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"En Terre Promise":

The Lives of Franco-Albertan Women, 1890-1940

by

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Abstract

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This study, based on 253 oral histories, examines the life stages of Franco-Albertan women during the period 1890-1940. Migrating from other Canadian territory or immigrating from Europe or from the United States, Franco-Albertans settled across the province, but especially in northern areas, around Edmonton, St. Paul and Peace River, where they formed substantial communities. Their immigration was promoted by the western Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and the clergy took an active role in overseeing the foundation and development of new settlements.

Within francophone communities, women played an active role. This study argues that their experiences of migration and settlement, and of daily life, were shaped especially by their gender and ethnicity, although class and region also played a role. All francophone women, whether of European or of North-American origin, came under the influence of the Victorian construct of separate spheres and the accompanying gender ideals which defined women's place and roles in society. Franco-Albertan women's gender identity was further fashioned by culturally determined ideals, especially by the conservative clerical-nationalism promoted in franco-Catholic communities.

Gender and ethnicity shaped every stage of Franco-Albertan women's lives. In childhood and youth, Franco-Albertan girls played games and engaged in work which taught them adult female roles. The need to contribute to the family economy placed on them heavy work responsibilities, especially since francophone households tended to

be poorer, larger, and more rural, on average, than other Albertan families as a whole. Work, in turn encroached on their schooling opportunities. The number of years spent at school increased as frontier conditions receded, but francophone girls, both rural and urban, continued to receive less schooling than young women of British-origin and Albertan girls as a whole. Ethnicity contributed to some of the disparity.

Francophone girls also tended to marry earlier than English-speaking Albertans. In rural areas, the narrow social space in which they moved meant that they mostly chose marital partners within their own locality, socio-economic, religious and linguistic group. In urban areas, the territories of courtship were wider. There, francophone women were also exposed to the ideals of romantic love, but on the whole, they, like rural Franco-Albertan women, continued to marry for traditional reasons. Once married, their lives centred around home and family. They were wives, mothers, keepers of the home, and auxiliaries to husbands. Although their activities were not confined to the private sphere, their lives were very much circumscribed by the domestic ideals espoused in Franco-Albertan communities.

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Special thanks to my advisor Professor Ruby Heap for her help and support.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this study to Jessica who made the years of struggle worthwhile.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> La Française ... est la compagne idéale de l'émigrant, du colon, de celui qui quitte la vie douce et facile de notre vieille civilisation pour aller tenter fortune dans les pays neufs comme le Canada. Elle souffrira sans faiblesse et sans jérémiades inopportunes les longues pérégrinations de la prairie, le froid, les privations, avec le compagnon qu'elle aime et dont, aux heures de découragement, elle relèvera le moral et réveillera l'énergie. Et elle sera non seulement l'épouse, mais la collaboratrice du colon. Elle se pliera courageusement et intelligemment à tous les emplois. Ménagère accomplie, la femme française l'est déjà; elle fait la cuisine, taille, coud, raccommode, lave et repasse; fermière, elle le sera et elle soignera bêtes et gens, traira les vaches, ensemencera, conduira la charrue aussi bien que le buggy. S'il le faut, elle fera même le **cowboy**.[1]

This somewhat grandiloquent tribute to the pioneering spirit and abilities of Frenchwomen by a French rancher in the Canadian prairie west at the turn of the twentieth century is one of the few images of married French-speaking women to appear in official histories of the western settlement period. The rancher's words reveal little about French female immigrants *per se*, but they do provide a description of the ideal settler's wife. She was a healthy and hard-working female companion, willing to suffer, without complaint, the harsh and primitive conditions of the frontier. As an accomplished housekeeper, she fulfilled a range of domestic tasks, from cooking to sewing, and still found time to lend a hand with farm work when the need arose, all the while comforting and supporting her husband when he met with failure and discouragement.

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[1] Original author's emphasis. Related in Donatien Frémont's, Les Français dans l'Ouest canadien (Saint-Boniface, Man.: Éditions du Blé, 1980) p. 136.

While this picture of hardy, over-worked, yet uncomplaining helpmates contain some elements of past realities in that it provides a glimpse of the nature and diversity of French farm women's work, it certainly does not do justice to the complexity of these women's lives. Nor does it shed light on the experiences of other French-speaking women who immigrated to the Prairies at the turn of the century. French settlers were ut a small portion of the francophone immigrants who came to occupy the 'free' lands and take up the economic opportunities the Canadian West had to offer. In Alberta, the francophone communities were composed predominantly of French-Canadians from Quebec and the other provinces, and repatriates from New England, the American West and Midwest. They were joined by French, Belgian, and a few Swiss immigrants. In prairie francophone communities women were more than wives. They were also mothers, daughters, grand-mothers, aunts, and widows. While they undoubtedly did labour long and hard, they also grew up, played, went to school, courted, loved, laughed, and enjoyed the company of family and friends. They married, bore and raised children, nursed them and other family members through accidents and illness, and became old. And though most likely met with some hardships, sadness, and loss, many also led satisfying family and social lives. They derived pleasure from their accomplishments and in many ways took advantage of the opportunities the new society provided. This study wants to explore the complexity of these Franco-Albertan women's lives at the turn of the twentieth century.

The movement of francophones to the area that, in 1905, became known as Alberta began as early as the mid-eighteenth century when fur traders and explorers extended trade deep into the interior of the continent. Gradually, small islands of francophone settlements sprang up in fur trading country as traders and *voyageurs* took up residence with their Indian wives and Métis children. The Roman Catholic church reinforced the Catholic and French-speaking elements of these communities by sending out missionary priests to minister to the people. Francophone settlers

interested in the commercial and agricultural potential of the area began to trickle in as early as the 1870s and 1880s but only in the 1890s did substantial groups arrive. This immigration was largely encouraged, and in part sponsored by, the western Roman Catholic hierarchy which envisaged a chain of Franco-Catholic settlements stretching across the West. Viable francophone communities became firmly established around Catholic missions: in the Edmonton-St. Albert area in the decades surrounding the turn of the century, in the St. Paul-Bonnyville region during the 1910s, and in the northern Peace River Parkland following World War I.

But the dream of the Western Catholic hierarchy of an important French-Catholic presence in the Prairie West did not materialize. The economic and social forces which had induced francophones to immigrate also brought hundreds of thousands of Anglo-Canadian, British, American and non-English-speaking settlers. The election of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals to the federal government in 1896 and the aggressive advertising immigration campaigns undertaken by his Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, combined with a number of world-wide economic, demographic, and technological developments made western Canadian lands attractive. By the mid-1930s, Alberta had a population of more than three-quarters of a million people, of which less than six percent was French-speaking.[2]

Of the francophones listed in the 1936 Census of Alberta, almost half, or 19,997, were female.[3] This study focuses on these girls and women and the previous generations of Canadian and European French-speaking females who settled in the province. The focal point of identification is the French language and, to some extent religion, since most were Roman Catholics. Although the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnic group' are not usually used to describe members of Canada's founding French and

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[2] In 1936, the population of Alberta was 772,782; only 42,479 people, or 5.5%, were of French or Belgian origin. Census of The Prairie Provinces, 1936, Table 35, p. 994.

[3] Ibid.

English nations, in the West, French-speaking people were minorities.[4] They fit the criteria of an 'ethnic group' as defined by Howard Palmer: "a group of individuals who have a sense of peoplehood, and are regarded as a people by others."[5] For lack of a better alternative, the term Franco-Albertan is also used, although this is a modern coinage that did not exist at the turn of the century. The francophone Métis were omitted from the study, in part because of the lack of documentation. Moreover, the complexity of Métis life style and culture could not be adequately dealt with in this introductory study. This work has been left to others.[6]

Collectively, Franco-Albertan girls and women were witness to most of the political events and economic and social developments which shaped the Alberta region before 1940. The first settlers arrived only a few years following the signing of treaties that pushed prairie Natives onto reserves and opened up the land in the southern prairie and foothills region to ranching interests. This was quickly followed by the immigration boom, land rush, rapid population growth, and dramatic expansion of villages, towns, and cities made possible by the completion of the transcontinental railway and the immigration policies of the federal government. This period, lasting to World War I, was one of massive economic and social change. By 1914, Alberta was still predominantly rural and agricultural but grain production for export had replaced subsistence agriculture and other economic sectors, especially resource extraction such as coal-mining, gained in importance. Edmonton and Calgary developed as important urban centres. During the war, the suffrage campaigns bore fruit and women were granted the provincial vote; agricultural production and urbanization

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[4] Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) p. 244.

[5] Howard Palmer, Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Herald, 1972) p.8.

[6] On Métis women, see Nathalie Kermoal, "Les rôles et les souffrances des femmes métisses lors de la Résistance de 1870 et de la Rébellion de 1885," Prairie Forum, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1994) pp. 153-168.

accelerated. The post-war period was marked by cycles of economic growth and recessions, terminating in the crisis of the 1930s Depression, labour and ethnic unrest, and social changes resulting from technological and cultural innovations such as the car and American popular culture.[7]

Franco-Albertan women experienced and interpreted these developments in terms of their gender and ethnicity. As women and as French-speaking Roman Catholics, the social meaning of being female was clearly outlined for them. They were exposed to a set of culturally determined ideals which influenced both their community's expectations of them and their own attitudes about acceptable behaviour. These ideals also served to shape their relationship with family and kin and, along with the middle class Anglo-Canadian domestic ideology which permeated prairie society, determined the kinds of work and wages available to them.

Franco-Albertan women's gender identity was largely fashioned by the Victorian domestic ideology prevalent in all industrialized western countries. The process of industrialization brought about an increased physical separation of the home from the place of work which led to a sharper sexual division of labour. Where once wives and husbands had worked together in productive activity within the family economy, with industrialization, the practice of middle class men leaving the home each morning to earn a living in the 'public sphere' while women stayed in the 'private sphere' to maintain the household and care for children became the ideal to attain. The ascription of domestic, reproductive, and unpaid work to women and paid, productive work to men placed women in a weak position in the paid labour market. Their opportunities to earn wages became increasingly limited and confined to low-status, low-paying jobs.[8]

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[7] Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, Alberta: A New History (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990) pp. 50, 76-77, 167-199.

[8] Catherine Hall, "The History of the Housewife," Ellen Malos, ed., The Politics of Housework (London: Allison and Busby, 1980) pp. 52-58; Beth Light and Ruth Roach

Accompanying and validating the ideology of separate spheres were powerful gender constructs which rooted differences between men and women in biology. Women's capacity for reproduction meant that child-rearing, and by extension domesticity, were also natural. Their place and roles thus became increasingly circumscribed to the home as wives, mothers and housekeepers. Sex differences were also believed to extend to a whole range of attributes: while men were strong, aggressive, and competitive, women were weak, passive, gentle, devoted, and patient. By the late nineteenth century, declining fertility rates of English-Canadian women, combined with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, led to fears of 'race suicide' in English-Canada, which in turn intensified the idealization of motherhood.[9] In the Prairie Provinces as in the rest of Canada, women's primary duty was held to be reproduction within marriage, the only true avenue for happiness and fulfillment.[10] The ideological construct of the separation of spheres from which stemmed the sexual division of labour and domestic ideals was so pervasive that, according to Wendy Mitchinson, "no women who lived in Victorian Canada could help but be aware of it."[11]

Along with these ideals of domesticity to which all Albertan women were subject, Franco-Albertans from Quebec had also been exposed to a very clear set of beliefs grounded in cultural and social traditions. Although economic liberalism, which emphesized individualism, private enterprise, and economic development was on the rise in Quebec in the last part of the nineteenth century, French-Canadian society

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Pierson, eds. No Easy Road: Women in Canada 1920s to 1960s (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1990) pp. 251-253.

9 Jane Lewis, "Motherhood Issues During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Some Recent Viewpoints," Ontario History, Vol. 75, 1983, pp. 11-15.

10 Terry Chapman, "Women, Sex and Marriage in Western Canada 1890-1920," Alberta History, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Autumn 1985) pp. 1-3.

11 Wendy Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) pp. 14-16.

largely remained grounded in conservatism.[12] This conservatism was promoted by a strong, and well-organized Roman Catholic clergy which allied itself with middle class businessmen, politicians, and professionals to forward an ideology based on religion and an idealization of the past. This clerical-nationalist ideology emphasized the hierarchy of the church, family, and nation. At the pinnacle was the church, charged with diffusing the word of God, which was to inspire all aspects of Christian life. The characteristics of the French-Canadian nation which had served to preserve Catholicism in the past, that is, rural life and cultural traditions, especially the French language, would continue to ensure the survival of Catholicism.[13]

But the key role in the preservation of the faith was assigned to the family which was to maintain religion in the daily lives of individuals and transmit it across the generations. The family was presented as a divinely ordered patriarchal unit with husband ruling over wife and children. This hierarchical structure promoted deference to authority and social stability.[14] Women were at the centre of this construct. As educators of their children, they ensured the transmission of religious values and the survival of the race by bearing children and by teaching them the French language and French-Canadian cultural traditions.[15]

In Quebec, the church's control over the Catholic school system, hospitals, and social assistance agencies ensured the diffusion of the conservative message, including its conception of women's role.[16] Yet, it is not clear how well society at large assimilated this message. For example, the discourse on French-Canadians' agricultural mission did no deter the more then 900,000 who, between 1840 and 1930, migrated south

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12 Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher and Jean-Claude Robert, Quebec: A History, 1867-1929, Translation by Robert Chodos (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983) p. 268.

13 Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, The Dream of Nation (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1983) pp. 118-119; Linteau, et al., pp. 268-271, 533-34.

14 Ibid.

15 Trofimenkoff, pp. 229-231.

16 Linteau, et al., p. 269.

to work in New England textile mills.[17] But until the 1930s, few of these expatriates severed their ties to French-Canada. Many sojourned just long enough to earn money to pay off debts or to improve their farms.[18] Others chose to reside permanently but they settled in enclaves, and were soon followed by clergy who were active in numerous Franco-Catholic parishes and French-Canadian parochial schools. Within each parish, lay and clerical leaders also founded a network of French-Canadian associations to maintain and reinforce traditional cultural and social practices.[19]

According to Yves Roby, the Franco-American clergy and community leaders subscribed to the clerico-conservative ideology. They linked language and religion to the French-Canadian nation, stressed the church's natural authority over all aspects of parish life and the hierarchy of the family, and advocated a purely domestic role for women.[20] Yet, years of urbanization and daily contact with American customs and values led to adaptation, resulting in a muting of the culture French-Canadians had brought with them and in some modification of behaviour. For example, young women wore some of the latest American fashions, such as short sleeves, and parishioners copied the Irish-American custom of holding dances in church basements even though such practices were forbidden in Quebec.[21] There is also some indication that a sizeable number of Franco-Americans were gradually losing their faith.[22]

On the other hand, many Franco-Americans answered the call of western Canadian colonizing agents and, at the turn of the twentieth century, migrated once more to the Canadian Prairies. The Catholic clergy was active in promoting their

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17 Yves Roby, Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle Angleterre, 1776-1930 (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1990) p. 7.

18 Jacques Rouillard, Ah les États! Les travailleurs canadiens-français dans l'industrie textile de la Nouvelle-Angleterre d'après le témoignage des derniers migrants (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1985) p. 26.

