of hybrid art forms as the work of the Trickster, ironically commenting the conditions of national and spiritual identity.

Throughout *The Trickster Shift*, the character of the trickster is explored through the interpretations of many different scholars and artists who have used the figure as a way of understanding indigenous artistic practice and spiritual life. For example Thomson Highway, a renowned Cree playwright, has described the complexities of the relationship between the trickster and the Aboriginal community, by relating him to the figure of Jesus. He explains that, just as Jesus represents an absolutely central character within Christian theology, the trickster is also an essential part of Native mythology who "essentially straddles the consciousness of Man and God."[90] Like Jesus, he is a spiritually instructional figure that translates the reality of our existence from the Great Spirit. Highway asserts that the function of the artist is similar to that of a priest in that they are both essentially exploring the spiritual life and representing or professing

[89] Ryan, The Trickster Shift, 12.
[90] Thomson Highway: Native Voice. Interview by Phyllis Wilson. Thomson, MB: Native Communications, 1988.

their interpretation and overall comprehension of the nature of this life.[91] Within my research, I am interested in discovering elements of Christianity which may have attracted the Aboriginal community to accept the new religion and allowed them to understand Christian symbols through their own cultural and spiritual lens. The parallels between artist and priest as well as between Jesus and the trickster described by Highway are an excellent example of the ability of Aboriginal artists to take Christian icons and manipulate them to correspond to their own worldview.

The cultural commentary expressed in *The Trickster Shift* is not simply a critique of Western dominance, a glorification of indigenous people and grief over lost traditions and lifestyles. It playfully explores the ambiguity of the complex position of indigenous people within our increasingly globalized world. It often pokes fun at not only the ways in which they are often categorized and stereotyped but also their own successes and failures at coping with their changing environment. Their work often reveals how they are seen as the 'Other' through the Western perspective yet how they also possess their own understanding of the 'Other' in regards to those outside of their community. The figure of the trickster allows Aboriginal artists to disrupt the common perception of the Other in order to uncover the absurdity of conventional systems of belief that have come to oppress them. This strategy comes into play as hybrid cultures maneuver through the challenges, questions and uncertainties faced in the process of inculturation.

The *Trickster Shift* is a valuable text for the development of my visual analysis as it has allowed me to see the images as not simple undisguised depictions of figures, scenes or symbols. Many of the religious images and practices carry highly complex and layered forms of social commentary on the hybridization of spirituality or how outside cultures view indigenous

[91] Ryan, The Trickster Shift, 3.

populations. Even within the processes of inculturation that arise in hybrid rituals and image, the trickster emerging with clever ambiguity because these objects are not dealing with simple and plain religious symbols and traditions. Even though it may seem that Christianity is the force driving these religious spaces (how they look and what goes on within their walls), as I will show the spaces are often a way in which Aboriginals are able to preserve elements of their spiritual culture and unite as a community.

Inculturation

I shall now explore the concept of *inculturation* and its significance within twentieth century religions. Throughout this thesis, the term inculturation is used to describe the efforts of one culture to communicate their religious message to another in such a way that fuses and blends the two religious traditions without weakening or diluting the essence of either. It is a form of spiritual hybridity that has been recently adopted by the Christian church, particularly in missionary churches across the world. For decades, post-colonial scholars and theologians have debated what constitutes effective and suitable forms of inculturation. In his article "Inculturation and Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?" Peter Schineller affirms the necessity for inculturation in modern Christian missionary approaches. He rejects the term "syncretism," insisting that it has an inherently disparaging, derogatory, and belittling effect because it implies borrowing features of a different religion without critically assessing them through the religious models and conventions of Christianity. He warns that this form of inculturation fundamentally weakens the integrity of the Christian doctrine.[92]

Theresa Smith points out the strong objection, particularly on the part of non-Christian natives, toward notions of syncretism that implement an "Indianized" Christianity. She believes

[92] Peter Schineller, "Inculturation and Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* April (1992): 50-53.

that Schineller's explanation is in fact an inadequate form of inculturation as it represents a "top-down" approach, in which church leaders evaluate the qualities and values of certain attributes of native cultures according to their own social and anthropological criteria.[93] Aboriginal theologians such as George Tinker are more likely to judge Christianity through the criteria of an indigenous world-view, showing a concern for the loss of their own cultural integrity rather than a desire to preserve the true principal of the Christian spirit. Tinker asserts that

> Today there can be no genuine American Indian theology that does not take our indigenous traditions seriously. This means, of course, that our reading of the gospel and our understanding of faithfulness will represent a radical disjuncture from the theologies and histories of the Western churches of Europe and America as we pay attention to our stories and memories instead of to theirs.[94]

As Gell and Bhabha suggested, scholars must understand the cultural context of the community before embarking on visual and textual analysis of the subject in question. The approach I have taken in my field-work research is one which attempts to bring to light the actual religious experiences of those I encountered through interviews and participation in religious masses and ceremonies. Due to the space and time limitations of this research, this thesis is of course far from comprehensive and does not fully take into account the wide range of people and the varying experiences they share within the community. However, I believe this experience-based approach generates a more perceptive insight into what really happens in these inculturated spaces and from where these practices and traditions may have arisen.

Although by now most disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology, theology, visual culture and art history have seriously contemplated the nature of inculturation within their respective fields, it has taken much longer for twentieth century religions to incorporate the

[93] Theresa S. Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception: Inculturation and Identity among the Anishnaabeg of Manitoulin Island," *American Indian Quarterly* 20 (1996): 517.
[94] George Tinker, "Spirituality, Native American Personhood, Sovereignty and Solidarity," *The Ecumenical Review* 44:3 (1992), 319.

concept of inculturation into theory and practice. *The Sacred Universe: Earth, Spirituality, and Religion in the 21st Century*, written by cultural historian, Catholic priest and ecotheologian, Thomas Berry, presents a compelling insight into the major questions and concerns of 21st century religions. It is a collection of essays compiled over four decades that reveal Berry's early recognition of the necessity of interreligious communication and cross-religious examinations. The author interweaves his analysis of modern religion and spirituality with the epidemic devastation of our Earth's ecosystems and the resulting extinction of species, directing the readers' concerns to the fate of our world's future generations. Through this study of cosmology and ecology, he prophetically reconciles the physical and the metaphysical, and in doing so, creates a space for religions to deal with the challenges of modernity. Barry argues that further interaction between different religions could allow them to better face the Earth's current environmental dilemmas. This topic has particular resonance to many indigneous groups not only because of their obvious concern for issues involving the loss of land but also because of their deep-seated relationship with Mother Nature and their spiritual connection to the earth.

The principal focus of Berry's argument centers on the problem of the "earthly infrahistorical" and the "divine transhistorical" nature of the order of the universe.[95] He eloquently states: "Our problem then, is to convert religion to the world rather than convert the world to religion."[96] This meaningful passage is reminiscent of Gauvin Bailey's discussion of the Jesuits' innovative attitude towards the societies they encountered during their missions to evangelize and is particularly illuminating to the ambitions of the churches I explore in this text. These spaces, which I consider to be characterized by religious hybridity, can represent this desire to engage with the challenges and changes of modernity that surround them by

[95] Berry, *The Sacred Universe*, 11.
[96] Berry, *The Sacred Universe*, 12.

'converting' their conception of religion. The innovativeness of this religious attitude does not imply a complete rejection of religious tradition. The innovation rather is in the manipulation of the elements of its tradition to connect more deeply with its surroundings.

Barry defines the 'spirituality of the Earth' as the spiritual attribute of the planet itself rather than a spiritual quality of humans that focuses on Earth. He makes the reader aware that to ignore the Earth's spiritual element is the sign of a significant loss of spiritual awareness. This kind of spiritual deficiency is evident in the early European Americans' failure to recognize the mystical dimension of the indigenous peoples' spirituality and their sacred relationship with nature and the land. The inability of the Christian religion to understand the spiritual facet of the Earth is considerably problematic. Evidently this lack of spiritual awareness has resulted in aggression, hostility and tragic violence towards the Aboriginal populations in North America as well as towards the land itself, leading to consequences of incalculable devastation.[97] The author does concede the weaknesses of the attitudes and approaches of various religions today. Nevertheless, he offers an outlook which religions can adopt to better understand their position in modernity and endure within this increasingly secular world which involves redefining their systems of representation to broaden their embrace.[98] This is precisely what I see happening within the communities I am about to explore in the next three chapters – with the Ojibwa people on Manitoulin Island, the Métis in Winnipeg and the Mi'kmaq populations in Cape Breton.

When I approach the topic of inculturation I consider successful forms of religious inculturation to involve a balanced and harmonized fusion of two spiritual traditions which respects the histories, practices and needs of one another. Each attempts to incorporate elements of the other religion that will complement their own beliefs and stimulate their faith while

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[97] Berry, *The Sacred Universe*, 69.
[98] Berry, *The Sacred Universe*, xii.

learning from the attributes that are new to them or that they may have discarded in the past. As I have discovered, the members of these communities experience and practice their faith in different ways, utilizing what they value and disregarding elements they may not support or believe in. My aim is to uncover how this blending of cultures is possible and to reveal when the power structures involved become unbalanced.

CHAPTER 2: ANISHNAABEG FIRST NATIONS OF MANITOULIN ISLAND AND THE CHURCH OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The following chapters will focus on an evaluation of particular Aboriginal communities in Canada that possess elements indicative of inculturation through the art nexus of that environment. Each community has its own distinct network of social connections encompassing the objects, people and spaces within it which builds a unique understanding of the hybridity of that culture and the ways in which inculturation is experienced there. Thus the churches and the objects within the church are an index of the social formation of the community, of its agency in terms of change, progression and adaptation. By combining a history of missionary settlement and the establishment of the church with what is happening today, my analysis will show how the church space moves through time and cultivates the cultural exchange of the social groups which make up that community.

Evaluating Inculturation at the Church of Immaculate Conception

I begin this analysis by focusing on the Church of Immaculate Conception (Figure 1) in West Bay on Manitoulin Island, a Jesuit missionary church rebuilt in 1971 after a propane explosion. The church expresses a fusion between Christianity and the traditional indigenous spirituality of the Anishnaabeg[99] societies that populate the region. The space visibly demonstrates an embodiment of the efforts towards inculturation at play in the art nexus, the web of social networks in which the church and its history are grounded. Immaculate Conception is a church with a troubled missionary history that has emerged through the efforts of the community and the congregation to produce an inculturated space of spiritual and social significance. It is important

[99] Anishnaabeg or Anishinabek refers to a group aboriginal peoples from the Algonquin regions of Canada. They are a sect of Odawa, Ojibwe or Pottowatomi tribes. Throughout this paper, the terms 'aboriginal,' 'Native,' and 'Indian' are used to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada who occupied the land prior to colonial settlement, as well as their descendants. 'First Nations' has become a preferred self-labelled term among most scholars and is widely used to highlight a separate identity and a status of inherent sovereignty. Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), xi.

to keep in mind that my subject of analysis is not simply the objects and the spaces which contain them, but the ways in which these spaces and objects stimulate the faith of its community and how they in turn evoke ritual action. Though the community at West Bay is small, the issues and discussions that surface through this hybrid Church in West Bay have meaningful implications which exceed the scope of Manitoulin Island.

An uncritical reading of this space might suggest that it represents a successful embodiment of the concept of religious inculturation. However, as mentioned, successful inculturation is an exceedingly challenging thing to achieve as every community has a different set of needs, concerns and problems. As this is a topic seldom explored, it is still not clear what are appropriate and efficient forms of inculturation, how it benefits Aboriginal groups or where and when it can become culturally detrimental. Additionally adding to the complexity of inculturation is that the solution to these issues is different for every community and may also be different for every individual in that community. As I will demonstrate, Immaculate Conception may not expose a unanimous solution to the problem of inculturation and does not necessarily give any clear answers to these questions. It does, however, provide an indication of what is going on in the art nexus of that community; the structure, manifestation and transformation of a new developing consciousness of the people of West Bay at the time of its construction.[100] Working from a post-colonial perspective, I will examine the encounter between the Jesuits and the Anishnaabeg and what the progression of missionary ideology reveals about the relationship between the 'missionary' and the 'missionized.' I will demonstrate how the construction of the space, its introduction into and development through the objects, spaces and people is an index of that community's experience with religious inculturation.

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[100] Theresa S. Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception: Inculturation and Identity among the Anishnaabeg of Manitoulin Island," *American Indian Quarterly* 20 (1996): 524-525.

The Early Jesuit Missionary Approach on Manitoulin: Dominance vs. Tolerance

I will begin by illustrating a fragment of the early Jesuit missionaries approach towards evangelizing the gospel to indigenous populations they encountered Canada. The missionary work of Paul Le Jeune, one of the first French Jesuit missionaries in Canada, was recorded through personal accounts and reports of his encounter with the Algonquian Indians of New France in the seventeenth century. These documents, commonly known as the *Jesuit Relations*, reveal significant features of the early Catholic missionary approach and also set the tone for the behaviour of following generations of Jesuit missionaries in Canada. Le Jeune strongly instigated the use of fear as an effective conversion tool, proclaiming that "fear is the forerunner of faith."[101] In a report on the success of their efforts, Le Jeune wrote that "The dread of punishment is beginning to gain such an ascendancy over their minds that, although they do not soon amend, yet they are little by little giving up their evil customs."[102] During missionary settlement in areas all over North America, tools, objects, crafts, even games were often removed from the indigneous people by the Jesuits if they believed that these objects or practices were pagan forms of idolatry or spiritual worship that was an abomination to the Church. These included items such as medicine bundles containing plants and herbs with which the Jesuits were unfamiliar, and which were used for physical and spiritual cleansing. Another example is the game of waltes (Figure 23), popular in the east coast, a traditional Mi'kmaq dice game that was taken away by the government because they believed shamans were using the game to cast bad spirits and evil spells.[103] These are specific examples of the ways in which the missionaries threatened the Aboriginals and took away their traditions, often so successfully that there is no

[101] R. G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit relations and allied documents travels and explorations of the Jesuit missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* (Cleveland: Pagent Book Company, 1898), 11: 89.
[102] Thwaites, *The Jesuit relations and allied documents*, 11: 215.
[103] Personal Communication – Interview with Walter Denny, December, 2013.

evidence of their existence today. In terms of the concept of fear and threat, Le Jeune could also have been implying the fear of his own people: fear of demons and evil spirits - as a way to motivate the missionaries to be more forceful in their approach.

The words of Jesuits such as Le Jeune reveal the intolerant attitude of early Christian missionaries towards indigenous cultures and the complete misinterpretation of their sacred practices. The early evangelists often saw the indigenous peoples' devotion to Mother Nature as detrimental to their true and full conversion to Christianity. Many of the rituals performed by Aboriginals reflected a physical worship of nature and the land they inhabited. For Jesuits like Le Jeune, these spiritual practices would have likely been considered a form of idolatry since they fundamentally opposed the admonition of the first commandment, 'thou shalt have no other gods before me'. Thus their initial approach does not seem to stimulate inculturation as it neglects the values, traditions, and continuity of indigenous culture.

Although many of the Jesuits' strategies involved taking away the Aboriginal people's cultural traditions and practices such as games, basket weaving and medicine bundles,[104] there *is* evidence found in other archival records, namely written records, that demonstrate a focus on effective communication. Many documents indicate colonizing behaviour and practices that seem to have been more supportive of the concept of inculturation, particularly their success in learning the indigenous language. Seventeenth century Jesuits in New France believed that a direct and efficient communication was the key to successfully spreading the gospel and converting the Natives to Christianity.[105] Once they attained functional communication and were able to adequately converse with the Aboriginals, they began to integrate many indigneous cultural notions and values into missionary teaching with as little alteration and misinterpretation

[104] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 523.
[105] John Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity," *Ethnohistory* 39 (1992): 478.

as possible.[106] This was particularly prominent in the Huron mission field. The Jesuits in this area were serious about learning as much as they could about indigenous customs and lifestyles through extensive field and language research. They reported their findings, applied their strategies to other areas they traveled to and also spread the word to other Jesuit missions across New France and thus their approach became significantly influential.[107] Although the objective of this strategy may seem to be social blending in a non-threatening way, and even one which is interested in the preservation of the indigenous languages, the missionaries had other agendas and reasons for learning their language outside of religious conversion.

Le Jeune and his followers felt that it was not only the spiritual practices of the Indians that had to be altered, but their entire way of life. Like other Jesuits around the Great Lakes, they also believed that they could easily get their message across by learning various Aboriginal languages and that this would encourage a cultural assimilation. It was only by learning Aboriginal languages that they could establish educational systems and the Jesuits believed that this would improve the living conditions of the indigenous peoples.[108] Yet their attempts at conversion were only nominally effective. Le Jeune observed that, "The savages agree very readily with what you say but they do not, for all that, cease to act upon their own ideas."[109] Thus the communities here, as is common in many other individual settlement histories throughout Canada,[110] had visible economic and political reasons to follow the Jesuit's teaching and take up Christian practices in the face of this religious invasion, but they did not necessarily do so in the

[106] Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-American Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), 50-51.
[107] Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage," 478.
[108] Michael Stogre, *That The World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights* (Quebec: Éditions Paulines, 1992), 233.
[109] Thwaites, *The Jesuit relations and allied documents*, 5: 151.
[110] See following chapters: Chapter 2: section titled, "Advantages of Religious Conversion," and Chapter 3: sections titled, "Britain vs. France: The Mi'kmaq Alliance to Catholicism," "Marginality of the Mi'kmaq Throughout the 19th Century: Assimilation or Extinction?," and "Partnership with Catholic Priests: Reliance on Catholicism Throughout Encroachment."

ways the Jesuits expected. They may have embraced certain aspects of the Christian religion yet they consistently refused to fully abandon their own rituals. The Algonquian consciousness, while considerably affected by the attack on their own spirituality, still allowed space for the persistence of tradition. The art nexus of that society contained resilient networks of continuity that allowed for many practices of traditional Algonquian life to persist through time.

On Manitoulin Island, the function of missionary work has focused on implementing Christianity, which, in the process, has frequently led to a rejection of the validity and sacredness of the Anishnaabeg's spiritual beliefs and practices. As in many regions throughout Canada, records of the initial Jesuit encounters on Manitoulin Island in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicate that they too employed a rather austere approach to preaching the Gospel. And like the Jesuits that arrived in Canada three centuries earlier, this often meant implementing fear through warnings of eternal damnation. Yet the endurance of the Anishnaabeg traditional life-worlds persisted all along and the Jesuits eventually realized that they were unsuccessful in eliminating what they believed to be the "evil customs" of the Aboriginals.[111]

This is evident in the accounts many Anishnaabeg and Ojibwe elders, as well as members of the traditional medicine society, or midewewin of Manitoulin. Kitty Bell is a midewewin elder and wife of Anishnaabeg artist Leland Bell who contributed to the artwork at the Church of Immaculate Conception. In an interview with Theresa Smith, Kitty recounts, "It was always there. Now the people are admitting 'yes, we gave up a lot.' And it was always taught from the pulpit. 'Don't go that way, that fire will surely lead you to hell.' They used these scare tactics. But it was always there, people always used these medicines."[112] From the point of view of some individuals, this particular moment in time does not seem to reflect any indication of an

[111] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 515.
[112] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 516. (Personal Communication, July, 1988.)

egalitarian power structure. Although individual memories such as Kitty's suggest a forceful and imposing strategy of inculturation, if I take a closer look at Manitoulin Island specifically, another outlook is offered which tells a different story.

Wikwemikong and the Growing Faith of the Anishnaabeg People

Much of the information available concerning the history of missionary activity on Manitoulin Island downplays the tensions and debates, avoiding the problematic elements of Jesuit settlement. The cover webpage for the Church of Immaculate Conception, which gives a brief historical outline of the church, emphasizes the involvement of the Aboriginal community in shaping the history of the church. It begins by describing the context of the island prior to the establishment of the Mission of West Bay. The earliest inhabitants of Manitoulin Island were a combination of Odawa, Potawatomie and Ojibwe tribes that first came there in the late seventeenth century to explore the land, to hunt and fish and also, to pray. For these new arrivals, the island became known as the home of Kitche Manitou, present in the water, fire, rock and winds. They believe that the Great Spirit of Kitche Manitou offered this land to the people so they could build a community there. For most of these early ancestors who brought with them the spiritual traditions of Wendat or Huron mythology, the faith in Christ was inherent in the Great Spirit, to whom they prayed and gave thanks for the land.[113] This account suggests that Christ was present in the lives of these people even before they were introduced to Christianity through the Jesuit missionaries. Non-Christian traditionalists would likely reject this description. Although historically, on Manitoulin, there may not seem to be much evidence of major rejection of Catholicism, this information seems to be imposing an idea of idyllic inculturation into a

[113] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en.

history of colonial encounter that was not so voluntarily cooperative in terms of religious conversion.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a significant population living in Wikwemikong, roughly fifty kilometres east of West Bay. The first official mission on Manitoulin was founded at Wikwemikong in 1844 and missionary activity soon began to expand to other areas of the island.[114] In 1846, a few families moved from Wikwemikong to West Bay and the first community at West Bay was established. The group of inhabitants constructed a school house as well as a provisional bark church. The school was also used as a residence for the priest who came to visit from Wikwemikong. This was a small Catholic society led by a young catechist, trained by Father Chone, who served as both teacher and gospel preacher. When Father Hanipaux came to West Bay in 1848, he recorded ninety-six residents who were apparently "all Catholics and quite fervent in their faith."[115]

In 1854 a new Catholic priest, Father Fremiot, came to spend the winter in West Bay and formally dedicated the church to the immaculate conception of Mary, thus bestowing the name which the church still bears today. Fr. Fremiot was known for his passionate approach to evangelism, expressed great fervor towards the people, and felt successful in the apostolic duties he carried out. He introduced communion to the people in an attempt to spiritually unite the differing backgrounds of the community. The first official Mission of West Bay was formed in 1860. The village's primary spiritual leader at this time was Louis Debassige, an Anishnaabeg chief who acted as a father figure, regarding the people as his children. On Sundays, he

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[114] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 515.
[115] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en. (Fr. J. Pawuin, s.j.)

assembled the people for instruction and for group prayer.[116] Thus far, no records indicate that the indigenous population at West Bay was in major contestation with the Catholic priests and missionaries who lived and worked there. Yet the accounts also do not imply that their Christian motivations necessarily bought about a denial of traditional Aboriginal spirituality. Although conflicts over land ownership that were beginning to emerge on Manitoulin Island, may have led to a larger sense of cultural division in the church.

In the mid-1800s Manitoulin Island was in the process of breaking down into small territories or reserves through land treaties but the indigenous tribes at Wikwemikong resisted the efforts of land ownership by the government of Upper Canada. The Aboriginals of Wikwemikong were so successful in their resistance that it remains the only unceded First Nations territory in Canada. West Bay, recognized as the centre of the Island, also wished to challenge the government land claims. During a significant meeting on June 22, 1861, three local chiefs, Kinojameg Jr., Wakegijik and Ominakamamigo, were appointed to lead the efforts of resistance. Unfortunately the territory of West Bay was eventually exempted.[117] However, conflicts over land control did not seem to directly influence the missionary activities and as the population at West Bay grew so did the religious community. Indian Affairs reports mention that the Ojibwe Indians who inhabited the West Bay region were all Catholics. Records from the late nineteenth century describe their "enthusiasm" in building new churches and schoolhouses and allude to their strong dedication to the Catholic faith.[118] Perhaps their "enthusiasm" to work cooperatively with the missionaries did not simply reflect their "dedication" to Catholicism but their realization that the integrity of their own beliefs systems could be preserved within

[116] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en. Accessed March 15, 2013.
[117] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en. Accessed March 15, 2013.
[118] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en. Accessed March 15, 2013 (Indian Affairs)

Catholicism. It is possible that the Jesuits' style of missionizing was fruitful not only in terms of spiritual conversion but that taking on the practices of this new faith had political, social and cultural benefits for the indigenous societies as well. The new churches they were helping the missionaries build could have been viewed as a structured space which systematically brought them together as a community: a new social and political formation.

Hybrid Features of Immaculate Conception

While considering how the church works as a social agent in the art nexus of the community, it is important to recognize that spaces are coexistent with identity and that the hybridity of the spaces and objects are an index of inculturation. Hybrid features are not simply the product of inculturation or what originates from the desire of the church to become inculturated, but are components that are actively involved in the development of inculturation and are constitutive of the art nexus. This means they have their own social agency in the community, in the same way as the individuals of that community can express personal, social and political agency. The church is a space which cultivates that exchange and influences the hybrid practices and rituals taking place within it.

Since its reconstruction in 1971, Immaculate Conception has incorporated elements of Anishnaabeg tradition in its architecture, visual ornamentation and religious services. This new apparently "syncretic" missionary approach has been adopted by Church officials and pastors all over Manitoulin at places such as St. Paul's (Figure 3) in Wikwemikong, Manitowaning (1849) and St. Andrew's ("Old Sheg") in Sheguiandah First Nations (1886, Figure 4). However, while these structures share certain attributes, they do not visually articulate the same level of cultural hybridity that is expressed most drastically in West Bay at the Church of Immaculate

Conception.[119] The obvious celebration of Aboriginal themes and symbols at Immaculate Conception seems to reflect an effort on the part of the Church to fuse the spiritualties of its congregation. Yet it has generated reactions that are both curious and illuminating but at the same time often puzzling and difficult for both Anishnaabeg and non-Native practitioners to come to terms with. For authors such as Theresa Smith, Immaculate Conception can be understood as a space that fosters the continuous discussion and negotiation surrounding the problematic co-existence of two.[120] There are certain problems that must be considered when investigating this complex and highly sensitive discussion in order to uncover the messages being conveyed through the space. One is the question of whether the attempt to create hybrid religious organizations within this framework is an appropriate and effective solution to resolve past traumas and propose a better resolution to the effects of colonization. Or is this building simply an example of the incongruous cultural appropriation of one symbolic structure to serve the aims of another?

The original missionary church that was established in West Bay at the location of Immaculate Conception was built in 1910. This structure as well as the immediate surrounding environment was completely destroyed after a propane explosion on February 27, 1971. The only remaining elements include the damaged church bell (Figure 5) and statue of the Virgin Mary (Figure 6), as well as some gravestones from early settlers (Figure 7). The bell and Virgin Mary statue were placed on display in the garden circling the church, and can still be seen there today functioning as surviving artifacts of the lost church.[121] They flowed through the art nexus of the church history to remain as comparative elements to the new artifacts which were about to

[119] Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, *Canadian Churches: An Architectural History* (Buffalo, New York: Firefly Books Ltd., 2007), 220-221.
[120] Smith, “The Church of Immaculate Conception,” 518.
[121] Smith, “The Church of Immaculate Conception,” 518.

be incorporated. The accident was a devastating tragedy for the locals who relied on the church not only for its religious services but also as a space for community gatherings and events, a space that brought the people together.[122] The congregation recognized that the church was a culturally significant space that generated participation and social involvement. Thus it is no surprise that it became a priority for them to reinstate its presence as soon as possible.

