

IMAGING AN IDENTITY: THE ACTIVISM AND PHOTOGRAPHY OF JAMES BRADY AS
A CATALYST FOR RENEWED MÉTIS SELF-DETERMINATION EFFORTS

by

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(Under the Direction of James F. Brooks)

ABSTRACT

James Patrick Brady (1908-1967) helped conceptualize Métis political self-determination through his photography and activism, and his work made their identity something to be proud of rather than suppressed. This thesis considers examples from his photographic collection as an extension of his efforts to organize the Métis in Alberta and Saskatchewan under his personal interpretation of Marxism which accommodated for Indigenous identities. His political philosophy developed from personal experiences as a laborer and generations of community organizing in his Métis-Irish family. Brady's photographs reflect his subjects' shared Métis and Indigenous histories, and provide visual evidence that supports the merit and necessity of continued advocacy efforts.

KEY WORDS: Métis, James P. Brady, Alberta Métis Association, Photography, Canadian History, Native American Studies

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B.A., University of Georgia, 2019

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree.

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

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August 2021

DEDICATION

For my parents, sister, and friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first give my thanks to my advisor Dr. James F. Brooks for offering his expertise and constant support throughout the thesis writing process. I also want to express my gratitude to the rest of my committee, Dr. Claudio Saunt and Dr. Stephen Berry. Dr. Berry deserves extra thanks for listening to and offering suggestions on my wildest research ideas over the last six years.

Thank you to every faculty member at the UGA History Department who has encouraged me to find ways to research photography, dance, and other arts through a historical lens. Delaney Kelly, Maggie Neel, Valerie McLaurin, and Sara Small also deserve the world for reading through my earliest drafts and offering their support; thanks to them for bearing with me.

Finally, I would like to thank my family — Cindy, Andrew and Katie Guenthner — and friends — Willem, Sarah, Saadia, Nada, and Emery — who provided invaluable emotional support throughout my time at this program. Their encouragement truly got me through this degree.

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“IMAGING AN IDENTITY”

Introduction

James Brady (1908-1967) was a Métis activist, self-described laborer, and photographer whose political activism and organizing brought Métis closer to achieving a collective identity and self-determination.¹ The Métis descend from Native women (usually Cree, Saulteaux and Dene) and the fur traders who married into Western Canadian Indigenous communities during the height of the fur trade, and reside mostly in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and urban areas of Canada today.² However, Canada does not consider them ‘Status Indians’, and they therefore struggle to qualify for the recognition and self-determination granted to other Natives in the country. “Status Indian” describes a Registered Indigenous person in Canada who receives certain rights and benefits including education and housing on-reserve as well as specific tax exemptions. These benefits are not available to non-status Indians such as Métis, Inuit, and other unregistered Natives. Two centuries of activism and negotiations against the clergy and Canadian governmental systems shaped a generation of Métis activists during the 20th century who made lasting progress towards obtaining self-determination over land, resources, and education.³

¹ Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Métis Patriots of the Twentieth Century*, New Star, 1981.

² Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples : Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, Manitoba Studies in Native History: 1, University of Nebraska Press, 1985, 41.

³ F. L. Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF*, UBC Press, 1997.; Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century*. New Star, 1981.; Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples : Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, Manitoba Studies in Native History: 1, University of Nebraska Press, 1985.; Sherry Farrell Racette, “‘Enclosing Some Snapshots’: James Patrick Brady, Photography, and Political Activism,” *History of Photography*, no. 3 (2018): 269-287.; Molly Suzanne Swain, “Victim of Deceit and Self-Deceit: The Role of the State in Undermining Jim Brady’s Radical Metis Politics,” MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 2018.; Michael Nest, Deanna Reder, and Eric Bell, *Cold Case North : The Search for James Brady and Absolom Halkett*, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada: U of R Press, 2020.

Brady was born in 1908 during a particularly contentious period of conflict over Métis lands and resources as Canadian clergy, politicians, and the public questioned their very identity as Indigenous people. His lobbying as part of “the big five” Métis activists — including Felix Callihoo, Joe Dion, Peter Tomkins, and Malcolm Norris — in the 1930s, earned the Métis twelve land settlements as well as social welfare programs. After his early successes, he continued to promote radical pro-Indigenous policies while working within the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a Canadian socialist political party with numerous welfare programs, from the 1930s until 1961.⁴ His work incited still circulating rumors of political motives behind his disappearance and likely demise while on a prospecting trip in June of 1967.

This thesis examines the significance of Brady’s accomplishments in three major ways. First, his photographs are material objects that show the Métis as a coherent community with a well-established identity in the 20th century. Second, Brady traveled throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan as an itinerant laborer, and his lifestyle resulted in interactions which led many Métis to become politically conscious and newly engaged in issues that affected their work, education, and identity. Third, his work provides a blueprint and precedent for Métis and other Canadian Indigenous peoples who continue to demand their rights today. Brady showed a consistent willingness to sacrifice his own chances at intellectual or political renown in urban and white Canadian spaces in favor of advocating for his Native community. He rejected a fully-funded opportunity to leave his family to study journalism at university before even reaching 18; he passed up this opportunity to live a comfortable urban life in order to remain a

⁴ Molly Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System”: James Brady’s 20th Century Métis Cooperatives and Colonial State Responses,” *Active History*, History Department at the University of Saskatchewan and Huron University College, October 10, 2018, Web, <https://activehistory.ca/2018/10/liberation-from-that-vicious-system-jim-bradys-20th-century-metis-cooperatives-and-colonial-state-responses/>.

laborer, and to avoid alienating his fellow Métis who had no such opportunities for class mobility.⁵

James Brady helped shape Métis self-determination over their own politics, education, and validity as an Indigenous people through his photography and commitment to political organizing. As a self-educated man actively involved in teaching Métis children and community members, it is only fitting that Brady's photography and writings now compose a body of work that continues to educate and influence later generations of Indigenous activists. Over a thousand images of his loved ones, meaningful places, and community members survive housed at the Glenbow Archives which are on display for the first time in 2021. The sheer volume of this collection attests to the possibility that this artistic pursuit was an extension of his manual and political labors. His photographs resist efforts to erase the Métis as an Indigenous people, and assert their needs for essential rights and self-determination.⁶ Drawing from his own background to show Métis protesting, practicing traditions, and surviving, these works are ultimately an extension of his political and community activism.

Establishing a Presence

Métis, translating to 'mixed', originally applied to the French and Cree speaking descendants of white and Native parents in western Canada.⁷ They crafted their identities around their French, British, Scottish and Indigenous heritages, but Métis identification is sometimes assumed by those who marry Métis. Though they came from all across the Great Lakes region,

⁵ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 48.

⁶ Part of the issue Brady faced as an organizer, which this thesis later discusses, is that few had the desire to engage with political systems which had failed them for years. Today, Métis ask for self-determination and land and resource rights, but not to separate and become sovereign from Canada. These goals are much the same as Brady's and the goals of the 1869 and 1885 resistance struggles.

⁷ Peterson and Brown, *The New Peoples*, 5.

most Métis families can trace their roots to the Red River settlement in modern-day Manitoba. The colony was founded in the 1810s by Catholic missionaries and emigrant métis families who responded to their advertisements.⁸ In the 1970s, the term came to signify a broader definition of mixed heritage throughout a larger area of western Canada and the northern United States. Focusing here on those in Canada who self-identify as métis, the term is used for anyone with Native ancestry who is not registered with the federal government or a band that has signed a treaty with the Crown. *The New Peoples* by Peterson and Brown marks a difference between *Métis* and *métis* from the Métis National Council; “Written with a small ‘m’, métis is a racial term for anyone of mixed Indian and European ancestry. Written with a capital ‘M’, Métis is a socio-cultural or political term for those originally of mixed ancestry who evolved into a distinct indigenous people during a certain historical period in a certain region of Canada.” Brady uses “Métis” in his writing and is the default here, as he sees the Métis as a social and political identity which he emphasized through his photography.⁹

James Brady created lasting connections and facilitated the formation of a more concrete métis social and political identity. Métis had experience advocating for themselves, but successful instances of this amounted to a few isolated moments of an emerging political and social consciousness, lacking organization or permanence. The only female member of the Saskatchewan Métis Society when it began in the 1950s, Janet Fietz, recounted Brady’s role as a leader of this society in an interview with his biographer, Murray Dobbin.¹⁰ Dobbin asked Fietz

⁸ James Brady, interview by Art Davis, Text Document, 1960, Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2-3.

⁹ Alternatively, *The New Peoples* uses the more inclusive “métis” to accommodate those who self-identify through marriage or socialization. I am using the term as Brady does in his own writings except when writing about Janet Fietz, who self-identifies as métis through marriage, but was still “treaty” by birth and proud of both identities.; Fietz, Janet Fietz Interview, 11.

¹⁰ Murray Dobbin is a Canadian journalist and author of *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris* (1981).

of the meetings; “Do you think that Brady had an influence on people? Did they start to organize?”¹¹ “They sure did,” she responded, “because he pointed out to us that we were human beings too, that we can say what we want to and do what we want to and try and talk about things rather than taking what’s handed out to us.”¹² Fietz demonstrates a common intellectual turning point among those Brady radicalized as the Canadian government had “handed out” insufficient necessities to métis, or passed over them altogether for generations. Brady's work and conviction in the political and social power of ascribed Metis identity helped solidify the belief that the Metis were a a valid identity that deserved to thrive. According to Fietz, “[the métis] try to really help themselves along. And to think of it now maybe it’s because they didn’t have any treaty money or the treaties used to get welfare, you know, flour and tea and stuff like this.”¹³ Brady cites his influence from the words of Little Work, a 19th century Cheyenne nation leader: “The white man only gives you something when you've already had it firmly grasped in your hand.”¹⁴

“What was obscure in my youth is obvious today,” writes Brady on the state of métis activism sometime in the 1950s, “My generation of Métis were the grand-sons and grand-daughters of those militant fighters of “La Nouvelle Nation” whose dreams of independence were crushed in military defeat 80 years ago on the banks of the Saskatchewan. We were the inheritors of a Lost Cause.”¹⁵ The “lost cause” refers to the efforts that Louis Riel, leader of the resistance and widely considered a Métis hero, and Brady’s own family made

¹¹ Fietz, Janet Fietz Interview, 8.