19 Roby, 114-125, 130-136.

20 Ibid, pp. 140-141.

21 Rouillard, p. 68-69.

22 Roby, p. 145.

immigration and in establishing francophone communities across the West. The western church created parishes and set up publicly-funded Roman Catholic schools run by nuns and priests. Historian Donald Smith, who has studied the francophone communities of Alberta, considers that the church was "central and highly visible." It "exercised great power."[23] Along with businessmen and professionals, priests helped found various organizations to maintain religious, linguistic and cultural traditions, including branches of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society, the Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne-française (ACJC), and the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, as well as a number of French-language newspapers such as La Survivance.[24]

But like French-Canadians settled in New England, Franco-Albertans adapted to their new environment. Although the Catholic Church in the West was strong, its power was muted by certain western conditions. During the whole period of western settlement, from the 1890s to 1940, but especially during the decades surrounding the turn of the century, the number of priests was never enough to minister to the scattered Catholic parishes. They usually served more than one parish and had to travel long distances to get from one to the other. Their influence on the behaviour of their parishioners was thus somewhat limited.[25] Furthermore, francophones were also exposed to the cultural influences of the wider Anglo-Canadian society in which they lived through schools, newspapers, contact with neighbours, etc..

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23 Donald B. Smith, "A History of French-speaking Albertans," in Howard and Tamara Palmer, eds., Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985) p. 96.

24 Ibid, pp. 96-99.

25 Leslie Savage discusses the shortage of priests in the Edmonton area around 1900 and the marriage practices which resulted. "Perspectives on Illegitimacy: The Changing Role of the Sisters of Misericordia in Edmonton, 1900-1906," Pat Rooke and R. L. Schnell, eds., Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective (Calgary: Detselig, 1982) p. 122.

In the process of adaptation, Franco-Albertans kept some values and cultural traits of the French-Canadian, French, Belgian, or Swiss cultures from which they sprang. But they also discarded certain elements that proved less useful in the new environment. As historians of ethnicity have noted, various patterns of continuity and change characterize all immigrant cultures.[26] Tamara Hareven, in her examination of work and kinship in the Amoskeag Mills in New Hampshire, has emphasized the persistence of the role of the family and kin in the adaptation of French-Canadian immigrants to factory work and life in urban industrial centres.[27] Traditional family and kin networks were carried over and modified to fit new conditions. Similarly, Franca Iacovetta has highlighted the ways in which working class, post-World War II, Italian immigrants in Toronto combined traditional kin and family support with membership in unions and strikes to cope with urban life and the modern economy.[28] Even self-sufficient and isolationist communities such as the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites, transplanted from Russia to North America in the 1870s, employed strategies based on family, church, and market to ensure both adaptation and continuity.[29] These various studies emphasize the need to study immigrant communities on their own terms since they are neither exact replicas nor aberrations of their homelands.[30]

This, then, is what this study endeavours to do for Franco-Albertan women at the turn of the twentieth century; to examine their lives within the context of their

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26 Roberto Perin, "Writing About Ethnicity," in John Schultz, ed., Writing About Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1990) p. 204.

27 Tamara Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

28 Franca Iacovetta, Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

29 Royden Loewen, Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

30 Perin, p. 205.

environment in an effort to unravel how specific factors, especially ethnicity and gender, shaped their experiences. Did their lives unfold according to the gender ideals the francophone community and the wider Anglo-Albertan society held up for them? Given that marriage and motherhood were promoted as the ideals for all women, how were francophone girls prepared to assume their duties as wives and mothers? The labour requirements of prairie frontier societies undoubtedly meant that work was an important component of their preparation. Girls thus likely began to work at an early age. But how were the circumscriptions based on the need to maintain separate spheres of activity adjusted to take advantage of their labour? Was the traditional sexual division of labour maintained? What kind of work did girls perform? And did this work interfere with schooling?

By the 1890s, common schooling was readily available to girls in central and eastern Canada but in the prairie region, incoming settlers were only beginning to establish such institutions. When schools were constructed, few were French and Catholic. How and in what ways did francophone girls' knowledge and ability to speak, understand, and read English affect their schooling? Given the Catholic church's emphasis on the family's role in the maintenance of religion in the lives of individuals, when parents could not count on the local schools to aid them in their duties, what strategies did they employ to provide education for their daughters? As in Quebec, convent boarding schools were an alternative but lack of money and the need for daughters' labour likely precluded many girls from attending. How long were francophone girls' educational careers and did they favourably compare to the years of schooling of francophone boys and Anglo-Albertan girls?

The lack of English-language skills may also have limited the job opportunities available to young Franco-Albertan women although the ability to speak French and membership in the francophone community may have opened doors to other forms of employment. The nature of their remunerated work, like the paid labour of other

Albertan women, was also limited by the segmented labour market. Was the concentration of francophone and Anglo-Albertan women in various sectors of the economy similar? Studies of women workers in English Canada indicate that although paid labour did not release young women from family obligations, it brought a measure of independence to some.[31] Are similar patterns discernible for Franco-Albertan women? How were paid work and family responsibilities balanced?

Given the centrality of the family, church, and parish in Franco-Catholic communities, these institutions undoubtedly structured much of the leisure activities of young francophone women, especially in rural areas. Did their leisure thus revolve primarily around the observance of traditional celebrations, participation in religious or nationalist associations, and informal socializing with neighbours and kin? As the twentieth century advanced, in Alberta urban areas, commercial forms of entertainment such as movies and dance halls became increasingly common.[32] In Quebec, these leisure activities were roundly condemned by the Catholic Church as dangerous American imports which provided young people with occasions of sin.[33] What was the normative discourse directed at young Franco-Albertan women? Was their participation in commercial forms of entertainment limited? How did these leisure activities influence their courtship patterns? Were their choices of marriage partners based primarily on traditional Roman Catholic precepts of marriage or were they also influenced by the romantic ideals promoted in English Canada after World War I?

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31 Light and Pierson, No Easy Road, p. 254.

32 Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet, Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta, 1896-1945 (Regina: Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism/ Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1990) p. 249.

33 Andrée Lévesque, Making and Breaking the Rules: Women in Quebec, 1919-1939, Translation by Yvonne Klein (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994) pp. 53-65.

The reality of the segmented labour market undoubtedly also contributed to women's decisions to marry as did the domestic ideals which presented marriage and motherhood as the ultimate achievement for women. In many ways, domestic ideals often corresponded to reality for married Canadian women. Their primary duties were to home and family, their labour directed at meeting the needs of husbands and children.[34] The high value placed on the institution of the family by the Catholic Church and the domestic ideals which permeated Franco-Albertan society also likely meant that francophone women's lives were directed at meeting the reproductive needs of the household. Childbearing and childcare had to be balanced with numerous domestic tasks that included subsistence-oriented activities which fed, clothed, and ensured the material comfort of families. What domestic technology or techniques of household management did they employ to make their work easier? What were their economic contributions to the household? Was their work restricted solely to the reproductive, private sphere as domestic ideals advocated?

What were francophone women's expectations concerning marriage and childbirth? The Church's proscriptions against all forms of contraception and the need for children's labour in the predominantly rural, agricultural prairie province may have resulted in relatively high fertility rates. How much of francophone women's married lives were thus spent pregnant, giving birth, or recovering after delivery? How did religion and cultural traditions influence childrearing practices? Another component of married Canadian women's work was nursing family members through accidents and illness and caring for dependent children and adults. These roles were held to be 'natural' for women.[35] Franco-Albertan women's healthcare roles must be examined to understand how they juggled these responsibilities with their other duties

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[34] Alison Prentice, et al, Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) p. 143.

[35] Light and Pierson, No Easy Road, p. 214-215.

and how they nursed the sick when resources were few. Only by investigating these issues will it be possible to illuminate the complex interplay of gender and ethnicity which shaped Franco-Albertan women's lives.

Their lives were also mediated by class and region. Western labour historians have shown that class was an important element of western Canadian society. Most have focused on the struggles between capital and labour in resource towns and in the rapidly expanding prairie centres.[36] But class also stratified agricultural communities - the financial and commercial elite vs. farmers; land owners vs. hired hands. Conflicts, however, were somewhat muted, especially before World War I.[37] Franco-Albertan urban and rural communities were no more monolithic. Although no study of class divisions in Franco-Albertan society exists, *per se*,[38] authors, such as Edwart Hart, who focus almost exclusively on the community's elite -priests, professionals, and politicians- implicitly recognize class divisions. For their part, Franco-Albertan women who had to earn their living by doing domestic work for professionals in francophone communities undoubtedly noticed class differences.

Beyond class, regional divisions within Alberta, were also of consequence. Farmers who were able to acquire land in the Central Parkland with its rich soils and warm growing season had much better chances of successfully farming than settlers who chose lands in the short and mixed grass prairie region with its limited rainfall

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[36] See for example: David Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations and the General Strike (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutioneries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1911 (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1977); Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1979).

[37] Cecilia Danysk analyzes the growing division between farmers and hired hands in the post-war period. Hired Hands: Labour and the Development of Prairie Agriculture, 1889-1930 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995) especially Ch. 7, pp. 112-141.

[38] Two studies clearly identify class divisions within francophone communities outside Quebec. See: Roger Bernard, De Québécois à Ontarois: La communauté franco-ontarienne (Hearst, Ont.: Le Nordir, 1988); Donald Dennie, "De la difficulté d'être idéologue franco-ontarien," La revue du nouvel Ontario, no. 2, 1980, pp. 69-90.

and poor soil and settlers who homesteaded in the boreal-parkland transition zone north of the central parkland belt with its limited agricultural potential.[39] Later immigrants who settled in the Peace River parkland also benefited from ample rainfall and fertile soil, but found that productivity was somewhat decreased by the short growing season (Appendix 1). Superimposed over these biophysical regions are rural - urban divisions. Life in towns and cities offered women different experiences than life in rural areas.[40] Job opportunities, for example, were much greater for urban than for rural women. These class and regional elements will be incorporated into the study whenever they serve to expand our understanding of Franco-Albertan women's lives.

1.1 HISTORIOGRAPHY:

Although Franco-Albertan women's lives remain obscure, the writing of women's history in the last three decades has documented Canadian women's historical experience in increasing detail. The quantity of Canadian studies that place women at the centre of analysis, written since the second women's movement began to challenge mainstream historical scholarship, is too numerous to mention here.[41] Only those that

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[39] Cordes, L. D. and D. J. Pennock, "Biophysical Constraints on the Natural Environment on Settlement," in. B. M. Barr and P. J. Smith, eds., Environment and Economy: Essays on the Human Geography of Alberta (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1984), pp. 61 to 74.

[40] Throughout this study, the use of 'rural' refers to agricultural areas and unincorporated hamlets whereas 'urban' means incorporated villages, towns, and cities as recorded in Census.

[41] There are a number of historiographical essays which provide a thorough survey of the field of women's history. See: Eliane Leslau Silverman, "Writing Canadian Women's History, 1970-82: An Historiographical Analysis," Canadian Historical Review (CHR), Vol. LXIII, No. 4, 1982, pp. 513-533; Ruth R. Pierson and Alison Prentice, "Feminism and the Writing and Teaching of History," Atlantis, Vol. 7 (Spring 1982) pp. 37-46; Margaret Conrad, "The Re-Birth of Canada's Past: A Decade of Women's History," Acadiensis, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1983) pp. 140-162; Sylvia Van Kirk, "What has the Feminist Perspective Done for Canadian History?" Ursula Franklin, et al., Knowledge

have highlighted facets of women's lives that are particularly relevant to this study will be addressed. A number of Quebec studies present the background of some of the French-Canadian immigrant women and identify the factors which shaped their beliefs and actions. The Clio Collective's survey provides a good overview of Quebec women's lives but it often neglects the political forces which at all times affected inhabitants of the province, women included.[42] S. M. Trofimenkoff in The Dream of Nation, clearly situates women within the political and intellectual currents that stirred Quebec society from the eighteenth century to the 1980s.[43] These studies along with a number of syntheses of Canadian women's history point to the growing recognition of the diversity of women's historical experiences.[44] They also reprise some of the major themes and interpretive frameworks of more specialized studies.

Work is one aspect of women's lives that has commanded a great deal of historians' attention. Initially, historians of women defined work as paid employment, and were preoccupied with showing women's participation in the workforce.[45] While

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Reconsidered: A Feminist Overview, Ottawa, 1984, pp. 46-58; Bettina Bradbury, "Women's History and Working-Class History," Labour/Le travail, Vol. 19 (Spring 1987) pp. 23-43; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Writing About Women," in John Schultz, ed., Writing About Canada : A Handbook for Modern Canadian History (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1990); Gail Cuthbert Grant, Postmodern Patchwork: Some Recent Trends in the Writing of Women's History in Canada," CHR, LXXII, No. 4, 1991, pp. 441-470; Wendy Mitchinson, "Women's History," in Doug Owram, ed., Canadian History, A Reader's Guide, 2: Confederation to the Present (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

42 The Clio Collective, Quebec Women: A History, Translation, Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987).

43 Trofimenkoff, The Dream of Nation.

44 Alison Prentice, et al, Canadian Women: A History; Beth Light and Joy Parr, eds., Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920 (Toronto: New Hogtown Press and OISE, 1983); Light and Pierson, No Easy Road.

45 Suzanne Cross, "The Neglected Majority: The Changing Role of Women in Nineteenth Century Montreal," S. M. Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds. The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Vol. I (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) pp. 66-86; Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," Labour/Le Travailleur, Vol. 4, 1979, pp. 131-164; Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, "Les travailleuses montréalaises entre les deux guerres," Labour/Le Travailleur, Vol. 2, 1977, pp. 170-183; Claudette Lacelle, "Les Domestiques dans les villes

feminist scholars extended the definition of work to comprise women's unpaid domestic work,[46] the integration of women's labour performed in the public and private sphere did not begin until Marxist feminists stressed the necessity of women's unwaged work in the home for the functioning of capitalist production.[47] A number of Canadian historical studies have exposed the links between women's paid and unpaid labour and between the formal and informal economy, thus unmasking the myth of separate spheres. Marjorie Cohen's study of women's involvement in dairying in nineteenth-century Ontario clearly linked women's economic contributions to the family economy and to overall economic development.[48] Bettina Bradbury, for her part, has highlighted working-class women's formal and informal contributions to the household economy.[49] In Working Families, she demonstrates that women's work alternated between private and public spheres of activity and between formal and informal market sectors.[50] That both men and women failed to live within their

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canadiennes au XIXe siècle, effectifs et conditions de vie," Histoire sociale/Social History, Vol. 15, 1982, pp. 181-207.

46 Ann Oakley, Women's Work - The Housewife, Past and Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) and The Sociology of Housework (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). Canadian studies include: Susan Clark and Maryiee Stephenson, "Housework as Real Work," Katherina Lundy and Barbara Warme, eds. Work in the Canadian Context: Continuity Despite Change (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981);

47 Natalie Sokoloff. Between Money and Love: The Dialectics of Women's Home and Market Work. New York: Praeger, 1980; Bonnie Fox, ed., Hidden in the Household: Women's Domestic Labour under Capitalism (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1980). For a good overview of Marxist feminist arguments, see: S. J. Wilson, Women, the Family and the Economy, Second Edition (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1986).