The parish priest at the time was Father Michael Murray, who had only been serving the Church for six months before the incident. When Fr. Murray arrived at the scene the next day, he set out to rebuild the church right away in order to renew this structure that many felt was integral to West Bay's culture and history. The parishioners also relied on the space, just as they relied on the priest, although this did not mean that everyone was in complete agreement on the way in which the new church was going to be built.[123] Father Murray recalls the arduous and challenging project of rebuilding the church and the extensive time involved in coming to decisions regarding its new design. In a 1993 interview, he explains:

> I had no experience or preconceived thoughts or notions about [the] Church. When it burned down, all of a sudden we were faced with a community and no building - what do we do? It was a learning process as much for me as for the people. Some people said, let's rebuild it exactly the way it was. We were used to it, people were married, buried, baptized there and we know the feel of what that place had been in the past.[124]

In his discussion of the group dynamics, Fr. Murray mentions how they appointed North Bay architect, Manfred May, to initially create a design for a "Native" church in the shape of a tepee. The tepee form, however, is not a conventional Anishnaabeg symbol and members of the parish objected to the initial plan, drawing attention to its disconcerting resemblance to the cone-like structures seen erected by the highway department which hold salt and gravel for road

[122] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en. Accessed March 15, 2013.
[123] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "A brief history of our parish of M'Chigeeng." Accessed March 15, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/index.html/en. Accessed March 15, 2013.
[124] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 518. (Personal Communication, August, 1993.)

maintenance in the winter. The committee rejected this design and began to research books on church architecture as well as their own traditional Anishnaabeg structures, notably the sweat lodge and midewewin lodge, the shaking tent, the wigwam and particularly the powwow arbour (Figure 8). Within these structures, the shape of the circle is pervasive. In Anishnaaabeg customs, as it is in many other North American indigenous traditions, the form of the circle arises not only within architecture and visual symbols but also in the sacred rituals that are performed in these areas. Exploring memory and tradition as the source of the new design as well as a desire to revive forgotten customs, the parishioners integrated what Fr. Murray perceived as three key requirements. For them, it was essential that the Church functions as a "place in which the circle of healing could be remade, a place in which shelter could be sought and a place of prospect."[125] From this information, I can gather that the design of this structure visually reflects what the congregation felt was necessary not only for the Church but for the larger community at the time of its construction. The act of rebuilding the church brought parishioners together and required them to think about what the space meant for them. It created social friendships and bonds but also lead to conflicts and controversies. The process of coming to decisions about design and structure compelled the congregation to contemplate what it meant to be a hybrid community and thus even the rebuilding is an index of the development of inculturation at that time.

Immaculate Conception Entrance Doors and Other Indexes of Inculturation

What resulted from these efforts was an unconventional space that uniquely echoed the spirit of the people for whom it was constructed. At first glance, Immaculate Conception does seem to demonstrate to some degree, the symbolism illustrated by Fr. Murray. It consists of a round plan with ten white sides (decagon) and a blue roof (Figure 9) and the frame is sunken mid-way into

[125] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 519.

the ground. Customarily, a steeple appears at the highest point of the roof on Christian churches, but here it is substituted for a type of elevated "smokehole" encircled by four crosses. This is an example of a design element that reflects the community's desire to fuse two spiritualties but it is also an element that contributes in itself to that desire for unity; it can be seen as a product of inculturation but also a sign of its presence in the community. This smokehole marks the Church's only window (with the exception of two in the vestibule), where skylight shines down onto the centered altar below (Figure 10). The entrance of the church comprises a set of double doors built by Mervin Debassige, leading into the front vestibule (Figure 11). These doors embody the syncretic visual symbols that essentially typify the building as a whole. It depicts a red sunburst emitting a series of yellow rays, four large and twelve small, over a blue backdrop. Anishnaabeg floral designs appear in the middle of the red circle and twelve black crosses are embedded within the smaller sunrays surrounding it. The Church of Immaculate Conception distributes pamphlets containing information regarding the symbolism of the doors and states that they should be interpreted as a "symbol of Christ, the Light of the World, with the four rays outlining the cross. The twelve minor rays represent the twelve Apostles taking Christ's message to the four corners of the earth."[126] This, however, may not correspond precisely with a traditional Anishnaabeg understanding of the imagery. It is constructive to recognize how different sources speak of the objects and their origin, meaning, and symbolism in comparison to other sources and to consider what their agenda might be, what the prototypes of that source are trying to convey.

If one read the doors through an Anishnaabeg perspective, it becomes clear that these symbols communicate an entirely different language. The image of the sun frequently translates to the figure of Kitche Manitou or the Great Spirit; who is the fundamental creator of earth and

[126] *Bekaadendan*, Immaculate Conception Church pamphlet (West Bay, Ontario, n.d.), 2.

life. There exists a strong tendency within Christian Anishnaabeg of assimilating the concepts of Kitche Manitou and the Christian God, although this parallel only applies to the first person of the Trinity – the Father, rather than the son. Similar to the Christian iconography, the four large rays designate the four directions but the smaller rays symbolize the twelve moons. Colours are also exceptionally meaningful in Anishnaabeg visual culture. The blue of the backdrop suggests spiritual power, which is particularly significant for the midewewin or medicine society. The black, red and yellow of the starburst represent colours in the medicine wheel; black indicates West, which is cleansing, yellow indicates East, which is knowledge and red is South, which is new life. The building is painted white, the fourth colour of the medicine wheel, which represents North, the direction of healing; perhaps the most appropriate colour to express the role of the church.[127] The inside of the doors reveal panels of skillfully caved oak also craved by Debassige (Figure 12). They depict clan totems as a symbolism of the members of the congregation family served by the church. Debassige represented every clan of the community at West Bay through their symbolic animal.[128] This attempt to have images that parallel the spiritual worldviews of both cultures can certainly be understood as an attempt to bring the backgrounds, values, and traditions of both cultures together but it can also be seen as a battleground of competing ideologies.

An initially surprising visual element of the interior of the church is the circular seating arrangement, which lowers into the ground as you enter (Figure 13). The altar, rather than being raised on a platform as is typical of Catholic altars, is at the lowest level and situated at the very centre of the pews, and evokes the practice of traditional teaching circles. As stated, the colour blue signifies spiritual power in Anishnaabeg language yet for Christians it is most often

[127] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 519.
[128] Naagzotam, Minjmendaan. "The Doors." Accessed March 22, 2013. http://immconmfn.diocesessm.org/about/tour/en/photoalbum_photo_view?b_start=0

connected to the Virgin Mary, the biblical figure after which the church was named. A symbolic correlation that bridges both Christian and Anishnaabeg spirituality is also displayed through the use of the number four: a painting of a circle with four feathers (Figure 14) is portrayed on the rear wall behind the tabernacle, wooden sculptures of the four evangelists surround the altar table (Figure 15) and hanging on the lectern (stand with slanted top, used to hold the Bible) is an animal skin depicting the circle of Kitche Manitou, but also understood here as the Christian God, with four feathers again designating both the directions as well as the spreading of gospels.[129] For much of the symbolism mentioned above, it is often not known if the symbolis associations were something conscious or intentional of the original artist or if the symbols were implanted onto the images and objects afterwards. Thus I cannot assume that the images and objects are solely the “object” of inculturation but are also a means by which inculturation happens in the community.

When the Church of Immaculate Conception first resumed mass, the space contained little else. However, it soon began acquiring items from either the efforts of the priest or gifts from parishioners. In terms of the act of *gifting*, the acquisition of more “hybrid” items reflects a positive response of the community towards what they saw was happening in the new space, although not all objects the church acquired could necessarily be considered “hybrid”. Fr. Murray remembers the church’s gradual accumulation of images and objects as the development of a collection that he considered ‘eclectic’ rather than truly syncretic.”[130] The church first acquired white statues of Mary and Joseph, which do not have an obvious Anishnaabeg symbolic counterpart and not long after, added two wooden carved totem poles flanking the figures (Figure 16). These totems did not seem to hold any commonly recognized signification for the

[129] Smith, “The Church of Immaculate Conception,” 520.
[130] Smith, “The Church of Immaculate Conception,” 520.

Anishnaabeg people and actually served as a source of confusion in the community. Some saw it as a distasteful use of an icon which has come to epitomize the appropriation of First Nations visual culture in tourist souvenirs of the Northwest. But since the totems were donated as a gift from a parish member, they were accepted and put on display and may have been intended to be purely decorative. Another parishioner carved the baptismal font and offered it to the church as a gift (Figure 17). The basin is sculpted from a large pine knot and rests on a pedestal which stands on the back of wooden turtle, representing the island of North America. For the Anishnaabeg, the turtle icon, like that of the totem, is a culturally appropriated, or rather inappropriated, from Iroquois and Huron mythology.[131]

When exploring the question of the origin of symbols in Immaculate Conception, issues arise surrounding not only whether an item is Christian or Native, but also over what specific indigenous culture it originates from. These issues could be tied to a deeper discussion relating to where their people initially migrated from, prior to settlement on Manitoulin Island. Topics regarding "origin," "authenticity," and "tradition" are a prominent subject of debate, notably between groups of Aboriginals who may understand different definitions of these terms. Many Catholic Aboriginals question whether some of the practices and rituals of the "traditionalists," (those who position themselves outside of the Church) demonstrate something about their roots or the roots of another indigenous tribe.

The parish's tabernacle (Figure 18) brings us back to the problematic use of the tepee shape, which, as I have discussed, was refused as an architectural structure for the church. The symbol of the tepee is widely considered to be a non-Anishnaabeg conception of a generic indigenous emblem and it is not believed to originate from Anishnaabeg tradition. However, on Manitoulin as well as many other First Nation reserves, the tepee is becoming increasingly used

[131] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 520.

in many intertribal rituals such as powwows. The use of these so-called generic indigenous motifs such as the tepee and the totem pole reflect the attitude of the new pan-Indian movement, which focuses on bringing together the traditions of many different Aboriginal tribes. However, many believe that the movement often leads to an assimilation or even homogenization of all North American indigenous identity. This notion of pan-Indianism tends to be highly confusing, especially for scholars who prefer to retain more specific delineations of traditional tribal values. For some, the pan-Indian movement has served as source of empowerment and unity but for others, it has led to much controversial debate.[132]

The addition of objects and images of uncertain origins does not solely reflect the pan-Indian movement. This phenomenon of gathering bric-a-brac from various parishioners is also a means by which the church becomes rooted in the community. These items help shape their nexus and by doing so, they become an index and figuration of that community. Thus, accumulation becomes an act of collection for the church but an extension of community identity for the people. When parishioners donated objects to the church as gifts, these objects sometimes carried on the process of religious inculturation and continued the symbols of cultural fusion, and other times they reflected the traditions, values or symbols which that parishioner felt best personally represented them rather than the community at large. Regardless of the intention of the donor, it is important to look at the act of *gifting* rather than just the iconography of the objects and read those gifts as *actions* – they are *how* the church becomes rooted in the community. The act of gifting is also an index of the communities' cultural development and a reflection of the way inculturation was influencing their religious lives at the time.

[132] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 520.

The Passion in the Pictorial Image

My final visual analysis will concentrate on what may be the most recognized features of Immaculate Conception – the Stations of the Cross (Figure 19). Typically in the form of sculpted reliefs, the stations here appear as lively modern paintings by Leland Bell, a well-known local Anishnaabeg artist. The traditional stations consist of fourteen scenes but here there are fifteen, as Bell has added the scene of resurrection (Figure 20). He believes that without the final act of resurrection in the Passion drama, the suffering portrayed in the previous stations loses all meaning. This reflects the artist's view that he cannot celebrate death but what he can, and do, celebrate is life and the church represents a place for that celebration. Bell is not a part of the Christian faith but a dedicated member of the traditionalist and the midewewin society. When asked to paint this series, he understandably encountered challenges and conflicts. One was the representation of violence as this is a subject Bell intentionally avoids in his work. Another challenge was his desire to depict Christian iconography while employing his own personal artistic conventions that is based on *mide* or medicine teachings through its use of symbolic colours and forms. Bell has commented on this struggle, saying, "I wanted to try to say something from my point of view, but I also wanted to respect the other tradition.... I found the balance in Love. With the Stations it was a great time of healing, a great time of purification. That's my cultural perspective."[133]

The artist's description of the fifth station of the cross (Figure 21), which depicts Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus to carry the cross, allows us to see how Bell translates foundational narratives of one religion through the veil of his own spiritual world-view: "The three circles are the Trinity. I use a path. Jesus has taken this path. He accepts his situation and walks the path, the way of the cross. Simon is dressed in a yellow frock because in my tradition yellow is the

[133] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 521. (Personal Communication, August, 1993.)

color of the east and symbolizes knowledge. He must possess knowledge and wisdom if he helps another man who is suffering."[134] Although Bell does not place himself within the Christian religion, he evidently feels the need to study the stories behind the Station of the Cross in order to create a meaningful depiction of them. Nonetheless, these images do not faithfully resemble the typical stations found in Catholic churches, which depict more universally recognized biblical imagery. What was important for the artist was to depict the stories in a way that the people could understand and identify with and above all, to reflect the consciousness of the indigenous community at West Bay.[135] Even though Bell's perspective takes the Christian traditions into consideration, these are still paintings by an artist who does not belong to the religion he is representing. His understanding of these stories does not equal a Christian faith yet these paintings are nonetheless a staple element of the church and are a strong part of the congregation's visual sacred surroundings that influences and enhances their faith. Thus, these paintings cross the boundaries of authenticity in the art nexus of this holy space. Guided by the figure of the trickster, its sly, ambiguous quality is what allows these paintings to intersect cultural bounds in a way that subtly reveals the indigenous witty self-awareness of their own social, political and spiritual adaptability. In the same trickster fashion, recognizing the power and impact of images, Bell's Stations also comment on the hybridization of Aboriginal culture by preserving elements of indigenous traditional spirituality even while depicting stories which originate from Christianity.

Similar forms of symbolic translation commonly emerge in Leland Bell's non-Christian paintings but often with separate and distinct references. It is important to mention that the artist is not simply implanting Midewewin language into a Christian story, but interpreting those

[134] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 522. (Personal Communication, August, 1993.)
[135] George Leach and Greg Humbert, Beedahbun: First Light of Dawn (North Bay, Ontario: Tomiko Publications, 1989) 9-23.

stories. Rather than merely translating the narratives of the Stations of the Cross to the Anishnaabeg people, he also incorporates Anishnaabeg wisdom to the Christians. This is a significant distinction for Bell. He goes on to explain,

> I guess to me it's partly a job. If someone from a Jewish community asked me to do paintings, I would do them. I would study Judaism] first, which is what I did with the stations.... It was Native people that asked me to do the thing, and I'm not saying that I'm trying to convert them back to Indian things, and I'm not saying they converted me to Christianity, because I'm not up for conversion - I never was.[136]

With this statement surfaces one of the *problems* of inculturation. By producing these paintings, Bell evidently creates a voice for himself within the church even though he consciously remains outside of it. Therefore, could these works still be considered positive and beneficial in terms of the aims of balanced and harmonious inculturation of this space? Is it more important to look at the intentions of the artist or, in Gell's terms, what the prototypes of these indexes signify to the recipients?

Leland and Kitty: Oppositions to Inculturation

So popular are Bell's renderings of the Christian Stations that they became the subject of a book published by the Jesuit Anishnaabeg Spiritual Centre, titled *Beedahbun: First Light of Dawn*, by Jesuit Fathers George Leach and Greg Humbert. This work celebrates the paintings as an illustration of the ways in which Anishnaabeg spirituality have been 'inculturated' into the 'new' Native Roman Catholic Church.[137] Bell, however, disagrees with some of the allegations stated in the book, claiming that it only divulges a partial truth behind his artwork and his perspective as a contemporary indigenous artist. He in fact does not support the notion of the uncomplicated melding of traditions that he feels is expressed in the book.[138] For example, Bell, commenting on a photograph of Pope John Paul II being offered an eagle feather by Elder Ernest Benedict during

[136] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 521. (Personal Communication, August, 1993.)
[137] Leach and Humbert, Beedahbun: First Light of Dawn, 19-22.
[138] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 522.

his visit to Midland, Ontario in 1984, said, “I'm not into that at all, that melding of traditions.” For Bell, everyone must follow their own paths:

> This is just my opinion, but I think if those people want to go toward the church, then let them go toward the church, and I'll go this way .., but I'm not going to go around saying this is the right way and you are the wrong way ... I don't think anyone in the world has the Truth. I think what people have is partial truth. Each spiritual tradition has truth according to its environment, its institutions ... and what I believe is that now and again you can maybe touch base with some people ... I don't want to belittle the way of the cross-whatever it is-but the thing is, when they see the paintings, they also see somebody who is not a Christian person. Although in the interviews [for Beedahbun] they might have twisted-not twisted-but changed, some words that I used in the actual explanation of things.[139]

Bell’s position within the cultural network of West Bay is indicative of the opinions of a larger non-Christian group, who stand in opposition to what they consider improper attempts at inculturation exemplified in cases such as the Church of Immaculate Conception and *Beedahbun: First Light of Dawn*.

The ways in which the Jesuit authors of *Beedahbun* creatively edited Leland’s word is an upsetting topic for his wife Kitty as well. She believes they deliberately attempted to Christianize the midewewin teachings, reflecting the Church’s recent pursuit to misappropriate Aboriginal elements into Christianity. However, “proper” incorporation of indigenous elements into Christianity in terms of successful inculturation is not something that is clear, even for scholars and theologians. Many believe that Nativeness is an element already ingrained in Christianity and Catholicism in Canada; the Aboriginal people are an integral part of the development of the Church in this country and in these communities especially. Yet many, such as Leland and Kitty, think this association is something that is forced rather than something that developed naturally. Kitty also commented on the misuse of Anishnaabeg customs and traditions and the insertion of ritual objects within the Church and the Christian practices is both unsuitable and unwise.

[139] Smith, “The Church of Immaculate Conception,” 522. (Personal Communication, July, 1988.)

> I've never seen any priest come into the [mide] lodge and sit with us and partake in these ceremonies and see how they are supposed to be done. It's a mind game. I think they are playing, fooling around with what they know nothing about.... And I see it like it's going to make our people sicker instead of healing them.[140]

When asked why she believed the Catholic Church had started to incorporate Anishnaabeg traditions, she explained that she could discern suspicious motivations within these efforts, small changes and modifications in the processes of this missionary religion that has lost its grasp of the Anishnaabeg culture: "I think they are just redoubling their efforts to dispirit us."[141] Kitty's ideological critique is an index of inculturation whether she and other traditionalists are in support of it or not, which is to say that her contestations also register in the art nexus as a whole, particularly in Leland Bell's work.

Hybrid Rituals: Complicating the Aims of Inculturation

Evidently some of the non-Christian Anishnaabeg are highly critical of the syncretic features of the building and the contents of Immaculate Conception, and this criticism is even stronger when it comes to the incorporation of Anishnaabeg rituals. One example is the integration of the sweetgrass ceremony, which parishioners at Immaculate Conception have been practicing for generations, by placing braids of sweet grass in front of the tabernacle. Frs. Humbert and Leach have commented on the inclusion of this Aboriginal ritual in their services:

> The sweetgrass ceremony readily emphasizes and portrays the mood of the liturgy at the beginning of the Eucharist as well as reinforcing the cultural spiritual consciousness of the Anishnabek. On occasion this ceremony has been inserted into the Roman Catholic liturgy as a means of blessing the assembly. It can substitute for, or enhance, the Penitential rite.[142]

Kitty Bell, however, objects to the use of this ritual and it has even been seen as controversial to Christian Anishnaabeg at Immaculate Conception. For instance, Raymond Armstrong, a devoted

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[140] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 523. (Personal Communication, July, 1988.)
[141] Smith, "The Church of Immaculate Conception," 523. (Personal Communication, July, 1988.)
[142] Leach and Humbert, *Beedahbun: First Light of Dawn*, 19-20.

member of the parish and aboriginal elder, served as an usher at the church and also trained to be a deacon at one time. He also recalls tensions surrounding the sweetgrass ceremony: “I've seen people going out [leaving the mass] and because I was an usher I would sometimes ask what their trouble was and they'd say, ‘well, I can't smell that sweetgrass.’” There are, indeed, a number of people - especially older parishioners who have, according to Armstrong, “been driven away on account of what they have in the church now.”[143] Thus the incorporation of Anishnaabeg rituals and practices in the church is not a community activity that has always generated positive responses across all parishioners, attracted outsiders to join the church or encouraged old parishioners to return to the church. These efforts at inculturation are not universally supported and the church’s attempts to increase their Anishnaabeg congregation do not always succeed and may sometimes even produce adverse results.

When considering the concept of tradition, there is this notion that authentic tradition is something that is unchanging, that continues throughout history and carries the same meaning. However, this is rarely the case. The rituals performed not only at Immaculate Conception but in sacred spaces throughout the area are in some way continually growing, modifying, and developing. Even if this change is subtle, the rituals come to symbolize something new to the community at West Bay. Fr. Jim Kelly has been the parish priest at Immaculate Conception since 2006. He has spoken of the current practices at the Church, including the sweetgrass ceremony, which may not correspond with most people’s idea of a “traditional” sweetgrass ceremony. At the beginning of every mass, almost without exception, they perform a *smudge*. During a smudge dried herbs are burned and the smoke is waved back and forth and carried throughout the Church so that all of the parishioners are exposed to the smoke. It is seen as a purification right that can open one’s ears to something they cannot hear, or one’s eyes to something they cannot see thus

[143] Smith, “The Church of Immaculate Conception,” 523. (Personal Communication, August, 1993.)

helping people to overcome barriers in their lives. Smudges would also take place in other types of gatherings such as important meetings, family gatherings, or an anniversary of a death. Some individuals will do a smudge everyday while they say their prayers.[144]

However, at Immaculate Conception, they do not only burn sweetgrass, but four symbolic medicines: sweetgrass, cedar, tobacco and sage. Each medicine has its own significance and purpose. A sweetgrass ceremony is a spiritual ritual where a braid of sweetgrass is lit and the sweet smelling smoke fills the room. Sweetgrass is one of the four sacred medicines but the ceremony is likely not a consistent tradition deriving from ancient times. For generations, sage was used if there was a sickness in the house, such as the flu. Families would burn sage on the stove or fireplace until the whole house was filled with the smoke of the sage, serving as a kind of expectorant. The root of the word sage is "to heal" and it is believed that this sacred medicine has practical healing implications. Since its mention in the Jesuit Relations in the 1600s, tobacco has been considered a sacred and precious herb. It has certain mind altering aspects such as inducing mental alertness and although today it is viewed as more harmful than beneficial, to some A, tobacco has a protective quality and is sometimes used as a form of offering to the earth, especially in dangerous areas of travel. Cedar is particularly significant to those at Immaculate Conception as the area is surrounded by giant mature cedar trees. Cedar has an interesting characteristic to it as well; it is toxic to most insects. It is the type of wood often used to create chests for linens as it protects from insects such as moths. However, many believe that drinking cedar tea in small quantities good for the body and helps keep it clean. Many Anishnaabeg have used cedar water to cleanse a dead body in order to make the body smell fresh and also to keep away insects. At Immaculate Conception, during their healing masses, and especially during Lent, one of the rituals performed is washing the hands in cedar water as a

[144] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Jim Kelly, May, 2013.

symbol of deep spiritual cleansing.[145] Thus all four of the sacred medicines that are burned during the smudge at Immaculate Conception are rooted in their own individual traditions. Yet Fr. Kelly points out that this may not correspond with some of the people's understanding of "tradition":

> *Traditions*… they've changed as I've said. The idea of burning the four medicines together, I'm not sure it existed 20 years ago or 30 years ago, but now it has been kind of widely adopted. There was sweetgrass before and there was sage before, there were all those things, so it affects me and it affects everybody here but it's a changing thing. People want to believe in these beautiful, quaint Native traditions, but a lot changes, it's not a static thing, it always changes.[146]

For Fr. Kelly, what is important is his desire to break down the distinction between Native and non-Native in the community at West Bay. He claims that there is a constant unconscious desire to categorise things under either Christian or Native which creates the barrier. He uses the example of holy water to clarify his point:

> It is not a question or Christian or Native. I have never seen holy water used as I've seen here in M'Chigeeng. It has an important role here; people have holy water in their houses and use it for different things. I honestly don't know whether to say if that is a Native thing or a Catholic thing. I know down south we like to say, 'there's Native and there's Catholic', but in the case of the holy water, is *that* Native or is it Catholic? In the case of the *smudge*, is it Native or is it Catholic? Some people would argue, well the Natives were able to preserve some things from before Vatican II, but incensing was done in the Church all through the middle ages. We call it Native so we can get away with it. If you went to Toronto or Barrie or Guelph or Sudbury and said lets burn incense at the beginning of the city council, they would say that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.[147]

Even though many feel that Immaculate Conception provides a meaningful source of cross-cultural union in the community at West Bay, there exists a definite sentiment of confusion, uneasiness and discomfort surrounding the space and the practices. Here is where the "problems" of inculturation come to the fore, notably the preservation of tradition versus the creation of new

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[145] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Jim Kelly, May, 2013.
[146] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Jim Kelly, May, 2013.
[147] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Jim Kelly, May, 2013.

practices that bridge the traditions of two cultures. There is a common opinion that the authenticity of traditions are lost within this merge although others believe it could contribute to their preservation. Fr. Kelly certainly brings up an important point when he states that traditions change and "authenticity" is a difficult thing to define, especially when dealing with elements of Anishnaabeg cultures that have literally been lost or that very few records, or evidence exist today of their spiritual lives pre-contact. This discussion will arise in following chapters when dealing with origin and authenticity of tradition.

<u>The Advantages and Disadvantages of Inculturation in West Bay</u>

To view the space through the art nexus proposed by Gell, the reactions which have arisen within the recipients of the community may be the result of the changing and unstable prototype of the index (i.e. Church). With such a range of reactions, influences and opinions, many see the church as a source of misperception rather than guidance, or may even serve as a source of distraction to the true function of Catholicism. Yet as I will continue to demonstrate these are issues that are relevant not only in West Bay but in many other Aboriginal communities across Canada. The prototype of the Church has many different meanings for everyone in the community and this meaning is neither static nor unanimous. Indigenous Christians all over North America understand their presence in the art nexus of their own individual community differently. These spaces and their history, their rituals and practices, all contribute to the layered and complex present social situation of the church in its move toward inculturation. In order to consider these spaces through an anthropological lens, it is imperative to take into account the individual networks of social relations within the community, the construction of churches, the production and accumulation of objects and images in the church, and their impact on the people. Accounts

of people's lived experiences through the history of these spaces, allows for an understanding of what constitutes individual and community spiritual identity in West Bay.

Within the Church of Immaculate Conception, I can identify some advantages of the space within the community. Despite the decreasing presence of Ojibwe among the congregation today, Immaculate Conception opens up a new space for understanding the role of the Church in a postcolonial era. For the non-Native parishioners and those who come to the church during summer vacations, or because of personal interest in the space, they are entering a radical and unique parish in its expression of spiritual hybridity. Some may feel as though they are intruding in a place where they may not belong because of its unfamiliarity or its obvious appropriation of indigenous symbols and rituals. Some may experience an ever-present sense of colonial guilt at the realisation of what has been lost and what is struggling to be recovered. Yet some may see it as a positive union between cultures that have been striving for years to rectify a past by generations of people who, for some time, have had no lived experience in.

After hearing the voices of those who do not support its efforts, the disadvantages of such hybrid churches are just as apparent as the benefits. Many feel that the inculturation of the Church is blurring the histories of the indigenous peeoples of Wikwemikong and that it is just another way of justifying the aims of the Church, even if these aims do not prioritize the preservation of Anishnaabeg culture. Instead of preserving culture the church attempts to draw on lost traditions and in the process, transforms those traditions into something new, something unfamiliar. For many, both Christianity and Aboriginal spirituality have and should always remain separate entities. When they are synthesized, what is left is a mitigated hybrid, an insufficient version of both traditions. However successful, inculturation aims to fuse the

spiritualties in a way which strengthens and enriches both Christianity and Aboriginal spirituality, rather than diluting them.

The move towards inculturation is strongly supported by both ends of the religious spectrum yet there is still no clear agreement on how to reach this destination or what the exact outcomes of inculturation would be. Through the examination of the Church of Immaculate Conception, manifests the ultimate problem facing religions of the twenty-first century, and the conditions for their survival. There is no simple solution to the questions and dilemmas of postcolonial reconciliation, especially in terms of religious experience. The Church of Immaculate Conception may not expose the solution to the problem of religious inculturation but it can act as a case study through which conversations of past traumas and present compromises can transpire.