¹² Fietz, Janet Fietz Interview, 8.

¹³ Fietz, Janet Fietz Interview, 5.

¹⁴ Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 81.

¹⁵ James Brady, “Vanished Campfires,” 2.

toward achieving self-determination and potentially even more for Métis.¹⁶ Though Louis Riel and his actions came with controversies, they were also the last notable movements towards changing these circumstances until the 1930s, and Brady greatly admired him. The U.S. attempted to annex the region during this period of heightened instability which opened an opportunity for the Métis to rebel against both Canada and the United States. As the two countries vied for Métis land, the Red River Rebellion of 1869 flared up. In 1870, the Métis leveraged the threat of U.S. intervention to receive rights as Indigenous peoples and extensive land from Canada. The success, however, was incomplete as these lands were parsed out in severalty, and white settlers could easily buy up the parcels of land, one-by-one.

In the meantime, Louis Riel fled to the United States to escape prosecution. White Canadian settlers continued to move onto the newly christened ‘Manitoba’ lands on both legal and illegal terms during this time. These settlers not only affected the Métis, but also the Cree and Assiniboine. The resulting unrest coincided with a renewed Métis North West Rebellion in 1885, again led by Louis Riel. This episode ended with the apparent finality of Riel’s trial and death. James Brady’s maternal grandparents narrowly survived the resistance as his grandfather had received a personal letter from Riel requesting that he help recruit for the cause.¹⁷ Laurent Garneau, Brady’s grandfather, moved his family to Edmonton, Alberta from Red River in 1870 as Riel's followers became increasingly unpopular in Manitoba, particularly when white people began settling in the area.¹⁸ In his article, “Hero of the North West: Louis Riel’s Place in

¹⁶ The “Lost Cause” terminology hearkens back to the term used by past Confederates after the U.S. Civil War. While the use of this term is certainly a complicated grey-area, Brady shows no sign of ideological sympathy with those he borrowed the term from in his own writings.

¹⁷ Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 76.

¹⁸ James Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 1960, MétisMuseum Archives, 68.

History”, Brady carries on the torch of support for Riel’s work.¹⁹ Brady’s opinion of the man, that “Riel is a thousand times vindicated by history,” adequately represents a perspective shared by most Métis today..²⁰

The civilizing mission, which aimed to make Indigenous peoples conform to an agrarian and Catholic lifestyle, was never far from the policies of the Catholic Church regarding the Métis. Father Lacombe, who headed the St. Paul de Métis, wrote to Métis living in Manitoba and Northwestern Alberta in 1885 to propose the St. Paul de Métis colony as their new home. Lacombe reminisces on the days when Métis people were, “under the guidance and safekeeping,”²¹ of missionaries. Failing to recognize the commonalities between “civilizing” by imparting Catholic teachings and Western ideals, he blames their deteriorated circumstances on the latter. “Far from bettering your condition,” he claims, “The new civilisation has done nothing but render it worse.”²² St. Paul de Métis was established for the Métis left destitute by colonization and constant suppression of their traditional cultural ways. The provincial government afforded the Métis some lands before 1885, but none of the relief aid or benefits that many so desperately needed. The Church offered the necessary welfare support, but never delivered on the promise. In a place designed specifically for limited agriculture and paternalistic Catholicism, stagnation and continued dependency became much more likely than any of the advertised “betterment.”

Any Métis choosing to move onto the settlement lands agreed to an allotment policy similar to those implemented in the United States. However, they would not own any of the

¹⁹ James P. Brady, “Hero of the North West: Louis Riel’s Place in History” (Essay, Canada, unknown date), Archival Collection, Gabriel Dumont Institute.

²⁰ Controversies regarding Riel’s faith and sanity merit discussion in conservative and non-indigenous circles, but Brady vehemently disagreed with such an assessment.; Brady, “Hero of the North West,” 2.

²¹ A. Lacombe, “To My Dear Children and Friends...,” 1885, letter, 1.

²² A. Lacombe, “To My Dear Children and Friends...,” 1885, letter, 1.

allotted property, and could not sell or mortgage it if they ever chose to leave. This benefited the under-funded settlement project, but not the Métis who desired self-determination. The colony outright forbade either white people or Indians from settling in the colony without explicit permission from a presiding missionary. This became yet another codified demonstration of Canada excluding the Métis from the potential benefits of either designation.²³ Lacombe claimed the enforcement of this prohibition was ‘protected’ by the government, making it a joint stance between the state and church. He also details the future establishment of industrial schools for children, slated to instruct them in primarily agriculture and cattle breeding.²⁴ This plan foretold the sort of education that Métis children could expect to receive for decades thereafter.

Lacombe further assured the Métis he would procure necessities for them, but this was contingent upon his own fundraising capabilities. "[N]othing is promised in either provisions or pecuniary aid, clothing, etc. but we may say that our corporation will do all in their power to aid as effectively as their means will allow," he says, "those who will be determined to work and live in good accord with the missionaries." Father Lacombe unsteadily pledged aid to those Métis who would decide to comply with the missionaries' goals and faith. Under these circumstances, Lacombe claims they "shall not be exposed to be at the mercy of the white people... In a short time, you will have made an establishment which will afford you an easy living."²⁵ This promise was rather bold coming from an organization that asked Native people to uproot their lives in exchange for tentative support. Lacombe's altruism came with conditions; assimilation and dependency on the Church.

²³ A. Lacombe, "To My Dear Children and Friends...", 1885, letter, 2.

²⁴ A. Lacombe, "To My Dear Children and Friends...", 1885, letter, 2.

²⁵ A. Lacombe, "To My Dear Children and Friends...", 1885, letter, 2.

Ultimately, Lacombe was unable to deliver on the fundraising and support needed to keep the settlement afloat, and the Church began dissociating itself from the Métis. On April 10, 1909, the settlement was opened to general homesteading as the Church “claimed that the Métis had failed to adapt to agricultural life.”²⁶ No matter what the Métis did or did not do in terms of adapting to western ideals, the Church and Canadian government would label them a failure rather than accept their Indigenous identity. According to Brady, his grandfather Laurent owned 400 cattle, 135 horses, a chain of trading posts, timber, and a saw mill; he lists numerous other Métis in comfortable living situations, and it becomes clear that the Church used an arbitrary and false excuse to end the settlement. In the newly unwelcome environment, much of the land was sold or taken into Quebecois hands.²⁷ Laurent Garneau and Brady Sr. were eventually able to put a stop to an illegal syndicate composed of the local land agent, priest, and trader that cheated many Métis who still held land titles out of their property, but the experience left many Métis disheartened and significantly poorer.²⁸

Both sides of Brady’s family influenced him towards his radical political ideals. His father, Jim Brady Sr., worked as a postmaster, a storekeeper, and a Dominion Land Agent designated to survey and divide Western Canada into one-square mile sections for agricultural, railway, and other uses.²⁹ Even before immigrating to Canada from Ireland in 1897, Brady Sr. was, in the younger Brady’s own words, “Intensely (sic) nationalist in feeling and impregnated with the traditions of anti-imperialism and the struggle for national liberation...”³⁰ Brady Sr. had studied law at Exeter College in England before striking out to Canada to work with the

²⁶ Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men*, 43.

²⁷ Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men*, 44.

²⁸ Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men*, 44.

²⁹ Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men*, 60-63.

³⁰ James Brady, “Untitled — Brady Family History,” p. 1, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/03847>.

Canadian Pacific Railway. He left the CPR within three years because he disagreed with the poor treatment of the railway's workers.³¹ When Brady Sr. married Philomena Garneau, he moved to St. Paul de Métis where the rest of her family lived in a small village known locally as Garneau Village.³² Part of James Brady's sense of indigenous pride can be attributed to his father's politics as a radical liberal and anti-imperialist particularly concerned with workers' rights.³³ As an Irishman, Brady Sr. potentially identified as Indigenous to Ireland and felt some solidarity with Indigenous Canadians. James Brady believed, "that struggle [for Métis nationhood] was fought out on the banks of the Saskatchewan River more than two generations ago... and was lost."³⁴ The resulting "vestiges of colonialism," he argued, are the concern of Indian and Métis people as well as of Canada and the western world as a whole.³⁵ In this sense, it is perhaps not so unusual that Brady's politics did not lead him to reject his paternal family as potential allies.³⁶

Sister Jean, Brady's actual sister and a nun at the Ile-a-la-Crosse residential school, said that she, "[does not] believe that Ji[m] ever considered himself (sic) a liberal, father was a left wing liberal but not a socialist. If father had been young in the thirties he would have been a socialist. He was a product of his time - in the liberal tradition. Both were concerned (sic) about the common people."³⁷ Even Sister Jean, who was concerned more with education than politics, observed the throughline of left-leaning political philosophies between generations of the family.³⁸ Norris also wrote in 1934 to suggest that Jim should convince Brady Sr. to run for

³¹ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 32-33.

³² James Brady, "James Brady Sr. Land Claim Certificate," March 23, 1909, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/m-125-31-p21-tif>; Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 32.

³³ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 42.

³⁴ James Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 1960, Metis Museum Archives, 80.

³⁵ James Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 1960, Metis Museum Archives, 80.

³⁶ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 50.

³⁷ Dobbin, "The Brady Sisters," 6.

³⁸ James Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 1960, Metis Museum Archives, 81.

liberal office. 1938 correspondence between the two called out the political complacency of their contemporaries at the Alberta Métis Association, Joe Dion and Peter Tomkins, but Brady Sr.'s politics perhaps aligned to an extent with that of Norris and his son.³⁹

The Catholic Church and the State coerced most Métis and other Indigenous peoples in Canada into attending Catholic-run residential and day schools. They educated their students with a paternalistic approach that aimed to lead Métis children towards agriculture.⁴⁰ “The parents, it was understood, had only a limited potential for improvement,” explains Barron, but, “As the director of the Northern Areas Branch explained, ‘I do not expect that we will be able to make farmers out of them, but by growing good gardens and farming on a small scale to supplement their meager trapping and fishing returns the present adult generation will certainly be uplifted.’”⁴¹ Métis children were still taught basic literacy, but they were quickly divided so that the boys learned manual labor and the girls were taught home economics as well as the potential practical application of those skills to industries such as canning.⁴²



Figure 1 “James Brady, Senior; at Fork Lake, Alberta”, Fork Lake, Alberta

³⁹ Murray Dobbin, “Letters: Norris to Brady 1933-’39,” 1970s, personal notes, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Brady Papers — VM Final, 5, 10, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/03864.M.Dobbin.notes.pdf>.