48 Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

49 Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City, Montreal, 1871," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1979, pp. 71-96; "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness, and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885," Joy Parr, ed. Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982) pp. 109-128; "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage forms of Survival Among Montreal Families, 1861-91," Labour/Le Travail, 14 (Fall 1984), pp. 9-46.

50 Bettina Bradbury, Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993) especially Chapter 5, pp. 152-181.

appointed spheres of activity is well documented in Joy Parr's study of male and female work in Paris and Hanover, Ontario. She also provides compelling evidence to show that gender is socially constructed and that the sexual division of labour is mutable to accommodate shifts in understanding.[51]

The strength of gender constructs is the focus of a number of studies. While some, such as Andrée Lévesque's Making and Breaking the Rules, demonstrate that women did not always subscribe to the normative discourse regarding their domestic and maternal roles,[52] most show the impact of this discourse, especially on women's sexual and reproductive practices. Wendy Mitchinson's study of the views of the medical profession on women shows that domestic ideals shaped doctors' understanding and treatment of their female patients. They defined women according to a narrow conception of gender ideals which identified men's bodies as the norm and women's as the aberrations.[53] Katherine Arnup, for her part, explored the advice directed at mothers during the inter-war years.[54] While women were made to understand that they were uniquely suited to motherhood, they were also told that they could not trust their natural 'maternal instincts' to care for their children. The intrusion of state and of health care experts in women's lives is also documented in the collection of essays, Delivering Motherhood.[55] These studies, as well as the McLarens' The Bedroom and the State, clearly demonstrate the interconnection of private and public spheres.[56]

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51 Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

52 Lévesque, Making and Breaking.

53 Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies.

54 Arnup, Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

55 Katherine Arnup, Andrée Lévesque and Ruth R. Pierson, eds. Delivering Motherhood: Maternal Ideologies and Practices in the 19th and 20th Centuries (London/New York: Routledge, 1990).

56 Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

Women's experiences of childbearing and childrearing have also been examined as two very significant stages in the life cycle of women in a number of studies. Two in particular are worth noting: Denise Lemieux and Lucie Mercier's Les femmes au tournant du siècle, 1880-1940 and Veronica Strong-Boag's The New Day Recalled. While the former studies women in Quebec and the latter women in English Canada, both provide a thorough analysis of how gender constructs have constrained women in their everyday lives.[57] The authors of both studies argue that despite individual experiences, "women as a whole experienced childhood, the labour force, courtship and marriage, housekeeping and child care, and aging in ways that remained similar enough to be collectively characterized."[58] Both studies also conclude that despite an increase in women's labour force participation, declining fertility and mortality rates, changes in household technology, etc., by 1940, women's lives still centered on the home and family. Gender constructs thus ensured that overall, there was "no great discontinuity with the past."[59]

Strong-Boag's study provides important insights into the lives of ordinary women in English Canada, but her treatment of prairie women is limited. One has to turn to regional studies for a more thorough examination of these women. But, by and large, prairie women's history is concerned with middle-class, Anglo-Canadian women, especially with their participation in reform and suffrage activism and their organizational and institutional work.[60] Biographical and autobiographical accounts

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[57] Lemieux and Mercier, (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1989); Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939 (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988). A similar study but one which focusses more on the domestic work of women is Denyse Baillargeon's, Ménagères au temps de la crise (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1991).

[58] Strong-Boag, p. 4; Lemieux and Mercier, p. 46.

[59] Strong-Boag, p. 2; Lemieux and Mercier, p. 360.

[60] For women's suffrage and reform activism see: Barbara J. Nicholson "Feminism in the Prairie Provinces to 1916," M.A thesis, University of Calgary, 1974; Paul Voisey, "The 'Votes for Women' Movement," Alberta History, 23 (Summer 1975), 10-23; Carol Becchi, "Divided Allegiances: The Response of Farm and Labour Women to Suffrage," in Linda

of this group are numerous.[61] These histories and accounts, however, are not representive of working class or of poor farm women's experiences; they speak instead of the lives of elite women whose experiences were deemed worthy of publication.

The first study to explore the history of ordinary women was A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women, published in 1975. It integrates an array of documentation from correspondence, private papers, and interviews, to provide a survey of prairie women's experiences.[62] This initial study was followed by Seena Kohl's socio-historical study of farm women in Saskatchewan which, by focusing on the daily lives of women on family farms, clearly demonstrated the value of women's

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Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979) and relevant portions of Catherine Cleverdon's, The Women Suffrage Movement in Canada (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974). For women's organizational and institutional work, see: L. J. Wilson, "The Educational Role of the United Farm Women of Alberta," Alberta History, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1977) pp. 28-36; Nancy Sheehan, "Temperance, the W.C.T.U., and Education in Alberta, 1905-1930," Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1980. From this thesis, Sheehan drew several articles among them, "'Women Helping Women': The W.C.T.U. and the Foreign Population of the West, 1905-1930," International Journal of Women's Studies, Vol. 6, No. 5 (Nov./Dec. 1983) pp. 395-411; Georgina Taylor, "' The Women ... Shall Help to Lead the Way': Saskatchewan CCF-NDP Women Candidates in Provincial and Federal Elections, 1934-1965," and Joan Sangster, "Women and the New Era: The Role of Women in the Early CCF, 1930-1940," in W.J. Brennan, ed., "Building the Cooperative Commonwealth": Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1985) pp. 141-160 and 69-97. These titles are certainly not comprehensive. For an excellent and current historiographical survey, see: Patricia Roome, "Remembering Together: Reclaiming Alberta Women's Past," in Catherine Cavanaugh and Randi Warne, eds., Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993).

[61] Nellie McClung's, Clearing in the West (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1976); Kennethe Haig, Brave Harvest: The Life Story of E. Cora Hind, LL.D. (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945); Byrne Hope Sanders, Emily Murphy, Crusader: "Janey Canuck" (Toronto: MacMillan, 1945); Candace Savage, Our Nell: A Scrapbook Biography of Nellie McClung (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979). Sara Roberts, Alberta Homestead: Chronicle of a Pioneer Family (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1971); Monica Hopkins, Letters From a Lady Rancher (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1982); Ruth Matheson Buck, The Doctor Rode Side-Saddle (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974); Elizabeth B. Mitchell's, In Canada Before the War (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981); Georgina Binnie-Clark's Wheat and Women (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

[62] Lorna Rasmussen, Candace Savage, et al. (The Women's Press, 1976).

work in the family enterprise.[63] A decade or so later, Marilyn Barber, Mary Kinnear, and Sara Brooks Sunberg examined the extent of 1920s farm women's productive work, their living conditions, and their willingness to participate in the pioneering process.[64]

For Alberta, the most comprehensive work remains that of Eliane Silverman. Several articles, on mother-daughter relationships, on the Victorian ideal of domesticity, and on marriage,[65] outline some of the preliminary findings of an ambitious oral history project eventually published in book form as The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier 1880-1930.[66] To use Silverman's own words, her work is a "collective autobiography about migration and adaptation."[67] Through women's own reminiscences, she presents their experiences as they moved through the different stages of life, from girlhood, adolescence, paid work, marriage, and motherhood. She recognizes that settlers were "of heterogeneous ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds," yet these factors do not bear on her analysis.[68] While her findings may

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63 Seena Kohl, Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan (Toronto, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976).

64 Kinnear, " 'Do you want your daughter to marry a farmer?': Women's Work on the Farm, 1922," Donald Akenson, ed., Canadian Papers in Rural History, Vol. VI (Gananoque, Ont.: Langdale Press, 1988); Barber, "Help For Farm Homes: The Campaign to End Household Drudgery in Rural saskatchewan in the 1920s," Scientica Canadensis, No. 9 (1985) pp. 3-20. "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier: The Helpmate Image," in Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986).

65 "In Their Own Words: Mothers and Daughters on the Alberta Frontier, 1890-1929," in Frontiers, Vol. II, No. 2 (Summer 1977) pp. 30-35; "Women and the Victorian Work Ethic on the Alberta Frontier," in Howard Palmer and Donald Smith, eds., The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan (Vancouver: Tantalus, 1980) pp. 91-99; "Women's Perceptions of Marriage on the Alberta Frontier," in David Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds., Building Beyond the Homestead: Rural History on the Prairies (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985).

66 (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984).

67 Ibid, p. xiii.

68 Ibid, p.xii.

be applicable to ethnic women, Franco-Albertan women included, there is no evidence to support this.[69]

The historiography of Franco-Albertans is no more revealing of prairie francophone women's experiences since it virtually ignores them. Examination of women's lives is for the most part restricted to a few studies of religious orders and of 'extraordinary' pioneers.[70] The exceptions are my own studies on the religious and nationalist socialization of women in an Edmonton Catholic boarding school and on the images of women presented in the French-language press during the Depression years.[71] There is as well an account of a French immigrant family based on the

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[69] There are few comprehensive histories of prairie immigrant women. Notable exceptions are Royden Loewen's Family, Church and Market, previously mentioned, and Frances Swyripa's Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891-1991 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Swyripa explores how the Canadian Ukrainian elite used images of women and their roles to advance nationalist causes. She argues that ethnicity played a greater role in shaping these women's experiences than did gender. Apart from these, the history of immigrant women in the Prairie West is contained in a handful of books and articles. Most give descriptions of pioneer women's lives but there is little analysis and virtually no integration into the wider Albertan or Canadian historical context. See: Zonia Keywan, Greater Than Kings: Ukrainian Pioneer Settlement in Canada (Montreal: Harvest House, 1977) and "Women Who Won the West," Branching Out, November/December 1975, pp. 16-19; Anne Woywitka, "A Roumanian Pioneer," Alberta Historical Review, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Autumn 1973) pp. 20-27, and "Homesteader's Women," Alberta History, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 1976) pp. 20-24. Several theses also provide a glimpse of other immigrant women: Donna Minions, "Three Worlds of Greek-Canadian Women: A Study of Greek Women in Calgary, Alberta," M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1986; Krystina Lukasiewicz, "Family and Work: Polish Interwar Immigrant Women in Alberta, 1920-1950," M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1993. Maureen Ursunbach Beecher's, "Mormon Women in Southern Alberta," provides invaluable insights into the roles of Mormon women in adaptation and settlement and in the maintenance of kinship bonds which strengthened their communities. Brigham Y. Card, John Foster and Howard Palmer, eds, The Mormon Presence in Canada (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990) pp. 211-230.

[70] Soeur Flore Houde, "Les débuts des Soeurs de l'Assomption au lac d'Oignons," in L'état de la recherche et de la vie française dans l'Ouest canadien. (Edmonton: Les actes du deuxième colloque du Centre d'études franco-canadiennes de l'Ouest, 1982); Agnès Goulet, Marie-Anne Gaboury: Une femme dépareillée (Saint-Boniface, Man.: Éditions des Plaines, 1989) Georges Duges. La première Canadienne au Nord-Ouest ou biographie de Marie-Anne Gaboury (Montreal: Librairie Saint-Joseph, 1883)

[71] "The Pensionnat Assomption: Religious Nationalism in a Franco-Albertan Boarding School for Girls, 1926-1960," M. Ed thesis, University of Alberta, 1988; "'Un grand coeur dans une petite maison', Franco-Albertan Women in the Pages of La Survivance, 1928-

correspondence of wife Aimée to her sister-in-law in Chalonnes, France.[72] Beyond these, Franco-Albertan historiography explores a narrow range of topics: the movement of French-speaking people to the prairies, the Catholic church and the role of lay leaders' in the settlement process and community organization, minority language and schooling issues, and the problem of linguistic and cultural survival.[73] While these are necessary to understand the Franco-Albertan's world, they tell us little about women's daily lives.

1938," M.A. *mémoire*, University of Ottawa, 1989. An article drawn from the M.Ed. thesis, carrying the same title, "The Pensionnat Assomption: Religious Nationalism in a Franco-Albertan Boarding School for Girls, 1926-1960," appeared in Historical Studies in Education, Vol. I (April 1989) pp. 95-117. An earlier version of chapter 3 of this dissertation was published as " 'Our Parents did not Raise us to be Independent': The Work and Schooling of Young Franco-Albertan Women, 1890-1940, Prairie Forum, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1994) pp. 169-188.

[72] Jacques Bertin, Du vent, Gatinel Un rêve américain (Paris: Arléa, 1989). There are also several autobiographies by male settlers which provide glimpses of family life: Marcel Durieux, Ordinary Heroes: The Journal of a French Pioneer in Alberta, Trans. Roger Motut and Maurice Legris (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1980); Gaston Giscard, Dans la prairie canadienne/On the Canadian Prairie, Trans. Lloyd Person (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1982).

[73] Donald Smith, "A History of French-Speaking Albertans"; Raymond J.A. Huel, "Gestae Dei Per Francos: The French Canadian Experience in Western Canada," in Benjamin G. Smillie, ed., Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) pp. 39-197; Robert Painchaud, Un rêve dans le peuplement de la Prairie (Saint-Boniface, Man.: Éditions des Plaines, 1987) and "French-Canadian Historiography and Franco-Catholic Settlement in Western Canada, 1870-1915," CHR, Vol. LIX, No. 4, 1978, pp. 447-466; Denise Stocco, "The French-Canadian colonization in Alberta," (Edmonton: Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, 1973); Donatien Frémont, Les Français dans l'Ouest canadien (Saint-Boniface, Man.: Éditions du blé, 1980) and "Les Français dans l'Alberta," Amérique française, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Avril 1954) pp. 29-39; Edward John Hart, Ambition and Reality: The French-speaking Community of Edmonton, 1795-1935 (Edmonton: Le Salon d'histoire de la francophonie albertaine, 1980); George F.G. Stanley, "French and English in Western Canada," in Mason Wade, ed., Canadian Dualism/La Dualité Canadienne (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) pp. 311-350; Kenneth Munro, "Official Bilingualism in Alberta," Prairie Forum, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1987) pp. 37-47; Yvette Mahé, School Districts Established by French-speaking Settlers in Alberta: 1885-1939 (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1989).

1.2 METHODOLOGY:

The neglect of Franco-Albertan women in secondary sources is partly due to women's near absence in written sources, concerned as they are with male leaders' commentaries on religion, social issues, government, and business. Preoccupied with work and family, francophone women themselves had little time to write and consequently left few written records. Studying their past lives cannot be accomplished by focusing exclusively on the written word; a different approach is required. Oral sources offer the means to incorporate women into Franco-Albertan history. The use of oral history to reach populations that are absent from conventional written documents is not new. Over the last thirty years, social historians have employed the techniques of oral history to study groups ranging from the urban poor to women survivors of Nazi concentration camps.[74] Feminist historians have found oral history particularly useful because women's own accounts and interpretations of their past experiences can be highlighted.[75] These accounts, in turn, provide insight into topics that are virtually inaccessible through traditional means: the rhythms of domestic life, the socialization of girls and the relations of power within families, contraceptive practices and sexual behaviour, and reliance on kin.[76]

The primary sources used in this study are three collections of oral interviews: the first and oldest eight interviews were sponsored by the Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta and date mostly from the late 1960s, early 1970s. The second and most substantial set, comprising 178 interviews, was conducted under the auspices of

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[74] Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time, p. 372; Sylvie Vandecasteele-Schweitzer and Danièle Voldman, "The Oral Sources for Women's History," in Michelle Perrot, ed., Writing Women's History, Trans. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford and Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1992) pp. 41-50.