CHAPTER 3: MÉTIS SPIRITUAL IDENTITY IN WINNIPEG, MANITOBA AND ITS EXPRESSION IN KATERI TEKAKWITHA AND PRECIOUS BLOOD PARISH

In this chapter, I look at the nature of Métis spiritualism, the missionary history in Winnipeg and the influence of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate as well as the involvement of Métis people in the Church. I also conduct a visual and ritual analysis of two distinct parishes: Kateri Tekakwitha Parish and Precious Blood Parish. I demonstrate how the ongoing issues of an evolving Métis spiritual identity come to the fore through the art nexus of these spaces and highlight the differences of experience and opinion of the community members involved. The churches I have chosen reflect two distinct communities in Winnipeg, the history of the Métis of that area and the foundation of religious spaces that have come to represent different aspects of Metis identity. The examination of Precious Blood and Kateri Tekakwitha Parish exposes critical insight on topics of representation, identity and agency of the Métis in this region.

Winnipeg is an important region for the purposes of this research as it is home to the largest Aboriginal and Métis population in Canada.[148] With many indigenous groups and communities in and around the city, the cultural environment in Winnipeg brings to light the diversity of aboriginal peoples and their spiritual beliefs across the country. The church and the belief system of the community is different from that in West Bay, Manitoulin. The spaces which I explore here may not express the same degree of religious hybridity as the Church of Immaculate Conception yet the process of analyzing them and acquiring people's opinion on the topic of inculturation uncovers the way in which Métis traditions are moving through the art nexus in Winnipeg.

[148] According to the 2013 National Household survey. "Winnipeg home to largest First Nation, Métis population," last modified, May 8, 2013, http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/Winnipeg-home-to-largest-First-Nation-Metis-population-206587821.html.

Kateri Tekakwitha and Precious Blood Parish: Distribution versus Incorporation

The two parishes that I discuss both demonstrate evidence of inculturation yet it is spiritually and culturally articulated in different ways. Varying degrees of expression or denunciation of Métis spiritual identity also gives insight into individuals' feelings towards religious inculturation and their approval or disapproval of its aims. On the west end of Winnipeg exists a small churchone that has had a great impact on its aboriginal community. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish is somewhat similar to the Church of Immaculate Conception in terms of the hybridity of its practices, objects, images, beliefs, and languages which relate specifically to the small congregation that gathers there every Sunday. Clear from the moment you walk in, it is unmistakably an Aboriginal space, with symbols of Métis spirituality at every corner. It pays homage to its patron saint, Kateri Tekakwitha, sometimes referred to as Lilly of the Mohawks, the fourth Native American to be venerated in the Roman Catholic Church. Indigenous traditions and spiritual worldviews deeply inform this church and it proudly celebrates the cultural heritage of its native parishioners, visually as well as in practice. Yet this aspect of the parish is only apparent on the interior. From the outside, there are no architectural references to native spirituality and the building is quite inconspicuous to strangers unaware of its presence. Although Kateri Tekakwitha Parish does not proclaim its native influence from the exterior, if one enters the space, they will experience a spiritual hybrid that acts as a complex index of inculturation of that community. The way in which Kateri Tekakwitha expresses this hybrid is through a *distribution* of indexes of inculturation which take the form of objects, practices, languages and beliefs. At this space, the elements of inculturation stem from a desire on the part of the parish to incorporate and celebrate Métis culture and they are visibly dispersed throughout the space in various ways. Through the process of distribution, inculturation arises from a main source (in

this case, a social and spiritual need) and then disseminates intermittently, taking diverse forms based on individual and communal efforts.

At the east end of town, in Saint Boniface, a well-known modern church that is commonly referred to as the "teepee church", appears to be heavily influenced by Aboriginal spirituality, based on its architectural construction. Through an extraordinary arrangement of coiled cedar beams which creates a spiral design of low curving brick walls, the church demonstrates a sensitively scaled relationship with the residential homes that surround it. Yet the gradient cedar-shake-clad roof creates a vivid outline that towers above the skyline of this quiet suburban district of Winnipeg. However, the intended symbolism of the space makes no reference whatsoever to native symbolism, forms or influences. As opposed to Kateri Tekakwitha, which overtly celebrates Aboriginal spirituality, the references to Métis culture in Precious Blood are much more subtle or even concealed by the sources of information which describe it. Both these spaces are indexes of Métis identity of their respective communities and contribute to the process of inculturation but in essentially different ways. They demonstrate how different groups of Métis feel about their aboriginal heritage and how it is represented. The way in which they experience their spirituality and where they choose to do so is an index of how religious spaces inform the practices taking place within them and in turn how the practices influence the expression of the church and what it means to its community. Rather than a distribution of indexes of inculturation, at Precious Blood, inculturation manifests through *incorporation*. That is to say, inculturation is expressed as a form of absorption and the indexes get absorbed into the very body of the architectural space. The lack of overt acknowledgement and references to Métis symbolic influence does not negate its inherent native character and what it signifies to the community. Thus it should not necessarily be understood as a suppression of

Métis identity because it does resemble a "teepee" but through the construction of a modern church. Here, inculturation is still present; it is incorporated as architectural entity. It is not ignored or denied, it is simply another modality of inculturation. Precious Blood may exemplify the suppression of identity but it does this by *incorporating* the native imagery into its modern construction. Therefore it is important to understand both spaces as different facets or different modalities of the same phenomenon.

My object of study consists not only of these two churches but also the viewpoint of the contemporary community members in order to recognize the prototypes of each index (i.e. the spaces). Their insights highlight the range of individual significations of the objects to the viewers. These real life experiences give us an idea of how the spaces move through the art nexus of the history of Winnipeg's Aboriginal peoples. The churches act as an extension of Métis spiritual identity and yet they are also a factor in shaping identity at the same time. This attests to Gell's theory of how spaces and the experience of Métis identity are in a continuous loop, influencing one another and demonstrating the effects of inculturation. Thus the churches are a reflection of how Métis identity has changed throughout the decades of colonial struggle and postcolonial indigneous revival, yet also contribute to the construction of Métis identity within the unceasing feedback between space and community that is constitutive of the art nexus of this region.

Spiritual Forms and Religious Character of the Métis

The range of Métis spiritual beliefs throughout the community of Winnipeg is quite diverse yet there are fundamental indexes of the development of individual and collective Métis identity. Métis spirituality has its roots in both Aboriginal and Christian religion, and is therefore

fundamentally hybrid.[149] Since the Métis people represent those of mixed American-Indian and European, particularly French-settler, ancestry, their religious tradition is commonly acknowledged as a fusion between Roman Catholicism and the Aboriginal spiritualism of the indigenous tribes surrounding the Saskatchewan and Red River areas.[150] It is therefore a relevant and critical group to consider because of the inherent hybridity of its religious history and the ways in which their traditions have evolved over time and in conjunction with a nexus of architecture and visual images.

Because of its hybrid nature, Métis spiritualism has often been a rather unexplored field of research. The first examination of Cree-Metis spirituality is found in Elmer Ghostkeeper's *Spirit Gifting: The Concept Spiritual Exchange*.[151] Another significant contributor is Joseph Couture who analyzed Aboriginal spirituality and traditional knowledge, particularly the function and role of medicine people in indigenous and Métis communities.[152] The majority of the research conducted on Metis spirituality focuses on the acceptance and adoption of a range of Christian values and traditions rather than to their Aboriginal spiritual practices and rituals. Some authors have avoided the hybric nature of Métis spiritualism altogether, as seen in Thomas Flanagan's contentious monograph on Riel's spiritual life.[153] In addition, the majority of literature on Métis people and formalized religion focuses solely on the influence of church-sponsored residential schools on Métis religious life and the involvement of missionaries in

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149 Darren R. Préfontaine, Todd Paquin and Patrick Young, *Métis Spiritualism* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003), 1.
150 Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 6.
151 Elmer Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting: The Concept Spiritual Exchange* (Calgary: The Arctic Institute of North America, 1996).
152 See Couture, Joseph E., "Explorations in Native Knowing" in John Freisen (Ed.) *The Cultural Maze: Complex Questions on Native Destiny in Western Canada* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991) 201-217 and Couture, Joseph E., "The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues" in John W. Freisen (Ed.) *The Cultural Maze: Complex Questions on Native Destiny in Western Canada* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991) 201-217.
153 Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel: "Prophet of the New World"* (Toronto: University Press, 1997) 125-129 and 198-204.

preaching the gospel.[154] For example, Raymond Huel has carried out elaborate research on the exchanges between the French Métis and the Roman Catholic missionaries that settled in the regions of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. His text, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* represents (arguably,) not only the most extensive contribution to the study of Oblate mission history but the entire writings of Canadian religious history as a whole.[155] However, in his rendition of this history, Huel proves to be conflicted between descriptions of accurate historical accounts and impulses to smooth over or take a non-critical stance towards negative events and ultimately celebrate and glorify the Oblate experience. His book covers an array of fundamental issues yet they are often framed by administrative concerns rather than interpretive inquiries. Since they had little to no direct links to government programs, Huel in fact allocates very little space in the volume to the actual experiences of Métis people. Additionally, the author does not address how the Oblate missionaries' involvement with the Aboriginals and the Métis differed from one another. Aside from these concerns, Huel's work, as well as other sources, will allow me to outline the history of missionary settlement in the area of Red River in order to illustrate how this hybrid of Aboriginal and Christian traditions has formed the foundation of Métis spirituality.

The two most widespread and influential religious missions in the history of the Métis came from the Anglican and Catholic Churches, which were established in Canada's northwest by 1820. In 1817, Monseigneur Plessis from Québec was called upon by Lord Selkirk to organize Catholic missions to Red River. At this time, the Church felt that the missionaries would be proficient in reestablishing peace and elevating the moral values of the Aboriginals and

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[154] See Antoine S. Lussier, "Msgr. Provencher and the Native People of Red River, 1818-1853", *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1985, pp. 1-15. For the role of Church-sponsored residential schools see: Celia Haig-Brown. *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the First Nations Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1993)

[155] Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the First Nationss and the Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996).

Métis, allowing a higher level of social stability across the region. The missionaries set out to not only introduce the Christian religion to the Métis but also to enforce their concept of 'civilization' under the guise of evangelization. For the missionary clergy of the nineteenth century, their attempts to 'civilize' the Métis and the indigenous peoples meant adhering to "peace, good behaviour and obedience to the laws of both Church and State."[156] This strategy conflicts with the aims of inculturation in that it does not attempt to incorporate elements of indigenous traditional ways of life, or incorporate the inherent morality that these tribes already lived by. Of course, their way of life surely influenced the missionaries in some way and elements of their traditional culture did persist even though much was lost throughout this exchange.

This attitude, which derived from the Church and Europe more generally, spread quickly in the late nineteenth century and has continued to shape the attitude of the Euro-Canadian society throughout the twentieth century. It asserted the belief that European culture was superior to the Métis ways of life which they observed. The process of civilizing the Métis involved the elimination of their nomadic lifestyle and the establishment of agriculture and religious and educational institutions. As missionary work expanded, the distinctions between the objectives of the Christian mission and Europe's civilizing mission ultimately disappeared. The Church attempted to promote ideas of property ownership and a settled lifestyle to the Métis and insisted on the supremacy of European-derived civilization as well as the Christian faith. The missionaries attempted to instill a rigid set of regulations and codes of behaviour that would help the Métis in making moral decisions and choosing right from wrong. "They regarded the Métis as a lost group who needed shepherding; the Métis, of course, were well guided and had no need

[156] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 23.

of a foreign body trying to direct their lifestyle, beliefs and history."[157] Initially, the civilizing mission of Europe and the religious mission of the Church were separate and distinct endeavors. However, their purposes, aims, and methods eventually began to overlap and feed off of each other in order to ensure their mutual success. Of course, this apparent "success" was only valued in the eyes of the missionaries and settlers in their goal to create a group of people that shared their beliefs, principals, behavior, and conduct. Yet in the end, this approach was unsuccessful as they did not attempt to become inculturated with the Aboriginal people and thus did not benefit from elements of the indigenous lifestyle that would have surely facilitated a more balanced cultural merge.

Missionary Influence: The Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate

The Oblate missionaries were the leading Catholic ministry in western Canada, a primarily French-language congregation that represented an elite community in this newly established country.[158] The Oblate Missionaries or the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate are a division of the Roman Catholic Church. This particular missionary group was the most dominant and effective missionaries to become involved with the Métis.[159] Initially developed in southern France by Abbé Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod in 1815, the mission's original goal was to convert the poor and lower classes and restore a declining Catholicism through spiritual practices and evangelization[160]. Along with their missionary work in Canada, the Oblates also served as educators and colonizers who wished to institute large numbers of French-speaking settlements in the West. Most significant was the responsibility of the Oblates in inaugurating and

[157] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 28.

[158] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) XI.

[159] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 23.
[160] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 1.

solidifying the Catholic Church as the single and dominant religion in western Canada[161]. This sense of a large, powerful Church, unified not only across the country but throughout the world was a completely foreign concept to the Métis who had a much more localised view of spiritual practices.

Arriving on the Prairies in 1845, the Oblates worked with constant effort and enthusiasm to preach the gospel to the Métis and to establish the Roman Catholic Church as the sole religious authority in Canada. The Oblate priests were successful in drawing in Métis men and women into the Church for religious services and many became valued members of the community, even among the Métis people. Numerous accounts of the Oblate Fathers describe them as tolerant, kind and compassionate during their missionary work, which is possibly one of the reasons why, for the most part, the Métis were willing to convert. Gaston Carrière states that the Oblates acquired the deserved distinction of "specialists in difficult missions," as the outcome of a remarkable account of commitment, service and dedication through greatly adverse circumstances.[162] One of the most important and uncompromising primary obligations of the mission was the acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church as the single and only provider of grace and redemption while the practices of all other religions were judged as incorrect and their supporters were thus considered heretics.[163] The Oblates were given a primary mandate to convey the message of the proclamation of salvation as rapidly and proficiently as possible to non-Christian inhabitants of the increasingly French Catholic Canadian Northwest.[164] In his somewhat idealized description of the early Oblate objectives and goals, Raymond Huel compares the accomplishments of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Canadian

[161] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) XI.
[162] Gaston Carrière, "Méthodes et réalisations missionnaires des Oblats dans l'Est du Canada (1841-1861)," *Etudes Oblates* 16 (1957): 37.
[163] Charles Champagne, "La formation des oblats, missionnaires dans le Nord-Ouest canadien," *Sessions d'étude - Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique* 56 (1989): 21-33.
[164] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 2.

Northwest to the "glorious chapter" of the Society of Jesus in New France, which I described briefly in my previous chapter.[165] Of course, the accomplishments of the Oblate Fathers came at a high cost to the Métis people among whom they were working.

The Oblates utilized the instruction and training provided through Eugène de Mazenod and intended to carry it out faithfully according to his *Instruction*. However, once they set out on this mission and experienced life with the indigenous people directly, they soon realized that they could not only apply their mandate to the religious lifestyles of the Métis, but that they must extend their authority to other aspects of Aboriginal lifestyle[166]. This meant altering their missionary approach. The cultural differences between the Aboriginals and the settlers, such as their nomadic lifestyles and hunting and gathering traditions, did not reflect the type of Christian citizens the Oblates hoped to generate[167]. Their first effort at improving their missionary style, as seen with the Jesuits, was learning the indigenous languages of the Métis tribes. Many European missionaries in northern Alberta, such as Father Pierre Moulin, were the first to translate the Bible and other religious texts into Cree syllabics.[168] However, as time progressed, the Oblates came to believe that teaching the gospel in the Métis languages was not enough to produce the kind of educated and refined inhabitants they wished to live amongst.[169] Despite their efforts to learn the languages, they eventually recognized that they were not achieving their expected results and thus began to systematically phase out other integral aspects to Aboriginal culture.

The structure of the Oblate mission began to informally expand to include efforts to regulate the environment in a stricter manner to promote not only the Christian faith but European social norms as well. The Oblates noticed that their efforts were most successful with

[165] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 1.
[166] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 25.
[167] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 25.
[168] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 40.
[169] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 25.

children, or any Aboriginals detached from their nomadic cultural traditions. Decisions were made to establish residential schools in all of the missionary settlements with the purpose of converting and reconstructing native spirituality and the society at large. This represented a significant departure from the initial missionary attitudes, which, in the beginning, allowed for the Métis' traditions and way of life to carry on and the Oblates to conform to their environment. This was a much more invasive and offensive approach that considerably weakened any sense of authority of the Métis and crossed the boundary between evangelizing and civilizing.[170] Even though the Métis were initially welcoming of the Oblates, they became more suspicious of the clergy and the priests and began to see their presence as an intrusion on their land and in their lives. The Métis of Red River gladly accepted the arrival of the Oblates into their communities but were unsatisfied with the often stern and rigid implementation of moral principles and standards. The missionaries imposed regulations that the Métis were unfamiliar with and uncomfortable with adhering to because they did not correspond with traditional Métis cultural practices.[171]

The Residential School System: Phasing Out Métis Culture

The Oblates of Red River were influential in the foundation of the residential school system, which was run by the Sisters of the Charity Order of Grey Nuns. The establishment of residential schools aligned with the missionaries' desire to eliminate the Métis' nomadic lifestyle and create permanent settlements across the region. The Grey Nuns' roles in the communities spanned from educators and nurses to community service and charity workers. Accounts of their experience in the residential schools often describes their closeness to the students they worked with. Although they may have been unaware of the cultural damage they were imposing, their efforts were

[170] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 74.
[171] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 28.

aimed at providing care and support to the Métis children.[172] However, the students soon began to view the nuns at authoritarian and unaccepting of their culture and language. Unlike the Oblate Missionaries who learned the Métis languages in order to improve their success in conversion, the nuns at the residential schools focused on teaching the English language and wiping out Michif, Cree, Chipewyan and other indigenous languages. The Métis children were not accustomed to the strict learning format implemented by the nuns or the limitations on their freedom in general. This is understandable considering, prior to the residential schools, Métis children learned in a more experimental manner and were not separated from their families for prolonged time periods.[173]

As the residential school system continued to expand over time, the generational chasm between the nomadic Métis and their increasingly settled children continued to expand as well. The extended periods of time that children had to spend away from their families brought about a heavy influence of the Church through the education they were given. As a result, the parents became less involved in the lives of their children and were less capable of passing on their language, lifestyle and heritage. This gap between Métis who may or may not have been Christian but who lived a more traditional native lifestyle, and those who attended residential schools in the northwest created new generations of Métis who could no longer speak their native languages or follow the same lifestyles and had significantly different values and beliefs.[174] It is clear that the combination of missionary settlement and implementation of residential schools produced a cultural, language and spiritual barrier between Métis parents and their children, slowly phasing out traditional Métis culture and heritage.

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[172] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 33.
[173] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 34.
[174] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 35.

The Oblate missionaries could not effectively carry out their objectives to the degree they hoped for because their overall program, perspective and method, was severely flawed from the beginning. They may have attempted to learn native customs and understand aboriginal culture by becoming fluent in their languages, yet their efforts towards directed cultural change generated strong native resistance and the mission's ultimate failure. Even a hundred years after the Oblates had arrived on the prairies, they were still unsuccessful in producing a native church that addressed the necessities and ambitions of those they served.[175] Evidently they would have to modify their missionary approach and their expectations if they were to overcome the cultural barriers that separated them.

The Potential Cultural Benefits of Assimilation and the New Direction of the Church

Both the residential school system and the Oblate missions were part of the institutional aims of colonization. Initially, the immersion of the Oblates into the lives of the Métis was intended to alter, exploit and control the structure of their lifestyles. However, by building positive and supportive connections among the Métis, the Church representatives prospered in their efforts to spread the gospel and convert the Aboriginal societies. Many Métis embraced Christianity, adhered to its instructions, and often became involved in the Church, but only to a permissible extent.[176]

Raymond Huel examines several reasons why it may have been beneficial for the Aboriginals to convert to Christianity and adopt the European lifestyle. He proposes that the Aboriginals associated the higher authority and advanced technology of the European settlers to their Christian religion and wished to adopt some of this power themselves by embracing the

[175] Ens, "Review of *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*," 58.
[176] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 29.

spirituality and way of life of the missionaries.[177] James Axtell, on the other hand, believes that the acceptance of Christianity guaranteed the continued racial existence of the indigenous peoples because they proved to effectively utilize conversion to their own ends, to benefit their own ethnic and cultural purposes. They recognized issues such as the spread of disease and their need to acquire material items from the settlers, and therefore saw assimilation as a social tool that would allow them to take advantage of their submissive position within colonialism.[178] However, to assume that all Métis chose to conform to the Catholic Church solely for cultural and practical reasons, does not give adequate recognition of their personal spiritual interests and the agency they acquired within the Church. The Métis seemed to recognize what inculturation could do for their increasingly mixed society by taking on some of the practices of European settlers and attempting to build a hybrid community while still holding onto the integrity of their own cultural heritage.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, advancement within the hierarchy of the Catholic and Anglican Churches was unfortunately denied to those of Métis descent.[179] Yet over the course of the next century, the Church was about to experience a transformation not only in its decree of the missionary approach, but in its entire worldview. Theologians eventually discovered another way of communicating their faith through their real-like experiences and daily realities. Instead of ready-made formulas to be blindly followed, this would actually come closer to early Christian belief.[180] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s proposed radical changes in the Church in order to address its decreasing

[177] Huel. *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. (1996) 76.
[178] James Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," *Ethnohistory* (1982): 36-37.
[179] Préfontaine, Paquin and Young, *Métis Spiritualism*, 3.
[180] Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor* (Winnipeg: Unpublished, 2013) 25.

relevance in the modern world. This quote from Pope John Paul II from 1965, summarizes this new attitude:

> Today the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence we can already speak of a new cultural and social transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well.[181]

During this time, Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was teaching at the Juniorat des Oblates in Saint Boniface, Winnipeg. Fr. Kerbrat explains how his ideas about pastoral care drastically changed during the era of Vatican II. The courses they taught and the numerous books from Europe introduced a new theology and a new approach to pastoral work that was revolutionary and "turned the entire Christian world-view on its head."[182] Their way of teaching was called into question, as were their courses. It was no longer believed that they held all the truth, but rather that life, the universe and Christian life are all mysteries. The notion that Christians should always seek to learn more about this truth would entirely change the way the Oblates viewed their religious lives. The Church and Vatican II agreed to recognize the independence of human realities, the value of democracy, reason, and scientific and technical progress.[183] The new attitude of the Church, although innovative and progressive, did not immediately open up the doors to the Métis people or increase opportunity for them. The racial prejudices that had evolved since the beginning of European colonialism still loomed heavily on the lives of the Métis living in Winnipeg in the mid-twentieth century. This progressive outlook may have symbolized the first step towards inculturation but did not immediately address First Nations issues in the Church directly.

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[181] Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, Introductory statmemt: the situation of men in the modern world, no 4, paragraph 2, 1965.
[182] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 54.
[183] Normand Provencher, "Trop tard ? L'avenir de l'Église d'ici," *Novalis* (2002): 231.

The Uncertainty of the Developing Métis Spiritual Identity

If I examine the outlook of the Métis during the time of Vatican II and the decades that followed, I begin to uncover why there was no significant change in the Church for the Métis until later on in the twentieth century. Fr. Kerbrat lived in Winnipeg during this time and commented on the general atmosphere of the city in terms of Métis life: "In 1978 there was so much racism, so much prejudice against First Nations and Métis people. [...] I felt there were many [Métis] who had been rejected, despised by the rest of the community, most of them were poor people."[184] Even during the late 1970s and early 1980s, having a Métis background led to many social disadvantages for individuals in Winnipeg.

Accounts of Métis individuals whom I spoke with and who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s recall similar experiences of concealing their aboriginal heritage. If the Métis children spoke with their families in their native tongue, they would likely have an accent when they spoke French at school and would get singled out by non-Métis children and teachers attempting to 'correct' their accents. Guy Savoie is a prominent member in the social and political community in Winnipeg and one of the Métis leaders in French Manitoba. He recalls, "When I was young, it was not popular to be Métis. The Métis were discriminated against. If you had to apply for a job, you didn't tell anybody you were Métis. You told them you were French Canadian, or you wouldn't get the job."[185] At this time it was not popular to celebrate your Métis heritage or even proclaim it. The Métis children learned from their parents that it was frowned upon to admit you are Métis. They did not want to distance themselves from the French Canadian community and some simply wanted to be seen as French-Canadians themselves and nothing more. Yet as the attitude of the Church continued to change, so did the attitude of many

[184] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, July, 2013.
[185] Personal Communication – Interview with Guy Savoie, July, 2013.

Métis in Winnipeg, and soon, they would see the establishment across the city of religious spaces that would serve the specific needs of the Métis population. However, not all spaces that served the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg visually promulgated the cultural heritage of the people who utilized it. Each represents different degrees and expressions of inculturation, demonstrating how it becomes enmeshed in the art nexus of that particular region.

Prior to 1979, the only space serving the Christian Aboriginal community in Winnipeg was Don Bosco Hall, located in the downtown core, where Aboriginal people gathered for certain liturgies. In the fall of 1979, rooms became available at a nearby church, Sacré-Coeur Parish and so, at the request of the Métis, the Archbishop of Winnipeg, Cardinal Flahiff, assigned one of the rooms to the new Centre for the Aboriginal Parish.[186] Cardinal Flahiff asked Fr. Kerbrat to co-pastor the new Aboriginal parish along with Fr. Alvin Gervais, OMI (Figure 22). Although Fr. Kerbrat grew up in Saint Laurent Manitoba (85% Métis population) and had worked with aboriginal people prior to this position, he nonetheless felt it was challenging. "It was a very demanding job [serving the Parish of Sacré-Coeur and the new Aboriginal Parish], working with people who had been rejected by society; they were hated, poor and ignored."[187] In spite of this prevailing feeling, the church produced an environment for them to work together as a Métis community, to create the necessary ministries, and to address not only the spiritual needs but the social and political issues of their people. They organized groups dedicated to certain objectives such as counselling and raising money for various community causes. This engendered a sense of purpose and agency that they did not necessarily receive from the formal church institution.[188]

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[186] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 106.
[187] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 107.
[188] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 109-110.

The Centre for the Aboriginal Parish did not incorporate a great deal of native imagery and symbolism in the furnishings, other than the vestments of the priests which incorporated native elements and materials (Figure 23), the cloth which hung over the altar (Figure 24) and the tabernacle, which was an actual miniature teepee that housed the Eucharist (Figure 25). This object has the most evident native symbolism but unlike the teepee or triangular shaped tabernacle at the Church of Immaculate Conception, the congregation never objected to it and it in fact still remains with the parish today. The lack of traditional Métis visual elements may not have reflected the will of the congregation. The Métis did not own this space and therefore did not have much agency in modifying it to their liking. They may have altered certain practices to incorporate indigenous rituals but restrictions were still being placed on them by the diocese. Fr. Kerbrat recalls the struggle they went through in order to get permission to drink grape juice instead of wine during the Eucharist as there were several known alcoholics who attended and took communion.[189] At one time, Fr. Kerbrat and Fr. Gervais asked if Cardinal Flahiff would allow a Métis member of the church, rather than a priest, to have final authority for the parish. Cardinal Flahiff did grant this authorization even though this conflicted with Canon Law. Shortly after, the decision was made that final authority would fall under the Parish Council, represented by the parish Coordinator (an Aboriginal person). This decision, however, was never formally approved by the officials from the Diocesan Chancery. When the coordinator for the Aboriginal Parish would call the Archdiocese, the response was always, "Tell the Father to call us."[190] Fr. Kerbrat has always wondered if the Métis or those who simply identify as Franco-Manitobans have ever felt responsible in any way for what happens in their cultural community. In his book,

[189] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, July, 2013.
[190] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 110.