⁴⁰ James Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 1960, MétisMuseum Archives, 27.

⁴¹ Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 26.

⁴² Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 26.

However, Brady's maternal family influenced him as much as his paternal family if not more. His mother, Philomena Archange Garneau, was one of the first Métis nurses, and Laurent Garneau helped raise him as well.⁴³ Interviews with Brady show particular reverence and respect for his maternal grandparents who raised him and passed on their revolutionary ideals.⁴⁴

Philomena herself was Métis with a combination of Dakota, French, and Cree heritage. Born in the Red River Settlement, she has a strong tie-in with the rich history of Red River as the first official Metis settlement. Although Red River was home for mainly French-Metis (rather than more generally Euro-Indigenous identifying people living throughout the continent), the family could easily have origins in any part of Alberta, Saskatchewan, or within the United States.

When Brady's mother died of the flu during the 1918 epidemic, Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette notes the following diaspora of the Brady family as the eight children were sent to live with various relatives.⁴⁵ The siblings were scattered to their relatives' homes until their father could cope with Philomena's death. Her passing would have had immense ramifications on the health and wellbeing of not only her family, but also Red River as a whole. In the aforementioned interview with Dobbin, Fietz remembers the poor healthcare that pervaded Métis settlements. In the 1930s, she recounts that,

“...we only had this little hospital. La Ronge Hospital they used to call it. It had around five rooms for the patients and then we always had a nurse, and that's all... in those days [the doctor] only came in once a year.”⁴⁶

In a situation similar to the one described in La Ronge, losing one of their few if not only trained medical professionals during the Influenza epidemic had lasting consequences not only on the

⁴³ “The Wisdom of Papasschayo, A Cree Medicine Men,” <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/03831.wisdom.papasschayo.pdf>

⁴⁴ James (Jim) Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 1960, 36-37.

⁴⁵ Racette 271.

⁴⁶ Janet Fietz, Murray Dobbin, interview, 3.

health of the community, but also on the education opportunities of the children attending mission schools. Sister Denis d'Alexandre sent a letter on November 23rd, 1933 to Peter Tomkins of the Alberta Métis Association detailing her time as a nurse in Grouard, Alberta. According to her, the children of ill parents were forbidden by the Provincial Police from attending school, “as they were a menace to the health of the other children.”⁴⁷ She reached out to the Métis Association as they had by then developed a reputation of advocating for the sick.

Losing his mother at age ten left Brady and his siblings unhoused, disrupted his daily life, and further exposed him to his grandparents' radical Indigenous activism.⁴⁸ This early life and loss also casts a new light on Brady's activism. Not only is there a strong precedent for his activist work within his family, but also an early reason for him to throw himself into education, photography, and physical and political labor places to stay productive and find solace. Brady's sisters remember that as far as their parents' activism went, “She was stronger in action than father. Father would agree that something should be done but not initiate the action — mother would.”⁴⁹ Dorothy Brady claimed that after their mother's death, their father was a “zombie” even once he recovered from the shock.⁵⁰ Her death and its ramifications in his family and community catalyzed Brady to begin his own exploration of identity and politics at a young age.

Brady began developing artistically when he acquired his first camera sometime around age 16, and he promptly began photographing his family and friends.⁵¹ The camera was likely an

⁴⁷ Sister Denis d'Alexandre to Peter Tomkins, November 23, 1933, Glenbow Archives, 49, <https://www.glenbow.ca/collections/search/findingAids/archhtml/extras/brady/m-125-32.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Racette, 271.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Chapman, Anne Walther, and Jean Brady, Brady, The Early Years, interview by Murray Dobbin, Text Document, 1970s Brady Papers — VM Final, Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/03853>.

⁵⁰ Chapman, Walther, and Brady, Brady, The Early Years, 4.

⁵¹ Racette, “Returning the Fire, Pointing the Canon: Aboriginal Photography as Resistance,” *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, 76.

early Kodak though Brady never took note of the make and model. As he traveled, worked, and organized throughout the early-mid 20th century, he documented the Métis people and places he came across. He did not intend to create artworks for a gallery space, but his photographs “show a concern with composition, human story, and natural beauty.”⁵² Sherry Farrell Racette, who writes on Brady’s photography and political activism, asserts that he documented historic sites and landscapes to embellish the oral histories he collected from community elders and political colleagues.⁵³ This concern for both individual and collective identities would come to mirror his developing political values and ideologies centered around Marxism and Métis Indigeneity discussed below.

Deemed an “intellectual recluse” by his biographer Murray Dobbin, Brady’s interest in the philosophies and activism of controversial figures begins to make sense. Brady’s sister, Anne Walther, recounted that he had a photographic memory and taught himself to read by age four.⁵⁴ A gifted and driven child, Brady won a Governor General’s Academic award in 8th grade.⁵⁵ He quit school almost immediately afterwards, but his education had only just begun. A typewritten list of the books that he collected beginning during his adolescence and left behind in his cabin after his death library runs 74 pages long even without including the many books he lent out.⁵⁶

Twentieth century histories and political texts covering the world over made up most of his library; Marx, Engels, and Stalin as well as atheist, anti-fascist, anti-racist, and abolitionist

⁵² Racette, “Returning the Fire, Pointing the Canon,” *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, 77.

⁵³ Racette, “Returning the Fire, Pointing the Canon,” *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, 77.

⁵⁴ Murray Dobbin, “The Brady Sisters: Dorothy Chapman, Anne Walther, Sister Brady,” <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/03853>.

⁵⁵ Farrell Racette, Sherry, “‘Enclosing Some Snapshots’: James Patrick Brady, Photography, and Political Activism,” *History of Photography*, no. 3 (2018), 271.

⁵⁶ Kathy Quant, “Métis Leader Jim Brady’s Personal Library” (The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America to 1992, May 18, 2018), TPaT - James Brady, <https://thepeopleandthetext.ca/18May2018>; Nest, Redder, and Bell, “Cold Case North,” 30.

texts sat on his shelves. Brady made a point of reading both nonfiction and fiction, collecting creative and philosophical works written by and about Canadian Indigenous, East and Southeast Asian, Latin American, and African peoples. His collection of literary fiction included such books as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Between Tears and Laughter* by Lin Yutang, Leon Tolstoy, *Jin Ping Mei*, Frederick Douglass, and a variety of poetry.⁵⁷ The fictional works tend to focus on similar themes to his nonfictional books, and also indicate his interest in complex social connections. Brady had diverse reading tastes, prioritized his learning, and maintained one of the most extensive personal libraries in western Canada despite moving on a regular basis.



Figure 2 “Louis Garneau’s Cabin at Wolf Lake, Alberta”, Wolf Lake, Alberta

Brady dropped out of school at approximately age 14 in order to start his lifelong self-education. He had reached the extent of what the French Catholic missions could offer, and began spending much of his time in the bush and remote cabins throughout his life where he read, wrote, and furthered his studies. He would go on to keep a tidy, book-filled cabin in La Ronge and the other places as he moved throughout Canada. One of his earliest retreats was a cabin (above) owned by his uncle that was located at Wolf Lake in Alberta. On the back of the

⁵⁷Quant, “Métis Leader Jim Brady’s Personal Library,” 12, 71-72, 69.

image, Brady wrote “Louis Garneau’s cabin on Wolf Lake. Where I wintered 1930-31.”⁵⁸ While at the cabin, Brady took his political education to a new level. Like many workers in the 1920s and 1930s who were disillusioned with an uncaring ‘land of opportunity,’ Brady became acquainted with Marxism and took “a six month hiatus of religious indecision,” as he considered Communism as opposed to the devout Catholicism of his youth.⁵⁹

Brady rejected Catholicism for himself by the time he was 30 according to his sisters although they remembered him as still willing to discuss religion with tolerance.⁶⁰ He would thereafter refer to himself as a socialist or Marxist communist, but his approach allowed him to apply his own, pro-indigenous ideas to these politics in practice. He developed a philosophy involving a dual-class Métis population which was first articulated in 1934 to the Ewing Commission,⁶¹ and quickly recognized that it did not align with the vision of his white contemporaries.⁶² Brady spoke to the commission, making it clear that it was “incorrect to place the [Métis] as bewildered victims who did not know how to protect themselves against the vicious features which marked the penetration of the white man into the Western prairies.” His dual-class conceptualization of Métis people which he subscribed to accounted for the “nomadic” Métis who lived traditional lives and the “progressive” or “Red River” Métis who were more educated and financially stable. These broad descriptions of class were intended to overlap—but not alter—orthodox Marxist class designations.⁶³

⁵⁸James Brady, *Louis Garneau’s Cabin on Wolf Lake, Alberta*, 1930, photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2353>.

⁵⁹ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 50.; Chapman, Walther, and Brady, Brady, *The Early Years*, 2.

⁶⁰ Chapman, Walther, and Brady, Brady, *The Early Years*, 2.

⁶¹ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 88-92

⁶² Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 90-92.

⁶³ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 90-92.



Figure 3 “Guy Indian Residential School”, Sturgeon Landing, Saskatchewan

Brady’s stance on education stemmed from personal experience and many years of systemically repressive and inadequate residential schools. He drew attention to a particular section of the transcript from the Alberta Métis Commission proceedings on April 1st, 1935. Here, Bishop Breynat of the Northwest Territories claims, “I don’t think [the Metis] should be given too much education. He needs a little to help — I think just until they are 13 or 14 years old probably.”⁶⁴ Heavily involved in running residential schools in areas affecting Dene, Métis, and other First Nations peoples, Breynat’s quick words speak volumes on how the Catholic church handled Indigenous education. Their goal was to civilize the Métis ‘sufficiently’, but Brady counters,

“The transparent reuslt (sic) is evident. Sixty years of clerical tutelage has induced an ignorance and passivity which has deprived the Native of the knowledge and

⁶⁴ J. P. Brady, “A History of the Alberta Metis Association 1932-1959,” Unknown Date, 1, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/03848.Ed.Den.SchoolsAlta.Metis.pdf>.

understanding whereby he can reach out and bring into being that better life for (sic) which the clergy so unctuously intone.”⁶⁵

Just as culturally-specific customs and ways of knowing carry on through generations of Métis, so too does the trauma of forced relocation, residential schools, and other assimilative practices. These hardships were part of a larger, State-supported effort to impose Canadian and Catholic ways of life on Métis to absorb them, their lands, and their resources into the rest of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan.