[75] Joan Sangster, "Telling our Stories: feminist debates and the use of oral history," Women's History Review, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1994, p. 6.

[76] Baillargeon, pp. 31-32; Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 7.

the cultural association, Héritage Franco-Albertain, between 1963 and 1985. The last group of forty-five interviews, directed by the Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta, was undertaken in 1989 (see Appendix 3). The 231 life stories drawn from these interviews were supplemented by information extracted from family and individual biographies in local histories.[77] To these life histories were added another twenty-two biographies compiled from a variety of private and public documents: correspondence and diary entries, and unpublished individual and family histories.

The women respondents from whose experience the 253 life histories are drawn represent a cross-section of ages. Table 1-A shows that the majority were born between 1890 and 1919. A full 91% of the women whose birth date is known spent all or part of their adult life in Alberta before 1940.[78] The other 9%, those born after 1922, had childhood memories of the period and drew upon their mothers' and grandmothers' reminiscences of life in the prairie west.

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[77] According to Daniel Bertaux, life stories are "accounts of a person's life as delivered orally by the person himself". When these life stories, which need not cover the entire life-span and all its aspects, are supplemented with other biographical data, they are known as 'life histories'. "Introduction," Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1981) p. 6.

[78] Of the 234 respondents for whom birthplace is known, eighty-three (35%) were born in Alberta. Of the remaining 151 women who immigrated to the province, forty-nine were adults (over eighteen) at the time of the move: of these, twenty-one were single, twenty-five married, and three widowed.

Table 1 - A

Year of Birth of Respondents

Year of Birth	Number	Percentage	Became Adults
Before 1880	5	2.1	1871-1899
1880-1889	21	8.8	1900-1909
1890-1899	35	14.7	1910-1919
1900-1909	74	31.1	1920-1929
1910-1919	69	29.0	1930-1939
1920-1929	27	11.4	1940*
1930-1939	7	2.9	
Known birthdate	238	100.0	
Unknown	15		
Total	253		

*12 women were born between 1920 and 1922 and would have been 18 by 1940.

Although oral history is invaluable for studying the lives of women, especially the domestic and subjective aspects of their existence, it presents particular problems for the historian. Because oral interviews are reminiscences communicated many years after experiences and events have taken place, memory is expected to play a crucial role in the nature and reliability of the interviews. While it is generally believed that accuracy of recall decreases with time, studies have shown that the greatest memory loss occurs within hours of witnessing or experiencing an event. This initial memory loss "is by far the most dramatic and violent and it affects any kind of contemporary witness."[79] Memory loss is thus a factor that should concern researchers using traditional written sources as much as historians of oral history. It is also commonly believed that an informant's age affects memory. Research has

[79] Paul Thompson, p. 111.

shown, however, that memory is not disproportionally affected by the aging process unless illness such as a stroke occurs or dementia sets in.[80]

Although the validity of oral sources cannot be dismissed on the grounds of memory alone, other factors can affect reliability. The very fact that only the reminiscences of certain Franco-Albertan women have been preserved indicates that a selection process has occurred. The death of potential subjects, the unwillingness of others to be interviewed, and the selection of subjects by the interviewers can affect the sample's representativeness.[81] But written sources are no less free of such bias since only certain documents are chosen, through accidental or intentional means, to be placed in archives.[82] In assessing the reliability of oral history, one must also keep in mind that the omission, exaggeration and suppression of facts and the projection of contemporary ideas, culture and beliefs upon the past can also occur.[83] And that more than anything else, oral history is subjective: "More than being a source of factual evidence, a reconstruction of reality, oral history is a recreation of people's memories and perceptions."[84]

This subjectivity can be an asset for the researcher trying to gauge the attitudes and the cultural influences that shaped the interviewee's outlook. But it can be a potential weakness if one is looking for so-called 'facts'. To minimize the problems associated with subjectivity and reliability, oral history must be submitted to the same kind of scrutiny as written documents. The comparison of many life histories, according to Berteaux, goes a long way in solving the problem of truthfulness.[85] In this

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80 Edmund Blair Bolles, Remembering and Forgetting: Inquiring Into the Nature of Memory (New York: Walker and Company, 1988) pp. 231-232.

81 Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time, p. 371-372.

82 Thompson, p. 106-107.

83 Isabelle Berteaux-Wieme, "The Life History Approach to the Study of Internal Migration," in Daniel Berteaux, Biography and Society, p. 257-258.

84 Hareven, Family Time and Industrial Time, p. 374.

85 Daniel Berteaux, Biography and Society, p. 9.

study, the life histories were examined for internal consistencies and checked against each other. Furthermore, corroboration of facts and events was sought in external sources such as published histories. And finally, the information obtained in life histories was supplemented by other kinds of documents: government publications, newspapers, photographs, and census data. The same set of controls used on oral archives were also applied to other sources. Indeed, biographies, diary entries, and correspondence can present, like oral interviews, problems of validity and reliability. They can be written to justify one's actions, for example, and facts and events can be embellished, distorted, or omitted.[86]

As a rule, further controls are imposed on oral interviews: the corroboration of information by analyzing the involuntary movements, costume, mannerisms, speech inflections, etc., of the informant. This sort of evaluation was not possible in the present study based as it is on oral archives, although a limited form analysis - emotional tone and inflection of voice of the respondents, etc.- was carried out. This limitation points to another problem with using oral archives as opposed to personally conducting interviews. The oral histories must be used as is. The historian cannot direct the course of the interview to get answers to a developed thesis or go back to expand or clarify a point.[87] These restrictions, combined with the varying quality and duration of the interviews in this study, meant that a large number of life histories had to be collected to acquire a thorough understanding of Franco-Albertan women's experiences. These numerous life histories provide texture to the patterns of francophone women's lives but they do not replace census data for understanding the demographic structure of the Franco-Albertan female population. Unfortunately,

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[86] For critiques of these sources see: Gordon Allport, The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1942) p. 98; Hareven, p. 374.

[87] This weakness can also be a strength since historians using oral archives cannot influence or control the respondents' answers.

however, the small proportion of Franco-Albertans meant that the community was frequently ignored by the dominant Anglo-Albertan group, resulting in few census entries. Their infrequent appearances thus makes it virtually impossible to compare data from census to census.

Analysis of Franco-Albertan women's life histories demonstrates that their memories were linked to the context of their lives. Although women's and men's ability to recall are not inherently different, individuals tend to remember things that are important to them. Since women have often been confined to the domestic sphere, they are more likely to remember events which concerned family and household than they are to recall matters peripheral to their lives.[88] Franco-Albertan informants thus clearly recalled their childhood experiences of convent school life, their courtship, the birth of their children, their domestic chores, and the pain of a child's death, for example. While many described how they had fed their family during the Depression, none spoke of the political debates or government measures occasioned by the crisis. Their memories, and the interviews, thus reflect what they perceived as the dominant events and patterns of their lives. They marked time not by public or political events but by their own personal rhythms such as marriage and childbirth, and by family occurrences such as the migration west or the death of a spouse.[89]

Accordingly, this study seeks to reflect Franco-Albertan women's own understanding and organization of their lives, centred as it was on home and family. It

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[88] Vandecasteele-Schweitzer and Voldman, p. 44; Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, pp. 256-257; Joan Sangster, p. 7; Denyse Baillargeon, p. 33. In her interviews of Montreal housewives who had lived through the Depression, Baillargeon found that women could recall precise information about domestic life, such as the price of food, while their husbands could not.

[89] The concepts of "women's time" and "family time" are highlighted in Margaret Conrad, " 'Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home': Time And Place in Canadian Women's History," Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., Rethinking Canada, pp. 70-71. For an evaluation of this approach, consult: Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Postmodern Patchwork: Some Recent Trends in the Writing of Women's History in Canada", CHR, LXXII, 4, 1991, p. 460.

is therefore structured around the stages of life the women themselves considered meaningful: their childhood work, schooling and socialization, courtship and marriage, domestic work, childbearing and childrearing, and the disruption and discontinuities of daily existence such as illness and death. This organizational principle is known as the life-course approach; it is designed to capture the "interaction between individuals and the family unit over time, and under changing historical conditions."[90]

In the life-course approach, the basic unit of analysis is the individual women respondents whose life cycles have been reconstituted through the life histories. Their life cycles are compared to each other to discern patterns and singularities. The repetitive daily existence within each stage of life is given as much importance as are the transitions -the changes from one stage to another, such as leaving home, getting married, and giving birth to children- and the rituals, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals, which mark these transitions. The historical transformations of roles within each stage as a result of technology, demography, or the economy are also taken into account. How did increased schooling affect the unpaid domestic work of girls, for example? And how were childrearing practices changed by the smaller size of families? Finally, the life-course approach also takes into account how the family mediates individuals' life cycles.[91] Collective family goals, for instance, can sometimes conflict with individual decisions and thus influence transitions. Frequently, women had to delay or cancel marriage plans because of family responsibilities. Using the life-course approach will thus allow for the study of Franco-Albertan women as they

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[90] Tamara Hareven, "Family History at the Crossroads," Journal of Family History, Vol. 12, Nos. 1-3, (1987) p. xiii.

[91] Glen Elder, Jr., "Families and Lives: Some Developments in Life-Course Studies," Journal of Family History, Vol. 12, Nos 1-3, pp. 179-185; Hareven, "Family History at the Crossroads," pp. x, xiii-xv.
The approach used here is in fact a modified life-course framework, since the life-course analysis is customarily used in conjunction with a cohort analysis, the examination of same age groups at particular points in time. Howard Chudacoff, "The Life Course of Women: Age and Age Consciousness, 1865-1915," Journal of Family History, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Fall 1980) pp. 274-292.

moved through the important stages of their lives while taking into account their interdependence with family and kin as well as the effects of social change.

In studying the experiences of women embedded in the family, one runs the risk of working from the assumption that: "the sexes and the generations experience families in the same way, and that their needs and interests are identical regardless of their position in the family."[92] This perspective obscures the different situations and concerns of individuals within the family, of women and children especially. This study attempts to avoid this methodological trap by placing the focus on women first and foremost, and by assuming that families are as much the locus of conflict as cooperation. On the other hand, it avoids seeing women as victims. Franco-Albertan women's labour was as essential to the survival of the household as men's work. Although the tasks performed were gender-defined and therefore different, both husbands and wives worked towards the advancement of the economic status of the household. Their work was interdependent. Interdependency, however, does not mean equality. The forces of patriarchy and capitalism were at work in the prairie west just as they were in older societies.

The study covers primarily the period 1890 to 1940. The 1890s marked the arrival of the first groups of francophone settlers whereas the 1940s brought about great changes to Alberta. The war, extensive pipeline and road construction, and the discovery of oil resulted in a period of economic growth and urbanization which dramatically altered society, including the lives of women. Female labour-force participation and the number of married women in paid employment rose while domestic technology modified the nature of homework.[93] 1940 was a watershed. It is therefore a good place to stop.

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92 Rayna Rapp in Rayna Rapp, Ellen Ross and Renate Bridenthal, "Examining Family History," Feminist Studies, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1979) p. 182.

93 Palmer, Alberta: A New History, pp. 281-325.

This thesis is divided in five chapters. Chapter 2 sets the context of francophone immigration by first charting the economic, demographic, and economic changes in the province between the 1880s and World War II. This is followed by a discussion of the francophone movement west and a profile of Franco-Albertan settlers. Chapter 3 describes the work of young French-speaking women, assesses their contribution to the family economy, and evaluates the degree to which economic responsibilities influenced their educational opportunities. Chapter 3 is concerned with their leisure and courtship activities. Finally, Chapters 4 and 5 examine married women's domestic life: their paid and unpaid work, childbearing and childrearing, and their strategies for coping with illness and death.

Chapter 2

IMMIGRATION TO ALBERTA AND FRANCOPHONE SETTLEMENT, 1880-1940

In 1879, after seven years of marriage, Cyrille and Léodina Bourgeois and their three young daughters left their farm in St. Léonard-d'Aston, Quebec, to find work in the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts. This first sojourn was a brief one, long enough to earn money to supplement their farm's meagre income. Eight years later, the family, which now included three more daughters, returned to Lowell, this time resolved to stay. While there, Léodina gave birth to two sons. Though she tried to get accustomed to urban life, she missed the farm and became increasingly determined that her daughters -three of whom were of marriageable age- wed French-Canadian men and settle in Quebec. Since conditions in the mills where Cyrille and the eldest daughters worked were becoming increasingly difficult to tolerate, the family returned to St. Léonard in 1895. During a previous stay in Quebec, the couple had received the visit of Cyrille's brother Joe, a farmer and prospector in the North-West Territories. Joe had vaunted prairie harvests and urged his brother to join him. Reluctantly, and only to prevent another move to Lowell, Léodina agreed to go.

They arrived in St. Albert in 1900 and stayed until Joe's death, in 1906, ruptured the Bourgeois' tenuous attachments to the West. The family returned to Quebec but within two years they were back. Accompanying them this time was son Joseph's bride Dorilla. By 1908 and the family's return, the best agricultural lands around Edmonton

had been taken up. Cyrille, determined to establish his sons and four sons-in-law on land, convinced Léodina that another move was in their best interest. In 1912 they filed for homesteads and moved to the St. Paul area, in the northeastern part of the province. By 1929, the old couple had died, Dorilla was pregnant with her fourteenth child, ten of whom were sons, and Joseph, like his father before him, brooded about the unavailability of inexpensive land for his sons. With much difficulty, he convinced Dorilla that the family should relocate in the Peace River area where homesteads were still available. After a difficult decade there, Joseph finally gave up farming, a career for which, he never had much talent. In 1939, the family moved once again, back to St. Albert, where he worked as a cattle-dealer.[1]

The travels and trials of the Bourgeois family were not atypical of French-speaking immigrants' experiences in the prairie west. Like the Bourgeois, most came to escape the hardships of the rural poor and urban working class in North America and Europe. They brought numerous children to work the land that would support them, their children and grand-children. But many, like Cyrille and his son Joseph, had little aptitude for agriculture and their search for better opportunities did not end with their arrival in the west. While most families did not relocate as frequently as the Bourgeois, some were even more transient. Yet few so closely mirrored the general patterns of francophone immigration and settlement in Alberta as the Bourgeois, with the Edmonton area as the preferred destination followed by the St. Paul region in the northeast and finally, the Peace River Parklands in the northwest. This immigration pattern will be examined within the larger context of Canadian immigration policy and overall settlement of the province. Using secondary sources and the data gathered from the life histories of the women in the sample, the profile of Franco-Albertan settlers will also be outlined.

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[1] Jeanine Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home, My Native Land," unpublished family history, Calgary, Glenbow Library and Archives, 1982.

