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Métis Matriarchs: Agents of Transition. Edited by Cheryl Troupe and Doris Jeanne MacKinnon. Regina: University of Regina Press, 2024. 316 pages. $89.00 cloth; $34.95 paper; $34.95 e-book.

Métis Matriarchs: Agents of Transition offers a persuasive alternative to traditional accounts of Western Canadian settlement. This volume, coedited by Cheryl Troupe, an associate professor in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan, and Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, an independent historian, underscores the vital yet often overlooked contributions of Métis women during a pivotal transitional period in prairie history as the fur trade gave way to a more sedentary, industrialized, and agrarian economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people that significantly shaped Western Canadian history through their various contributions to the fur trade in the nineteenth century. They resisted colonial encroachments in Manitoba in 1870 and at Batoche, Saskatchewan, in 1885. Between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, their lives underwent significant transformation as a result of the extinction of the buffalo, loss of land, forced migration, economic marginalization, and the denial of recognized rights. Métis women's contributions to the Métis nation's history have frequently been downplayed or overlooked; nonetheless, they are progressively asserting their rightful place in the historical narrative of both their nation and Canada.

This collection's primary merit resides in its essential critique of settler colonial historiography. Much like other scholars before them (Brenda MacDougall, Diane Payment, Kim Anderson, and many others), the editors and contributors portray Métis women not as passive victims of colonial expansion but as agents who negotiated, resisted, and responded to significant social and economic transformations. They achieve these objectives by concentrating on both prominent matriarchs (such as Marie Rose Delorme Smith in chapter one and Victoria Belcourt Callihoo in chapter two) and those lesser-known (such as Josette Lagacé in chapter three). The different chapters explore how Métis matriarchs, as active agents of transition, defended their communities' cultural survival by responding to colonial encroachments into their lives and livelihoods. In addition, some of these women "navigated multiple identities such as Métis, First Nations, farmers, and ranchers" during periods of change (xvi). As noted by the authors, "these women overcame economic changes, political resistance and upheaval, settlement pressure, loss of land, displacement, relocation, family trauma, racism, and loss while consistently adapting, resisting, and challenging the changes they faced" (262). The narratives highlight key elements of Métis women's daily lives, illustrating the shifts and continuities in their family roles and responsibilities, while also showcasing their resilience over time (xv). Despite experiencing marginalization and

racism from settlers and the state, Métis matriarchs continued to transmit knowledge and cultural teachings while fulfilling their roles as women, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers to maintain the strength of their kinship networks and community structures (much like they did during the fur trade era).

As the title suggests, the authors and contributors use "the concept of matriarchy to demonstrate how women—aunties and grannies—of a certain age and stature navigated the changing world around them" (xv). The eight chapters, authored by women—five of whom are Métis—employ a biographical approach and are rooted in relationships and kinships. Several chapters are written by the descendants of matriarchs such as Caroline McNabb, Julia Lamotte, and Auxile Lepine—Jade McDougall (chapter 4), Gabrielle Legault (chapter 5), and Janice Cindy Gaudet (chapter 6)—highlighting that these women were not merely agents of transition but also of *transmission* (xxix).

Each chapter is constructed on dialogues with either family members, descendants of the matriarchs, the matriarchs themselves (as demonstrated in Troupe's eighth chapter about community activist Norma Cummings), or with community members (in Allyson Stevenson's seventh chapter regarding the intergenerational transmission of knowledge through material culture in the northern village of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan). Overall, the book builds dynamic conversations that cross generations and time by emphasizing storytelling through the matriarchs' own words—stories they passed down despite colonial pressures—alongside various sources, including archival materials and personal collections. The case study format allows for intimate portraits of individual women while simultaneously revealing overarching trends of adaptation, "resistance, resilience, and cultural survival" (261). The chapters expose numerous topics, including women's leadership and community stewardship, food sovereignty, knowledge transfer, material culture, kinship systems including adoption practices, and entrepreneurship.

The book effectively elevates Métis women from the margins of historical narratives to prominent protagonists in prairie history. Anyone interested in the multifaceted impacts of colonialism, Métis cultural continuity, and the evolving dynamics of Métis communities in Western Canada would benefit greatly from reading it. It not only contributes considerably to the growing body of scholarship on the lived experiences of Métis women in Western Canada, it also challenges scholars to examine the intersections of gender, race, and colonialism on the Canadian prairies. *Métis Matriarchs: Agents of Transition* is an essential read for anybody interested in Indigenous studies, gender and women's studies, and Canadian history.

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