As with other residential schools throughout Canada, the children faced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse from those assigned to teach them.⁶⁶ Further, residential schools forced their Indigenous students to leave behind traditional languages and practices or else face significant punishment. Michif, the official language of the Métis Nation, is a phonetically written language that only 5-10% of Métis are conversationally fluent in today as a direct result of these policies.⁶⁷ Recently, the Métis National Council has begun a push for the revival of Michif as it and other Métis languages that arose from intermarriage and trade face potential extinction.⁶⁸ However, this does not erase the damage altogether, and only mitigates the 21st century effects of the systemic genocide of cultural heritage and Métis life.⁶⁹

Largely because of his own unconventional education from attending a day school and self-educating, Brady recognized the need for educational reform for Métis and other indigenous peoples in order to avoid further cultural losses. One of his descendants, Anne Marie Dorion,

⁶⁵ Brady, “A History of the Alberta Metis Association 1932-1959,” 2.

⁶⁶ Sarah Kathleen Johnson, “On Our Knees: Christian Ritual in Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,” *Studies in Religion* 47, no. 1 (2018): 3–24.

⁶⁷ Canadian Geographic, “Métis,” Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021, <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/section/metis/>.

⁶⁸ Canadian Geographic, “Métis,” Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, 2021.

⁶⁹ Siku Allooooloo, “Canada’s Indigenous Genocide Is Ongoing,” *Truthout*, June 30, 2021, <https://truthout.org/articles/canadas-indigenous-genocide-is-ongoing/>.

speaks on the Métis and Cree concept of *Opikinawasowin* which translates to “child rearing way.”⁷⁰ *Opikinawasowin* is often practiced via storytelling as Elders share traditions with children. To demonstrate this, Dorion shares an account of Brady coming to read to children in Alberta.⁷¹ She includes a memory from an elder, Isabelle Imprey, who says, “He would often read only a small section of a story to each household so the children would have to talk to each other to find out how the entire story played out. This served to create a natural educational dialogue between the children.”⁷² The instance here indicates that collaboration and traditional ways of knowing are valuable tools for reclaiming their education.

In many of the communities he lived in, Brady made a concerted effort to reduce the gaps in learning left by day and residential schools for both adults and children. He taught prospecting to new recruits throughout the 1950s, but more interestingly, he started an unofficial adult education class at Cumberland House which, “[he] found out that it broke down a good deal of that hostility.”⁷³ He said the Métis at Cumberland House, who generally received no more than a few years of education at a day school, were aware and proud of their history.⁷⁴ Brady was able to tell them about “particularly the old Métis history and the old history of the Northwest and Indians and all of these matters.”⁷⁵ showing their personal interests in both Métis heritage and a common Indigenous heritage.⁷⁶ The setting was more of an open forum to discuss anything from local grievances to trapping as Brady then worked for the CCF, but the people seemed interested

⁷⁰ Dorion, “Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Métis Children,” 2.

⁷¹ Dorion, “Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Métis Children,” 86.

⁷² Dorion, “Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Metis Children,” 86.

⁷³ Davis, Interview with James Brady, 30.

⁷⁴ As non-status, the ability for Métis to attend school depended on whether they were white passing and chose to identify as such, their proximity to an integrated school system, and whether they could legally claim “status” which would qualify them for residential school — not necessarily a desirable outcome.

⁷⁵ Davis, Interview with James Brady, 29.

⁷⁶ Davis, Interview with James Brady, 29.

in coming to learn. Brady “had the policy there that if there was something that someone didn't understand I used to tell them, "I will answer your question if I can, and if I can't I will find out for you."”⁷⁷

Brady poured his life into facilitating self-determination for the Métis; there was kinship and familiarity there to encourage his efforts which were taxing on his introverted personality. Dobbin closes *The One-and-a-Half Men* by claiming that Brady had a much further ideological reach than he himself understood; Métis to this day cite the man as a significant presence and influence on their own activism. There is also evidence that Brady’s work affected and could apply to non-Métis indigenous peoples. For instance, he worked extensively with Joe Dion and to actualize the Métis Settlements created in 1938. Additionally, he had plans in place to help set up a prospecting co-op in Yukon, by their request, during the 1950s. These plans indicate that he was ready and willing to work with Natives and white people in Yukon, continuing his grassroots work in education, resource management, and workers’ rights.’ He canceled his Yukon plans at the last minute because Norris asked him to replace his position with the CCF at Deschambault Lake, but the correspondence shows that he was in contact with non-Métis Indigenous peoples and a willing ally to them still stands.⁷⁸

Picturing the People

Through the photography and work of Brady, we witness a history of art in the service of Indigenous advocacy for land and educational self-determination taking shape. The candid photographs and open faces draw the viewer in, and ask them to consider the political beliefs

⁷⁷ Davis, Interview with James Brady, 30.

⁷⁸ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 165.

ingrained in those images. For all this talk of their merit as a record of Métis people and life throughout the 20th century, it is worth considering other possible values of Brady's photographs. What can they accomplish? Who benefits from their study and preservation? Some remain in Métis households as "family objects" to look at as keepsakes or pieces of material culture, but many more lie in the Glenbow Archives.⁷⁹ It is relevant to again state that Brady was a self-described laborer, not an artist. He traveled extensively, but still almost all of his photographs were of or related to Métis people. In an interview with Murray Dobbin, Jean Brady claimed that she, "can't recall any discussion that wasn't political - [Jim was] always this way - race, religion, politics were all blended together."⁸⁰ His photographs are no exception. Numbering over 1,000, the images show the aspects of Métis life that Brady valued; shared history, labor, and personal relationships. Together, the photographs and the titles he often gave them reflect the very foundation of his goals for the Métis.

Art historian Laura Dickson frames Brady's photography as "vernacular," lending some insight into their potential as a record of Métis experience.⁸¹ Racette explains this concept of vernacular photography, "...as an *art moyen* — a democratic craft defined by a common aesthetic whose primary purposes are those of recording social integration and genealogical relationships."⁸² When applied to Brady's photographs, the images compose a history of Brady's everyday life and encounters which covers almost 40 years. Yet, this collection goes beyond

⁷⁹ Laura Dickson, "Negotiating Vernacular Community: The Photographic Archive of Metis Activist James P. Brady," Master's thesis, 25.

⁸⁰ Chapman, Walther, and Brady, Brady, the Early Years, 2.

⁸¹ Paul Seesequasis, "Enclosing Some Snapshots: The Photography of Métis Activist James Brady," Glenbow Museum, March 20, 2020.

Laura Dickson, "Negotiating Vernacular Community: The Photographic Archive of Métis Activist James P. Brady." MA Thesis. University of British Columbia. May, 2015.

⁸² Sherry Farrell Racette, "Returning the Fire, Pointing the Canon: Aboriginal Photography as Resistance" *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, 74.

forming a family scrapbook. Brady shows that photography of the mundane is still neither neutral nor benign. Instead, his image-making reflects and even furthers Indigenous activism. Some of the first Indigenous-Canadian photographers — John McKay, George Simpson McTavish, George Hunt, and Richard Throssel to name a few — illustrate that, “Images that captured spontaneous moments — people chatting or children playing with puppies — are affirmations of survivance.”⁸³ In his book, *Known and Strange Things*, photography critic Teju Cole recognizes the violence wrongfully concealed when making ‘neutral’ photographs of colonized settings and people “at the expense of real suffering.”⁸⁴ In vernacular photography, there is sometimes an element of surveillance or force on the part of the photographer. Photography as a discipline historically grapples with making an intimate image versus an invasive one, and the difference hinges on consent. In regards to Brady’s photographs, curator Paul Seesequasis claims,

“Brady’s snapshots also minimize the camera as predatory, possessive weapon, as much as possible [sic] (photographs are always possessive): and utilize them as a common, working class framing. Brady was documenting dignity, individuals; not statuses: status, non status, Métis.....snapshots democratize the camera; potentially reframe the subject outside a colonial framework.”⁸⁵

Like Cole, Seesequasis rejects the neutrality of a photograph, even a so-called snapshot.

Relating to the Métis and other Natives in Canada, images of a residential school, ancestral land, or a loved one who has passed away will always hold the intense and often painful history that comes with the colonization of Native peoples. Brady identified fully with his Métis heritage and most of his subjects were also Métis, and all of his writings indicate that he intended to uplift his

⁸³ Sherry Farrell Racette, “Returning the Fire, Pointing the Canon: Aboriginal Photography as Resistance” *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, 74.

⁸⁴ Cole, *Known and Strange Things*, p 216-217.

⁸⁵ Paul Seesequasis, Twitter post, July 29, 2020, 1:08 p.m., <https://twitter.com/PaulSeesequasis/status/1288696406341906433>

people whenever possible. As such, the vernacular nature of Brady's works plausibly counters the colonialist roots of photographing human beings. He made images of his people without "capturing" them within a stagnant moment or imposing a conceptualization of their indigeneity. His photographs featured community members during their daily lives in the places that mattered to them, forming a collaborative aspect of Métis identity with each image.

However, the many photographs he made of beautiful and important landscapes and built locations show an awareness of Métis history that in many ways grounds his portraits. Making and interacting with collections of photographs like Brady's signals that the physical Métis presence extends beyond what the Canadian government recognizes as their settlements or individually owned properties. Though perhaps not "Native land" under treaty or law, their ancestors stood there and grounded their history in that place.⁸⁶ Brady would return to the specific places and people whom he cared for, and this often overlapped with his activist work which retains a life of its own. As he solidified his own identity and presence in these images, he created this robust archive of Métis history.

⁸⁶ Celeste Pedri-Spade, "Waasaabikizo: Our Pictures Are Good Medicine," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 5, no. 1 (January 2016), 52-53.