The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor, he recounts the words of a Métis woman, told to him after mass one day:

> I left Saint Laurent at eighteen years old. I hated everything Métis. I went to work in Saint Boniface with a group of women who referred to themselves as Franco-Manitobans. Years later, the governments recognized Louis Riel as a hero and a Father of Canadian Confederation. Suddenly, these former Franco-Manitobans called themselves Métis.[191]

These Métis had been robbed of their language and heritage to become "civilized Europeans".[192] Then they had suppressed and denied this heritage in order to avoid the social stigma of being Métis. Attempting to regain their agency as proud Métis now seemed both questionable and forlorn.

Kateri Tekakwitha – A Reawakening of the Métis Spirit in the New Aboriginal Parish

During the 1980s there were more than 50,000 Aboriginal people in the city of Winnipeg, half of whom were Catholic. For several years, three elders from the Aboriginal Parish had taken on the responsibility of raising money for a new Church as they wanted a space of their own. They had raised a remarkable $70,000 and in 1991 when they moved into the new Kateri Tekakwitha Parish (Figure 26, 27), the congregation felt that this was a welcoming and comfortable space just for them. Fr. Kerbrat explains how there was a new spirit in the parish. More Métis people had become involved in pastoral care and changes had been made to the liturgy. [193] The increasing engagement and responsibilities of the Métis reflected the ways in which the church was gradually becoming inculturated.

With the new space came a desire on the part of the congregation to inculturate their native ancestral traditions through the visual décor as well as within the Church ceremonies. They tried to let their indigenous spirit inform their Christian practices by integrating Aboriginal

[191] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 114.
[192] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 107.
[193] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 148.

traditions such as burning incense with sacred sweet grass (Figure 28), praying in the four directions, represented by four colours (Figure 29, 30, 31, 32), a woman acting as a guardian of the water and presiding over its blessing, readings in Ojibwe language and Cree hymns. The choir also began using instruments of their choice such as guitars and drums rather than the traditional Catholic organ or piano (Figure 33) Drumming is a traditional Métis musical practice used in spiritual and healing rituals, thus is much more meaningful and relevant for the congregation.[194] Other significant features which express indigneous spiritual visuality include a set of Eucharist paintings, portrayed in a common Métis artistic style (Figure 34, 35), a wooden baptismal font (Figure 36) with a medicine wheel and lilies, a well-known Christian symbol of chastity, innocence and purity, and more table cloths with the symbolic colours of the medicine wheel (Figure 37).[195] The architecture and structure of Kateri Tekakwitha Parish may not contain any representation of Métis spirituality yet all of the elements in the church inform the practices performed and these practices are interconnected with the visual elements that surround the parishioners during mass. The visual symbols and rituals feed off of each other, enhance the spiritual experience of the entire congregation, and work within the artistic program of the space to reflect not only the move of the church towards inculturation but also the increasing agency of the Métis parishioners.

Another essential symbol of the parish is evidently the figure of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Canadian Aboriginal saint and a highly influential woman for Métis Catholics. She was born in 1656 to Algonquin and Mohawk parents in Auriesville (now New York). In 1660 she survived a smallpox epidemic but lost her parents and was left scarred and disfigured. With a group of survivors, she moved to a new settlement where she had family and her uncle was

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[194] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 137.
[195] Fr. Kerbrat. *The Impertinence and the Compassion of a Pastor.* (2013) 137.

Chief. She made the decision to never marry and devote herself to following the Christian faith and was shunned by her tribe for this choice. She was baptized in In 1675, by Father James de Lamberville, S.J. of the St. Peter's Mission at Caughnawaga. In 1677, Fr. Lamberville sent Kateri to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier on the St. Lawrence with a note for Father James Fremin, superior of the Mission, proclaiming "I am sending you a treasure, guard it well!" Fr. Fremin admired her simple lifestyle, diligent prayer, and her devotion and dedication to a life for Jesus. She received her First Communion on Christmas day, a few months after her arrival in St. Lawrence and in 1679, Father Fremin allowed Kateri to pronounce a private vow of virginity and to consecrate herself to Our Blessed Mother. She died in 1680 at the young age of 24 and it is said that her scars completely cleared after she passed and that miracles and favours attained through her intercession began almost immediately. In 1943, Pope Pius XII solemnly approved the decree declaring her "Venerable" and interest in Kateri grew significantly throughout the 20th century, particularly during the Second Vatican Council. Yet it wasn't until 1980, the tercentenary of her death, when Pope John Paul II beatified Kateri, advancing her to the rank of the "Blessed." And finally in October 2012, Kateri was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI, elevating her to a "Saint".[196] Images of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha permeate the building in paintings (Figure 38) and sculptures (Figure 39). Recently they have also added a life-size wooden sculpture at the very entrance of the Church (Figure 40), an object of respect and devotion which praises Kateri the patron saint of the parish. There is hope the canonisation will also continue to help heal old wounds inflicted by the Catholic Church on Canada's First Nations. A new saint cannot change past wrongs but this is seen as another step in the right direction and a positive effort at inculturation.

[196] "Who is Kateri Tekakwitha?" accessed 24 January 2014. http://home.catholicweb.com/Kateriparish/index.cfm/NewsItem?ID=176086&From=News.

It seems as though Kateri Tekakwitha Parish arose at a certain moment in history when particular social changes were happening simultaneously, which created the possibility of this type of space to come into being. The Roman Catholic Church was loosening is grip on strict regulations and uniformity of liturgies and opening up to the benefits of freedom of thought over blind obedience. At the same time, prejudicial attitudes diminished as Métis and Aboriginal populations all over the country began reviving lost traditions and celebrating indigenous heritage. The sense of Métis indignity and disgrace discussed earlier is not imposed upon Métis children by previous generations like it was in the 1960s and 1970s and today, they are generally highly encouraged to celebrate their Aboriginal ancestry. Similar to the Church of Immaculate Conception in West Bay, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish is a reflection of the consciousness of the Métis community at the time it was established and remains an integral part of Winnipeg's Catholic Aboriginal spirituality today. This space reveals the outcomes of a deliberate effort at inculturation on the part of the church. The declaration of nativeness is intentional and encouraged by the congregation and Kateri Tekakwitha proudly celebrates its distinguished aboriginal heritage. However, not all churches that developed within aboriginal communities in Winnipeg have targeted the same deliberate forms of inculturation that emerge at Kateri Tekakwitha Parish.

Precious Blood Parish: "The Teepee Church" – Convoluted Symbolic Expressions

Across town in a French district of Winnipeg called Saint Boniface is a well-known church whose references to native symbolism are indirect and uncertain, further complicating the aims of inculturation. L'Église Précieux Sang, or Precious Blood Parish (Figure 41, 42) is known throughout the city as "the teepee church". The structure emulates its environment with low walls paralleling the small homes that surround it and an elevated roof that matches the area's

mature trees (Figure 43). The movement of the wall spirals steadily around the structural base forming a circular coil with the altar located precisely at the centre. The breathtaking organization of glulam timber ceiling beams create a sort of winding structure that imitates the shape of a tipi or the way one assembles kindling to start a fire. The roof is assembled into a twisting corrugated pyramid, curling as it soars upwards. The space's only natural light source emanates from a colourful stained glass skylight (Figure 44, 45) at the very top of the spiral. Exiting through the church's main doors is a spiritually stimulating experience as one follows the hall counter clockwise from dark to light, brightened by the white, blue and red of the overhead stained glass window (Figure 46)[197]. However, visually symbolic this church might be to Aboriginal people who view it, sources that comment on the actual symbolism of the space consistently deny its resemblance to any sort of Native object and the Métis community of Saint Boniface might have a completely different interpretation of the parish than outsiders who naturally assign aboriginal significance to it.

Precious Blood Parish, built in 1968 was designed by Métis Franco-Manitoban architect, Étienne Gaboury and located in an area of Winnipeg with a high Métis population. The parish was founded by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and staffed by the missionaries until the 1980s. There was certainly a significant Métis presence among the church members initially, but that presence has diminished. The parish is still used for various Oblate functions and celebrations such as Fr. Dominique Kerbrat's 60th anniversary as an Oblate pastor[198] and also serves as a meeting space for certain Métis organizations, particularly *L'Union Nationale Métis Saint-Joseph*. Based on the architect, history, location, structure, design and material, Precious Blood Parish may seem to reflect another example of a church which is praising Canada's indigenous

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[197] Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, *Canadian Churches: An Architectural History* (Buffalo, New York: Firefly Books Ltd., 2007), 372.
[198] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, July, 2013.

cultures or that at least the apparent 'Native' symbolism was intentional. In fact, if one read up on information regarding the actual symbolism of the church available on the internet and in various pamphlets and books on Precious Blood, they would only find references to strictly Catholic concepts. Surprisingly, in nearly every source available on the subject of the symbolism of the Precious Blood design, one will find these words: "The plan was never meant to represent a "*teepee*" or a "*tent*"."[199] This deliberate dismissal of indigenous imagery is somewhat puzzling and disconcerting. From an art historical perspective, artist intention is nonetheless an important aspect of visual analysis, however, this intent is often unknown or disregarded and viewer interpretation is generally considered more relevant to the analysis. So what is the reason behind this denial of Aboriginal or Métis influence or representation in Precious Blood Parish? More importantly, how did this example of modernist church architecture adopt a meaning that was significant to the Métis people in Winnipeg? This reciprocal exchange of messages and meanings displays the way in which the spaces and the community mutually define one another. The object (the church) shapes the attitudes and identities of those who view it and the viewer in turn influences the meanings which the object takes on. This social network that encompasses objects, people, spaces and their continuous interactions make up the reciprocal relation between art and identity in the community and demonstrate how inculturation manifests itself idiosyncratically differently across the nation.

The architect, Étienne Gaboury, had a specific message in mind when he designed the plan for Precious Blood Parish. Highly influenced by the work of Le Corbusier, Étienne Gaboury's architectural style has its roots in the modernist movement. He has expressed his artistic language through the complexity and variation of the geometry used by the great modern

[199] *Précieux-Sang, Precious Blood Church*, Precious Blood Parish booklet (St. Boniface, Manitoba, n.d.) 9. See also, "L'Église; Symbolisme," Paroisse du PrécieuxSang, accessed 1 February 2014. http://www.paroisseduprecieuxsang.com/francais/.

architects. Gaboury's interest in Le Corbusier revolved around his philosophy and transcendence of matter and "indescribable space" as well as the way in which he uses light to design space. Le Corbusier's later works, however, inspired Gaboury's spiritual and emotional interest in architecture. [200] A small booklet published by the church, containing detailed information about the symbolism of the architecture, design, materials, and liturgical objects and decorations, states that the plan of Precious Blood represents "a building with the unique thought of the upward movement of the People of God towards the Promise Land."[201] The parish website goes on to describe,

> The church is in a spiral shape that symbolizes the various stages in the life of Christians. […] The windows on the church have several meanings: the clear triangle represents the Holy Trinity, three persons in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The red glass signifies the fruit of the love between Father and Son. The green glass represents branches and leaves as a sign of a living vine. The cedar shingles that cover the roof outside and move into the interior represent the unity between the external world in which we live and the inner world where we celebrate the Lord.[202]

None of the traditional native symbolism attached to cedar or the colour red previously described is included in the description, yet it does appear integrated into the space. Instead, nearly every element of the structure has been given a specific Catholic message or intended symbolism. For example, the seating arrangement is not as circular as the Church of Immaculate Conception but the entire plan is based on circular forms and the pews are placed in a semi-circle around the altar (Figure 47). Circular seating is an essential characteristic of indigenous ritual and lifestyle and apparently for the congregation that attends Precious Blood, yet the parish booklet states that it is meant to improve visibility and create a closer bond in the congregation so that the parishioners may "participate more intimately in the celebration of the Holy Mass."[203] The

[200] Étienne Gaboury, *Étienne Gaboury* (Saint-Boniface, Manitoba: Les Éditions dy Blé, 2005) 18.
[201] *Précieux-Sang, Precious Blood Church*, Precious Blood Parish booklet, 9.
[202] "L'Église; Symbolisme," Paroisse du PrécieuxSang.
[203] *Précieux-Sang, Precious Blood Church*, Precious Blood Parish booklet, 2.

disregard of all First Nations symbolism is additionally surprising considering the spiritual dimension of Gaboury's life and work. I believe the church's efforts towards inculturation did not have the type of effect on the artist's work in light of the repression of Métis identity which no doubt affected his life growing up in Winnipeg.

In his autobiographical book, *Étienne Gaboury*, Gaboury mentions how he developed a "spiritual awareness" through the values, attitude and mentality he learned from his religious mother, which are visible in his religious and secular work. His architectural career also took off around the same period of the Second Vatican Council, when Catholic symbology was being reexamined, which offered him a new freedom of spiritual expression.[204] There is even a portion which describes how his sense of spiritualism is linked to Aboriginal communities and how he continuously attempts to incorporate cultural meaning in his buildings by "using form to go beyond the purely functional, practical and physical needs" of a space. Gaboury has designed schools in aboriginal communities and mentions how, throughout these projects, he engages with the communities in order to produce common bonds, ensuring a strong sense of indigenous pride.[205] Yet this is the only information available in his book which speaks of his connection to native culture and his Métis ancestry is not mentioned in the text at all. Thus it seems quite plausible that in some way or another, Precious Blood, and likely all of Gaboury's architectural works, are influenced by Métis spirituality, regardless if it is intentional or not, regardless of whether it is acknowledged or concealed. The ways in which this native influence subtly reveals itself is reminiscent of typical trickster characteristics in that it seems to have a presence in Gaboury's work, yet this presence is also marked by some level of secrecy. The fact that viewers

[204] Gaboury, *Étienne Gaboury,* 18.
[205] Gaboury, *Étienne Gaboury,* 18.

associate native symbolism to the space and that it is still denied by the artist and the church is an excellent social commentary on the history of repression of Métis identity in Winnipeg.

Failures and Successes of Inculturation at Kateri Tekakwitha and Precious Blood Parish

I can look back to the common attitude of the Métis people of Winnipeg around the 1960s and the general privacy regarding Métis ancestry, to give an indication of Gaboury's sentiment towards Métis culture. Perhaps one of the reasons behind the absence of native symbolism at Precious Blood is that the architect and authors writing about the church may feel that it drastically simplifies a complex structural concept that they wish to make known. For Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, Precious Blood Parish represents the direction and fluidity of life. He relates the aesthetic beauty of the forms as the roof rises, to the beauty experienced in everyday lives as people continue to grow. There is no rigidity in the structure, and it is vastly different from the common rectangular shaped churches. Similarly, there is very little rigidity in our lives, but much variability and uncertainty. "It describes life, it's going up, it's going somewhere and there's beauty in the journey, in the movement."[206] When asked what he thought about the disavowal of native symbolism in Precious Blood, Guy Savoie stated,

> There's no doubt that people refer to it as the teepee church. There are still a good number of parishioners from a Métis background but its only Catholic rituals, they're not geared toward Métis people. Maybe the church does not want it to be viewed as such (a native symbol). […] It must be pretty difficult for the architect to design the church with that type of structure which speaks so much of spirituality, not to include the native spiritualism in it, even if he wouldn't tell you that. But obviously the public view the native spirituality in the church much more, but that's probably not the position of the diocese or the archbishop.[207]

Guy seems to believe that the refutation of native symbolism stems primarily from Church rather than from the Métis public or from the architect per se. Yet this is precisely how the symbolism becomes incorporated and absorbed throughout the space. Gabriel Dufault is the President of

[206] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Dominique Kerbrat, July, 2013.
[207] Personal Communication – Interview with Guy Savoie, July, 2013.

L'Union Nationale Métis Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, the oldest Métis organization in Canada. Originally from Winnipeg, he has lived in the city for most of his life and was an active member of Precious Blood Parish during the time of its construction. He feels a sense of warmth and comfort in the church because of the modern concept, the emphasis on wood, which reflects the surrounding nature as well as Métis traditions, the central altar and the warm colours and lighting. All of these combined elements enhance his spiritual experience when he is inside the space. Perhaps he can feel the way in which the native spirit is absorbed into the space, thus experiencing how it manifests through inculturation. When asked about the kind of message he thought the church reflects to the community, that might differ from other churches in the area, Gabriel responded by saying, "It is very much used in terms of promoting the city of Winnipeg. You will usually see the St. Boniface Cathedral and Précieux-Sang church, it's part of the promotional imagery for Winnipeg."[208] This aspect of using images of the church as a source of publicity for the city adds another dimension to the complexity of messages, meanings and symbols allotted to the parish. The "teepee" church may be acting as a tourist attraction for Winnipeg and drawing in visitors who are interested in the structure because of its resemblance to the generic Pan-Indian symbol of the teepee. They may visit the space in the hope of experiencing something that involves traditional aboriginal spiritualism yet this is not the case at Precious Blood. It is not an Aboriginal parish and does not serve the special needs of the Métis of Saint-Boniface. Today the Catholic Franco-Manitoban Métis population has declined not only in the Precious Blood congregation but in the Saint-Boniface community as well. The population is now more dispersed throughout the various districts of Winnipeg, creating a rift in Métis cultural unity.[209] The Métis here may never experience a space like Kateri Tekakwitha Parish,

[208] Personal Communication – Interview with Gabriel Dufault, July, 2013.
[209] Personal Communication – Interview with Gabriel Dufault, July, 2013.

where their Aoriginal spiritualism is practiced and not only experienced visually. It is clear that Precious Blood Parish, despite its likeness to a Catholic Native church, did not put deliberate effort into inculturating the space in order to accommodate the traditions of the Métis parishioners, whether they desired this change or not. Perhaps the Métis community dispersed precisely because they felt that they did not have a spiritual space of their own that catered to their individual needs. The distinct hybrid elements found in the Church of Immaculate Conception and Kateri Tekakwitha Parish do not appear within the art nexus of Saint Boniface and the form inculturation experienced there does not reflect the same sense of purpose, function, or favourable outcomes.

If Kateri Tekakwitha Parish is compared to Precious Blood Parish, it would seem as though Kateri Tekakwitha expresses a more intentional embodiment of the efforts of inculturation by the Church. It brings Métis people together, gives them a sense of power, instrumentality, and allows them to experience their spirituality in a more productive and valuable way because it is focused on their specific requirement and desires. Although it is far more distinguished and admired, Precious Blood may have served to disrupt ties between Winnipeg Métis because it did not fully allow them to practice the same sense of Métis culture and tradition which was visually incorporated into the space surrounding them. Is the denial of the teepee symbol at Precious Blood being experienced as a loss of culture and the expression of native visuality at Kateri being experienced as a revival of culture? Understanding these reactions and effects will allow assessment of whether these spaces and the rituals performed in them, represent the failures or the successes of inculturation.

CHAPTER 4: CATHOLICISM: A TOOL FOR THE SURVIVAL OF MI'KMAQ CULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Mi'kmaq people refers to indigenous groups occupying Canada's eastern Maritime Provinces.[210] This chapter will focus on two separate but related reservations on Cape Breton Island, found along the coast of Bras d'Or Lake: Potlotek First Nations and Eskasoni First Nations. As with the Métis and Anishnaabeg of the two previous chapters, native identity among the Mi'kmaq is a major concern, yet throughout the eastern part of Canada's Atlantic coast, it bears the added weight of a much longer history of contact, conquest and colonialism. Research into Nova Scotia's aboriginal past reveals how forced reserve life and assimilationist policies have led to a severe loss of Mi'kmaq culture and lifestyle.[211] However, more recent research also reveals how the Mi'kmaq dealt with a politically, economically and culturally changing environment in such a way that would benefit the preservation of their traditions, language and ways of life.[212] As I will demonstrate, Catholicism was used as a resource by the Mi'kmaq to strategically negotiate this complex and unstable social setting throughout the process of colonialism.[213] It has led to a highly devout group of Aboriginal people who remain strong in their Catholic faith even today. For the most part, the Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton utilize their religion not only for their personal spiritual benefit but also as a way to strengthen the close bond of their community.[214]

The challenge of this research is uncovering the reasons why the Mi'kmaq embraced Christianity when it was first introduced to them and why the religion is still an important part of

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[210] Alexander J. Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 6, 2010, 16.
[211] Simone Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life: The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 2.
[212] Andrew Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival: The Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton in the mid-19th Century." *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (1998): 98.
[213] Robert A. Campbell, "Bridging Sacred Canopies: Mi'kmaq Spirituality and Catholicism." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 18:2 (1998): 308.
[214] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.

their lives today. The assumption that their lasting faith is solely the result of successful missionary approaches fails to acknowledge the instrumentality and self-determination of the Aboriginals during colonial exchanges. The Mi'kmaq people continue to be essential to the process of inculturation in Cape Breton whether they are aware of it or not. Inculturation was not an aim that was enforced into the communities by the Church, but one that the Mi'kmaq had primary agency in implementing. It was the success of the indigenous people which allowed them to hold onto their Native traditions, re-introduce them into the Church and incorporate them into their Christian lives. This process allows us to observe Bhabha's cultural theory of the disruption of dichotomous perceptions of power relations such as colonizer/colonized, dominant/submissive or missionary/converted. It also demonstrates his concept of ambivalence and how the tug and pull of acceptance and rejection between the missionary and the neophyte served as a form of effective cultural production, creating an aggregate hybrid community.

Settlement in Acadia: the European model of Christianity and Civilization

The rich and long-established history of the Catholic Church in Nova Scotia illustrates the ways in which the Mi'kmaq were able to appropriate Catholicism to allow for the survival of their own native spiritual beliefs. Their present religious experience cannot be seen as either a break or link between this history or the future of the Church, but rather as the outcome of the processes formed in the expression of cultural differences. As Bhabha points out, these moments of dislocation and intersection of spheres of difference are the grounds on which individual and shared understandings of nationhood and cultural values are negotiated. The periods of cultural difference experienced throughout colonial encounter make us question our common views of modernity and tradition, of progression and impediment. The First Nations reservations I explore occupy an interstitial space of a postcolonial nation that have brought about hybrid religious

spaces and practices which help demonstrate the processes of inculturation occurring in these regions. It is thus imperative to examine their history's colonial exchanges; the ways in which the cultures have encountered one another and the outcome of this encounter.

Colonization began in the early seventeenth century with the arrival of the French in what was then known as Acadia, and, just like the majority of North America during the colonial era, the religious missions were one of the leading constituents of Europe's plan of action to conquer the unknown lands.[215] During this time, tensions were arising between the Huguenots and the Jesuits in France and thus Henry IV proposed to put the Huguenots in charge of the religious needs of the French settlers in Acadia and the Jesuits in charge of evangelizing the indigenous tribes.[216] Catholicism became integrated into the lives of the Mi'kmaq almost immediately with the arrival of the French colonists. The first official Mi'kmaq to be baptized was Grand Chief Membertou on June 24, 1610, by Abbé Jessé Fléché, a secular Catholic priest. Chief Membertou is one the most significant figures in early Mi'kmaq history and is still celebrated today for establishing the long and prosperous relationship between the Aboriginals of Nova Scotia and the Church.[217] During the baptism ceremonies of the early seventeenth century, the indigenous people were also given French names and therefore became acquainted with the European concept of first and family names. When Chief Membertou and his family were baptized, they were given names associated with French royalty, members of the elite and members of the church.[218] This gesture seems to demonstrate the settler's respect for the Mi'kmaq leaders by identifying them with the powerful figures of France, however, it could also be understood as an

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[215] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 192.
[216] Anne-Christine Hornborg. *A Landscape of Leftovers: Changing Conceptions of Place and Environment Among Mi'kmaq Indians of Eastern Canada* (Lund, Sweden: KFS, 2001), 21-22.
[217] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 193.
[218] Whitehead, Ruth H. *The Old Man Told Us: Excerpts from Mi'kmaw History 1500-1950* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 1991).

attempt to enforce European social beliefs and customs into Aboriginal life.[219] At this point the benefits of conversion for the Mi'kmaq might be latent but these actions are representational of more complex exchanges of power and should be understood as initial efforts of uniting spiritual worldviews.

Missionary work in Acadia throughout the seventeenth century was led by the Franciscan Récollects who were present between 1619 and 1629 and again between 1669 and 1690. Their attitude towards evangelism and conversion resembled that of the secular Catholics who baptized Chief Membertou, in that they believed that the Mi'kmaq must first make the transformation into "civilized" Frenchmen before they could truly become Catholic. Mi'kmaw Elder Merrill commented on the missionary history in Nova Scotia and their adoption of French customs and lifestyle saying, "Christianizing the Native was a matter of control. Mi'kmaq people were brainwashed by Catholics."[220] The connection between the French hierarchical system and religious conversion of the indigenous people, demonstrated through the renaming ceremony at baptism, is further indication of the direct association between the colonial tactics of both secular and religious establishments.[221] However, during the period of French colonialism, the Jesuit missionaries were also exceptionally active in eastern Canada and employed a quite different approach to evangelism than the Huguenots and the Franciscan Récollets. Initially, the Jesuits did apply a rather harsh ethnocentric method in terms of lifestyle intervention and the denial of their customs and traditions, until they recognized that the Mi'kmaq did not need to fully assimilate to European culture as a prerequisite to Christianity.[222] Perhaps they acknowledged the Mi'kmaq's ability to open their lives to Christianity while still holding onto their traditional

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[219] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 195.
[220] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 195. (Personal Communication, November 7, 2003.)
[221] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 195.
[222] Prins, Harald E.L. *The Mi'kmaq: Resistance, Accommodation, and Cultural Survival* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996).

spiritual practices. Conversely, the Jesuits considered the possibility of integrating Mi'kmaq spiritual views into the Christian cannon in order to create a more recognizable and acceptable doctrine that they could adopt without abandoning their indigenous culture through assimilation.[223] This ideology suggests that even as early as the 1600s, these administrators of faith utilized a technique that approximated the concept of religious inculturation and also contributed to the positive relationship between the Jesuits and the Mi'kmaq. This presumably led to the belief that the Mi'kmaq could appropriate Catholicism to suit their worldviews, without abandoning their own cultural integrity, leading to the large acceptance of the Church throughout the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia that still exists today.

The Jesuit Relations provide evidence of the initial ethnocentric attitudes of the representatives of the order, as exemplified in Jesuit Pierre Biard's letter to the Reverend Father Provincial in 1612, criticizing the conversion strategies of Abbé Fléché:

> This Priest, it is said, baptized nearly a hundred persons during the year, […] But, since neither this Priest nor anyone else knew their language, save so far as pertains to the merest necessities of intercourse and trade, the neophytes could not be instructed in our doctrines. They [the Mi'kmaq] accepted baptism as a sort of sacred pledge of friendship and alliance with the French. As regards Christ, the Church, the Faith and the Symbol, the commandments of God, prayer and the Sacraments, they knew almost nothing; nor did they know the sign of the cross or the very name of Christian… In other respects there is almost no change from the religion of the Gentiles to Christianity. They keep up the same manners and traditions and mode of life, the same dances and rites and songs and sorcery; in fact all their previous customs.[224]

This statement also reveals the perseverance of the Mi'kmaq ways of life in the face of intercepting cultures and shifting social environments. According to Pierre Biard's words, specifically his reference to the spirituality of the Mi'kmaq as "sorcery" and the "religion of the Gentiles," the Jesuits may have not been as considerate of the Mi'kmaq culture as the administrators and traders at the time, who were driven by economic and social interests. Yet the

[223] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 196.
[224] Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Volume II, Acadia, 1612-1614,* 87-89.

Jesuits were a part of the French colonial initiative which aimed to cooperate to an extent with the Mi'kmaq population. Although their aims were geared toward religious conversion, their attitude toward the Mi'kmaq was similar and therefore they quickly assumed a more tolerant missionary approach. Indeed, their new, non-invasive and permissive method strengthened the positive relationships between the French and the indigenous populations.[225] This type of colonial exchange allowed for the Mi'kmaqs to retain a sense of cultural agency. Of course their practices have changed throughout the years yet it is possible that they accepted Catholicism out of their own will rather than a completely forced conversion, illustrating Bhabha's concept of cultural negotiation. It is here where the Mi'kmaq negotiated their options, demonstrated social awareness and a concern for cultural survival, and adapted accordingly.