2.1 CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE WEST:

Prior to 1880, the population of the westernmost region of the North-West Territories was largely composed of a few thousand Natives, small groups of Métis, and the handful of Protestant and Catholic missionaries who ministered to them. Added to these were the fur traders and administrators of Hudson's Bay Company trading posts, a few whisky traders and settlers and after 1874, several hundred North-West Mounted Police.[2] Though population was sparse, the area had already piqued the interest of central Canadian expansionists and politicians who increasingly came to believe in the region's agricultural potential.[3] Following the transfer of the North-West to Canada in 1870, the settlement and agricultural development of the region became an essential component of John A. Macdonald's 'national policy'. The Prairies would supply natural products to eastern Canada which in turn would sell westerners the manufactured goods they required for settlement and agricultural production. To promote east-west trade, a transcontinental railway was constructed and high protective tariffs imposed to keep out American manufactured products.[4]

Since the whole plan of nation building was contingent upon a populated and developed West, immigration was essential. As early as 1869, government agents began surveying and dividing the land into townships, sections, and quarter-sections of 160 acres each. In 1872, the Dominion Lands Act was passed. According to the terms of this act, male settlers twenty-one years of age or older and women heads of families could obtain title to one quarter-section of land by paying a ten dollar registration fee and fulfilling a number of conditions such as residing on the land for three years,

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[2] Palmer, Alberta: A New History, pp. 29-39.

[3] Douglas R. Owram, The Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) pp. 3-6.

[4] Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, Donald B. Smith, Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation, Second Edition (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1992) p.120.

constructing a dwelling, and clearing and cultivating at least thirty acres. The homesteader who obtained title to this first quarter-section had the option of buying, for a modest price, a second neighbouring quarter.[5]

The homesteads attracted settlers but settlement was scattered and largely confined to the areas bordering the Canadian Pacific Railway lines which, completed in 1883, ran through Calgary and west to the Rocky Mountains. While the majority of immigrants settling in the Alberta region during this period were from Ontario and the British Isles, a number of Americans also made their way northwest: Mormons from Utah, Icelanders from North Dakota and Norwegians from Wisconsin. As well, several settlements of German-speaking people from eastern Europe were founded. By 1891, the line of settlement extended to Strathcona, south of Edmonton across the North Saskatchewan river.[6]

Before the mid-1890s, however, homesteaders and farmers were greatly outnumbered by Ontario- and British-born ranchers who had taken advantage of the generous leases of grazing land provided by John A. Macdonald's Conservative government.[7] Large-scale immigration, settlement and agricultural production based on a wheat economy only took off after 1896 following the election of Wilfrid Laurier's federal Liberal government. Once elected, Laurier continued J. A. Macdonald's 'national policies'. His Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, dedicated himself to settling the West. Sifton believed that the best immigrants were farmers so through aggressive advertising campaigns, he set out to attract agriculturists from eastern

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5 Palmer, Alberta, pp. 50-51; D. Francis, et al., Destinies, pp. 63-64.

6 Palmer, Alberta, pp. 60-61, 68-75.

7 David Breen, "The Ranching Frontier in Canada, 1875-1905," Lewis G. Thomas, ed., The Prairie West to 1905: A Canadian Sourcebook (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975) pp. 217-227.

Canada, Britain, the United States and western and eastern Europe. He subsequently made land speculation more difficult and procedures for acquiring homesteads easier.[8]

Supporting Sifton's campaign was a favourable conjuncture of economic and demographic factors as well as advances in technology. In Europe, an increase in population following the industrial revolution had strained available agricultural lands and forced individuals and families to seek work in cities. For the urban working class and the rural poor, the promise of free land in Canada offered the possibility of escape. Lower transportation costs made emigration increasingly possible. Furthermore, the closing of the American frontier after 1890, declining freight rates, as well as available markets and high prices for Canadian wheat enhanced the attraction of the Canadian West. Combined with these were advancements in farm machinery and the development of early-maturing strains of wheat which improved production and increased the chances of farming successfully in northern areas.[9]

2.2 THE OVERALL PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT:

Between 1896 and 1914, immigrants arrived in Canada in ever-increasing numbers: some 17,000 in 1896, 41,500 in 1900, 141,500 in 1905, 287,000 in 1910, and 401,000 in 1913.[10] A substantial proportion of these newcomers were directed to the Prairies. During the period of settlement that preceded the Second World War, Alberta's population increased more than tenfold, from 73,022 in 1901 to 772,782 in 1936. As Table

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[8] D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896-1905," in Howard Palmer, ed., The Settlement of the West (Calgary: Comprint/University of Calgary, 1977) pp. 63-67.

[9] Palmer, Alberta, pp. 77; D. Francis, Destinies, pp. 124-128.

[10] Francis, Destinies, p 124-125.

2-A indicates, the largest number of newcomers settled in rural areas. As late as 1941, 62% of Alberta's population was rural.

Table 2-A

Population of Alberta, Rural and Urban Distribution, and Population of Major Urban Centres, 1891-1941*

Census Year	Alberta	Rural	Urban	Major Urban Centres Edmonton	Calgary
1891	17,500**	N/A	N/A	700	3,800
1901	73,022 [317.3]	54,489 (74.6)	18,533 (25.4)	4,176	4,091
1906	185,195 [153.6]	127,320 (68.7)	57,875 (31.3)	11,167	11,967
1911	374,295 [102.1]	236,633 (63.2)	137,662 (36.8)	31,064	43,704
1916	496,442 [32.6]	307,693 (62.0)	188,749 (38.0)	53,846	56,514
1921	588,454 [18.5]	365,550 (62.1)	222,904 (37.9)	58,821	63,305
1926	607,599 [3.3]	373,751 (61.5)	233,848 (38.5)	65,163	65,291
1931	731,605 [20.4]	453,097 (61.9%)	278,508 (38.1%)	79,197	83,761
1936	772,782 [5.6]	486,335 (62.9)	286,447 (37.1)	85,774	83,407
1941	796,169 [3.0]	489,583 (61.5)	306,586 (38.5)	93,817	88,904

* Data compiled from Census of Prairie Provinces, 1916, Table 7, p. 148; Census of Canada, 1931, Table 35, p. 500; Census of Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. I, Table I, p.832 and Table 4, p. 833; Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. II, Table 12, p. 177, Vol. II, Table 16, pp. 190, 193 and Vol. IV, Table 1, p. 3.

** The population for the area that became Alberta is an estimate. For all 1891 data see: Robert Stamp, "The Emergence of Alberta as a Geopolitical Entity," in B.M. Barr and P.J. Smith, eds., Environment and Economy: Essays on the Human Geography of Alberta (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1984) p. 8.

[ ] Percent increase over preceding census.

( ) Percent rural and urban of total population.

The early years of settlement, 1896 to 1913, were boom years characterized by great expansion and change. By the beginning of World War I, massive grain production for export had replaced subsistence farming. The primitive conditions and hardships of the early pioneering years were slowly being overcome as hundreds of hamlets, villages and towns built along railway lines provided a range of services and amenities.[11] The transformation of urban areas was just as dramatic. The population of the two major cities, Calgary and Edmonton, jumped from a few thousand each at the turn of the century to a combined population of over 100,000 in 1916. (See Table 2-A) Both cities developed as major western Canadian centres.[12]

The immigrants who arrived during this period of remarkable growth profoundly marked the character of the region. Table 2-B indicates that, in the decade ending in 1911, the largest number of immigrants (21.7%) came from the United States. Many remained in the southern part of the province so that by the 1920s, the American-born comprised half the farmers in the area.[13] During that same decade, the British (18.6%) formed the second largest group of immigrants. Like the Americans, they overwhelmingly came and settled as individuals, though some were part of group settlements. Along with the Ontario-born (15.4%), these Anglo-Albertans impressed their political and cultural values on the new society and moulded the economic, political and social institutions of the province.[14] Although numerically superior, English-speaking settlers represented but some of the diversity. Among other immigrants were Scandinavians (4% in 1911), and central and eastern Europeans, the

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11 Palmer, Alberta, pp. 106-107, 127.

12 Paul Voisey, "The Urbanization of the Canadian Prairies, 1871-1917," in Howard Palmer and Doug Francis, eds., The Prairie West: Historical Readings (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985) pp. 391-392.

13 Palmer, Alberta, p. 83.

14 Ibid, p. 78, 105.

latter (Slavs, Hungarians, and Roumanians) comprising one-eight of the population by 1911.[15]

Table 2-B

Percent distribution by birthplace of the population of Alberta, 1901-1941 *

Origin	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Total	73,022	374,295	588,454	731,605	796,169
Canada	57.1	43.3	53.6	58.1	67.5
Maritimes	2.0	2.6	2.4	1.8	1.4
Quebec	3.6	2.7	2.5	1.9	1.5
Ontario	16.8	15.4	11.7	8.1	6.1
Man. & Sask.	34.1]**	2.0	2.8	4.3	5.5
Alberta	]	19.6	33.1	41.0	52.0
Other prov. & Territories	0.6	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
Europe	16.0	14.9	11.2	15.1	12.6
British Isles ***	10.6	18.6	16.9	15.0	10.9
France & Belgium	0.3	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.4
U. S.	15.3	21.7	16.9	10.8	8.2
Other	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Compiled from: Census of Canada, 1901, Table xiv, pp. 446-447; Census of Canada, 1921, Vol. II, Table 36, pp. 240-241; Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. I, Table 23, pp. 522-523 and Table 24, pp. 530-531; Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. II, Table 42, pp. 658-661.
** This number represents the population of all three future prairie provinces.
*** Includes British possessions.

15 Census of Canada, 1921, Vol. II, Table 36, pp. 240-241.

This period of growth came to an end with the agricultural depression of 1912-13 and the outbreak of World War I. Many farmers prospered during the war when wheat production and prices rose but they faced increasingly higher production costs. With no war industries in the province, towns and cities, other than resource-based centres, experienced little growth. Immigration came to a halt and did not resume until the end of the economic recession of the early 1920s. Drought in the southern part of the province did little to attract immigrants. Settlers were also deterred by the fact that inexpensive prime agricultural land was no longer available in central and southern Alberta.[16] The economic upturn of the late 1920s drew in a fresh wave of immigrants, many of whom settled in the northern Peace River Parkland area newly made accessible by railway lines. During the decade 1921 to 1931, the province's population increased by only 24% (Table 2-A), a substantial slowing down of the accelerated growth experienced before the war.

The economic depression of the 1930s virtually put a stop to immigration and population growth. The result of drought, the closing of foreign markets, and falling agricultural prices, the Depression had a devastating impact on prairie life. Lower wheat prices and smaller harvests caused a rapid decline in farm income. In south and east-central Alberta where the effects of drought and soil-drifting were most severe, farmers faced bankruptcy. When they stopped buying, all sectors of the economy were affected: the resource and service industries and light manufacturing in cities contracted, laying off employees.[17] Throughout the 1930s, much as 25% of the labour force was unemployed.[18] With immigration almost nil, the disheartened leaving the province, and a declining birthrate, Alberta's population remained virtually stagnant

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16 Palmer, Alberta, pp. 198-202.

17 Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, pp. 382-385.

18 Palmer, Alberta, p. 247.

during the decade. As Table 2-A indicates, the increase for the decade averaged a mere 4.3%.

2.3 FRANCOPHONE SETTLEMENT:

Francophones had found their way to the western prairies as early as the eighteenth century. By the mid-century, French-speaking fur traders and *voyageurs* following in the footsteps of the LaVerendryes, were familiar with the area which extended as far west as the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. It is estimated that by the end of the French regime, as many as two hundred French-Canadians may have lived and worked in the western interior.[19] After the Conquest, French-Canadians laboured for both the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies. While in the west, many had taken Native wives, and by the mid-nineteenth century, a growing number had elected to settle in the interior, especially at Red River, with their mixed-blood families. Their Métis descendants continued to be involved in the fur trade as guides, boatmen, interpreters, teamsters and freighters for the fur trading posts around which many settled. In 1833, for example, 117 Métis depended on work to be had at Fort Edmonton.[20] By the early 1840s, the fort had enough Catholic, French-speaking Métis and fur traders that the Roman Catholic Church felt the need to establish a mission to minister to them. A second mission was founded at Saint Albert, some 30 kl. north of the fort, in 1861. Two decades later, this mission was a thriving agricultural community of approximately 1,000 inhabitants.[21] By this time, francophone settlers from Quebec, attracted by business opportunities in construction and cattle sales, had also moved to

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19 Smith, "A History of French-speaking Albertans," p. 85.
20 Hart, Ambition and Reality, p. 8.
21 Smith, p. 87.

the area. A few others, after following the Gold Rush trail to the Yukon, had returned to the Edmonton area and stayed.[22] Some, like the Joseph Lamoureux family, found agriculture on the central parkland promising and homesteaded as early as 1874.[23] Immigrating alone or with families, these francophone settlers, along with the Metis of the region, constituted, by 1885, 44% of residents in the Alberta sub-district of the North-West Territories and were the majority of inhabitants in the Edmonton area.[24]

The extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway line north from Calgary in 1891 brought the first groups of French-speaking colonists into Alberta. Their settlement was promoted by the Roman Catholic church. Before 1870, the clergy had actively discouraged immigration in order to protect Native and Métis people from Euro-Canadian influences.[25] With the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada, however, it became apparent that colonization of the North-West was inevitable, and the strategies of the clergy, if not their opinion concerning white settlement, changed. Believing that settling the West with French-Catholics was preferable to English-Protestant colonization, the western Roman Catholic church hierarchy, notably Mgr Alexandre Taché of Saint-Boniface and his successor Adélard Langevin, began to actively promote Franco-Catholic immigration.[26] These church leaders had a vision of creating, from existing Métis communities, core French-Catholic settlements stretching in a chain across the West. Regrouping these people in 'bloc settlements' to form compact and solid enclaves and anchoring the end of the chain of settlements in the francophone

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22 Hart, p. 16.

23 Stocco, The French-Canadian colonization in Alberta," p. 31.

24 Census of the Three Provisional Districts of the North-West Territories, 1884-85, Table III, p.10.

25 Painchaud. Un rêve français, pp. 45-46; Hart, p. 23.

26 Taché (1854-1894) and Langevin (1895-1915), as well as being the metropolitans of the ecclesiatic province of Saint-Boniface, Manitoba, were also the administrators of a diocese which extended from the head of the Great Lakes to the western borders of Saskatchewan. Under their governance were Mgr Vital Grandin of Saint-Albert (1871-1902) and his successor, Mgr Émile Legal (1902-1920). Ibid, p. xi.

communities of Northern Ontario and thus in Quebec, would shield them, the leaders hoped, from anglicization and secularization.[27] To promote settlement, the church hierarchy relied first on lay colonizing societies and agents. When these proved less than successful, the church, began to appoint in the late 1880s, its own missionary priests as colonizing agents. More dedicated than lay agents, these colonizing-priests had more success in recruiting settlers for the North-West. In Alberta, the immigrants were directed to the Métis colonies near Edmonton.[28] An early missionary-colonizer, Father Morin, brought some 620 French-Canadian families to the area between 1891 and 1899, founding the communities of Villeneuve, Morinville, Legal, Beaumont and Rivière Qui Barre.[29] (See map in Appendix 2)

The bulk of French-speaking immigration occurred during the 1896-1913 period. While settlements were established across the province - for example, immigrants from France founded a number of communities at Trochu, Sylvan Lake and Tinchebray in south and south-central Alberta - the majority of francophones continued to head to the Edmonton area. When the fertile land there had been taken up, colonizing-priests encouraged and directed settlers to move into the St. Paul area, to take up homesteads made available by the failure of the Métis reserve.[30] As numerous small centres such as St. Paul, Bonnyville, St. Lina, Therien, and St. Vincent sprang up, this became a second area of francophone concentration in the province. By 1912, settlement had expanded to the Lac la Biche and Plamondon area. Once the war began

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27 Painchaud, Un rêve français, pp. 2-3.