Figure 4 “Site of Frog Lake Massacre”, Frog Lake, Saskatchewan



Figure 5 “Cairn at Frog Lake Massacre Site”, Frog Lake Saskatchewan

Brady came to Frog Lake while visiting Joseph Dion on the Cree reserve where Dion taught. Frog Lake was part of the historic Cree uprising led by Wandering Spirit on April 2, 1885, during the Northwest Rebellion.⁸⁷ Figure 4 and Figure 5 depict a cross and a cairn respectively, showing Brady’s focus on faith and remembrance. Marianne Hirsch speaks on historic images which record pain, such as that of a massacre of one’s people, that ‘bleeds’ into the present, using images that survived the Holocaust as evidence.⁸⁸ Photography involving

⁸⁷ Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 2.

⁸⁸ Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” 115.

Indigenous people presents an opportunity to reconnect and continue connecting with family and kin who were subject to such pain.⁸⁹ The photographs may offer a moment of comfort for the photographer, and may offer similar consolation to those viewing the image years after. Brady's visit to the site of massacre and these images also shows his concern with the pan-Indigenous aspects of experiences such as the genocide culture and human life. By photographing the memorials at the site, this becomes a somber moment of pilgrimage for Brady. These images suggest a similarly deep personal impact behind Figure 3 of the Guy Indian Residential School. As we are finally seeing discussed in the media in 2021, Indian residential schools were the site of horrific negligence and suffering for Indigenous peoples.⁹⁰ The school in Figure 3 was still in use, not yet a historic site when Brady photographed it. Already a site of suffering then, it is undoubtedly another site where Indigenous children lie in unmarked graves.⁹¹ These images together suggest a pattern of Brady photographing spaces as evidence Indigenous history.

⁸⁹ Spitzer, Interview, 19-20 minutes.

⁹⁰ Allooloo, "Canada's Indigenous Genocide Is Ongoing."

⁹¹ Allooloo, "Canada's Indigenous Genocide Is Ongoing."

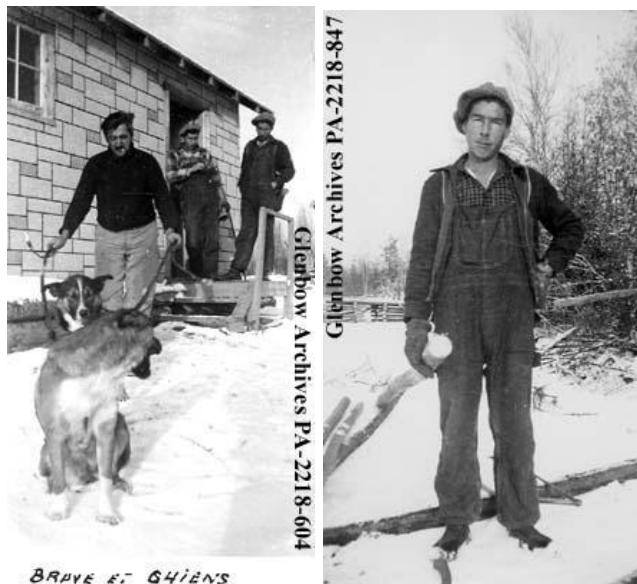


Figure 6 “Brave et Chiens”, Jahala Lake, Saskatchewan;

Figure 7 “Benjamin McKenzie Working with Logs in Snow”, Jahala Lake, Saskatchewan

In the *Brave et Chiens*⁹² image taken during his time at Jahala Lake just east of La Ronge, Saskatchewan in the early 1950s,⁹³ Brady’s friends Wilf Boland and John and Ben McKenzie stand outside in the snow with two large dogs. A cigarette hanging from Wilf’s mouth as he wrangles two dogs and the other two stand idle, the men are gathered on break from one of their trade occupations. We catch a glimpse of a moment of leisure and a positive memory for Brady as indicated by the lighthearted “Brave and dogs” caption.⁹⁴ The caption also proudly marks the Indigenous identity of his friends. The following image of Benjamin ‘Ben’ Mckenzie alone, carrying a log in his work-gloved hand suggests a deeper friendship between the two by this point.⁹⁵ The Mckenzie family appears many times over the years within the collection. The

⁹² James Brady, *Brave et Chiens*, 1952, Photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2678>.

⁹³ Upon comparison with similar photographs in the glen-314 James Brady fonds, the images likely came from September 1952.

⁹⁴ Brady, *Brave et Chiens*.

⁹⁵ James Brady, *Benjamin McKenzie Working with Logs in Snow, Probably in Saskatchewan.*, 1952, Photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2888>.

people Brady photographed tended to carry themselves with ease, and a deep level of comfort between comrades was present here in these short interruptions of work. These two images from 1952 also reflect Brady's concern with labor, and were made during the workday. By photographing his coworkers both at work and at rest, Indigenous and laborer, he ensures the preservation of their multiple identities in the images.

In a surviving letter from Brady to Mckenzie sent on September 14th, 1952, Brady writes saying he read Ben's article on Gabriel Dumont — an prominent Métis bison hunter, leader participating in the North-West Rebellion, and politician — in an issue of *National Affairs Monthly*. He describes it as “the first article I have read which indicates the real nature of the Métis insurrection in Saskatchewan and places Riel and Dumont in the correct historical perspective...”⁹⁶ Sharing a common perspective on Métis historical identity, Brady easily falls into a “comradely” relationship with Ben. As members of “the militant labor movement” as Brady puts it, they were the “true inheritors of our [metis] tradition of democratic struggle and we we (sic) know that [with] their help we shall see the passing of the monopolists of the 20th Century.”⁹⁷ The seven page (typed) letter encompasses Brady's personal and cultural involvement with past assertions of Métis self-determination, and culminates in the claim that this struggle is inherited. He made Métis self-determination a realistic future through his image-making, and it made their identity something to be proud of rather than suppressed.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ James Brady to Ben, “Untitled — Letter to Ben,” Text Document, September 14, 1942, James Brady Papers, Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/03852>.

⁹⁷ Brady, “Untitled — Letter to Ben,” September 14, 1942, 7.

⁹⁸ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 107



Figure 8 “Outdoor portrait of the Malcolm Norris family”, Unknown, Alberta

In Brady’s photographs, we can see evidence of resistance continuing long after the 19th century against the oppressive factors such as the church. Images of Métis men and women as trappers, hunters, and family portraits show resistance through their very survival. “Say Jimmy when you have obtained copies of the negatives you selected will you kindly mail them to my better half, Mrs. Norris,”⁹⁹ writes Norris in one of his many letters to Brady as he asks for the photograph above, “I did not take my camera last year.” An annotation written by Brady on the back of Figure 8 describes it as, “The whole blooming Norris (Malcolm) family June 1933.”¹⁰⁰ Malcolm Norris went through many of the same experiences as Brady as they grew as political activists side-by-side — leading the Alberta Métis Association, serving in the Canadian military during the Second World War, and prospecting —, and the two were lifelong friends. The family photo represents a quintessential style for Brady; he made many portraits of friends’ families, and making images outside in natural lighting was cheaper and easier than either a studio or

⁹⁹ Malcolm Norris to James Brady, November 11, 1935, James Brady Papers, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/m-125-21-p093-tif>.

¹⁰⁰ James Brady, *Outdoor Portrait of the Malcolm Norris Family*, June 1933, Photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2194>.

investing in early flashbulbs. The cost of these latter options would have been excessive considering his lifestyle and usual location somewhere in the bush of western Canada. A more simple manual or even point and shoot camera made it easy to make photographs of families in rural settings.



Figure 9 “Two Gentlemen Enjoying a Campfire”, Wolf Lake, Alberta

In Figure 9, Joseph F. Dion and George Ward, a farmer and trapper, sit smiling at a fire during a trip taken to Wolf Lake in 1932.¹⁰¹ Wolf Lake was an often used location for Métis trappers, and also a place Brady returned to as it was the location of his uncle’s cabin where he had spent the winter a year prior. At Wolf Lake, he found his friends Dion and Ward as well as the sense of security and belonging that came with being isolated in the bush for him.¹⁰² In their shared hobbies and concern for Native education, Brady and Dion shared a strong working friendship. Joseph Dion of the Kehewin Cree Nation had Métis heritage, and worked for the Alberta Métis Association.¹⁰³ His Métis lineage is open to interpretation and coexistence with his

¹⁰¹ “J. F. Dion and George Ward on a trip to Wolf Lake, Albert,” James Brady, photograph. <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2183>. An alternative version of the same photo is inscribed, “Attending to the wants of The Inner Man.” <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2261>.

¹⁰² Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 9.

¹⁰³ University of Regina, “Joseph Dion,” Shattering the Silence: The Hidden History of Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan, January 1961, <https://www2.uregina.ca/education/saskindianresidentialschools/joseph-dion/>.

other self-determined identities. Dion, like Brady, left St. Anthony's Indian Residential School during 5th grade, and chose to finish his education from home in order to eventually become a teacher. The Catholic-run institution assigned their students numbers, and Dion was assigned No. 7.¹⁰⁴ Further, four of his siblings and a close friend died due to the poor health conditions at the school which was a common factor in residential schools throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Poor healthcare further cornered Métis children into attending a residential school or no school at all as non-Indigenous places for education worried about the potential health risks of allowing their attendance.¹⁰⁵ The systemic de-tribalizing of Dion was thorough, and, in 1912, he chose to give up his treaty Indian status in favor of becoming franchised and able to vote in Alberta. This decision, which came with weighty consequences, perhaps contributed to Dion's decision to advocate for the Métis as another of the "Famous Five" who made the settlements a reality. As a teacher on the Kehiwin Indian Reserve, his education and citizenship rights gave him much in common with Brady and the others, and incidentally, an edge when dealing with legislation.¹⁰⁶



Figure 10 "Len and Marlene Belcourt Playing a Game, Outdoors", Unknown, Alberta

¹⁰⁴ University of Regina, "Joseph Dion."

¹⁰⁵ Byrne, "No Other Weapon Except Organization," 317.

¹⁰⁶ University of Regina, "Joseph Dion."



