

It is a pity that she did not heed the words of one chief she quoted who gave the lie to the utility of such terms. "An infusion of white blood into the Creek," Moty Tiger wrote, "does not always make him a good businessman" (p. 215)

George Washington Grayson died in 1920, having devoted the better part of his life to protecting the sovereignty of his nation. Unable to stem the tide of robber barons and railroad boomers who gobbled up the Creeks' land, Grayson's resistance nonetheless offers a poignant reminder of just how awful federal Indian policy was. Another world exists, however, that Warde left alone. What was Grayson's relationship to his family? How did he behave at home? And how "Creek" or "American" was he as a father and husband? As long as such details of his personal life remain obscure, it will be difficult to fully assess his legacy as a Creek nationalist.

Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999.

Review by Brenda Macdougall, University of Saskatchewan

Over twenty years ago, historian John Foster encouraged scholars of Métis history to recognize that Métis people were as diverse as Indians or Europeans and to write about that diversity in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, few scholars have heeded his words and vigorously examined what Métis identity was outside the nationalistic struggles in the 19th century. Keith R. Widder's *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837* expands the scope of Métis history and contributes to a growing literature that seeks to understand the diversity of Métis culture. While Widder argues that Métis identity in the Great Lakes was diffuse because there was no large central community such as the Red River settlement, he demonstrates that the Great Lakes Métis nevertheless recognized their distinctiveness as a separate people. This Great Lake Métis identity was evidenced, according to Widder, by their general rejection of Americanization and simultaneous adop-

tion of those aspects of American culture introduced by evangelical missionaries that could be used to strengthen their own communities.

Widder focuses his examination of Métis identity on the Mackinaw Mission (and accompanying boarding school) opened in 1823 by Amanda and William Ferry, two evangelical protestants from New England who hoped to convert all Aboriginal people in the area into American citizens. The Ferrys and their fellow missionaries opened the Mission to transform Métis people from French-speaking, Catholic fur traders into English-speaking, Protestant farmers who accepted American republicanism. The missionaries failed in their conversion efforts, however, because they lacked any real knowledge of the people they sought to convert. Ignorant that the Métis of the Great Lakes historically acted as cultural, economic and political intermediaries between European traders and Indian communities, the missionaries failed to understand that the Métis had long integrated useful aspects of European and Indian societies. Over several hundred years, Widder argues, the Métis family became a middle ground "shaped by the tensions caused by the intersection of European and Indian beliefs, technology, and material objects" (p. xvii). This notion of a cultural middle ground is derived from Richard White's book, *The Middle Ground*, which concluded that Indians and Europeans necessarily forged a relationship of accommodation between 1650 and 1815 because of competing political and ethnic interests vying for dominance. While White's analysis stopped short of evaluating the development of Métis people and culture as a distinct people, Widder picks up the obvious next step to study the physical manifestation of the middle ground—the Métis. Widder asserts that, because of their origins, when the American evangelical missionaries arrived, the Métis necessarily continued trying to recreate and foster a middle ground. As they had always done, the Métis took those aspects of the new lifestyle that benefited them and rejected those that were incompatible with or undermined their lifestyle as traders and intermediaries. Métis parents, for example, readily sent their children to the mission school so that they might learn those aspects of American culture that would maximize the Métis position

within the American economy. However, never comprehending Métis motivations, instead of converting them, the missionaries had the effect of retrenching the Métis' role as cultural intermediaries and sparking a revival in Catholicism in the region.

What Widder has accomplished with this study is to shed greater light on a group of Métis people overlooked by Canadian and American scholars alike. Straddling a region that was historically both Canadian (British) and American, scholars in both contemporary nation-states have asserted that the Métis did not or could not have a distinct identity. Clearly, as demonstrated by Widder, the Métis of Mackinac Island did regard themselves as somehow distinct from either local Chippewa or Odawa communities and the newly arrived Americans. While it could be argued that the Mackinac Métis perhaps did not comprise a "nation" (in its modern political usage), their insistence on retaining their religious and social autonomy is evidence of an underlying sense of distinctiveness. Widder notes that, while the Métis may have accepted American legal, governmental and commercial dominance, they could and did reject its religious and, to a lesser extent, its social institutions if they were incompatible with their own cultural sensibilities. Today, as Métis political organizations on the Canadian side of Lake Superior proclaim that the first Métis identity emerged in the Great Lake fur trade, it appears that scholars are finally helping to substantiate that claim.