28 Ibid, pp. 63-65.

29 Hart, pp. 23-25.

30 St. Paul-des-Métis, an agricultural mission, was founded by the Roman Catholic Church in 1896 to help the Métis "adjust to the new society in the West." Four townships of land near the Saddle Lake Indian reserve were set aside. But insufficient funding by governments and the Catholic Church ended the project. By 1908, the land was made available to non-Métis settlers. Palmer, Alberta, p. 102.

in 1914, there was no further expansion in the population of these northeastern areas through immigration.[31]

A factor contributing to the decline in French-speaking immigration was the anglicization of the clergy in the Edmonton and Calgary dioceses after 1913. Although only 30% of Roman Catholics in the prairie provinces were French-speaking in the early twentieth century, all the bishops and two-thirds of the secular priests in the Edmonton and Calgary dioceses were francophone. Upon their appointments as bishops of Calgary and Edmonton, in 1913 and 1920 respectively, John McNally and Henry O'Leary quickly rectified the ethnic imbalance among their diocesan priests. The new English-speaking clergy did little to encourage French-speaking immigration.[32]

After 1920, the Peace River region, one of the few dioceses (Grouard-McLennan) with a French-speaking bishop and clergy favouring and actively promoting francophone colonization, received a sizeable number of francophone settlers. A few French-speaking colonists had ventured north earlier, establishing in 1912, communities in the Falher-Girouxville area. But homesteading became much more attractive with the completion, in 1916, of the railway link between Peace River and Edmonton. It was not, however, until the late-1920s and the upturn in the economy that the real expansion of francophone settlement in the area occurred. Then, a number of farming communities such as Eaglesham, Tangent, Donnelly, Guy, McLennan, and Jean Coté were established. Immigration slowed during the Depression and World War II but resumed in the late 1940s and in the next two decades to give the region today one of the strongest concentration of francophones in the province.[33]

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31 Stocco, p. 8.

32 Smith, p. 98. The St. Albert diocese was renamed the Edmonton diocese in 1913.

33 Stocco, pp. 8-9.

2.4 THE ORIGINS OF FRENCH-SPEAKING SETTLERS:

Because it is impossible to ascertain the origin of the majority of French-speaking people in Alberta from census reports, the immigration pattern of this group has yet to be fully outlined. While census data on the birthplace and naturalization of the foreign-born give the numbers of French and Belgian immigrants entering the province over time, the reports fail to delineate between French-speaking and non-French-speaking American immigrants and francophones and non-francophones migrating to Alberta from other Canadian provinces and territories. Evidence would seem to indicate that the earliest groups of French-speaking immigrants were predominantly French-Canadian expatriates from the United States. Of the 620 families brought by Father Morin before 1900, 53% came from American states while only 28% were from Quebec and Ontario.[34] Historians have offered a number of explanations to account for this early preponderance of Franco-American immigrants.

According to Robert Painchaud, Quebec's clerical and secular elite never shared the western Franco-Catholic hierarchy's commitment to the French-speaking settlement of the Prairies. While the West's francophone leaders warned against the dangers to religious and language rights should French-Canadian immigration fail to reinforce the numbers of French and Catholic settlers in the West, Quebec's élite discouraged people from leaving the province arguing, as did an editor at Montreal's La Minerve, that doing so "serait travailler à diminuer la force de notre nationalité ici."[35] Quebec leaders also viewed efforts to colonize the west as competition with their own plans of establishing agricultural communities in Quebec's own northern frontiers. Plenty of land was available in 'les pays d'en haut'; French-Canadians need not exile themselves. Acting upon these beliefs, Quebec leaders restricted western colonizing-

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34 Hart, p. 24.

35 Robert Painchaud, "French-Canadian Historiography," p. 457.

agents' recruitment to only those Quebecers who were absolutely determined to emigrate. The agents were also advised to direct their search south of the border where hundreds of thousands of expatriate French-Canadians lived.[36]

The western Catholic church hierarchy and its immigration agents had recognized the value of repatriation as early as 1870 but, for a number of reasons, it had limited success in directing Franco-Americans to the Canadian West. In her survey of the francophone settlement of Alberta, Denise Stocco echoes A. I. Silver's arguments that the church and its colonizing agents prevented many prospective immigrants from moving west by imposing conditions - such as the possession of a start-up capital of $1,000 and agricultural experience - that many failed to meet.[37] Painchaud presents convincing counter-arguments to demonstrate that the church was no more conservative in its choice of settlers than the federal departments responsible for immigration.[38] Both church and state were in agreement: preferred settlers were farmers, especially married ones with families, with enough capital to survive until the land could support them.[39] Like the federal government, the church's immigration policies were shaped by recognition of the harsh realities of the undeveloped nature of the land and the overall economic situation in the West. But unlike the western francophone hierarchy which was forced to rely heavily on repatriates for its colonization ventures, the federal government saw repatriation as but one source -and a minor one at that- of settlers. Consequently, except for a brief period in 1877-78, Franco-Americans did not benefit from federally subsidized railway fares.[40] The late-

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36 Ibid, pp. 458-459 and Painchaud, Un rêve français, pp. 87-88.

37 Stocco, pp. 5-6; A.I. Silver, The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) p. 240.

38 From 1867 to 1892, immigration was the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. Responsibility was transferred subsequently to the Department of the Interior. Friesen, p. 185.

39 Painchaud, Un rêve français, pp. 52-54.

40 Ibid, pp. 61-62.

1880s' economic renewal in New England, where most expatriates had settled, also weakened the impetus for francophones to leave, as did the poor attitudes to emigration of Franco-American lay and clerical leaders.[41]

Emphasis on Franco-American recruitment, in part, shifted to the Midwest and the West, especially in the 1890s and early 1900s. Many colonizing priests, including Father Morin, concentrated their efforts there although they did not abandon the eastern states. The francophones who had migrated to the American West and Midwest made excellent prospective settlers because many were involved in mining, logging and agriculture, and thus possessed skills, especially the latter, which were much in demand in the Canadian West.[42] Mgr Legal of Saint-Albert voiced many agent-priests' opinions about the desirability for westerners: "Ces gens connaissent la vie qu'ils auront à mener ici. Ils sont habitués et pour eux c'est une question d'amélioration dans leur situation. Pour les Canadiens de l'Est, c'est trop l'inconnu pour eux."[43] The western and midwestern states were also considerably closer to the North-West than New England and transportation costs were comparatively lower. In the first decade of the twentieth century, recruitment bore fruit, although it is not clear how many francophone repatriates came from the American West. From 1900 to 1903, 1,682 francophone settlers originated in the U. S. as opposed to 1,471 from Eastern Canada.[44] Repatriation continued until the First World War when all but one immigration agencies were closed. Efforts were renewed in the post-war period but Franco-Catholic colonizing agents faced increased difficulty obtaining Canadian government subsidies

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41 Ibid. pp. 135-137.

42 Although many of the western American francophones had been born in Quebec, very few migrated directly to the western American states. Most had lived in New England and the Midwest before moving west of the Mississippi River in the 1870s and 1880s to homestead. D. Aidan McQuillan, "French-Canadian Communities in the American Upper Midwest During the Nineteenth Century," Cahiers de géographie du Québec, Vol. 23, no. 58, avril 1979, pp. 60-61.

43 Painchaud. Un rêve français, p. 152.

44 Ibid. p. 152.

for their work. Their efforts came to an end in 1927 when the federal government ceded all matters concerning repatriation to the provinces.[45]

As important as repatriation was as a source of potential francophone settlers for the West, it never replaced Quebec as the primary source in the eyes of the western church hierarchy, despite the reservations of the Quebec elite. In 1891, a federally-subsidized colonizing agency was opened in Montreal from which colonizing-priests operated. They used this base to recruit in the U. S. as well. Although the Western Catholic hierarchy and its colonizing agents consistently and periodically reassured Quebec leaders that they were only targeting Quebec families intent upon emigrating, complaints received by the Minister of the Interior as late as 1914 about the agents' work suggest that recruitment was widespread among all potential candidates for western settlement.[46] After 1900, colonizing-priests, in conjunction with the CPR, also organized numerous excursions which aimed to introduce the West to a growing number of Quebecers through tourism or harvest work.

Following World War I and the end of the initial pioneering period, the western church hierarchy relaxed the conditions for settlement thereby attracting growing numbers of French-speaking settlers from Quebec.[47] By this time, the Quebec élite was well aware of the poor nature of Quebec's northern agricultural lands and no longer hindered the emigration of settlers to the Canadian west.[48] Marginal lands in the Maritimes and in Ontario also pushed some French-Canadians westward. Thus, of the two hundred francophone families which settled in the village of Jean Côté in the Peace River area in the 1920s and 1930s, as many as 75% came from Quebec. 15% came

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[45] Ibid, pp. 161-62.
[46] Ibid, pp. 123-25.
[47] Smith, p. 92.
[48] Stocco, p. 4; Smith, p. 98.

from other Canadian provinces and Europe, and only 10% were from the American states.[49]

Throughout the period of settlement, only a small number of French-speaking immigrants came from Europe. Few French, Belgian and Swiss chose to settle in Alberta. France had low birth and unemployment rates so its citizens were not impelled to leave. When they did emigrate, they were more likely to go to France's colonies around the globe than to the Canadian West. Poor relations between the French government and the western Canadian church hierarchy also limited recruitment in France. The Church hierarchy wanted only Catholic immigrants so agents tried to exclude French republicans and liberals from immigrating. In 1904-05, western Canadian Catholic agents publicly attacked the French government's anti-clericalism, which retaliated by prohibiting all immigration propaganda.[50] Belgium, unlike France, had a surplus population but employment opportunities were available in neighbouring France or in the African Belgian colonies.[51] As for the French-speaking Swiss, they were few. By 1916, 3,464 French and Belgian, and a few Swiss citizens, had emigrated to Alberta.[52] Their geographic and class origins were diverse and their settlement scattered across the province. Aristocratic Catholic monarchists formed a ranching community in Trochu; socialists attempted to create a utopian settlement in Sylvan Lake; capitalists owned and operated the West Canadian Collieries in the Crow's

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49 Smith, p. 98.

50 Painchaud, Un rêve français, p. 199.

51 Not all Belgians were francophone but according to Cornelius Jaenen, the Flemish tended to settle in south-western Ontario while the French-speaking Walloons settled in Quebec and in the West. "Les Belges au Canada", Ottawa: La Société historique du Canada, 1991, Brochure No. 20, p. 22. A number of Walloon farmers settled north of Saint-Albert among other French-speaking settlers while others worked the mines of the Crow's Nest Pass. Howard and Tamara Palmer. Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985) p. ix.

52 Census Of the Prairie Provinces, 1916, Table XLII, p. 281.

Nest Pass and labourers and members of the middle class found work in resource towns, cities or tried their hand at homesteading.[53]

2.5 PROFILE OF FRANCOPHONE FAMILIES IN THE SAMPLE:

The sample of life histories in this study can shed additional light on the origin of francophone immigrants. Table 2-C shows that of the 218 respondents whose own or family origins are known, 42.6% came from Quebec, 17.5% from other Canadian provinces, 30.3% from the United States, and 9.6% from Europe. Correlations drawn between year of arrival and origin reinforce patterns previously noted. While 65.5% of respondents' families coming from Quebec arrived before 1914, more than 83.3% of the Franco-American settlers in the study immigrated before that date. Of this latter group, as many as one-quarter, coming predominantly from the western states of Kansas, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, made their way to the North-West before 1899. This illustrates the early focus and success of the immigration agents' work in the region and the greater accessibility of the Canadian North-West to western Franco-Americans. The majority of the European families (66.7%) also arrived before World War I. The only regions which contributed more of the respondents' families after the war than before were the Canadian provinces. 60.5% of the Canadian families of the women in question came to Alberta between 1914 and 1940, most (52.6%) arriving before the Depression.

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53 Smith, pp. 94-95; Palmer, Land of the Second Chance, p. 215.

Table 2-C

Origin and year of arrival in Alberta of immigrant families of women in the sample, 1870-1940

Period	B.C.	Man. & Sask.	Ont.	Quebec	Mari-times	U.S West & Mid-west	U.S East	France	Belg. Switz. Lux.
1870-1899	0 (0)	3 (17.6)	0 (0)	7 (7.5)	0 (0)	15 (62.5)	2 (4.8)	2 (13.3)	1 (16.7)
1900-1913	1 (20.0)	2 (11.8)	8 (61.5)	54 (58.0)	1 (33.3)	4 (16.7)	34 (81.0)	9 (60.1)	2 (33.3)
1914-1918	1 (20.0)	2 (11.8)	5 (38.5)	18 (19.4)	1 (33.3)	2 (8.3)	3 (7.0)	2 (13.3)	0 (0)
1919-1929	2 (40.0)	8 (47.0)	0 (0)	11 (11.8)	1 (33.3)	3 (12.5)	2 (4.8)	2 (13.3)	3 (50.0)
1930-1940	1 (20.0)	2 (11.8)	0 (0)	3 (3.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Sub-total	5 [2.3]	17 [7.8]	13 [6.0]	93 [42.6]	3 [1.4]	24 [11.0]	42 [19.3]	15 [6.9]	6 [2.7]
Known	218								
Un-known	35								
Total	253								

( ) Percentage of families originating in each region for period indicated.
[ ] Percentage of all families (known origin) originating in each region.

What propelled these people to leave their homes to venture West? These migrants were part of the widespread population movements which historians have identified as one of the central features of the North Atlantic economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, resulting from "the formation of new world markets, the unprecedented circulation of productive resources, and the linking of

regional economies."[54] But behind these economic forces, as historian Bruno Ramirez points out, were the decisions and strategies of individuals and families to cope with change.[55] This study's life histories are particularly useful in revealing some of the motives which led French-speaking people to the Canadian West. These are charted in Table 2-D.

Primarily, economic factors pushed the families of the respondents to migrate. In fact, slightly more than half (58.4%) of the respondents identified economic woes, such as repeated crop failures, unemployment, lack of prospects, business failure and bankruptcies, etc., as the forces that compelled them and their families to pull up roots. Within this economic category, the effects of marginal lands provided by far the primary impetus for leaving. Studies on the out-migration of French-Canadians from Quebec in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries do show that the growing population and the limited availability of good agricultural land led to the increased proletarianization of a large segment of the population which migrated in search of work.[56] Correlations between marginal lands and migration are less clear for western Franco-Americans and for French-Canadians outside Quebec. Table 2-D also indicates that the families of the respondents chose to relocate in Alberta for largely economic reasons as well. 76% of respondents reported emigrating to take advantage of free land, to find employment, or to improve their business and financial opportunities.

Non-economic factors also influenced the decision of individuals and families to migrate. A few individual men moved west during the course of the First World War to avoid the military draft, believing that as farmers they would be exempted. In some

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[54] Bruno Ramirez, On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic economy, 1860-1914 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991) p. 138.