Figure 11 “On the Jasper Trail”, Jasper Trail, Alberta



Figure 12 Little Girl Playing Dress-up”, Unknown, Alberta

Woven into his body of work are images of the Belcourt family; the first (Figure 10) of Len and Marlene Belcourt playing outdoors, and the second (Figure 11) of Louise Belcourt preparing food on a campfire.¹⁰⁷ Brady was not the only one “enclosing some snapshots” in letters, as Marlene Belcourt attached this photograph, Figure 12, of herself, slightly older and playing dress-up, to a letter sent by her family to Brady.¹⁰⁸ She stands, posed with hands on her

¹⁰⁷ James Brady, *Len and Marlene Belcourt Playing a Game, Outdoors*, 1948, Photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2379>.; James Brady, *On the Jasper Trail*, 1940s, Photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2370>.

¹⁰⁸ Racette, “Enclosing Some Snapshots.”

hips and grinning, and annotated the back herself to say, “The sun is a bit bright. But that’s me Jim. Do you still want a cook. I’m going to try that next (Marlene) Belcourt 1948.”¹⁰⁹ In this exchange of images, we see that Marlene looked up to Brady as a family friend. Once can picture Marlene grinning as she wrote this message, excited to tell her admired role model about her career aspirations. Asking whether Brady still wanted a cook perhaps alludes to a past conversation between the two, and gives the sense that Brady genuinely supported the young girl’s aspirations.

A pattern develops within Brady’s photography and writing that suggests he was of two minds in regards to women. He showed an interest in supporting women who hoped to work and provide for themselves regardless of age or circumstance.¹¹⁰ In his interview with Davis, Brady shares an anecdote of Edith, a teenager he met in the late 1940s while living in Edmonton.¹¹¹ Edith had initially come there with a white man, a romantic interest who promised marriage, but he promptly abandoned her in the city. She wanted to stay and work in Edmonton rather than face her parents’ judgement, determined to make her living. Brady helped provide for her financially for two months, and makes a point of mentioning their relationship was “purely platonic.”¹¹² He described Edith to Davis as “proud and stubborn...a very industrious girl and very neat in her appearance.”¹¹³ Calling her “industrious” and “neat” shows Brady’s emphasis on her character and potential as a worker.

James Brady, “Untitled — Letter to Ben,” 7.

¹⁰⁹ James Brady, *Little Girl Playing Dress-Up*, 1948, Photograph, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2378>.

¹¹⁰ For further reading, “APPENDIX I: Attending to Gender” at the end of Molly Suzanne Swain’s thesis addresses the ways Brady interacts with and considers Metis women.; Swain, “Victim of Deceit and Self-Deceit,” 108-112.

¹¹¹ Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 24.

¹¹² Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 24.

¹¹³ Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 24.

Brady's tone changed dramatically the moment a woman was of particular beauty or romantic interest to him. In his correspondence with Norris from 1934 to 1935, they refer to Brady's girlfriend as "Raspberry."¹¹⁴ They never actually use her real name (assuming it was not indeed "Raspberry"), and instead call her "girl" or "little girl."¹¹⁵ In March of 1935, Norris wrote to say he was, "greatly impressed with your little girl, and would like to repeat my advice of earlier date. Get married.. (sic) You know two can always live as cheaply as one."¹¹⁶ Brady did not marry this woman, and the mixture of pet names served mainly to infantilize her. The use of "little girl," the same language Brady applies to Marlene Belcourt who is an actual child, trivializes this ex-girlfriend. Raspberry, a woman Brady might have married, is ultimately an unnamed and now anonymous woman.

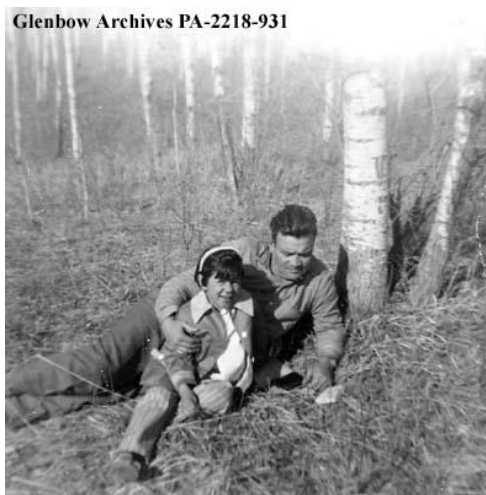


Figure 13 "James Brady and Emma-Jean Bird", Cumberland House, Saskatchewan

¹¹⁴ Dobbin, "Letters: Norris to Brady 1933-'39," 7.

¹¹⁵ Dobbin, "Letters: Norris to Brady 1933-'39," 9.

¹¹⁶ Dobbin, "Letters: Norris to Brady 1933-'39," 9.



Figure 14 “Cecilia Dorion, Cumberland House, Sask.”, Cumberland House, Saskatchewan

Photographs of Brady’s domestic and romantic life depict fragments of his own memories of those he worked so hard to protect within the images. For example, he and his daughter Emma Jean Bird are depicted in Figure 13, sitting in a Saskatchewan forest near Cumberland House.¹¹⁷ Brady often kept his private family life hidden from the general public, but here in a quiet forest he is with his daughter in an idyllic and affectionate scene only six years before his sudden disappearance in 1967. Brady made over a thousand images during his brief time at Cumberland House, a remote Cree and Métis settlement with no more than 2,000 community members. He left the community for La Ronge in 1951, but not before photographing many loved ones and community members in outdoor settings.

During his interview with Art Davis, Brady responds to Davis’ request for more information on his romantic life with a polite yet pointed, “Probably it's just as well to draw a

¹¹⁷ *James Brady and Emma Jean Bird*, James Brady, August, 1961, Photograph.

veil over the past.”¹¹⁸ His desire to veil the past he had with these women reflects both unresolved emotions, a certain level of carelessness for their futures, and a desire to keep this part of his life secure from the rest. Brady undoubtedly sexualized women he found attractive, at least in his language, but in other ways he protected Métis women. “That picture you see — the femme fatale of my life,”¹¹⁹ he says of Figure 14 which shows Cecilia Dorion at Cumberland House, Saskatchewan.¹²⁰ Cecilia was known as a fiercely independent woman and trapper by both her descendants and voting censuses from the 1960s.¹²¹ She was the mother of his second daughter, and stayed unmarried and living at Cumberland House long after Brady left for La Ronge. He does not use the same diminutive language with Cecilia as he did with past girlfriends, but she was an exception in that regard. Although “femme fatale” acknowledges her womanhood, it also confines Cecilia to an unstable role where she is mysterious, beautiful, and even dangerous with the ability to seduce Brady and make him miserable.

Verna Richards, owner of the La Ronge Cafe in the 1950s and 1960s, recounted the one time during their friendship when Brady shared about Cecilia, adding greater complexity to this assessment. After getting into a fight with a man at the La Ronge Cafe, Richards kicked them both out and she talked with Brady behind the building as he broke down.¹²² According to her, “Jim just said, ‘He said some very nasty things about her and no one’s going to talk about her like that because she is not like that.’ And that was why he hit [the man from Cumberland.] he was, you know, supporting this woman.”¹²³ According to Richards, Brady was still sending

¹¹⁸ Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 54.

¹¹⁹ James Brady, Interview by Art Davis, 54

¹²⁰ James Brady, *Cecilia Dorion, Cumberland House, Saskatchewan*, 1949, Photograph, Glenbow Archives.

¹²¹ Rural Preliminary List of Voters, Canada Elections Act, 1958, 1, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/imageviewer/collections/2983/images/33022_302028-00496?usePUB=true&_phsrc=Tls23&_phstart=successSource&usePUBIs=true&pId=12368683.

¹²² Verna Richards, Interview with Murray Dobbin, 17.

¹²³ Richards, Interview with Murray Dobbin, 17.

Cecilia money at least a decade after their relationship began around 1950, but he never mentioned her again. Dobbin asked her specifically if she saw Brady with any girlfriends during this period, but she responded, “No. [He] Never, never, never went out with any women. He treated all women as sisters, if they were older, like mothers, you know.”¹²⁴ Brady caring for Cecilia does not negate the earlier discussion of his prior romantic partners nor his perspective on women he found attractive.

With his controversial politics and disappearance, Brady also had cause to protect his romantic partners and children from public scrutiny. Though many of his images are now archived and displayed publicly, this protectiveness may extend to the other Métis he photographed. While coming into their political battle for self-determination, having a collective identity reflected in semi-private images could help strengthen a sense of Indigenous identity and resolution for the cause as much as any propaganda poster.

Shaping Métis Resistance

Prior to the war, Brady spent the 1920s and 1930s becoming educated and radicalized, helping to organize the Métis Association of Alberta as their secretary-treasurer, and facilitating the establishment of official Métis settlements in 1938.¹²⁵ The Alberta Métis Association pushed for a Royal Commission to review the conditions of the Métis peoples of Alberta. In between the 19th century period of resistance and 1938, many Métis lived on crown lands without access to government services or the relief programs which were offered to anyone who held title to land.¹²⁶ As Alberta began requiring licenses for legal hunting, fishing, and trapping, the

¹²⁴ Richards, Interview with Murray Dobbin, 24.

¹²⁵ Brady, Interview with Art Davis.

¹²⁶ Byrne, “No Other Weapon Except Organization,” 315.

conditions became unbearable for most Métis. Many of the photographs Brady made in the 1920s and 1930s showed other Métis in the bush, carrying out these activities as those things were still their livelihood. The association lobbied the provincial government for permanent lands on which the Métis could hunt, trap, fish, and otherwise live sustainably without needing government relief payments.¹²⁷



Figure 15 “Anti-War and Facism Demonstration”, Regina, Saskatchewan

The Métis Association of Alberta, founded in 1928, aimed to inspire democratic political changes while more conservative Canadians labeled their actions “conspiracies and terrorism.”¹²⁸ Becoming a member of this association in 1930, Brady hoped to implement Marxism on both a local and international scale. In “Vanished Campfires”, Brady presents his take on the philosophy as inclusive of class and globally-applicable; “Our ideals are the ideals of the common people throughout the world... It is our pride as Canadians, as common people of Canada, that makes us rejoice at thr (sic) rout of Rommel in Africa and the glorious Soviet victory at Stalingrad.”¹²⁹ Brady believed in a wider liberation of the working class by way of a Leninist proletariat revolution, and the maintenance of cultural identities within that process. He transcribed this

¹²⁷ Nicole C. O’Byrne, “No Other Weapon Except Organization: The Métis Association of Alberta and the 1938 Métis Population Betterment Act,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2013, 312.