Britain vs. France: The Mi'kmaq Alliance to Catholicism

The Mi'kmaq may have experienced a brief moment of social stability yet the arrival of British settlers at the beginning of the 18th century caused further challenges and threats to the indigenous cultures of Acadia. Contrary to the French, the British concept of colonization did not recognize the Mi'kmaq people as independent beings.[226] During colonial tensions between England and France, dedication to the Catholic faith became one of the most resilient forms of political and cultural survival that the Mi'kmaq adopted to fight against the British assimilationist tactics of colonial expansion. Outside of religious conversion, Catholic allegiance became a political tool for the French Jesuits in this battle as well. The Jesuits' nonassimilationist evangelical methods favoured cultural compatibility and allowed them to successfully insert the religion into Mi'kmaq lives in such a way that did not produce severe conflict or resistance. Furthermore, French colonial authorities turned Catholicism into a tool, a driving force that

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[225] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 197.
[226] Jennifer Reid, *Myth, Symbol, and Colonial Encounter: British and the Mi'kmaq in Acadia, 1700-1867* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995) 62.

would support the indigenous populations' conflicts against the British authorities, with whom they were competing for land and power in Acadia at the time.[227] Despite the efforts of the French, the first half of the 18th century saw the colonial enterprise transition from their hands to the hands of the British, and by 1763, Britain gained complete political control over the land which was renamed Nova Scotia.[228] These events would contribute to strengthening the relationship between the Mi'kmaq and the Catholic Church.

As the British expanded their authority and domination over Nova Scotia, their "colonization ideology" was decisively influenced by John Locke's "labour theory of property," which relied on the belief that indigenous lands were not being used effectively to their fullest potential and therefore indigenous tribes should be uprooted and replaced by more productive people and practices. What the British administrators saw as "improvements" to the land took the form of ploughed fields and settled homes with fences and a garden. These transformations to the land translated into the concept of private property and thus attributed economic value onto them.[229] The desire for the Aboriginals to renounce their traditional nomadic ways and take up farming was articulated by British officials as early as 1783. It was believed that by doing so, the increasingly deplorable state of the Mi'kmaq could be prevented and the "ascent from savagery to civilization begin."[230] While immigration of Loyalist, Planter and Scottish societies rose rapidly, the conventional activities the Mi'kmaq once used to support themselves and their families such as hunting, trapping and fishing, became heavily limited.[231] As Nova Scotia became more densely populated by European settlers, the Mi'kmaq people assumed a range of

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[227] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 199.
[228] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 200-201.
[229] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 76.
[230] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 75.
[231] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 82.

economic tasks and functions, depending on their particular occupational environment, as a strategy of survival and adaptation.

While the Mi'kmaq still occupied a somewhat settled, somewhat roving lifestyle and the settlers were continuously moving into their territory, indigenous-white exchanges were an increasingly frequent occurrence throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Though at times these exchanges could become dangerous due to physical confrontations over land and trespassing or the transference of foreign disease, they often resulted in welcoming and amicable relations which lead to a diverse variety of personal connections, from employers to co-workers to husbands and wives.[232] Along with commercial fishery, labour and the production of crafts, the Mi'kmaq would often rent areas of land to white settlers and travellers, sell them wood and animal skins and, because of their expert knowledge of the territory, they would frequently serve as guides and navigators for British and European hunters, surveyors and government officials.[233] In spite of the profound disruptions to their pre-contact ways of life, the Mi'kmaq took part in a mixed economy, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability to their rapidly changing environment. The political struggles they were dealing with led the Mi'kmaq to find aid within the missionary workers, with whom they had more trusting relationships. It is these moments of social exchange that created the sense of cultural hybridity experienced not only economically and politically but as a spiritual fusion as well.

Still, throughout the nineteenth century, the Mi'kmaq became increasingly marginalized in terms of population and agency, and thus their economic status worsened, especially following the enormous immigration of Scottish settlers after the Napoleonic wars (approximately 30,000

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[232] Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *The Journal of American History* 88:3 (2001): 829-865.
[233] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 86.

Scottish immigrants arrived on Cape Breton Island between 1815 and 1838).[234] The government began conducting research to generate reports and censuses on the economic state of the Mi'kmaq with the intention of improving their living conditions. However, the Mi'kmaq did not believe that the government's objectives were beneficial to them, but rather aimed to "compel them to perform Statute Labour – pay taxes – and serve in the Militia."[235] This framework prompted the colonial authorities to regard the Mi'kmaq as neither a partner nor an adversary, but as a "problem" that required a solution, and census data was essential to this examination.[236] According to government officials in the mid-1800s and their interpretation of the results, it was evident that the indigenous populations of Nova Scotia would either have to assimilate or they would become extinct.[237] With the dramatic influx of British, Scottish and European immigration, along with the pressures to conform to the demands of the government, the Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton began to petition colonial authorities for land grants and demand licenses of occupation. After the release of the survey of "Indian Reservations on Cape Breton Island," in 1833, they were allocated a total of six reservations, altogether comprising 12,205 acres. Yet within 40 years, this area dropped roughly twenty per cent in size, owing primarily to further colonial invasion by British settlers.[238] The loss of land demonstrates the social effects resulting from the expression of cultural difference, where values are negotiated and it becomes perceptible what level of agency was experienced by all parties involved in conflict. Keeping up any form of traditional indigenous lifestyle was becoming progressively difficult and impractical for the Mi'kmaq, yet with the help of some unexpected individuals, valuable elements of their culture lived on throughout the most encroaching moments of colonization.

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[234] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 70.
[235] NSARM, RD 5, Volume 3, Number 72, Charles R. Ward to John Whidden, 11 February 1842.
[236] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 71.
[237] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 96.
[238] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 72.

Partnership with Catholic Priests: Reliance on Catholicism Throughout Encroachment

Confronted by an uncompromising British colonial program alongside the ongoing possession of their motherland by countless prospective farmers, the Mi'kmaq relied on the Catholic Church as one of the few cultural defences available to them to retain and conserve their native language and traditions. As early as the 1750s, the Christian religion was integrated so profoundly into the everyday lives of the indigenous communities that it bore as much significance to them as any other element of their culture. For the Mi'kmaq, their allegiance to Catholicism distinguished them from the British settlers enclosing in on them, and their strong faith reinforced their determination to challenge assimilationist efforts.[239] Once Britain gained colonial control over Nova Scotia in 1763, and the First Nations tribes were not only politically dominated but territorially vanquished, they turned to the Church as a spiritual ground on which British authorities could not contravene.[240] Catholicism evolved into a resource of indigneous collective and community identity that afforded a practical and applicable replacement for their dwindling attachment to the east coast lands as a major source of cultural unity and group identity.[241] This sentiment is still felt if I consider the recognition of Christianity in Mi'kmaq nationhood. However, today, the Mi'kmaq no longer need to rely on the Church as a political ally when they are challenged to defend their culture.

The Catholic priests were particularly significant in this eiteenth century context as their role in society developed into an essential component of cultural life, an aspect of their Mi'kmaq identity that had to be maintained against the threat of the assimilation.[242] Noteworthy clergymen included Abbé LeLoutre, who ran a mission in Shubenacadie from 1738 to 1750, as well as Abbé

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[239] Leslie F. S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), 154.
[240] Anne-Christine Hornborg, "Ritual Practice as Power Play or Redemptive Hegemony: The Mi'kmaq Appropriation of Catholicism," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 92(2): 173.
[241] Prins, *The Mi'kmaq: Resistance, Accommodation, and Cultural Survival*, 124.
[242] Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867*, 68.

Pierre Maillard, who served as a missionary in Acadia from 1735 until his death in 1762. Maillard worked as both an advisor to the Mi'kmaq and a mediator between them and the colonial authorities.[243] The French Jesuits who conducted missionary work in the indigenous communities contributed towards the protection and continuity of the Mi'kmaq language by being the first to consign it to written form.[244] Maillard even went so far as to compose official letters and documents to the British government officials in the interests and support of the Aboriginals, using the native alphabet that he had created, as he was determined to more fully comprehend the Mi'kmaq language. As additional testimony to their opposing stance to the British, both Maillard and LeLoutre were captured and imprisoned by the British military during King George's War, or the Fifth Anglo-Wabanaki War (1744-48) for their participation in the war as ministers for the French soldiers and their Wabanaki allies.[245] Affirming their political siding with the French, the Mi'kmaq recognized the priests' efforts, which eventually developed into a positive, trusting relationship between the French and the Catholic Church and also presaged initial indexes of inculturation.

The vocabulary used in government appeals, petitions and requests demonstrate the Mi'kmaq's thorough comprehension of English law, especially in terms of protections, privileges, and rights. It also implies that they had assistance from individuals who truly cared about their concerns, supported their cause, and were capable of articulating their arguments with clarity and persuasion. There is much evidence of this white-native alliance and assistantship in nineteenth century Cape Breton as well, particularly when it came to the land of Chapel Island. In 1841, Father Julien Courteau, a priest whom the colonial authorities believed to be "most in communication with the Indians," was appointed to the Catholic mission of L'Ardoise, a

[243] Prins, *The Mi'kmaq: Resistance, Accommodation, and Cultural Survival*, 141-142.
[244] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.
[245] Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867*, 46-47.

neighboring reservation to Chapel Island. Courteau assisted the Mi'kmaq in writing petitions for land possession in 1848, 1851, and 1867, not only for Chapel Island but other reserves around the Bras d'Or Lake, including Eskasoni.[246] The Mi'kmaq associated this physical act of communication with a sense of cultural agency as well as a willingness to come together as separate cultures, creating a connection that lead to a dynamic social hybrid. The visual aspect of converting the Mi'kmaq language into written form carries with it a sense of agency as well, intervening on the thoughts and actions of those who read it, by projecting a symbol of cultural strength and permanence.

The fact that the Mi'kmaq pursued the support of familiar priests and church officials for political conflicts is not unexpected, but rather corresponds with their extensive history and experiences with the Christian religion. The introduction of Christianity in the early seventeenth century and the virtually uninterrupted company of Catholic missions amongst Cape Breton's First Nations populations throughout the French Regime, when politically strategic exchanges were founded on ritual, religion, and hybrid customs, formed a bond between the Mi'kmaq and the Church that allowed for the endurance of indigenous lands, languages, and traditions. This long-established relationship with Catholicism not only provided the opportunity for the Mi'kmaq to interact and work with the clergy of Cape Breton Island, but offered those writing the petitions and letters a religious rhetoric, which they utilized to convey their remonstrations.[247] Even today, the Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton hold strong to their Catholic faith, four hundred years after the celebrated baptism of Grand Chief Membertou, no doubt owing largely to the powerful connection established by the Jesuit missionaries and Catholic priests of the colonial era. This is even evident in the Mi'kmaq National Flag, raised in Halifax in 1901 (Figure 48) and still used

[246] Anselme Chiasson, *Chéticamp: History and Acadian Traditions* (Wreck Cove, Cape Breton: Breton Books, 1998), 97-100.
[247] James Youngblood Henderson, *The Míkmaw Concordat* (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 1997).

today. The cross on the right is a symbol of the Christian cross and the white, red and blue colours of the flag represent the Holy Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[248] The imagery of two crossed spear-tipped flag poles that seem to emanate rays through the opening created by their crossing, could simulate the fruitful outcome of the joining of two nations. This powerful image is itself an index of inculturation and a tool for the continuation of a positive and beneficial relationship. Yet it is important to recognize that this relationship was more compulsory than completely willing and that there was not always a balanced exchange of power like the image suggest.

The Nature of Mi'kmaq Spiritualism: Hybrid Traditions

Nearly any subject on the topic of Aboriginal spirituality in North America will mention its affiliation with Christianity, and this is especially true of Mi'kmaq spirituality. In her article, "Indigenous Identity: What Is It, and Who Really Has It?," Hilary Weaver shares a common frustrating Mi'kmaq experience: "Some people ask, 'Are you Indian or are you Christian?' as if these are two mutually exclusive categories."[249] Other First Nations people have expressed similar convictions in regards to Christianity and Catholicism, specifically. Mi'kmaq Elder Florence stated, "Catholicism is a thick layer that covers Mi'kmaqness in the people."[250] Another Elder, Karen, claims that, "The Catholic Church is our real tradition."[251] In fact most Mi'kmaq today agree that the theosophies of Catholicism and Mi'kmaq spirituality are so interwoven that they cannot be completely distinguished from one another. Scholars believe that the two religions fuse together in a variety of ways, producing a "wide range of individual manifestations

[248] "Prominent flags of the Mi'Kmaq Nation," First Nations History – by Daniel N. Paul, accessed August 18, 2014, http://www.danielnpaul.com/Mi'kmaqFlags.html.
[249] Hilary N. Weaver, "Indigenous Identity: What Is It, and Who Really Has It?" *American Indian Quarterly* 25:2 (2001): 251.
[250] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 183. (Personal Communication, October 29, 2003.)
[251] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 183. (Personal Communication, February 14, 2004.)

of religiosity."[252] This fusion forms the networks of relationships and cultural exchange, and these are the interstitial moments through which the developments of inculturation transpire throughout Cape Breton.

It is quite challenging and somewhat problematic to separate the traditional native and Catholic elements in the Mi'kmaq belief system. As in the Anishnaabeg societies of Manitoulin Island, there exists a conviction among some Mi'kmaq people, typically referred to amoung indigenous people as "traditionalists," that simply refuses Catholicism and the Church altogether as the source of traditional native spirituality, yet this group is much smaller and more segregated than the Ojibwa traditionalists. The majority of Indigenous people in Nova Scotia practice personal or communal hybrids of traditional and Catholic spiritual customs and agree that they experience these two religious identities in complete harmony, as one faith.[253] The structural way in which the two cultures have integrated and the hybrid of their resulting religious lifestyle is the most progressive and synthesized form of inculturation I have encountered throughout my research. The ways of life exhibited by the Mi'kmaq people, and other inculturated Native Americans, suggests a great deal of agency in their religious choices. The Mi'kmaq do not feel that the customs and rituals they chose to practice necessarily conflict with one another despite originating from different places and peoples, or as though they are breaking the 'rules' of either Catholicism or native traditionalism.[254]

For Elders such as Margaret Millbrook, the traditions coexist in a way that complement one another. She feels that within the fusion, their spirituality is intensified to a greater level than if they attempted to divide the traditions. Elder Margaret explains, "The Catholic Church and the

[252] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 135.
[253] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 184.
[254] James Treat, "Introduction: Native Christian Narrative Discourse," in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.

traditional ways are not mutually exclusive. People go to church and go to a sweat. Respect for other people's choices is very important. So everybody can do whatever they want."[255] To dichotomize the broad categories of Christian and Aboriginal as entirely separate entities is to disregard the personal agency of indigenous Christians.[256] This type of understanding reinforces Bhabha's notion of the 'Other', further distancing the two cultures, when in actuality, there is a much more complex situation than a simple merging of two separate categories. The plurality of spiritual identities, backgrounds, and practices are what arise in the interstitial space between fixed groups of race and religion. This space supports a form of cultural hybridity that stimulates individual difference while allowing individuals to unite as a community. The resulting hybrid social environment disrupts the dichotomy between two original categories by generating an entirely new phenomenon. It is not simply a mixture of two cultures, acquiring equal parts of each, but a new tradition altogether, the experience of completely new practices that are specifically appropriate for the Mi'kmaq. Many of whom I spoke with during my visit to Cape Breton, expressed similar beliefs and experienced an individual form of inculturated religion in their everyday lives.

All of these elements of settlement history in Nova Scotia and the social, visual and spiritual network that surround them have a lasting effect on the lifestyles of the Mi'kmaq and a continuing influence the rituals and practices that take place there today. They also produce the spaces in which the Mi'kmaq experience their religious lives, which themselves demonstrate revealing aspects about the hybridity of their spirituality and how inculturation is expressed in that community. Through the communal act of construction and furnishing, the society that creates and surrounds these spaces has produced examples of hybrid visual culture. All parties

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[255] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 109. (Personal Communication, January 24, 2004.)
[256] Treat, "Introduction: Native Christian Narrative Discourse," 10.

involved, missionaries, settlers and Mi'kmaq, used elements of their own visual traditions as a tool for cultural exchange, union, communication and persuasion. Along with the aspect of language translation and converting oral language to written form, these exchanges were also marked by visualization gathered from different people, places and traditions. The amalgamation of these different visual elements can be understood as a symbol of the political cycle and cultural consolidation; an extension of their understanding of what community is.

Potlotek First Nations: Perseverance Against Powerful Adversaries

I will now turn to a discussion of the two First Nations reserves on Cape Breton I chose to examine as case studies, as a lens through which to analyze religious inculturation of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Potlotek First Nations is also known as Chapel Island, referring to the small island off the coast of the reservation, where the St. Anne's Mission is held every year in late July (Figure 49, 50). As stated earlier, the island has served many functions, both religious and practical, for the Mi'kmaq who've either inhabited or visited the region before and after European contact. Grounded on a subsistence economy which extended throughout the colonization period, Chapel Island has a history of Mi'kmaq resilience; it stands today as an emblem of their victory over the British enterprise in the numerous battles over their rights to the land. However, in the mid-twentieth century, the residents of Potlotek endured their most challenging conflict against the federal government for the land, during efforts to carry out the Centralization Policy. Although the policy was never entirely realized, this endeavor would severely affect the structure of the social nexus for the Mi'kmaq for decades to come.

Developed by the Indian Affairs bureaucrats in Ottawa, centralization was conceived as a response to the state of poverty on the reservations, yet the government's intention was not simply to improve their economic condition, but to eventually engender cultural extinction.

Implemented in 1942, centralization attempted to accomplish several things, including reducing administration expenses by shoehorning the indigenous populations across Nova Scotia into two central reserves: the Mi'kmaq in Cape Breton were to relocate to Eskasoni and those on the mainland, to Shubenacadie. Not surprisingly, most Mi'kmaq families ignored and protested against this policy for as long as they could fight off the authorities, knowing that the promises of jobs and new homes would not be realized. When the Native people refused to leave their homes or eventually returned to their original residences, the government abandoned its attempt to segregate the Mi'kmaq and by 1950, centralization had ended.[257] Although it was never fully implemented, the force of centralization displaced a significant number of First Nations in Potlotek and across Cape Breton, causing the destruction of communities and a severe loss of culture.[258] As Mi'kmaq people left their homes to move to other reservations or areas of Nova Scotia, they brought with them their native traditions and cultural lifestyles, which often fused with the lifestyles of the societies with which they were integrated. Those who eventually returned to Potlotek, often brought with them the foreign traditions they had adopted during the years they were away, and this generated a complex amalgam of cultural native values and practices in the community.

Lillian Marshall, a Potlotek Elder who lived through the devastations of centralization, spoke of her experiences during these difficult years and the horrible impact it had on their people:

> My father fought against it. We lost all our leaders, we lost the Chief. Some people were fooled by the promises – rewards if they move, like homes, and no one got anything, it was all false. […] When everybody started moving, it was very hard for me. I was only about 10 years old. I lost friends from school every day. I finally lost 21 members of my Mi'kmaq family. There was a split in the community. My father became a leader of those who refused to move. They started having meetings and fighting the government's

[257] "Centralization - Kitu'-mawo'lulkwek," Accessed 3 March 2014, http://www.cbu.ca/mrc/contemporary-mikmaq.
[258] "Centralization - Kitu'-mawo'lulkwek," Accessed 3 March 2014.

> policy. […] It killed our culture. All the people moved away, leaders, prayer leaders were lost. It was also during the war. So there were some men who went to war and when they came back, their friends and family weren't there anymore. A lot of people in Eskasoni are originally from here.[259]

Although at one time Potlotek was prosperous economically and industrially, the circumstances deteriorated with the loss of population over the course of colonialism and more dramatically during the attempts of the centralization policy on the mid-twentieth century, however, the spiritual relevance of the reserve is strong, stable, and reinforced each year through Chapel Island's St. Anne's Mission.

Spiritualism of Potlotek: St. Anne's Mission and the Potlotek Chapel

St. Anne represents the biblical figure of the mother of Mary, the grandmother of Jesus.[260] She was appointed as the patron Saint of the Mi'kmaq in the seventeenth century by the Jesuit missionaries who saw a connection between the story of St. Anne and traditional Mi'kmaq beliefs. In the Mi'kmaq traditional story of Kluscap, a Mi'kmaq cultural hero and icon, a vital figure named "Grandmother" has mythical powers and healing abilities. The "Grandmother", like St. Anne, symbolizes an Elder, and her valuable work with suffering Mi'kmaq is often related to the Christian Saint who also worked with the sick, and sheltered the young, the elderly and childbearing women.[261] In honor of St. Anne, hundreds of Mi'kmaq come together on Chapel Island each year for social, political and religious discussions and ceremonies. A commemorative stone (Figure 51) and informational plaque (Figure 55) rest on the coast of Potlotek, across from the island. This annual intermingling of Catholic and native rituals is not only fun and gratifying for those who participate but also serves to maintain relationships

[259] Personal Communication – Interview with Lillian Marshall, December, 2013.
[260] Donald Attwater, *A Dictionary of Saints* (London: Penguin Publishing, 1965), 186.
[261] Anne-Christine Hornborg, "St Anne's Day – A Time to "Turn Home" for the Canadian Mi'kmaq Indians," *International Review of Mission* 91:361(2002): 238.

between the bands of Nova Scotia.[262] The cultural activity of the St. Anne's Mission is an index of inculturation that helps shape the identity of the Mi'kmaq and their opinion regarding the Catholic Church. It is a religious ceremony which ultimately derives from a Catholic source yet is unlike any Catholic pilgrimage since it is specifically focused on the culture, lifestyle and values of Nova Scotia First Nations. This activity of gathering for a weekend-long celebration stimulates ritual activity by renewing lost or declining traditional practices such as fishing, crafts, sweats, and powwows. It is also an event where many significant political discussions are held between band chiefs and leaders. Thus the ceremony can be understood as a literal tool which the Mi'kmaq utilize every year to support the preservation their culture.

Despite the popularity of the St. Anne's Mission, today's residents of Potlotek do not have their own Catholic church and must attend non-native churches off the reserve at one of the four churches of the Eastern Richmond County Catholic Parishes if they wish to participate in a weekly mass. However, a small chapel is located in the community hall, across the street from the Potlotek Band Office, where they have occasional religious services, such as the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which I attended in December, 2013. Like Kateri Tekakwitha Parish in Winnipeg and the Church of Immaculate Conception in West Bay, this space is clearly intended for a Native-Catholic congregation and visually bears symbols of both traditions (Figure 53). Many symbols found here reflect the Mi'kmaq culture specifically, such as the Grand Council flag (Figure 54), the Mi'kmaq Star with the colours of the medicine wheel (Figure 55), Christian prayers written in Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs (Figure 56), as well as some local artwork (Figure 57). The space also incorporates several pan-Indian symbols, including the decorative miniature teepees (Figure 58) and figures of Kateri Tekakwitha (Figure 59). There is a noticeable emphasis on the use of wood in the furniture, altar (Figure 60) and above all, the

[262] Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival," 92.

chapel ceiling (Figure 61, 62). Not only aesthetically pleasing, the use of wood can symbolize their endurance as a people as well as their profound respect for nature. During my visit to the chapel, I also came across a very similar tabernacle to the one found in the Church of Immaculate Conception (Figure 63). The wooden tabernacle is also in the shape of a triangle with a carved wooden cross on the front. One of the Mi'kmaq women in the chapel told me that she ordered this particular tabernacle for the chapel as the shape of the triangle, in Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs, designates "God". For the Mi'kmaq of Potlotek, the triangle in this case has great significance and is a recurring shape found throughout the chapel. The ceiling panels form continuous triangles within the star-like pattern of the roof and there are three triangular skylight windows inserted in this formation that allow natural sunlight to illuminate the altar below (Figure 64). This is a quite different reaction to the shape of the triangle than reactions seen at the Church of Immaculate Conception in West Bay, where parishioners rejected it as a generic symbol of a teepee. In this space, the triangle is eminent and signifies a completely different prototype. For the Mi'kmaq here, this symbol is a visual hybrid formed during initial exchanges of communication and establishment of written language. Its formation and continued use is an index of inculturation in that it reflects the concept of the Christian God, adapted through the Mi'kmaq world view and expressed in their native written hieroglyphs. All of these parish objects discussed are not simply signifiers of "nativeness," but the means through which inculturation manifests itself in Potlotek and they express agency by inciting ritual action.

Whilst I attended the mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I noticed the casual structure of the liturgy, led by Fr. Mariadoss Lourdusamy, who only comes to Potlotek for special occasions. The first song was "Oh Come All Ye Faithful." Those who knew the words in Mi'kmaq sang in the traditional language while the rest sang in English. Other Christmas songs were sung in

Mi’kmaq over the course of the ceremony. The first reading was in English and the second reading was completely in Mi’kmaq by Lillian Marshall, a well-known and respected Potlotek Elder. During the liturgy, it was clear that many were not very familiar with the prayers, gestures, and responses of typical Catholic services and the children who served the altar were inexperienced, yet helped out Fr. Lourdusamy as he instructed them throughout the rituals. This is not surprising considering the infrequency of these services in their community. Many do not have the means to travel to any of the four Eastern Richmond County Catholic Parishes in L’Ardoise, Barra Head, St. Peter’s, or River Bourgeois every Sunday morning, or may not desire to attend these parishes as they do not acknowledge their specific Mi’kmaq traditions. This celebration seemed to be more about the community gathering together for a Christmastime mass, a chance for them to engage with one another on a spiritual level which, for the people of Potlotek, is rather rare. The celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe as well as the St. Anne’s Mission reflect the operation through which inculturation is expressed in the social nexus of their community. The Mi’kmaq of Potlotek are primarily in charge of the presence, operations and continuation of these religious events, demonstrating how they actively retain a strong connection with the Church despite not having a weekly mass of their own. Yet these active and living religious expressions are deeply infused with hybrid elements that specifically reflect their history and cultural identity.

The spiritual and religious expressions of the Mi’kmaq on this reservation take a personal and individual form, and these expressions are diverse, altering from person to person. There may be little unanimity among religious customs and perhaps if Potlotek had a native church of their own with weekly services, their practices would be more collective, consistent and synonymous. Although this may not necessarily be the best solution for the Mi’kmaq here since

there is such a clear respect for individual choices, beliefs and the plurality of religious expression. Homogenizing religious doctrine and traditions might take away from this pluralistic aspect and prevent the Potlotek of Mi'kmaq from maintaining these individual differences of expression. Many Mi'kmaq also feel that there is still a lack of inculturation in the Catholic Church. Lillian Marshall says she would like to see more native practices, such as smudging, incorporated in the Mi'kmaq services:

> I want more of our language to be used in the church, in the readings (not just songs and prayers), even if it's just once a month. I also want the priests to say the Our Father in Mi'kmaq. […] I learned my prayers in my language and they are more meaningful to me. I can say them in English but they don't need as much even though I understand them.[263]

Despite the belief that the level of inculturation of the Church might not be as advanced as they would like, many still recognize the efforts and the change they have seen throughout the course of their lives. Wilbert Marshall is the Chief of Potlotek First Nations and he remembers growing up in Potlotek and the gradual acceptance and inclusion of traditional native customs:

> I am Catholic, but over here, with our kids, we're trying to bring back the traditional things. I think that's the way the Church has to go now, they need to accept us, and I think they are, in this area anyway. Before, they didn't used to like the powwows and other native stuff going on at the same time [as Christian ceremonies] but now, they're starting to mix it together. The priests around here are interested and willing to get involved with us. The way I was brought up, you respect your elders and you respect the priest.[264]

Some Mi'kmaq identify their Catholic practices as different from their indigenous spiritual practices and there may be variations in the way they incorporate these together. However, like Wilbert, most feel that their Christian lives and their traditional lives do not conflict with one another. Wilbert explains, "I don't think there is a tension [between Christian and Native] but some people do, some traditionalists for example. But for me, it's all one life.