[55] Ibid, p. 144.

[56] For the effects of marginal lands and the growing proletarianization of small landholders in Quebec, see: Ramirez, pp. 24, 28-29 and, for an earlier period and the increase in landless peasantry, Alan Greer, The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) pp. 20-51.

cases, whole families were uprooted in an effort to find security for military-aged sons. Jeanne Nobert's family, for instance, left Quebec in early 1918 and moved to land near Cluny to prevent three sons from being drafted.[57]

Table 2-D

Factors Leading To Emigration of Families in the Sample, 1880-1940

'Push' Factors			'Pull' Factors		
Factors	Number	Percentage	Factors	Number	Percentage
Lack of prospects	7	11.6	Work/ Financial prospects	12	16.0
Unemploy-ment	3	5.0	Land availability	31	41.3
Business failure/ Bankruptcy	8	13.4	Better future for children *	8	10.7
Marginal lands	17	28.4	Wealth/ Fortune	6	8.0
To avoid draft	5	8.3	Adventure	7	9.4
Health	15	25.0	To visit/reunite families	9	12.0
Anti-clericalism in Europe	5	8.3	Better climate	1	1.3
			To keep language	1	1.3
Subtotal	60	100	Subtotal	75	100.0
Unknown	193		Unknown	177	
Total	253		Total	253	

* These hopes were often of an economic nature.

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[57] Institut de Recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean, University of Alberta, (hereafter known as IRFSJ) AGG, Jeanne Nobert Hamel. Full references are given in Appendix 3.

Other families emigrated for health reasons. The parents of a son or daughter stricken with illness would be advised by eastern Canadian or American doctors to seek the drier prairie climate. But for many, such as the Bourassa daughters, the move did little to ameliorate their condition. These sisters had contracted tuberculosis while working in New England textile mills. They came to Alberta in 1916 with their parents who felt that the prairies would provide a healthier environment. But the relocation came too late to save their daughters' lives: the eldest died the day after the family's arrival in Plamondon, the youngest, two years later.[58]

French-speaking immigrants were also drawn to the Alberta prairies by the possibility of maintaining linguistic and cultural identity. As strange as this might seem today, with the Alberta francophone assimilation toll at more than 75%,[59] the province was once promoted as a haven for francophones. Colonizing-priests assured prospective immigrants that in the North-West they could preserve their linguistic and cultural identity.[60] Despite legislation restricting the use of the French language in schools and in the provincial legislature,[61] bloc settlements of French-speaking settlers, did, in fact, provide thriving environments until the Second World War.[62] The success of these communities probably contributed more to the recruitment of French-speaking settlers than evidence suggests. Since as many as 59% of the respondents' families had relatives already established in the west, word of mouth likely carried the message that at least certain communities, if not the whole of Alberta, welcomed francophones. Thus, the number of respondents who gave preservation of the French

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58 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

59 Assimilation tolls are for the 1970s. La Fédération des Francophones hors Québec, Les Héritiers de Lord Durham, Vol. I, avril 1977, p. 27. The proportion of francophone assimilation is likely as high or higher in the 1990s.

60 Stocco, p. 7.

61 Language and schooling legislation in the North-West Territories and after 1905 and the creation of the province is examined in Chapter 3.

62 Smith, pp. 84-101.

language as a motive for moving to the Prairies likely does not fully represent the actual numbers of immigrants for whom the possibility of retaining language and culture was but one more asset the Canadian west had to offer.

The desire to rejoin family members who had previously moved west was also a factor leading to emigration. But the number of respondents who indicated kinship attachments as the primary motive for emigrating does not reveal the extent or the importance of family relationships in the migration process. Only five of the women in the study reported coming west to rejoin a brother or parents already established in the area. Another four came to visit relatives and ended up staying after meeting their future husbands. What Table 2-D does not show is that a full 59% of the 147 respondents who gave information about their families' reasons for emigrating west reported having kin already established there. Thus, chain migration, an important aspect of the movement of francophones from Quebec to New England and to Ontario highlighted by Tamara Hareven and Chad Gaffield respectively, also occurred in the process of francophone migration to Western Canada.[63]

Like other North Americans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the French-speaking people who eventually settled in Alberta were highly geographically mobile.[64] Of the 233 respondents who gave information about their

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[63] Tamara Hareven, "The Laborers of Manchester, New Hampshire 1912-1922: The Role of Family and Ethnicity in Adjustment to Industrial Life," Labor History 18, (1975) pp. 249-265; Chad Gaffield, Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict, especially chapter 2 "'Invaders' and 'fugitives,' or Families in Motion?", pp. 31-61.

[64] The transiency of North American populations was first highlighted by Stephan Thernstrom in Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964). Canadian studies on geographic mobility were initiated by Michael Katz with The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975). Tamara Hareven, Gérard Bouchard, and Chad Gaffield have demonstrated the high mobility of French-speaking New Englanders, Quebecers and Ontarians respectively. See for example, Tamara Hareven's, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town, 1900-1924," Journal of Urban History, Vol. 1, No. 3 (May 1975) p. 373; Gérard Bouchard's, "Family Structures and Geographic

own or their family's migratory patterns, 42% of the families had tried their luck elsewhere before coming to Alberta: 36% had moved once, 5% twice, and 1% three times. And for many families, like the Bourgeois, their arrival in Alberta was but one more stage in the migration process. 26% of families moved again after their initial settlement in the province: 12% relocated once, 5% twice, and 9% three or more times.[65] Lucia Fex who migrated to Alberta in 1913 with her husband and two small children reported having moved twenty-two times during the course of her life in the province. Unfortunately, she provided little description of her various relocations.[66] Jeanne Boivin, on the other hand, detailed her parents' attempts at finding economic and social security. Arriving from Kansas in 1911, the family settled on a homestead near Elnora where her mother's sister and brother-in-law also homesteaded. Over the course of the next seventeen years, the Boivins re-settled eight more times.[67]

These geographically mobile families were of predominantly agricultural and working class background. Table 2-E indicates that 72% of the heads of households were farmers or labourers before their emigration; another 19% were involved in trade and commerce, half as clerks and the other half, as store owners. Most of these (at least eight of the fourteen store owners) had held occupations as labourers: textile workers, carpenter, bakers, cabinet maker and construction worker, before venturing into business. Their stores and shops were likely small operations employing mostly family members. As such, they may have been closer to the working classes than to the

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Mobility at Laterrière: 1851-1935," Journal of Family History, Vol. 2 (1979), pp. 350-369; and Chad Gaffield, Language, Schooling, pp. 31-61.

65 Paul Voisey demonstrates the transiency of western settlers in Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). He found that: "fewer than half the farmers remained in the [Vulcan] township for as long as five years before 1920; thereafter about three-quarters stayed for at least that long" (p. 33). Voisey attributes much of this transiency to the desire of immigrants to "turn a quick profit and clear out" (p. 36).

66 IRFSJ, CHE, Lucia Fex Beaulac.

67 IRFSJ, RAL, Jeanne Boivin Noël.

affluent shopkeepers they may have aspired to become. Only 9% of the francophone settlers in the study had been engaged in the professions before their move West.

The availability of inexpensive arable land in Alberta meant that an increased proportion of immigrants took up farming; while only one-third of the heads of the households had been farmers before emigrating, a full 83% were involved in agriculture in the West. This indicates both a strength and a weakness in the potential for adaptation of these settlers. On the one hand, that many settlers did not have prior farming experience hampered their chances of success as homesteaders. On the other hand, the fact that many had skills unrelated to agriculture, increased their versatility, a necessary characteristic of successful pioneering.[68] Farming and homesteading very often had to be combined with other occupations -with paid employment in building and railroad construction, in lumber camps or as farmhands- to make ends meet, especially during the early years of subsistence-agriculture. Quite frequently, as well, homesteading was combined with commerce. Twenty-one of the twenty-nine (72%) shopkeepers and store owners also farmed. This movement between paid work, land and business ownership, combined with the seasonal variation of price, grade and yield of agricultural products upon which farmers and town businessmen depended, and which could result in both rapid upward and downward mobility, makes it difficult to force settlers into rigid occupational and class structures.[69]

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68 Voisey, Vulcan, pp. 17-18.

69 Ibid, p. 215.

Table 2-E

Occupations of Heads of Household of Sample Immigrant Families

	Before Move		After Move	
Occupation	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Professional*	13	9.0	3	1.2
Trade/ Commerce**	27	18.6	29	12.0
Labourer				
skilled***•	22	15.2	6	2.5
unskilled	34	23.4	3	1.2
Farmer	48	33.1	201	83.1
Other****	1	.7	0	0
Subtotal	145	100.0	242	100.0
Unknown	108		11	
Total	253		253	

* Notaries, schoolteachers, journalists, etc.
** The Trade/Commerce category comprises store owners, shopkeepers, etc..
*** Skilled labourers include: carpenters, mechanics, plumbers, etc.
**** Includes lay brother.

Social mobility was also often accompanied by movement between cities, towns and farms. Poor crops could force farmers and their families to urban areas in search of work while waged-work and its financial rewards could open up the possibility of settling on land. The francophone women in the sample show this fluidity of movement between rural and urban areas. 81.3% of the women in this study spent the greater part of their lives in rural areas, yet, this does not mean that they never experienced urban life. Many spent their childhood on farms and later moved to towns and cities. But as Lemieux and Mercier point out for Quebec women, the migration patterns were not uni-directional - that is, from rural to urban.[70] Some western

[70] Lemieux and Mercier, pp. 58-59.

francophone women, like their Quebec sisters, migrated to towns and cities in their youth in search of work but returned home to marry and raise their families. Others moved to urban areas later in their lives, to enjoy the comfort and conveniences larger centres provided, or to take advantage of greater educational opportunities and employment for their children, and more rarely, for themselves.

2.6 CONCLUSION:

Secondary sources, combined with the data from the life histories of the women respondents, reveal a clearer outline of French-speaking immigration to Alberta than was previously available. In many ways, the pattern depicts the immigration experience of the Bourgeois family. Like the Bourgeois, many of the settlers who arrived before 1914, had previously journeyed to the United States to work in New England factories, in the logging and mining camps of the Midwest, or had homesteaded in the western states. A larger proportion originated in Quebec and other Canadian provinces; a few others came from Europe. Whatever their country of origin, the majority of these settlers, again like the Bourgeois, were from working class and agricultural backgrounds and they emigrated primarily to improve their economic situation. Once in Alberta, their search for economic opportunities continued, compelling many to migrate from place to place, region to region, and back and forth between rural and urban areas. While they founded communities across the province, their settlement was concentrated in three areas: Edmonton, St. Paul, and Peace River. Women were an active and vital element of francophone communities. The next two chapters examine the early stages of these women's lives. While work and schooling, which made up a significant portion of their childhood years, are studied in Chapter 3,

Chapter 4 focusses on the socialization and acculturation processes through which they became young women.

Chapter 3

THE WORK AND SCHOOLING OF YOUNG FRANCO-ALBERTAN WOMEN

Germaine Bussières, the only daughter in the large family of a Quebec couple homesteading, in 1910, near St. Paul, was her mother's helpmate at an early age. As a seven-year-old, Germaine was already doing housework and milking cows. By the age of thirteen, she had been pulled out of school and worked at home full-time baking bread, churning butter, knitting, sewing and doing, by hand, the weekly family laundry. Before her marriage in 1928, she spent several winters working at hospitals in both Edmonton and Saskatoon. She very much enjoyed this work away from home, to the dismay of her parents who required that she return to the farm each spring to help with the housework, gardening, and dairying.[1] Germaine's experience shows both the importance of francophone daughters' labour power and parents expectations. When the workload on the farm increased, parents relied on daughters to shoulder their share of the labour and pulled them out of school and paid work. This movement between paid and unpaid work and schooling characterized the childhood and adolescence of the francophone women respondents.

Their work patterns were not only flexible; they were also the most versatile workers of families, performing child-care duties, domestic chores, gardening,

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[1] During the interview, Germaine did not reveal the nature of her hospital work but it was likely related to the domestic skills of housekeeping, sewing or cooking. [RFSJ, ARD, Germaine Bussières Desaulniers.

dairying and, when needed, fieldwork. As paid workers, they also brought in much needed income which helped parents through lean times and contributed to improve the family's standard of living. The decisions about the nature of daughters' contributions were part of family strategies influenced by factors as varied as family composition, employment opportunities, and socially ascribed gender roles. Parents' allocation of their daughters' labour and wages could lead to conflicts when familial responsibilities failed to correspond to the individual needs and desires of the young women themselves. While daughters mostly had to bend to parents' decisions, the value of their contributions and the families' reliance on their labour and wages served to modify somewhat parental authority. This chapter examines the interplay between the schooling and the paid and unpaid work of young Franco-Albertan women.

3.1 UNPAID WORK:

One of the most constant recollections of the women interviewed was of hard work. The daily upkeep of hastily-built homes, whether in rural areas or in rapidly expanding towns and cities, was a difficult and endless task. Franco-Albertan housewives worked hard at keeping a clean house. The women interviewed, and their mothers, had to accomplish this without the benefit of modern conveniences which most acquired only in the 1940s and later. The burden of housework was rendered more difficult by the fact that large families were often housed in cramped quarters.[2] Not surprisingly, as soon as daughters were old enough, they were enlisted to give their mothers a helping hand. Preschool-aged daughters minded younger children while

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[2] The problems of overcrowding and the absence of household technology are discussed at length in Chapter 5.

mothers attended to outdoor chores and housework. By the age of seven or eight, girls also washed dishes, dusted, swept floors, fed and herded barnyard animals before or after school hours, on weekends and during holidays. More demanding tasks, such as milking cows, hauling water, ice, coal and wood for household use, churning butter, cooking, sewing, gardening, doing the laundry, and scrubbing rough wooden floors were usually performed by older, twelve- or thirteen-year-olds, though the eldest or only girls of large families, like Germaine Bussières, could find themselves pressed into such service at a much younger age.