¹²⁸ James Brady, “Vanished Campfires,” 1.

¹²⁹ James Brady, “Vanished Campfires,” 3.

article in the 1950s, yet the politics laid out within have origins in his work from the 30s and 40s. Those earlier years were largely dedicated to how he could incorporate ‘lumpenproletariat’ Métis into this larger plan for revolution. Brady’s conceptualization of a communist revolution that benefited Métis ultimately looked different from plain Marxism and the CCF’s policies, neither of which considered Native peoples as deserving of an active role in the movement. His version gave the preservation of Indigenous identities value in the larger class struggle — solidarity without the erasure of unique cultures.

Figure 15 shows Brady’s view at the World Committee Against War and Fascism (WCAWF) demonstration of 1934 in Two Hills, Alberta, close to the Saskatchewan border. WCAWF preached a message of pacifism though most individual members and groups also had communist leanings.¹³⁰ The Royal Canadian Mounted Police monitored this and other anti-fascist, communist, socialist, and pacifist organizations during this time, increasing the prevalence of government surveillance. Records of associated demonstrations and gatherings exist in the form of ‘secret’ weekly summaries detailing “revolutionary organizations and agitators in Canada.”¹³¹ These demonstrations paralleled Brady’s work with the Métis Association of Alberta, and he successfully lobbied for the 1938 Métis Population Betterment Act. The Act established twelve Métis Settlements with boundaries protected by the Canadian government.¹³² Professor of Indigenous law, Nicole O’Byrne, claims that the resulting 1938 Métis Population Betterment Act benefited both sides’ seemingly disparate goals.¹³³ The Alberta government wanted a relatively cheap solution to the Metis’ economic struggles, and the Métis

¹³⁰ Anti-War and Facism Demonstration, August 5, 1934, Two Hills, Alberta, Photograph, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/is-glen-2240>.

¹³¹ Sherry Farrell Racette, “Enclosing Some Snapshots,” 274.

¹³² “Metis “Famous Five”,” Canadian Museum of History, June 1, 2017, <https://www.historymuseum.ca/blog/metis-famous-five/>.

¹³³ O’Byrne, “No Other Weapon except Organization,” 311-352.

wanted a way to support themselves and protect their cultural identity. Further, “it represented historical redress for the poor treatment of the Métis since the failure of the Red River Resistance.”¹³⁴ Brady also helped found the Métis Association of La Ronge and the Métis Association of Saskatchewan, two other organizations which advocated for self-determination.

Alberta Métis and sympathetic Status Indians began meeting in 1930 to organize against the potential transfer of lands and resources. Their tenuous position on Crown lands was at risk. Status Indians and white farmers alike contributed their support and expertise to the cause.¹³⁵ Joseph M. Dechêne, a Liberal elected member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta (MLA) at the time, helped press the government to consider the Métis petitions and demands. After attending the meeting of Metis, he immediately wrote to the Minister of Lands and Mines Richard G. Reid on their behalf. For the next meeting, Dechêne said, “it was lately decided to have that part of the delegation still existing, namely Mr. Dion and myself wait upon you.”¹³⁶ Passing along information and sympathies marked the extent of Dechêne’s support, but other members of the House of Commons offered further information and advice to the association over the next few years.

A letter from P.G. Davis to Brady promises to send documents requested by the latter, and congratulates Brady on his election as secretary-treasurer.¹³⁷ The sympathetic letter was a far cry from concrete support in the form of money or a promise to vote according to the organization’s goals. They continued to receive support from the white community, other Indigenous peoples, and politicians, but never to the extent or manner that Brady and Norris

¹³⁴ Byrne, “No Other Weapon Except Organization,” 313.

¹³⁵ Byrne, “No Other Weapon Except Organization,” 316.

¹³⁶ J.M. Dechene and R.G. Reid, “Report of the Provincial Government,” April 5, 1932, Glenbow Archives, <https://albertaonrecord.ca/m-125-32-p06-tif>.

¹³⁷ P.G Davis, Letter to James Brady, January 5, 1933, Glenbow Archives, m-125-32, p 30-31.

hoped for. The two men took a backseat from grassroots organizing around 1935 as it became clear that the association's goal of obtaining land for Métis would not encompass the self-determination of nomadic Métis or genuine educational and social reform.¹³⁸ Brady then became involved with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and Communist Party (CP). Though the organizations had overlapping goals for workers' rights, they were formally opposed and had no crossover members aside from Brady.¹³⁹ Albertan politician and CP member Bill Tuomi claimed that Brady earned trusted roles in both organizations as, "He could just do it because he was Jim."¹⁴⁰ His ability to move between different organizations shows one of his hallmark characteristics which others recognized, an "unwavering commitment to socialism, but a commitment acted out of in the interests of native people."¹⁴¹

In Brady's mind, the goals of the nomadic and the impoverished Métis were aligned with the Métis middle class despite the fact that the Marxist communist white working class could not conceive this alliance between proletariat and lumpenproletariat.¹⁴² The combination of his lived experiences as a Métis, altruistic community member, and as an itinerant labor allowed him to perceive this gap in the CP and CCF. Anti-fascism united Brady with these groups and he was a very active member throughout the 1930s and 40s. However, WWII disillusionment and the CCF replacing the Social Credit government in Alberta and Saskatchewan finally tested these parties' stances on the Métis. Métis Historian Molly Swain picks up on an earlier thread discussed here; similar to the Métis Population Betterment Act of 1938, "Based on racist stereotypes that Métis were lazy, unintelligent, and unsuited to modern forms of industrial labour, the government saw

¹³⁸ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 109.

¹³⁹ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 111.

¹⁴⁰ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 111.

¹⁴¹ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 111.

¹⁴² Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 112.

co-ops as a means to replace welfare and integrate Métis into the mainstream economy, where they would learn to be productive, tax-paying citizens.”¹⁴³ Initially, Brady believed the CCF trade programs were a step in the right direction—an unusual moment of political optimism from Brady while many of his contemporaries distrusted the CCF’s intentions. Brady long hoped to utilize the state programs, recognizing the skeleton of something potentially useful for the Métis peoples living there. However, it became impossible to ignore that the Métis did much worse with their income tied to CCF co-ops instead of the more flexible employment options that were available prior. Yet, like the Social Credit government, the CCF rarely granted Métis significant positions of power in government or local co-ops.¹⁴⁴ Brady quickly recognized that the co-ops intended to phase out Métis welfare programs while extracting resources from Indigenous lands in Saskatchewan.¹⁴⁵

The Canadian Communist Party was banned in 1940 in the wake of World War Two, but was reestablished in 1943 as the Labor-Progressive Party as the original party’s leaders filtered out of prison. However, the Canadian government still kept a keen eye on the new party’s activities. A new phase of Brady’s activism followed after this suppression of communist ideologies in Canada through intense government observation and imprisonment of influential community leaders. Brady’s role as a community organizer was ongoing aside from his two year stint in Holland during WWII where he served twice in the 4th Medical Regiment, R.C.A., June 1943 to March, 1946.¹⁴⁶ Each deployment came to an end due to injuries he sustained which led him to a new period of more local, community-centered work for Brady. His activist projects

¹⁴³ Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System.”

¹⁴⁴ Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System”.”

¹⁴⁵ Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System”.”

¹⁴⁶ Racette, “Enclosing Some Snapshots,” 278

began again with the support and collaboration of the post-war Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) co-ops on Métis lands.¹⁴⁷

The CCF initially brought Brady in because he had experience organizing education and co-ops for Natives, but he became disillusioned after the fallout from his refusal to support ‘MacLean’, a CCF candidate for control over Cumberland House in 1950. Brady explained his decision to MacLean, “I am not going to be considered a traitor by my own people. That’s exactly the position I put myself in if I support you.”¹⁴⁸ Not taking the rejection in a “comradely” fashion, MacLean attempted to have Brady transferred to Uranium City. Brady turned down that position saying, “...at that time, you see, if I had left Cumberland it would disrupt this entire co-operative program. MacLean knew that at this time I was on the verge of organizing the timber co-operative.”¹⁴⁹ Before attempting to have him transferred, MacLean wanted Brady fired based on his work or illegitimate children. However, “Even the Anglican priest in the community, no friend of Brady, refused to repeat the rumors or criticize Brady.”¹⁵⁰ In this chain of events, there is clear evidence that MacLean recognized Brady’s power as a community organizer, yet he loathed to admit it aloud or put in the work needed to genuinely receive Brady’s approval. Brady’s timber co-operative, Cumberland House Wood Products Co-op, functioned for a year or two after he left the town in 1951 as it lacked support from the CCF.

The 1950s marked when the language of ‘assimilation’ gave way to ‘integration’ as the CCF rebranded their unwavering hopes that Métis was a sort of transitional identity; a “temporary expedient until the Métis disappeared as a people,” as Barron phrases it.¹⁵¹ However,

¹⁴⁷ Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System”.”

¹⁴⁸ Davis, Interview with Brady, 41.

¹⁴⁹ Davis, Interview with Brady, 42.

¹⁵⁰ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 180.

¹⁵¹ Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 212.

the CCF did not attempt to do away with the Indian Act or any treaties as other political bodies tried to in the late 1960s, but they also seem to have been “prepared to wait for Indians to assimilate voluntarily in order for them to receive the benefits of full citizenship,” although doing so would forfeit any special status.¹⁵² Much of the CCF policies geared towards Native communities worked to safeguard individual and human rights rather than ethnic or national rights.¹⁵³ Therefore, Brady’s attempts during the 1950s to advocate for labor and educational reforms within the CCF fell on deaf and resistant ears. What he wanted was for the Métis to be aligned with the general ideas of social welfare, education, and equal standing with other ethnicities in Canada, but he also embraced Métis identity as important to maintain and integral to any political action made on their behalf.¹⁵⁴ James Brady, many of his contemporary activists, and even his sister, Jean, a nun who taught in Saskatchewan for the Grey Nuns at Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse residential schools, found ways to resist and promote Native education that went beyond basic literacy. Brady and Sister Jean aligned almost wholeheartedly on the matter of Native education despite their other core differences, namely her faith.¹⁵⁵ She published an article on her views in *Native Voice*, run by the native brotherhood of British Columbia, “without any ecclesiastical consultation or approval.”¹⁵⁶

Despite the fact that much of his organizing efforts dissolved once left to their own devices, Brady effectively passed on instructions and ideas to other Métis on how to better their circumstances. According to Janet Fietz, “He went visiting. He visited people, and if anyone

¹⁵² Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 212.