[263] Personal Communication – Interview with Lillian Marshall, December, 2013.
[264] Personal Communication – Interview with Wilbert Marshall, December, 2013.

We respect all the traditions, especially the St. Anne's mission"[265] It seems as though the majority of those in Potlotek do not acknowledge a cultural difference in their spiritual lives but celebrate them as one; neither negates the other. Perhaps the deliberate pressure of the Church to become inculturated might actually be contributing to the dichotomy between Christian and Native by pulling out traditional First Nations spiritual elements to exalt, when way the people of Potlotek have always practiced religion does not recognize this distinction.

When asked about the notion of inculturation and the Church's gradual resolution to celebrate Native American values and customs, Wilbert, from his perspective as chief, believes that the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq east coast general sentiment is in favor of inculturation. He supposes that the progress towards inculturation that he sees and experiences is not so much on the part of the Church at large, but is carried out more locally and is a result of the priests on the reservations, working with the Mi'kmaq who may not be answering to or obeying the wishes of the bishops or the diocese. The way that inculturation is being carried out here and in other reserves across Canada is primarily the product of the individual efforts of the people living in those areas, not necessarily what the Church as an institution may have in mind in terms of becoming further "inculturated." For Mi'kmaq people all across Cape Breton, the St. Anne's Mission is a time of spiritual rejuvenation, especially for those of Potlotek who do not have the opportunity to participate in weekly services at a native church. Undeterred by this absence, Potlotek holds strong to its spiritual values, only in more private, diverse, and sometimes unconventional ways.

Eskasoni First Nations: The Archetype of Inculturation?

In Nova Scotia, the indigenous lands have produced fertile soil for Christianity to grow and spread, and there are numerous explanations for this occurrence. While the prominent religious

[265] Personal Communication – Interview with Wilbert Marshall, December, 2013.

congregations such as the Huguenots and the Jesuits worked diligently to convert the First Nations communities they encountered during colonialism, they were also simultaneously helping to build schools, hospitals and homes, which arguably improved the lives of the Mi'kmaq. There exists an abundance of evidence of sisters of Notre Dame and St. Martha who spent their lives educating and improving the health of native peoples.[266] Though this evidence also illustrates the numerous difficulties of this historic encounter, reservations like Eskasoni First Nations arose from the solemnity of colonization with their language and culture unbroken. Of course, many members of the Church did not share the cultural respect of those who were more successful in evangelizing the gospel to the indigenous people, but in Eskasoni in particular, the Church has proved to be a friendly and devoted religious cradle for the Mi'kmaq.[267] Speaking of Eskasoni, Alexander J. Macdonald has stated, "The Church has opened her doors to indigenous people, given to them the love of Christ, but also received from indigenous people rich aspects of their cultural identity."[268] The community here attests to the Mi'kmaq voice being received and paid attention to on a large scale level by the Church, and they are united with billions of others across the world in a mutual vocalization for humankind.

Every Sunday, the people of Eskasoni gather to celebrate the Eucharist at the Holy Family Parish (Figure 65), the communal and spiritual centre of the reserve. Two things are instantly obvious once inside the church: this parish is clearly Catholic, and this parish is clearly Mi'kmaq (Figure 66). Compared to other native parishes across Cape Breton, services are generally quite full and there is frequent participation in sacraments, principally in confession.

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[266] See Mother Caroline Friess, *The letters of Mother Caroline Friess, School Sisters of Notre Dame: 1824-1892* (Saint Louis, Missouri: School Sisters of Notre Dame, 1991); Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, *The American foundations of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, compiled from the annals of their convents by a member of the congregation* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Dolphin press, 1928); and Heidi Macdonald, "Maintaining an influence: the sisters of Saint Martha, Charlottetown, respond to social and religious change, 1965-85," *Atlantis* 32:1 (Fall 2007): 89-100.
[267] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.
[268] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.

Baptisms are particularly popular communal occasions, bringing in hundreds of Mi'kmaq who assemble for a festivity that lasts for days. They lie among a largely secular and indifferent society, perpetually leaving its faith behind, and still, Eskasoni's Holy Family Parish is flourishing.[269] Father Martin MacDougall has been the parish priest for a little over ten years and since his arrival, the general quantity of parishioners may have decreased slightly due principally to deaths and relocations, and the number of weekly masses has dropped from three to two. This does not discourage Fr. MacDougall. "The congregation had dropped off some but they'll all come back, not every Sunday, but they know who I am, even if they rarely step foot in the church. But they do, for weddings and funerals. Funerals here are packed right to the rafters."[270] It is evident that the people of Eskasoni support one another in times of loss, moreover in any significant occasion of their spiritual an emotional lives. At Holy Family Parish, the interest and participation are what propel ritual activity, and the rituals, in turn, impel further community involvement. The space is activated by the rituals performed within it. The space therefore self-perpetuates a social nexus of community identity, which builds a strong sense of Catholic Mi'kmaq unity in Eskasoni.

Eskasoni enjoys the freedom of having religious celebrations that, through the practices and the visual elements, demonstrate the hybridity of the space and the parishioners' desire to rejoice in Mi'kmaq spiritual traditions. The Mi'kmaq symbols are found in every corner of the space, intensifying its visual hybrid and heightening the impact of native culture within the Catholic liturgy. The animal skin altar table cloth (Figure 67) is richly adorned with beadwork of flowers and the Mi'kmaq hieroglyphic symbol of the Eucharist, integrating Mi'kmaq cultural elements onto the sacred surface. On the altar table alongside the Missal, rests an eagle feather

[269] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.
[270] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Martin MacDougall, December, 2013.

(Figure 68), which is never supposed to touch the ground, adorned with beads representing the colours of the medicine wheel. The eagle is a deeply respected and valued creature since it is believed to be the only animal to have "touched the face of the Great Spirit."[271] Used in many traditional rituals and religious ceremonies, it has a powerful spiritual and physical presence as it represents the medium through which they can experience the existence of the Great Spirit in their lives. For the Mi'kmaq, possessing a claw or feather of an eagle is a sign of cultural status and respect.[272] The common figure of Kateri Tekakwitha reappears here in wooden sculptures (Figure 69). The baptismal font is also wooden with a mosaic detail that circles the edge (Figure 70). It seems to be vital to the congregation that the sacred objects in the church reflect aspects of traditional Mi'kmaq beliefs and practices through the language and materials used and they respond to these objects through ritual, such as praying before Kateri Tekakwitha and using the eagle feather during confessions and for smudging. The hybridity of these visual elements makes them difficult to place within standard categories of art, bringing forth the ambiguity of the interstitial space in which they exist.

Perhaps the most visible recurring symbols of all are the Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs that can be found all throughout the church; on the altar, on the walls (Figure 71), and in books (Figure 72). The hieroglyphic symbols are important to the Mi'kmaq as they signify the first existence of indigenous writing in North America and the prayers have provided a means of spiritual instruction and a generational bond for "passing down a unique religious and linguistic heritage."[273] Holy Family Parish contains seven stained glass windows depicting events in the life of Jesus (Figure 73). Over each of the windows, and an extra one over the side door, you will

[271] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.
[272] "Sacred Symbols, Customs and Values: The Eagle Feather," Mi'kmaq Association for Cultural Studies, accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.mikmaqculture.com/index.php/mikmaq_history_culture/songs.
[273] Campbell, "Bridging Sacred Canopies," 303.

find a stained glass hieroglyphic symbol for the Sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist/Communion, Confession/Penance, the Holy Orders, Marriage, and the Extreme Unction/the Sacrament of the Sick (Figures 74-77). Most of the Mi'kmaq symbols and objects were present in the Church before Fr. Martin MacDougall's arrival at Holy Family Parish in 2003, including the eagle feather, the Mi'kmaq Star, and the statues of Kateri Tekakwitha. The stained glass windows, however, was an addition set forth by Fr. MacDougall. Similar windows had been created for a church in Whycocomagh First Nations in West Cape Breton and the people of Eskasoni desired them for their own space. Fr. MacDougall commissioned the same artist to create the windows which now belong to the Holy Family Parish. Nearly everything else in the parish had been there prior to Fr. MacDougall's position as priest, and were acquired by Mi'kmaq in the community, which further demonstrates the ways in which the Church represents Eskasoni's own adaptation of Catholicism, rather than following a formulated path.[274] The emphasis on the Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs serves to encourage the use of the traditional native language, not only in the Church during services but this influence carries out into their daily lives and the perpetuation of their Mi'kmaq identity.

As for the practices that go on throughout the liturgy, the Mi'kmaq have made Holy Family Parish a place of their own. Parishioners arrive early to pray in silence or to mingle with one another. Many children are involved in altar service and young Mi'kmaq teens are encouraged to participate by delivering the readings. Accompanied by acoustic guitars, the large choir sings with cheerful passion a mixture of English and Mi'kmaq songs. The Our Father is always prayed in the native language and even Fr. MacDougall recites it in Mi'kmaq. This concordant fusion produces observable testimony to the Church's newfound acceptance of First Nations culture and their willingness to embrace the spiritual elements it has to offer so that

[274] Personal Communication – Interview with Fr. Martin MacDougall, December, 2013.

Christianity may benefit from the native traditions that have been helping to shape it since the era of missionary encounter.[275] I can look at the objects and the space of this contemporary religious expression in Eskasoni as a device of cultural preservation to understand the complex cultural cross-fertilization of missionary encounter and postcolonial conciliation.

The Sweat Lodge – Living the Catholic and Traditional Life as One

During my visit to Eskasoni, I had the privilege of being invited to a sweat lodge ceremony; one of the most common and widespread native rituals in North America. Despite its popularity, there is little consistency across sweats from tribe to tribe, and even from sweat to sweat within one community. Each sweat varies in attendance, prayers, songs, intentions, meanings, content, and outcome. The main purpose of a sweat is spiritual healing although it is also believed to have a physically advantageous cleansing influence. The sweat lodge, or wigwam (Figure 78) is built to offer a holy and protected space so that those inside may focus on the spiritual beings that join them during the ceremony. There are some general commonalities across the procedural tasks of sweats such as heating rocks on a fire outside of the wigwam and transporting them inside once they are hot enough, pouring water onto them, splitting the ceremony in rounds of prayers and songs, and entering and exiting the lodge in a particular way.[276]

The sweat I attended in December served both men and women, had four rounds, and lasted altogether nearly two hours. Each round was devoted to a different specific ritual. The first round included Mi'kmaq songs and drumming, led by one person in the circle, and is devoted to the preservation and celebration of Mi'kmaq culture. In the second round, everyone attending the sweat has the opportunity to dedicate a special prayer to someone in their lives, and each person around the circle takes a turn. The third round comprises of Mi'kmaq songs and prayers for the

[275] Macdonald, "Why are Natives Such Good Catholics?" 16.
[276] Poliandri, *First Nations, Identity, and Reserve Life*, 143.

deceased, the forgotten, and the lost. Finally, in the last round, religious songs are sung, including a musical version of the prayer, the Our Father. This final round was of particular interest to me, as it seems to represent an entirely indigenous-originating tradition with Catholic songs and prayers that have been inserted into it. I realized this is not the way the Mi'kmaq of Eskasoni viewed the sweats, with a division of Christian and traditional. Those who joined me during the sweat told me they were all Christians, they prayed to God, the Creator, and that was what the sweat lodge is about. They did not acknowledge a difference between the two but are actually generating the fusion themselves. The sweat is another ritual which demonstrates an index of inculturation but in this case, the Church has virtually nothing to do with it. The ceremony is wholly led by Mi'kmaq people, culture, and language, emphasizing their agency in terms of contribution to inculturation and desire to retain the Christian elements of their spiritual lives within their traditional Mi'kmaq practices. Just as I experienced during the mass at the Holy Family Parish, the Mi'kmaq of Eskasoni live their Catholic and native spiritual lives as one, and this is what has allowed for a highly successful and effective form of religious inculturation.

Inculturation – A Two-Way Device

It should be clear by now that it is overly simplistic to presuppose that a complex cultural anomaly such as Mi'kmaq Catholicism was solely inflicted by outside forces, or developed as a reaction to structural constraints. The Mi'kmaq appropriated Catholicism because they saw an opportunity to not only to maintain their ties as a community but survive as a culture. The sustained rituals, ceremonies, and pilgrimages and the use of hieroglyphic prayers validate the enduring progressions of social encounter, communication, interaction and perception that are tremendously influential in the formulation and conservation of cultural identity.[277] The hybrid outcome of colonial encounter in Cape Breton and the art, spaces and languages produced in

[277] Campbell, "Bridging Sacred Canopies," 303.

response attests to Bailey's studies as well in terms of using innovative visual approaches as a tool for conversion, communication and agreeable integration. The nature of inculturation has certainly changed over the last four hundred years. To the Mi'kmaq, the religion they experienced at the early stages of colonialism seemed to be a non-threatening, potentially beneficial aspect of these new settlers' lifetstyles, especially if they were able to preserve their culture and heritage through the help of the Jesuits and Church officials. Today the efforts at inculturation are more obligatory on the part of the Church that now searches for harmony among the First Nations people they serve. However, it is not solely the Church that is becoming progressively inculturated to accommodate the indigenous populations. The Mi'kmaq have shown that inculturation is a tool; an instrument they too employed throughout colonization when manoeuvering through stages of change, adjustment, dilemma, or crisis.

CONCLUSION

The final visual analysis of this thesis is of a painting which I believe embodies the notion of spiritual inculturation between Canada's First Nations and the Church through its use of skillful integration and hybrid symbolism. Blake Debassige, a renowned Ojibwa Manitoulin Island artist, may not be aware of the concept, yet his influential painting, "Tree of Life" (Figure 79) has certainly had an impact on the artists of the region, notably the "Woodland School," and on spiritually perceptive art of its kind.[278] The image, coupled with an illuminating artist statement, has even brought insight to the nature of Aboriginal Christianity for scholars involved in the subject. It is the cover image of Michael Stogre's significant book, *That the World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights* (1992), the first and only project of its kind. In the artist's statement, Debassige describes what his painting represents in the eyes of an Anishnaabeg. It is a celebration of life with a focus on community vision. Although the painting is clearly rendered in a native artistic style heavily influenced by Norval Morisseau (flat surfaces, heavy outlines, bright colors, sharp edges and line repetition) and thematically falls in line with the "second generation" Ojibwa artists of his time[279] (stylized birds, animal spirits and moons), Debassige places Christian iconography front and center.

His painting, "Tree of Life," portrays a flat pine tree with several horizontal branches from which various birds are perched with an owl leaning over the very top branch. The tree also includes faces representing those who have passed along, looking downward along the branches, and those still present, facing outward along the trunk. A native stylized Christ on the cross is shown hanging within the tree, even becoming a part of it, as knots and growth rings form along his body. One could read this as an asseveration that Christianity is at the roots of, or deeply

[278] "Blake Randolph Debassige," The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed September 5, 2014, http://www. thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/blake-randolph-debassige.html.
[279] "Blake Randolph Debassige," http://www. thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/blake-randolph-debassige.html.

ingrained in the spiritual community in West Bay and within all Christian aboriginals across Canada. Debassige's version of Christ is meant to represent, as he describes, "an Indian Christ, for the native people adopted him generations ago."[280] The artist is deliberately calling attention to the fact that the First Nations needed to convert Christianity into something that suited their own specific worldview in order to truly consider it a part of their tradition and daily practice. The Christ he has illustrated also holds wild roses in his hands, meant to indicate the ritual offering of flowers when a person has passed away. Like Leland Bell, Blake Debassige is able to produce a peaceful rendering of a highly violent Christian subject matter.

Christian symbolism continues in the depictions of the Holy Trinity, namely the repetition of the number three; three birds sitting along the tree top as well as the circles above them. These could very well signify three moons, reminiscent of Leland Bell's Fifth Station of the Cross, "Simon of Cyrene Goes To Help Jesus," with the three moons suggesting a bridge connecting Christianity to the traditional Anishnaabeg values. Debassige explains that "birds are considered the medium by which the soul travels," therefore each bird he has depicted symbolizes an individual who has passed away but that still has a powerful presence on us today. Perhaps the most enlightening feature in terms of the subject of inculturation which I found was in this quote from the artist's statement:

> The three figures on the lowermost branches: the animal-like form, the human form and the cocoon-shaped figure to the right represent the ancient culture and way of life of the people. They do not figure strongly in the mural but they are still present. Some of the ancient traditions and the language still remain, but there is much lost.[281]

These minimal yet integral elements of the image serve as a reminder of the necessity of inculturation in these particular communities. Even with the changes they have seen, the loss of

[280] Stogre, Michael. *That The World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights* (Quebec: Éditions Paulines, 1992). 4.
[281] Stogre, *That The World May Believe*, 4.

culture is never forgotten. Debassige alludes to the presumption that there is in fact no way to fully reconcile the atrocities of the past. Both parties must continue to make an effort towards finding effective solutions to problems of cultural and spiritual conflict and this image exemplifies this struggle.

"Tree of Life," as well as all of the works which have been discussed throughout this thesis should be understood as '*distributed objects*,' a term founded on a concept which Alfred Gell refers to as a '*corpus*' of aboriginal art, or a "kind of spatio-temporally dispersed 'population'."[282] Rather than originating from some principal governing association or representing a unified whole in any way, these pieces have emerged solely through historical accumulation and removal by way of the systems of social relationships between First Nations (artists, patrons, gifting) and others (scholars, collectors, the Church) of the art nexus within in which they reside.[283] Although from a stylistic perspective, these works have no definite or substantial unification as a distributed object. The rational necessity of the constantly fluctuating context and viewpoint of tradition in an historical aggregation of artefacts indicates that the practice of understanding art history is fundamentally parallel to the development of consciousness itself, which is also characterized by a constant fluctuation of perspective.[284] In other words, any work of art bears the weight of a certain period of time, belonging not solely to the temporal coordinates of a 'now' (the moment of its creation), but to a larger temporal space which extends into the past and is reconfigured back into the present. Therefore I interpret the spaces of worship and the visual and ritual objects pertaining to them as a cognitive movement encompassing collective community memory. Not only does this movement of collective memory reflect the weight of its past, it builds towards aspiration, searching for an unattained,

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[282] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 221.
[283] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 221.
[284] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 256.

and likely unattainable future.[285] By analyzing these hybrid spaces and objects in this way, the 'mind' under analysis can be elucidated from the point of view of these social operations of objectification. These are what represent the developing sensibility and awareness of a collectivity. Therefore it is imperative to examine each community as a separate entity as each has experienced a different history and thus possesses a different set of issues, needs, desires, stimulating a unique native spiritual identity.

Despite the challenges of analyzing religious inculturation through hybrid churches in First Nations communities, the observations made during my visits to each location and each space of worship I encountered have led to certain realizations. I have distinguished significant components regarding the nature of inculturation by recognizing the cultural differences between parishes and parishioners across Canada. This realization denotes that the Church cannot address issues of spiritual hybridity in a unanimous manner for all Christian communities on native reservations. However, one important conclusion that I have come to is that cultural and spiritual diversity is a positive element of the religious lives of Christian natives and should be encouraged rather than attempting to instill unanimity across all Christian dioceses. The initial introduction of inculturation occurred largely as a consequence of the Church's gradual recognition of *difference*. Therefore the acknowledgment of locational differences and individual needs will inevitably engender community appreciation and a feeling of pride, belonging and spiritual freedom. More importantly, it allows for a greater sense of personal agency and authority for the aboriginal members of the Church. It is clear that efforts at religious inculturation are most successful when they are implemented, structured, and carried out by First Nations people. Religious inculturation in Canada had aimed to open its doors to beliefs and practices that, in the past, it had denounced from those they serve. Thus the ones in charge of the

[285] Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, 258.

reimplementation of those beliefs and practices must be those who have directly experienced this loss of culture. The aboriginal rights issues that have provoked this thesis and led to the creation of spaces such as Immaculate Conception, Kateri Tekakwitha, Precious Blood and Holy Family Parish have not yet been resolved. My hope is that by contributing to the preliminary studies of religious inculturation between the Catholic Church and Canada's First Nations, this thesis will encourage further explorations contribute to a more harmonious future for all hybrid religious communities across the nation.

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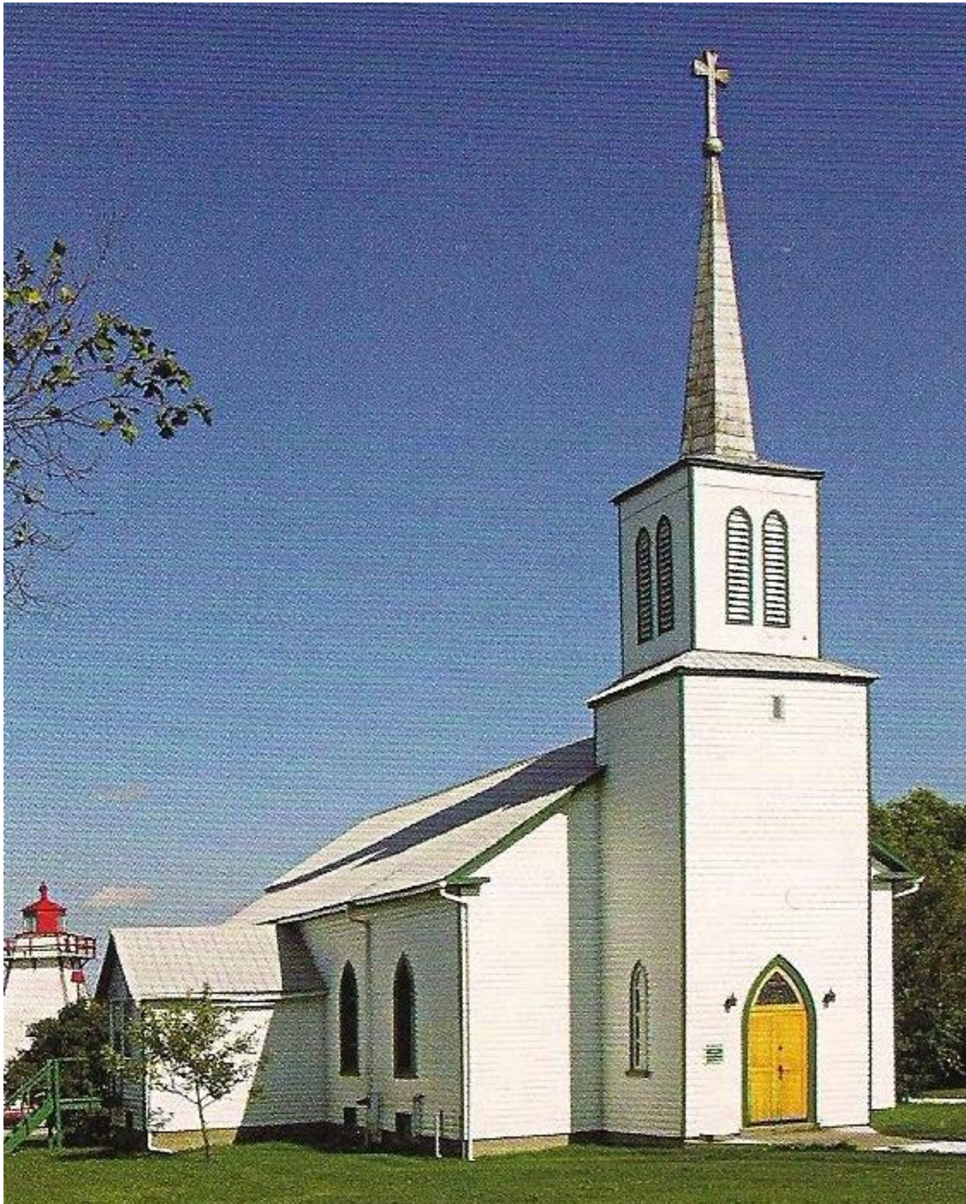
Figure 1

The Church of Immaculate Conception, M'Chigeeng First Nations, West Bay, Manitoulin; 1971-72; Manfred May, architect

Figure 2

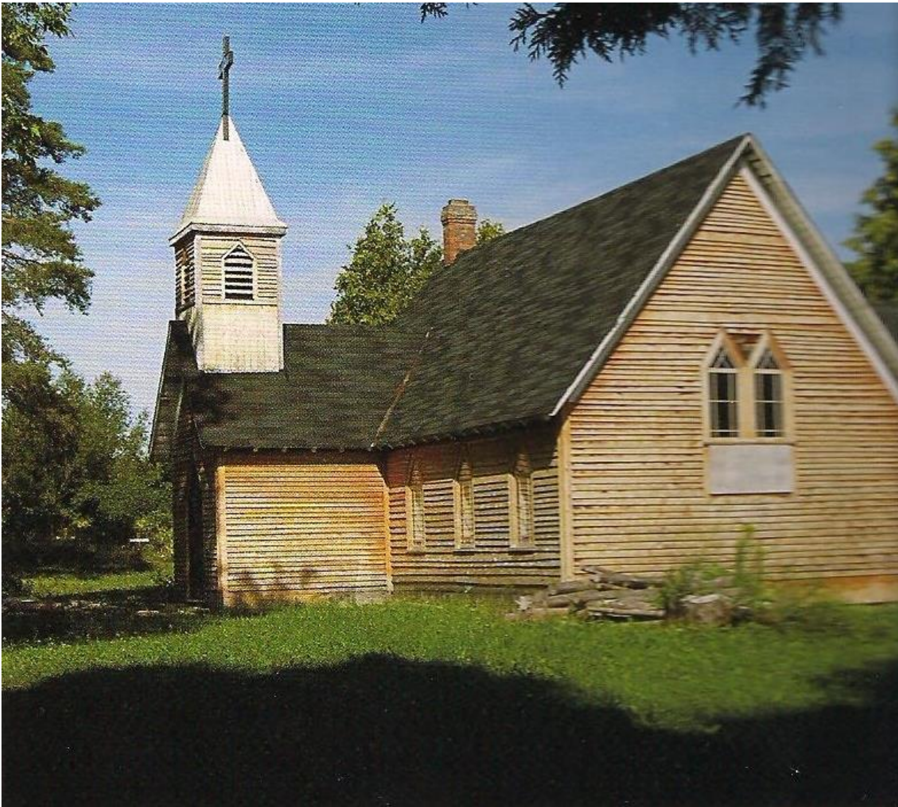
Game of Waltes, Courtesy of Walter Denny, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Ontario.