¹⁵³ Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins*, 209. Barron notes that Indigenous national rights are an ahistorical concept, even for native peoples, at this point. Postwar demands for self-government did not encompass self-determination as we understand it now until the 1970s.

¹⁵⁴ James Brady, *Jean Cuthand, M. F. Norris, and James Brady, at a demonstration*,” Regina, Saskatchewan, April 1, 1961, Glenbow archives.

¹⁵⁵ Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Brady, Interview with Art Davis, 36.

goes and visits you that means they like you. And if they don't visit you they don't like you. So this is how come lots of people liked him. He visited them and he sat in the tents or at the campfires and talked to people like this. So people knew he was trying to do something. And doesn't come once in a while and just go through the place and go through town, or land for a few hours and take off again. He lived with us and he talked to us and we learned..."¹⁵⁷ In short, he fully immersed himself in every community he lived in, and made a point of being social enough that politically uninvolved people might still listen and become active participants. In Figure 14, James is pictured (right) at a demonstration with his friends and fellow activists Jean Cuthand (left) and Malcolm Norris (center) in 1961.¹⁵⁸ Brady did not make this photograph, but it represents the collaborative aspect of his efforts towards Métis self-determination. It provides evidence that he did not work alone, and photographing his advocacy gives Brady his own place in the visual archive of Métis that he crafted.



Figure 16 “Jean Cuthand, M.F. Norris, and James Brady, at a demonstration”, Regina, Saskatchewan

¹⁵⁷ Janet Fietz, Janet Fietz Interview, Interview by Murray Dobbin, transcript, June 18, 1976, Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina oURspace, 9.

¹⁵⁸ James Brady, *Jean Cuthand, M. F. Norris, and James Brady, at a demonstration,* Regina, Saskatchewan, April 1, 1961, Glenbow archives.

Brady continued starting co-ops and working to reform them until the CCF publicly resisted his proposal to incite change within the existing system in 1963. He approached Tommy Douglass, former premier of Saskatchewan, at a CCF convention, and proposed a semi-independent agency to govern northern Saskatchewan. This change would allow Métis and other indigenous peoples to obtain adequate representation in CCF politics and co-ops, but Douglass refused to consider it.¹⁵⁹ He claimed the relevant tax and voter base was too insignificant to justify changing CCF operations. Brady then turned to educational and local activism for the remainder of his life, avoiding any further political organizing.¹⁶⁰ He refocused on local, grassroots activism as he befriended and organized indigenous working class communities for the next few years. However, health issues followed by his disappearance cast a pall on the rest of his work. In January of 1967, Brady wrote to Norris:

“After many months of inactivity I feel gratified to inform you that I have made an initial effort at organizational work for the Saskatchewan Metis. An organizational meeting was held on January 11th and considering the weather and local conditions the meeting was attended by 26 individuals which was much beyond my expectations.”¹⁶¹

Brady had regained some hope for the La Ronge Métis as they expressed interest in political action for the first time in approximately fifteen years. This was also just six months before his death. James Brady left behind a strong impression upon the psyche of the Métis he knew and worked with. The effects became more obvious over the decades after his life as Métis organized and caused legislative changes at a level that had not been possible for them since 1938.

In June 1967, Brady and his friend from Lac La Ronge, Absolum “Abbie” Halkett (Cree), disappeared while prospecting in northern Saskatchewan.¹⁶² Their camp remained intact with

¹⁵⁹ Molly Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System.”

¹⁶⁰ Molly Swain, “Liberation from “That Vicious System.”

¹⁶¹ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 241-242.

¹⁶² Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 245.

food and supplies on the shore of Lower Foster Lake. Though the summer was unusually cold, simple explanations of hypothermia or exposure do not quite fit.¹⁶³ These strange circumstances provoked suspicion. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) searched the area for their bodies to no avail, yet rumors circulated, grasping for explanations of their disappearance. The case remains unsolved. Métis community members often point to the friction between the state and Brady due to his activism while others suspect a local man who had a potential motive to harm Brady.¹⁶⁴ Whether due to political or personal reasons, Brady's disappearance and presumed death did not stop other Indigenous peoples from continuing his work. Many of his friends and fellow activists found it difficult to pick up the pieces of his work for a time as few could match his devotion to achieving radical change rather than settling for a survival.

Significant progress in obtaining Métis rights did not begin again until the 1980s, and the Métis have eight remaining settlements and a tenuous relationship with the Canadian government today. The province of Alberta finally recognized the association's historic, human rights, or self-governance centered arguments for the land as valid, let alone existent, until 1990 in the Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act.¹⁶⁵ In terms of the Métis, Section 35, part 1 of the 1982 Constitution Acts states that "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."¹⁶⁶ The act explicitly includes "Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples", yet the unequal legislative treatment of different indigenous peoples carries on in the form of 'status' and 'non status' designations. Finally, *Daniels v. Canada* (2016) ruled that

¹⁶³ Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men*, 250.

¹⁶⁴ The name is redacted in Murray Dobbin's notes, but Michael Nest received permission from the man's daughter to use the name, "Joe Mason." To summarize Nest's opinion on the matter, a quote from Anne Dorion says it best, "Nothing is served by naming him." Murray Dobbin, "Brady's Demise," James Brady Papers, Gabriel Dumont Institute: Saskatchewan, CA. 1970s, 4., Nest, *Cold Case North*, 222.

¹⁶⁵ Byrne, "No Other Weapon Except Organization," 313.

¹⁶⁶ *Rights of the Aboriginal People of Canada*, Constitution Act, s 35, Part II, Canada, 1982, https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/APPA/Briefs/ConstitutionAct_2017-09-19_e.pdf.

Métis and other non-status Indians were entitled to programs and services under the 1982 Act.¹⁶⁷ The Daniels v. Canada case was filed in 1999, and took 12 years to go to trial for the first time where the favorable decision was appealed twice. The ruling affirmed the right to improved education, housing, and healthcare services for métis and non-status indigenous peoples while placing the onus on the federal government rather than provincial governments. The mention of housing in particular sets a potential precedent for successful land claims and reconciliation that extends beyond simple words of apology, and opens the door to more positive change.

CONCLUSION: “When he wasn’t there, his door was always open”¹⁶⁸

Coming from a home life rooted in generations of community activism, James P. Brady conceptualized much of the political philosophy required to start a movement for Métis self-determination. Brady was politically radical, but not timelessly so. As a uranium prospector who organized other Métis laborers in that profession, it seems unlikely that Brady would support contemporary Indigenous resistance against new pipelines built over Native lands. Climate change and resource management in that regard were simply not a concern during his lifetime. Based on these points, Molly Swain maintains, “Brady and his politics are simply not the metrics against which we want to be measuring our own work... His treatment and sexualization of women... would have also (one can hope) excluded him from radical organizing spaces.”¹⁶⁹ Brady spent decades adapting Marxist communism to encompass a pride for Métis identity, and there is no reason to assume his political ideas regarding climate and women would be an exception and stagnate in the 1960s. However, this is a salient point if only to say that no

¹⁶⁷ Daniels v. Canada, 35945 CA (2016), <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/15858/index.do>.

¹⁶⁸ Richards, Interview with Murray Dobbin, 19.

¹⁶⁹ Swain, “Victim of Deceit and Self-Deceit,” 91.

activist is a “hero” above questioning. Brady was a person, not a living philosophy, and his ideas were ultimately changeable with room for ambiguities.

Brady’s parting words to Art Davis during their interview ring true today; “[The Métis] future lies in the fact that they must... be freed of the disabilities which colonialism has imposed upon them, or the vestiges of colonialism still impose upon them[, and they must] free themselves of that vicious system which has imposed these conditions on a conquered people.” Brady’s political philosophies influenced many indigenous communities and workers as he spent his life traveling, socializing, and bringing up political change in local settings. His skills as a political organizer were great enough to warrant regional action throughout his life, and his writings and photographs continue to inspire future resistance.

Few people saw Brady’s photographs during his lifetime, and the photographs he distributed by hand or letter were deeply personal. The full impact of Brady’s images as a record of Métis identity and self-determination came much later after his death. Writing on Indigenous photography and decolonization, Lynne Bell posits, “While the archival photograph is an indexical trace of the past... the photographic text is also situated, activated, and narrated in the present.”¹⁷⁰ For those who identify as Métis, Brady’s photographs provide visual proof of individual and collective Métis experiences and survivance. The 21st century legislation regarding Métis thus far attests to the timeliness of the recent surge of scholarly and artistic interest in his work.¹⁷¹ Through his 2021 exhibition on Brady at the Glenbow Museum, “Enclosing Some Snapshots,” curator Paul Seesequasis (Willow Cree) shows Brady’s raw talent

¹⁷⁰ Lynne Bell, “Unsettling Acts: Photography as Decolonizing Testimony in Centennial Memory,” *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*. McGill-Queen’s/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History. Montreal [Que.]: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011, 167.

¹⁷¹ Nest, “Cold Case North.”; Swain, “Victim of Deceit and Self-Deceit.”; Racette, “Enclosing Some Snapshots.”; Dorion, “Opikinawasowin.”

as an untrained photographer, and “his ability to convey the dignity and resilience of Métis and Cree life and people, through even the most trying of times.”¹⁷² As Seesequasis claims, “it is questionable whether Brady ever considered these photographs to be a “record” but, intentionally or not, that is what they now are.”¹⁷³ The “record” Brady’s photography composes provides visuals that convey the heart of Brady’s political activism in a way that supports a Métis future of self-determination and uncontested identity as an Indigenous people.

¹⁷² Seesequasis, “Enclosing Some Snapshots: The Photography of Métis Activist James Brady,” Glenbow Museum, March 20, 2020.

¹⁷³ Seesequasis, “Enclosing Some Snapshots: The Photography of Métis Activist James Brady,” Glenbow Museum, March 20, 2020.

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