Figure 3



St. Paul's, Wikwemikong, Manitowaning, Manitoulin; Frame, 1849; builder unknown

Figure 4



St. Andrew's "Old Sheg," Sheguiandah First Nations, Manitoulin; Frame, 1886; builder unknown

Figure 5

Original church bell, placed in church gardens, Immaculate Conception

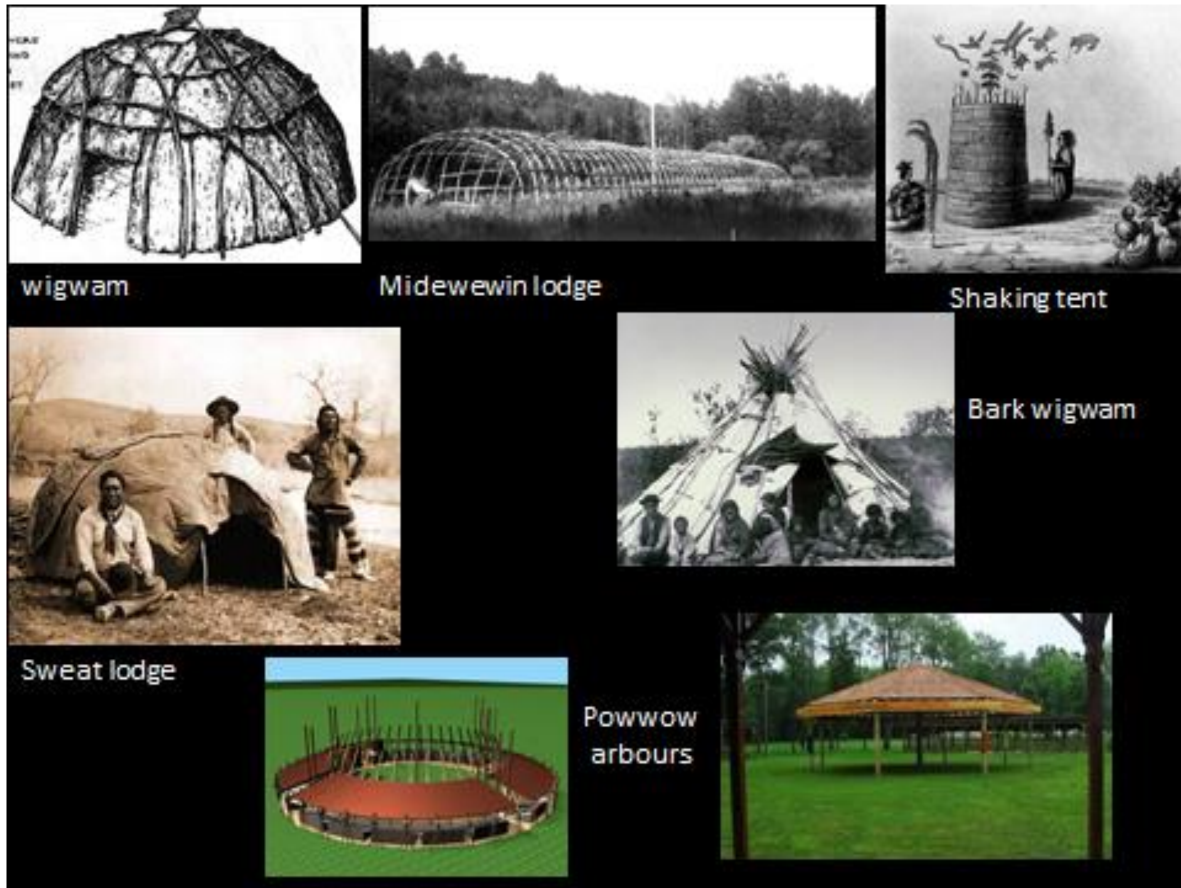
Figure 6

Statue of the Virgin Mary, placed in church gardens, Immaculate Conception

Figure 7

Gravestones of early settlers, Immaculate Conception

Figure 8

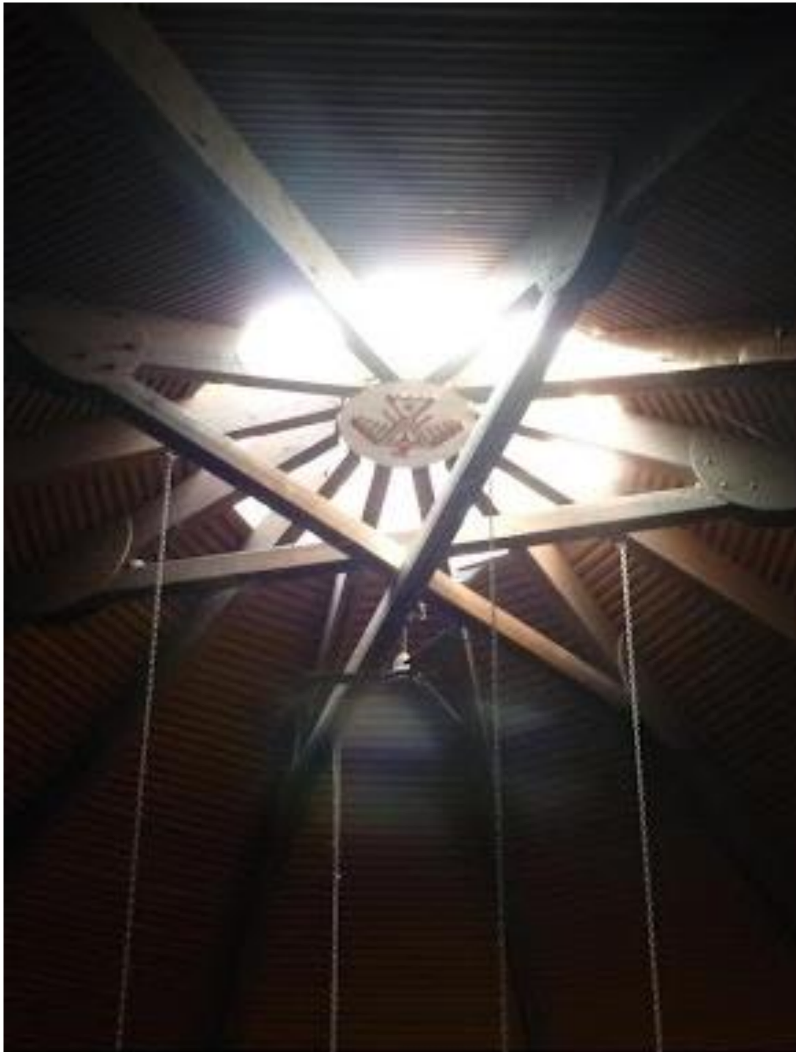


Traditional Anishnaabeg architectural structures; sweat lodge, midewewin lodge, shaking tent, wigwam, powwow arbour

Figure 9

Immaculate Conception, M'Chigeeng First Nations, West Bay, Manitoulin; 1971-72; Manfred May, architect

Figure 10



Central Skylight, Immaculate Conception

Figure 11

Entrance Doors, exterior, Immaculate Conception, by Mervin Debassige

Figure 12

Entrance Doors, interior, by Mervin Debassige, Immaculate Conception

Figure 13

Immaculate Conception, interior view; circular pews and central altar

Figure 14

Rear wall painting, Immaculate Conception

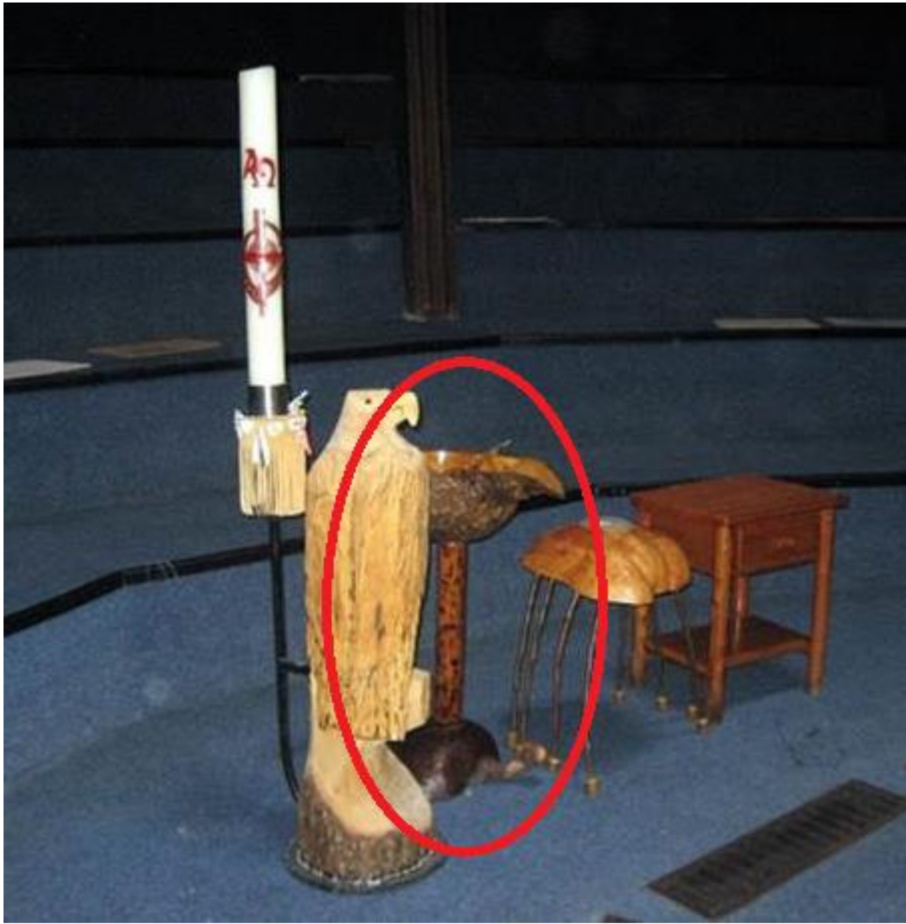
Figure 15

Wooden sculptures of evangelists, 3 of 4, Immaculate Conception

Figure 16

Sculpted totem poles, 1 of 2, donated by parishioner, Immaculate Conception

Figure 17



Sculpted baptismal font, pine, donated by parishioner, Immaculate Conception

Figure 18

Tabernacle, Immaculate Conception

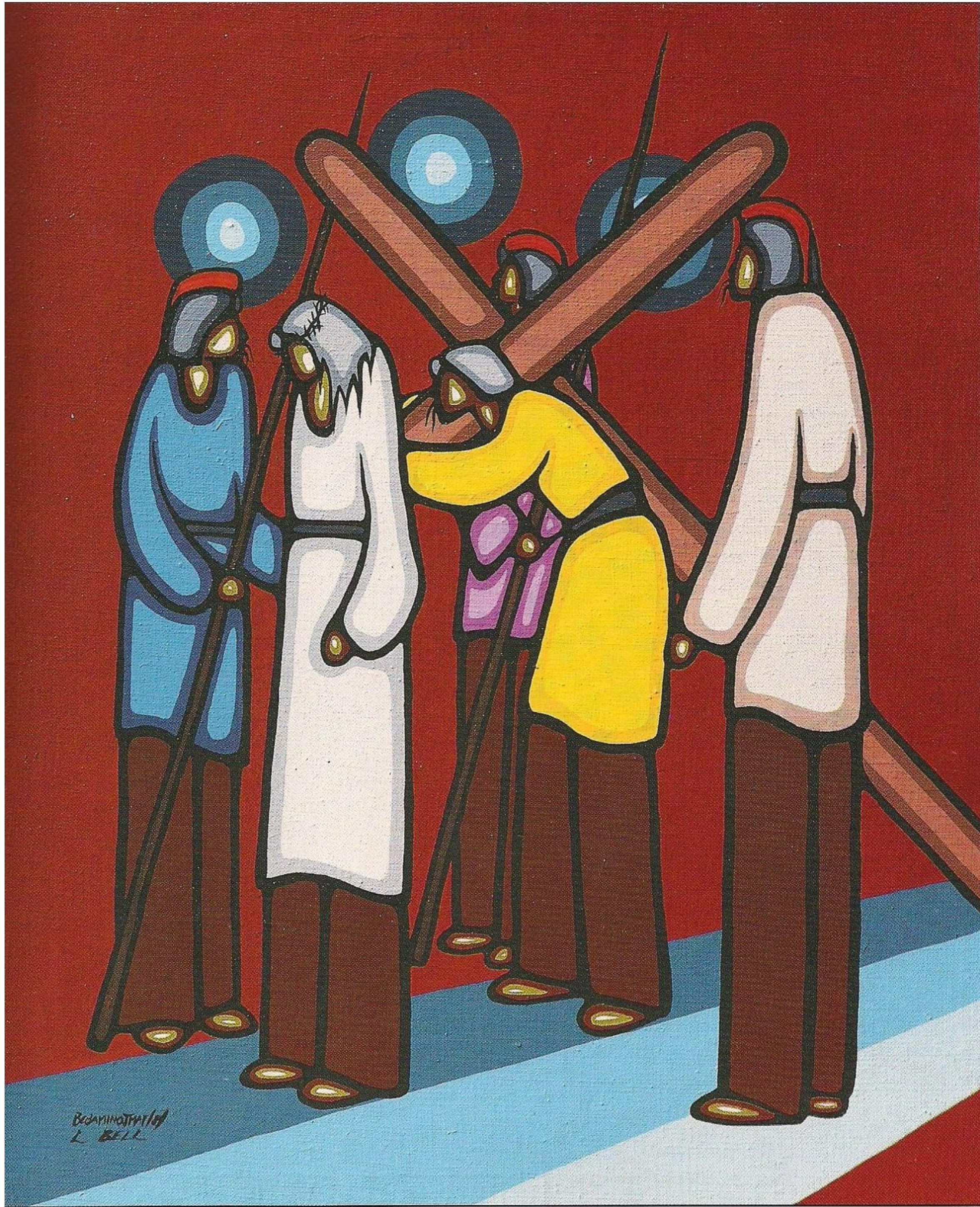
Figure 19

Stations of the Cross, Leland Bell, acrylic on canvas, 50cm x 45cm, Immaculate Conception

Figure 20

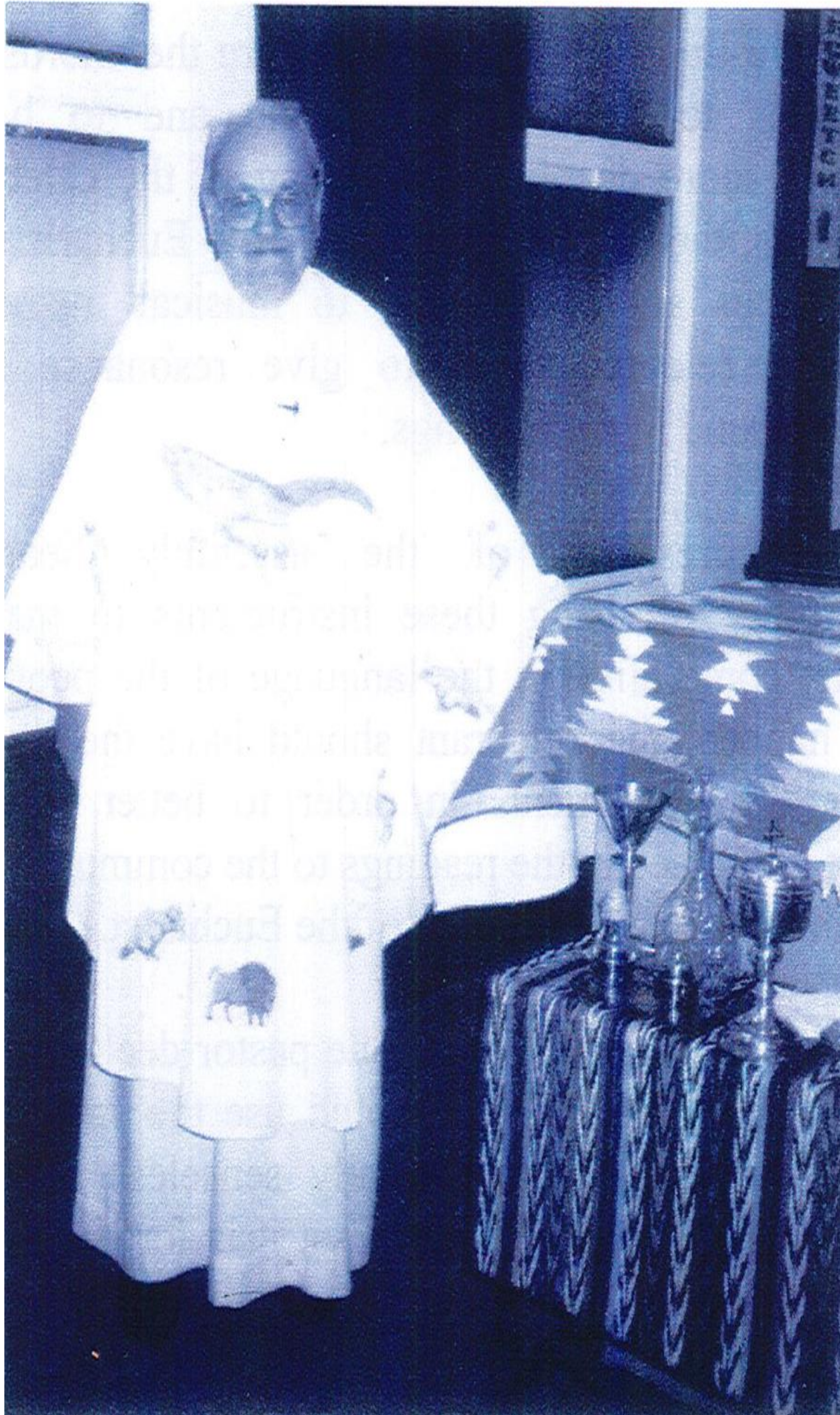
Jesus Risen From the Dead (Fifteenth Station), Leland Bell, acrylic on canvas, 50cm x 45cm, Immaculate Conception

Figure 21



Simon of Cyrene Goes To Help Jesus (Fifth Station), Leland Bell, acrylic on canvas, 50cm x 45cm, Immaculate Conception

Figure 22

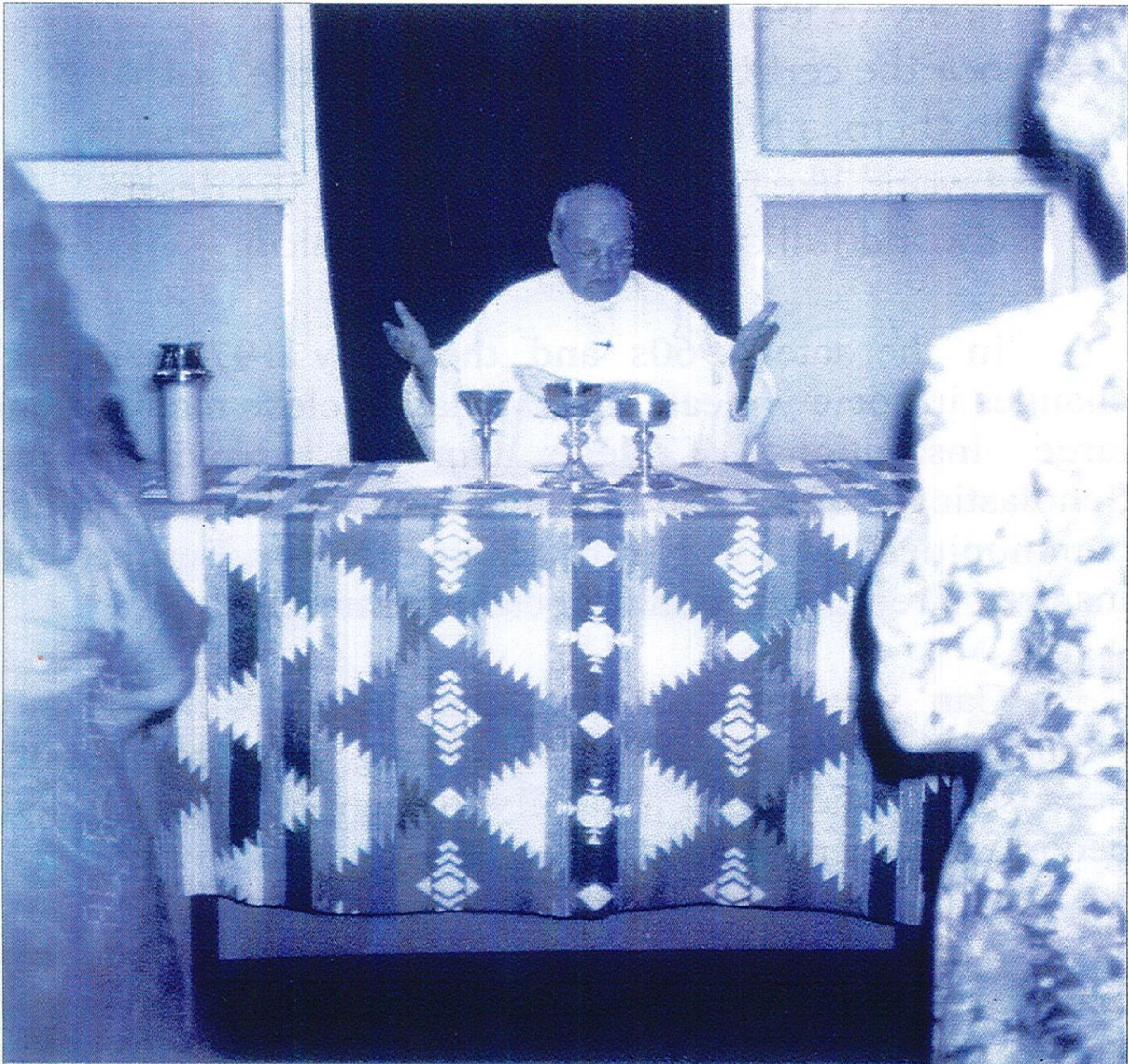


Fr. Dominique Kerbrat at the new Aboriginal Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 23

Native Vestments, Fr. Kerbrat and Fr. Gervais, Aboriginal Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 24



Altar table at the Aboriginal Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 25

Tabernacle, Aboriginal Parish, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

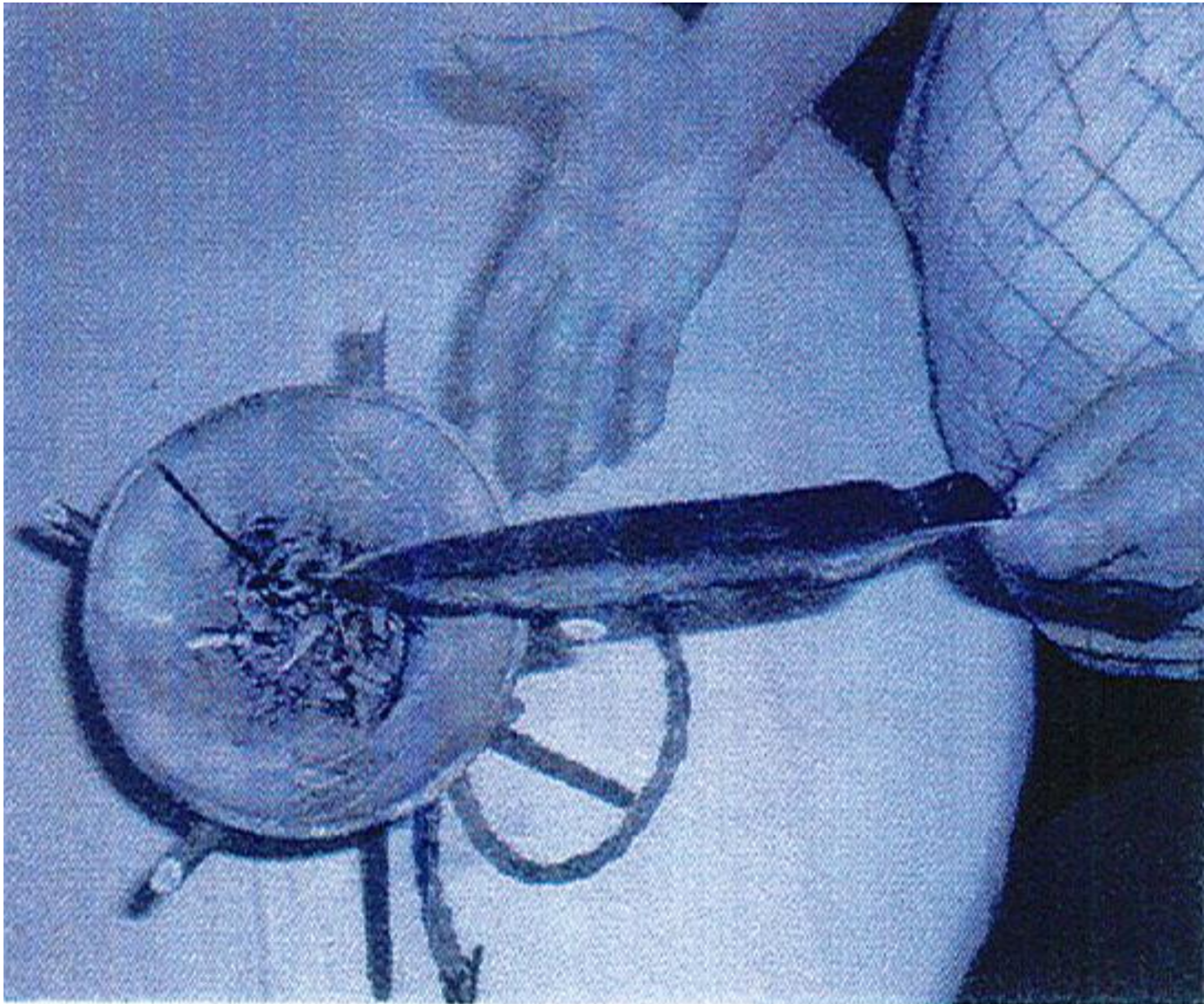
Figure 26

Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, exterior, 1991, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 27

Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, interior, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 28



Sweet grass burning bowl and feather, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 29

Four Directions – Yellow: East, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 30

Four Directions – Black: West, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 31

Four Directions – Red: South, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 32

Four Directions – White: North, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 33

Parish Choir, 1991, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 34

Eucharist Paintings (I), Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 35

Eucharist Paintings (II), Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 36

Painted Baptismal Font, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 37

Table Cloths with Directional Colours, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg

Figure 38

Paintings of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

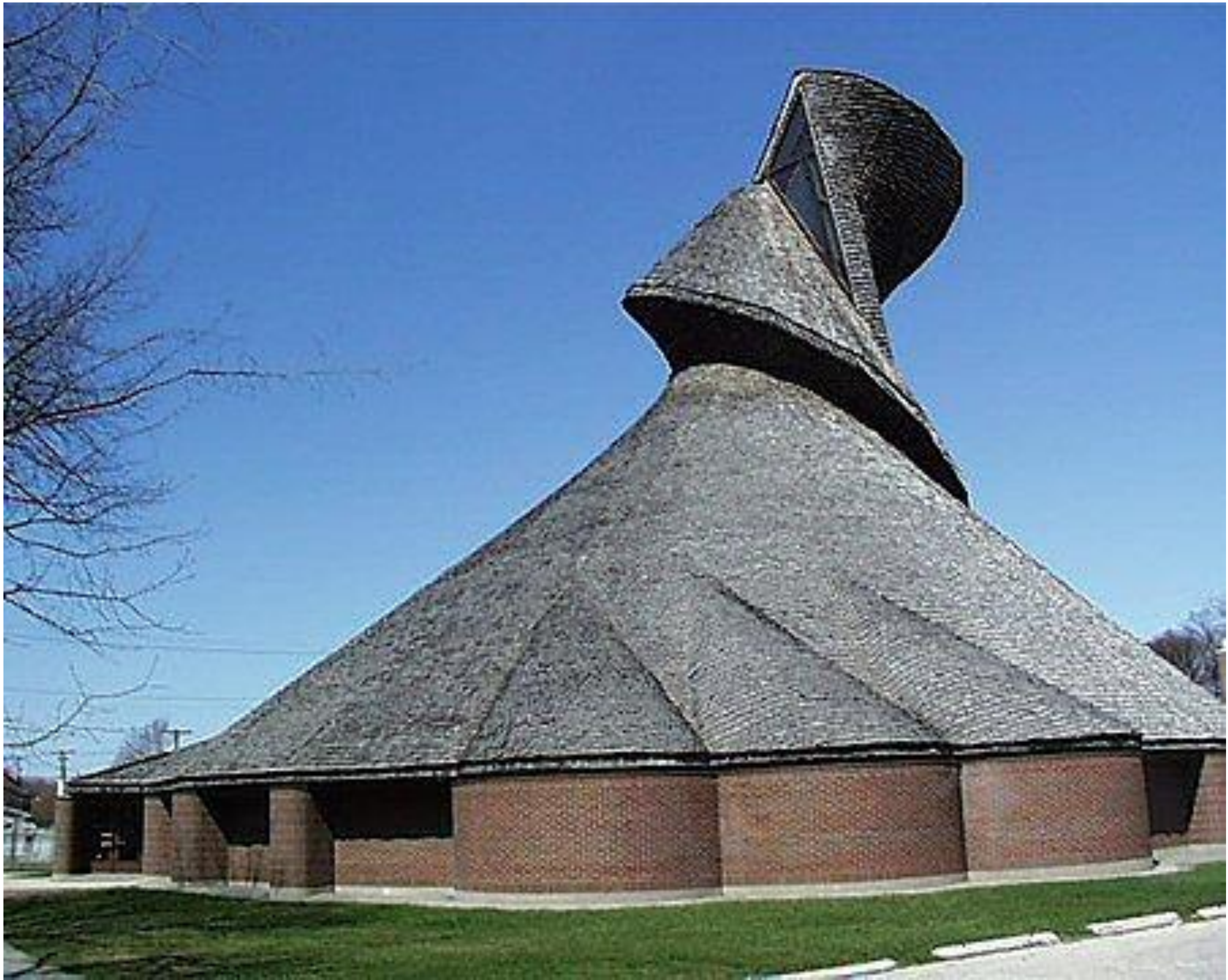
Figure 39

Hanging sculpture of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 40

Life-size sculpture of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Kateri Tekakwitha Parish, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 41



Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba; 1967; Étienne Gaboury, architect

Figure 42

Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba; 1967; Étienne Gaboury, architect

Figure 43

Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba; 1967; Étienne Gaboury, architect

Figure 44

Stained glass skylight, Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba

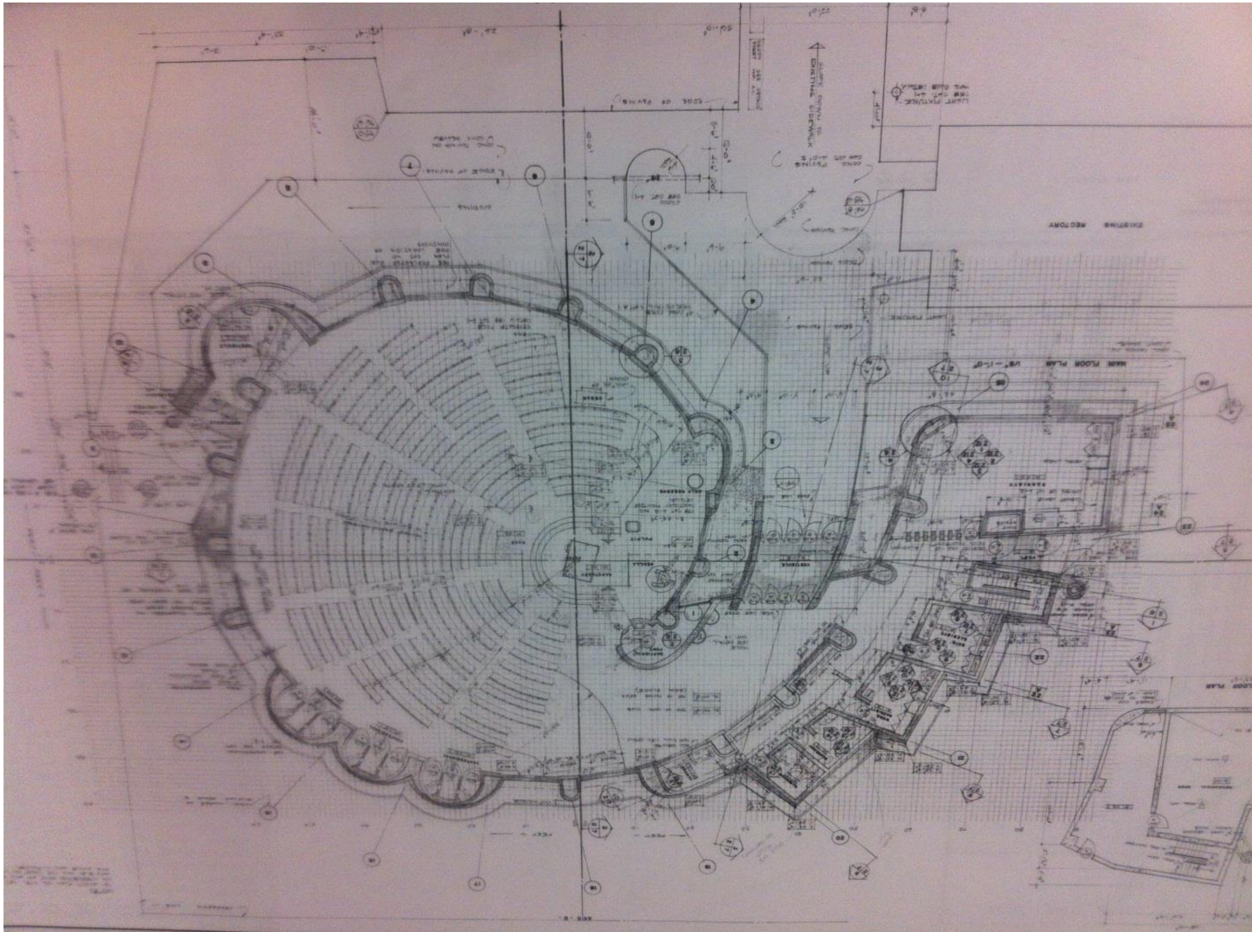
Figure 45

Stained glass skylight, Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 46

Interior, Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 47



Floor plan – central altar, Precious Blood Parish, Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 48

Mi'kmaq National Flag, first raised in Listukujk (Listuguj, P.Q.) on October 4th, 1900 and in Kjipuktuk (Halifax, N.S.) in 1901.

Figure 49

Potlotek First Nations, Chapel Island, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

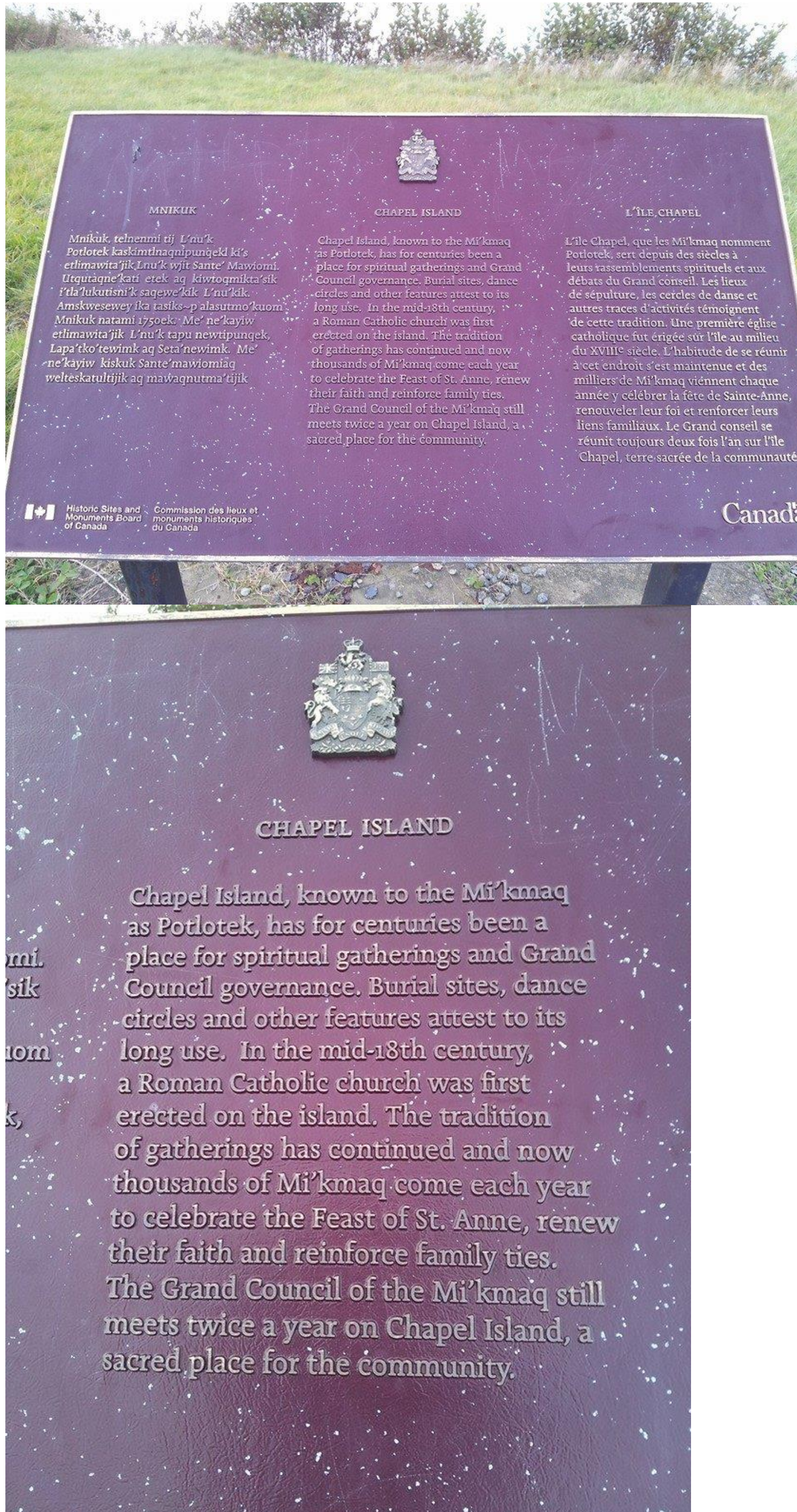
Figure 50

Chapel Island, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 51

Chapel Island/St. Anne Commemorative Stone, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 52



Chapel Island informational plaque, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 53

Potlotek Chapel, interior, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

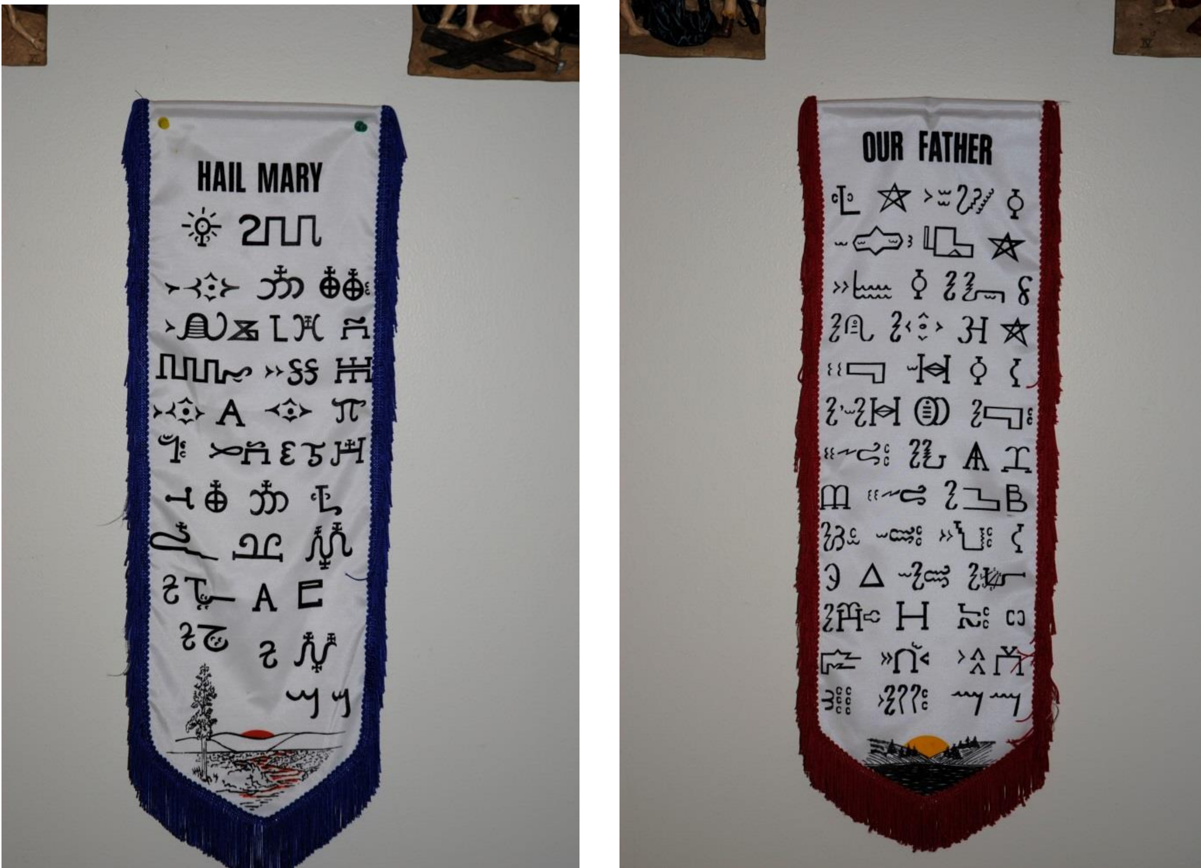
Figure 54

Grand Council Flag, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 55

Mi'kmaq Star with the colours of the medicine wheel, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 56



Hail Mary and Our Father in Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 57

Native artwork, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 58

Miniature Decorative Teepees, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 59

Figurine of Kateri Tekakwitha, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 60

The Altar, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

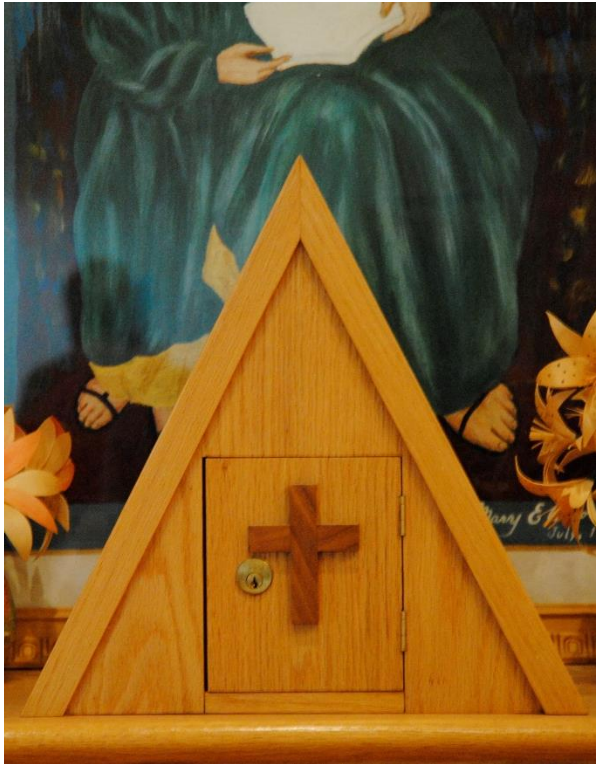
Figure 61

Wood Ceiling, front, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 62

Wood Ceiling, back, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 63



Tabernacle, Potlotek Chapel,
Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Tabernacle, Immaculate Conception,
West Bay, Manitoulin Island, Ontario.

Figure 64

Triangular patterns, wood paneling, Potlotek Chapel, Potlotek First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 65

Holy Family Parish, exterior, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 66

Holy Family Parish, interior, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 67

Altar Table, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 68

Eagle Feather, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 69

Kateri Tekakwitha wooden sculptures, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

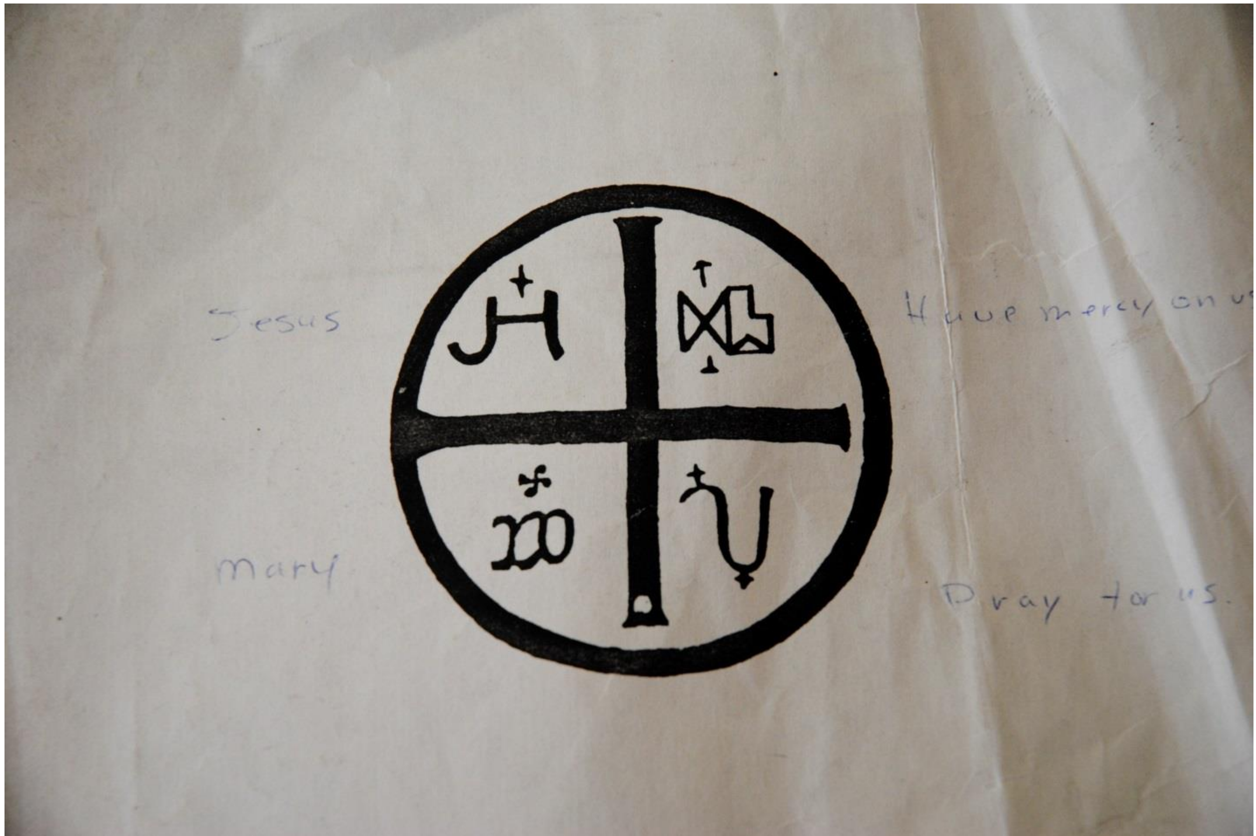
Figure 70

Baptismal font and wooden mosaic detail, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 71

Mi'kmaq Star with symbols representing the altar, baptism, the holy orders, and the seven districts of the Mi'kmaq, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 72

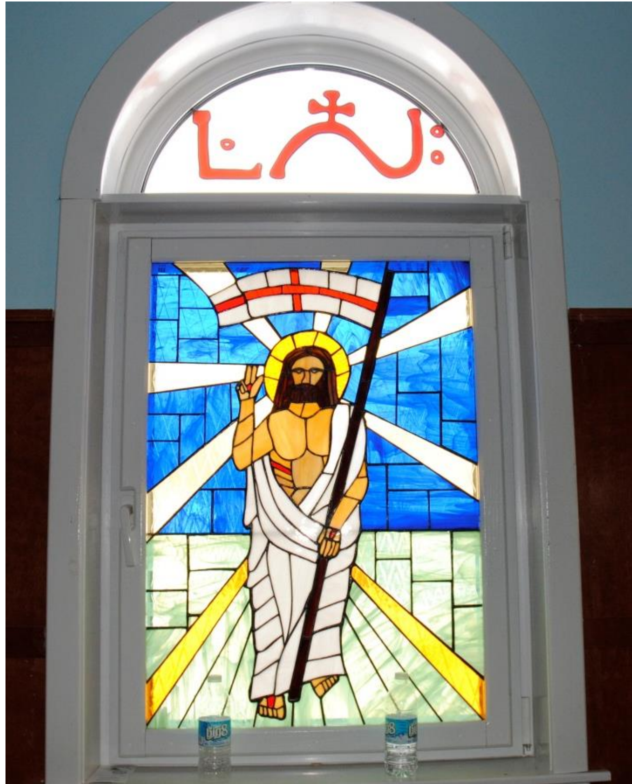


Mi’kmaq hieroglyphs in prayer books, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

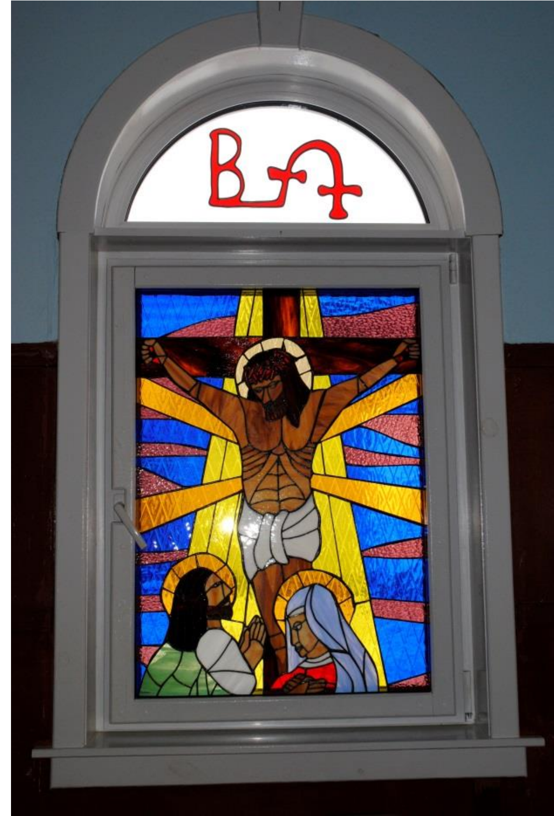
Figure 73

Stained glass windows, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 74



The Sacraments



Baptism

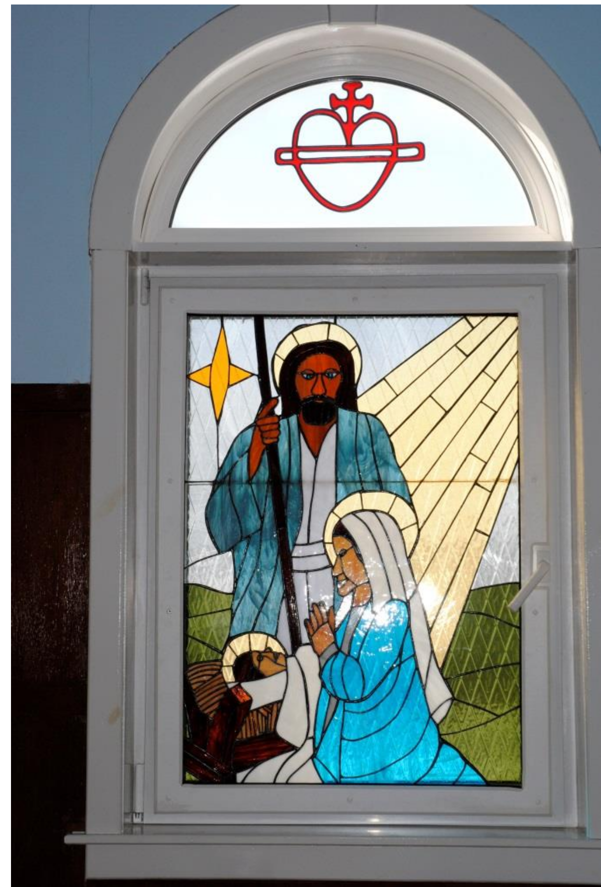
Stained glass windows – The Sacraments and Baptism, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 75

Confirmation **The Eucharist/Communion**

Stained glass windows – Confirmation and the Eucharist/Communion, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 76



Confession/Penance **The Holy Orders**

Stained glass windows – Confession/Penance and the Holy Orders, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 77

The Sacrament of the Sick/Extreme Unction

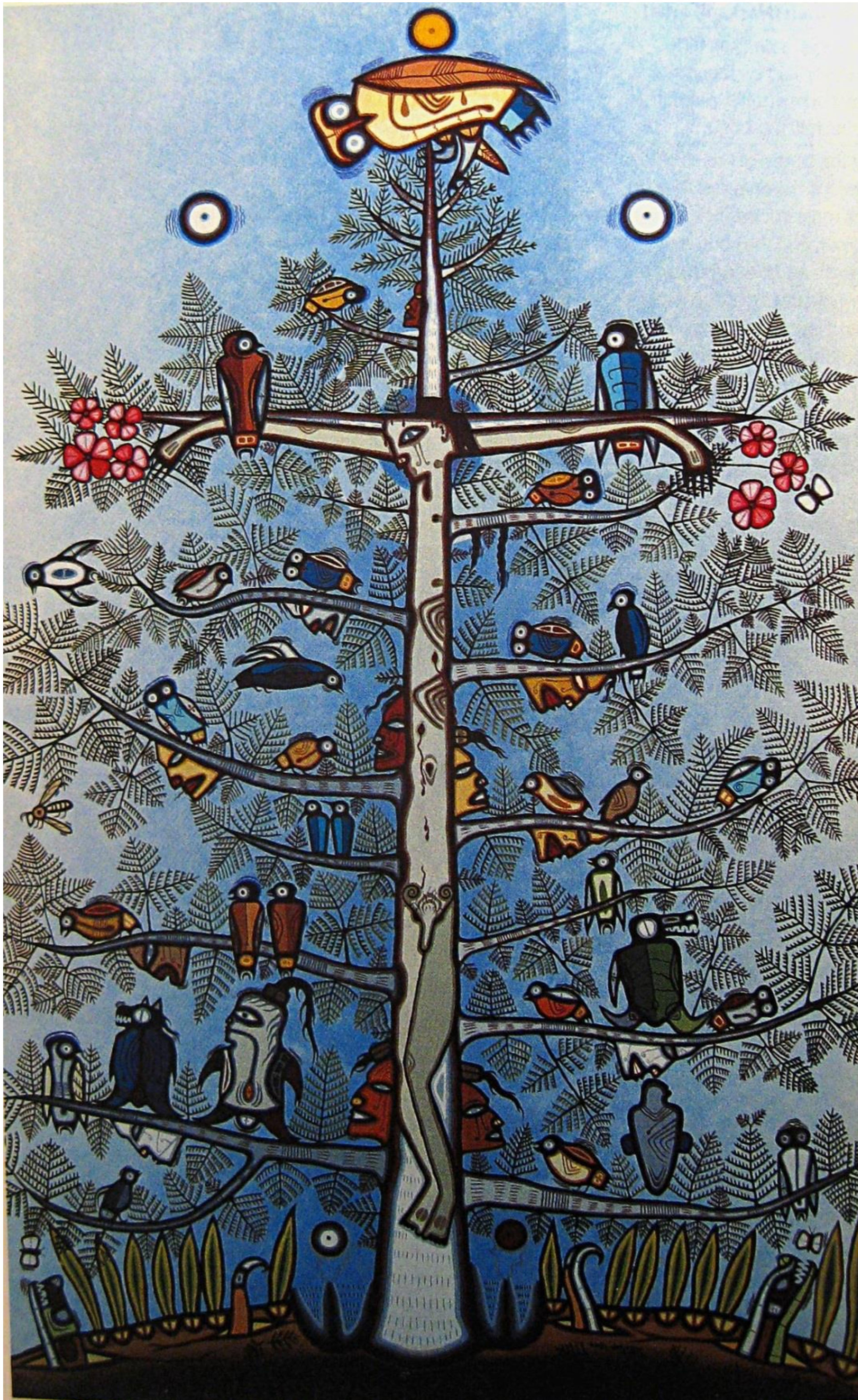
Marriage

Stained glass windows – Marriage and the Sacrament of the Sick/Extreme Unction, Holy Family Parish, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

Figure 78

Mi'kmaq Sweat Lodge or Wigwam, used for traditional sweat ceremonies.

Figure 79



Tree of Life, Blake Debassige, 1982, acrylic on canvas, Collection of the Anishinabe Spiritual Center, Espanola, Ontario.