Few girls, apart from the frail or youngest members of families, who were sometimes required to do less than healthier or older siblings, were excused from helping with work in and around the house. The centrality of work in children's lives had something to do with the fact that, in frontier societies, there was always an excess of labour for the number of available workers. Children's work was simply indispensable.[3] But just as important were parents' attitudes; work was considered a valuable form of training which built character and trained youngsters for adult work and responsibilities. Conversely, to leave youth idle was to promote bad habits and immorality.[4]

At first glance, this belief seems to have transcended class. Marguerite Trochu, the daughter of French aristocrats ranching in south-central Alberta around 1910, did her share of work. In her diary she recorded her many tasks: "Today; kneading bread; I'm the baker and doing it very well. Alternatively: cook, maid, washerwoman, baker, young lady (at the ball), delivery girl when I go shopping at the store. What might I be next?"[5] But her excitement at the variety of roles she had to assume indicates that

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3 Neil Sutherland, "'We always had things to do': The Paid and Unpaid Work of Anglophone Children Between the 1920s and 1960s," Labour/Le Travail, 25 (Spring 1990), p. 137

4 Gagnon, "'Un grand coeur'", pp. 26, 38-39.

5 Marguerite Trochu's Diary, June 15, 1907, Translated by Yvonne van Cavanberge, Lorene Anne Frère Private Collection, St. Ann Ranch, Trochu, Alberta.

these activities may have been somewhat novel for her and likely would not have been expected of her past the initial pioneering stage. Children's work was not absent in urban areas but urbanization and improved financial conditions somewhat modified practices as early as the first decades of the twentieth century. Middle-class, town and city daughters thus seemed to have had more free time than rural girls. Evidence of this is provided by a number of the life histories of the women in the study. Anna Grenier, who arrived in Edmonton at age fifteen, in 1915, worked but still found time to go out with her friends.[6] Class also played a role. Marianne Miquelon, the daughter of a town businessman, did not perform chores. Her "mother had a girl to help with the housework and an Indian woman to do the washing."[7]

Most of the families of the women in the study did not benefit from hired help for a number of reasons: paid domestic workers - especially in rural areas- were scarce and difficult to obtain, as were farm labourers. Had they been available, few families could have afforded the expense. So by the time farm girls were twelve or thirteen years of age, they not only took on more work in and around the house, they also assumed more farm work. In the main, work was divided along socially-constructed notions of what was appropriate for each gender. Fieldwork and the care of animals were men's responsibilities while housework, gardening, the care of poultry and oftentimes dairying, were women's work. Nevertheless, the demands of homesteading and pioneer life and the scarcity of hired help rendered the sharp division of labour between men and women impractical if not impossible. In the absence or shortage of male labour, young women were expected to do fieldwork. Many of the francophone women interviewed, especially those whose families homesteaded before 1914, recalled doing heavy farm labour. Eva Gagnon helped clear land using the grubhoe to dislodge

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6 IRFSJ, REG, Anna Grenier Girard.

7 Marianne Molyneaux, "Early Days in Alberta," Alberta Historical Review, Vol. 8, No.2 (Spring 1960) p. 8.

tree roots while her sister, with the horse team, pulled out the stumps.[8] Once the fields were cleared of trees, young women picked roots and rocks, drove teams of plough animals and helped with the seeding. During the summer, they did the haying and at harvest time, they mowed, raked, stooked and hauled grain.

Hard work though it may have been, some girls preferred fieldwork and welcomed the chance to be outside. Charlotte LaPalme, who, at fifteen, had farmed with her aged father in the northern part of the province during the early 1920s, recalled: " J'aimais bien la terre et ça [ne] me gênais pas de porter les salopettes et la casquette à la semaine... . Je suivais mon père comme un homme... . Le dimanche j'étais mal à l'aise parce que je devais porter une robe."[9] Charlotte's words illustrate more than her preference for outdoor work; they also reveal the circumscription of gender as it applied to young francophone women in these frontier communities. The gendered division of labour was mutable to accomodate women's fieldwork in the absence of male workers, but there were limits to the "loosening of sex-role expectations."[10] Young women were still expected to be 'feminine' when their work was done. Neither did fieldwork release girls from household duties. But if the family had more than one daughter of working age, the girls' preferences were sometimes taken into account and a kind of specialization of labour took form with some doing the housework and others the farm tasks.[11]

Farm tasks were often well beyond the young women's physical capabilities and could, at times, endanger their own and others' lives. Accidents involving children and horses were not uncommon. Nine-year-old Angéline Michaud and her younger

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[8] IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Gagnon Charest.

[9] Lapalme family history in Marie Cimon Beaupré, ed., Leurs rêves: Nos mémoires. Histoire de la région Donnelly-Falher et biographie des pionniers (Donnelly-Falher, 1979) p. 359.

[10] Seena Kohl, Working Together, p. 34.

[11] IRFSJ, AGG, Dorilda Nault Désilets; IRFSJ, DEL, Eva Roy.

brother overturned a wagonload of grain when they proved unable to control the horse team while hauling grain from the field to the barn. They were unhurt and able to walk home but did so reluctantly, fearing their father's wrath. But he recognized the demanding nature of the work he asked his children to perform and did not criticize them. He was also likely well aware, as most parents were, that do so would have made youngsters, especially as they became older, more reluctant to freely contribute their labour. Parents, who relied on children's work, thus had to show understanding of their youngster's limitations and tried to compensate them, even in small ways -with, for example, a Sunday picnic when the stooking was done- for their contributions.[12] Daughters' recollections indicate that francophone parents partly subscribed to the 'modern' child-rearing methods identified by Neil Sutherland as being predominant in English-Canadian families in the twentieth century.[13] Although francophone parents believed that children needed order and discipline in their lives, they tempered their authority with patience, affection and understanding.[14]

This does not mean that a daughter's valuable contributions, whether in the field or in the house, were always recognized by those who most benefited from her labour. Agathe Megnan, who, following the death of her mother, kept house and raised her younger siblings, had to counter the criticisms of her father who felt that she

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12 Glenbow Museum and Library, Projet de Recherche Historique Francophone (PRHF), Angéline Michaud Adam.

13 Neil Sutherland, Children in English Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976). See especially Chapter 2, " 'Multitudes Better Equipped ... than Their Fathers': A New Childhood for a New Society," pp. 13-36.

14 This child-centered educational philosophy, favoured by Alberta educators in the 1920s and 30s, was promoted in the francophone press. La Survivance, 13 novembre 1930, 23 juillet 1931, 7 octobre 1931 and 14 septembre. Two articles by Robert S. Patterson are particularly useful in understanding educational trends in the West: "Hubert C. Newland Theorist of Progressive Education," and "Progressive Education: Impetus to Educational Change in Alberta and Saskatchewan," in E. Brian Titley and Peter J. Miller, eds., Education in Canada: An Interpretation (Calgary: Detselig, 1982) pp. 149-192.

would have contributed more had she become a nun and ensured the salvation of the family.[15] Eva Gagnon, for her part, painfully remembered her father's later assessment of her work. Though she and her sister had done much of the farmwork until the younger sons were old enough to help, her father claimed, in later life, that the sons had contributed more because they had brought in an income. Although Eva reminded him that her labour, and her sister's, had allowed the sons to absent themselves from the farm to work for wages and that mechanization had not alleviated their work as it had eased their younger brothers', her father's evaluation of his daughters' work did not change.[16] As Corlann Gee Bush has demonstrated for the early twentieth century farming families of the Palouse region of Idaho and Washington, in a market economy,[17] though financial contribution to the family involves both income earning and expense cutting, expense reduction was less valued.[18] Eva's discussion with her father indicates that this was certainly the case for francophone farming families as it probably was for town and city households as well.

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15 IRFSJ, AGG, Agathe Magnan St. Pierre.

16 IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Gagnon Charest.

17 Although farming in Alberta in the pre-World War I period was largely a subsistence-level activity, there is no doubt that settlers operated within a national and continental market economy. Voisey, in Vulcan, especially "Part II: Agriculture," (pp. 77-154) clearly shows this.

18 Corlann Gee Bush, " "He Isn't Half So Cranky as He Used to Be": Agricultural Mechanization, Comperable Worth, and the Changing Farm Family," in Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., "To Toil the Livelong Day": America's Women at Work, 1780-1980 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987) p. 223.

3.2 SCHOOLING:

For Eva and daughters like her, house and fieldwork came in conflict with schooling. While Eva received three winters of schooling, Lucille Bergerin, as the eldest of a family of twelve, attended school for only a few days per month before being pulled out altogether at the age of thirteen to help her ailing mother.[19] What with the absence of schools in isolated areas, transportation problems, short school terms as a result of teacher shortages and inclement weather, the late starting age of most children, and the competing demands of the family economy, the period of schooling, for many, was brief.[20] This was especially the case for the first two decades of settlement when schools were few and every hand was needed to break the land and begin agricultural production. With the initial period of settlement over, the number of years spent at school increased considerably. This pattern of increased schooling is reflected in illiteracy rates which declined markedly over the 1890-1940 period, from 10.9% for francophone women sixty-five and over to less than one percent for fifteen-to-twenty-year-olds.[21]

Comparative census data on the number of years of schooling and on school attendance rates would provide a clearer and more thorough pattern of the educational changes occurring over the decades, but the inconstancy of variables used from census to census, especially with regards to ethnic origin, makes comparisons virtually impossible. The 1936 Census of the Prairie Provinces, the only census for which such information is available, provides only a static picture of Franco-Albertan women's schooling. Table 3-A indicates that by that year, 42% of Franco-Albertan females over

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[19] IRFSJ, IRT, Lucille Bergerin.

[20] Although seven seems to have been the average school-starting age for the girls in the study, parents often delayed longer, until daughters were old enough to handle the horse team or the two- or three-mile walk to the schoolhouse, before sending them.

[21] Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol I, Table 80.

five years of age had received five to eight years of schooling, while another 33% had completed nine years or more.[22] Urban francophone women spent more years at school than rural ones; almost 43% of urban women had nine years of schooling or more while only 22% of rural women spent the equivalent number of years at school.

The table points to a number of other interesting patterns: on average, francophone women, in both rural and urban areas, spent more years in school than their male counterparts. Men surpassed women in only one category: 8% of urban males as compared to only 6% of urban females had thirteen or more years of schooling. On the other hand, francophone women received less schooling than rural and urban Albertan women and women of British origin: 73% of rural Albertan women and 58% of rural women of British origin received less than nine years of schooling as compared to 78% of francophone women. French-speaking women's years of schooling were greater in urban areas but, on average, they were still less than Albertan and British-origin women: 57% of urban French-speaking women went to school for less than nine years while only 49% and 41%, respectively, of the latter two groups did.

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22 Ibid, Table 69.

Table 3-A

Number of years at school (given in percentages) of the population five years of age and over, rural and urban, for all Albertan women, women of British origin, and Franco-Albertan men and women, 1936 *

Years at school	Francophone women		Francophone men		Albertan women		British-origin women	
	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural	urban
	11,425	6,124	14,344	5,655	186,949	130,496	78,826	91,283
None	8.7	4.8	9.0	5.5	10.6	4.2	4.8	2.9
-5 years	21.7	14.8	23.3	16.8	19.6	12.1	13.5	9.4
5-8 yrs	47.4	37.5	50.4	41.1	42.9	32.7	39.5	29.0
9-12 yrs	19.7	36.7	14.7	28.7	24.1	43.7	37.5	49.8
13 + yrs	2.0	6.1	2.0	7.8	2.5	7.1	4.3	8.8
not stated	0.5	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1

* Compiled from Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. I, Table 69, pp. 1102-1105.

A number of factors may have contributed to keeping francophone girls, and boys, out of school. As Table 3-B demonstrates, Franco-Albertans came from comparably large families whose principal wage-earners brought home, on average, over 15% less income than the household heads of Albertan families and almost 19% less than household heads of British origin.[23] More mouths to feed with less money certainly meant that francophone youngsters had to work to contribute to family

[23] As is the case for years of schooling, census data on annual earnings of francophone families is limited. The only census to include such information is the 1946 Census of the Prairie Provinces. While the data is not for the period 1880-1936 which this study examines, the 1946 data are not irrelevant. The post-World-War-II period is generally assumed to have been a period of economic growth and prosperity. But in this period, as the data indicate, francophone families still very much needed the income of secondary wage-earners. And even then, combined francophone earnings were, on average, less than the earnings of household heads of British-origin and Albertan families. One can only assume that the money brought to francophone households by secondary wage-earners was even more vital to the survival of the family during harsh economic times such as the early years of settlement, the post-World-War-I recession and the 1930s Depression.

income. Sons, who generally earned higher wages than daughters, were more likely to go work for pay, as Eva Gagnon's brothers did, but when needed, daughters also contributed. Irène Hamel, for example, quit school in 1935 to work for wages after the family's crops were devastated by hail.[24]

Table 3-B

Average Size of Families and Average Annual Earnings ($) of Albertan, British- and French-origin Heads of Households, 1946 *

	Albertan		British-origin		French-origin	
Age of Heads	Size	Earnings	Size	Earnings	Size	Earnings
All families	3.7	1,688	3.5	1,754	4.5	1,427
Under 35 years	3.3	1,439	3.2	1,472	3.7	1,272
35-44 years	4.4	1,786	4.1	1,869	5.4	1,518
45-54 years	4.4	1,860	4.0	1,972	5.5	1,565
55-64 years	3.5	1,874	3.2	1,983	4.1	1,474
65 and over	2.7	1,474	2.6	1,559	2.9	1,209

* Compiled from Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946, Vol. III, Table 27, pp. 394-395.

Along with daughters' contributions to the family's welfare, the pattern of settlement of francophones may have also impeded school attendance. The 1936 Census of the Prairie Provinces indicates that 69% of Franco-Albertans were rural as opposed to 63% of Albertans.[25] To these rural inhabitants, schools may have been somewhat

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[24] IRFSJ, DEL, Irène Hamel Wallace.

[25] Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 35. Since the pattern was towards increased urbanization as the twentieth century advanced, the percentage of rural population was even greater in previous decades. For example, the 1931 Census of Canada (Table 35, p. 500) shows that 70% of Franco-Albertans were rural compared to 62% of Albertans.

less accessible. In fact, until quite late in the settlement period, in some areas, there were no schools for children to attend. The three older Gatine children, who ranched in south-central Alberta with their parents in the first two decades of the century, never received any formal schooling before the ages of sixteen, fourteen and thirteen. In the absence of a local school and the inability of the Gatines to pay for their children's boarding away from home, mother Aimée juggled the care of younger children and domestic chores as best she could to give the older sons and daughter a few hours of schooling each afternoon. A local school was not established until 1914.[26] Yvette Ayotte, whose parents homesteaded in the north-eastern part of the province in 1931, received no schooling from the age of nine to fourteen, the period corresponding to her arrival in Alberta and the opening of the local school.[27]

Along with the absence of schools, the schooling of francophone children was also affected by the accessability -or inaccessability- of French and Roman Catholic schools. The North-West Territories Act of 1875 had provided for the establishment of publicly-funded Catholic separate schools in districts which showed an adequate number of local supporters. The use of French was allowed in the legislative council and in the courts. In Catholic schools, it could be used as a language of instruction. But after 1891, the English-origin settlers who flooded into the region moved quickly to ensure the Anglo-Canadian character of the West. In 1892, the assembly of the Territories voted to restrict the use of French in the assembly and in the courts. Later that year, English became the sole language of instruction in all schools and French was restricted to the first two or three years of primary schooling to ease the entry of unilingual French-speaking children into the regular English program. A series of ordinances beginning in the same year also placed a number of restrictions on Catholic schooling. In 1892, education was centralized under a Council of Public Instruction

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26 Bertin, Du vent, Gatine!, pp. 130-131.

27 PRHF, Yvette Ayotte Van Brabant.

which oversaw teacher examination and certification, school inspection, curriculum planning and textbook selection. Then, in 1901, religious instruction in Roman Catholic schools was restricted to the last half hour of the school day. The autonomy bills of 1905, by which the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created, upheld these ordinances.[28]

On the local level, Catholic francophones struggled against these restrictions as best they could. Members of the community, elected to serve on the boards of the school districts registered by French-speaking settlers -118 such districts had been established by 1939- hired or attempted to hire Catholic and francophone teachers to teach.[29] These teachers, especially in remote areas, often used French clandestinely as a language of instruction. The hiring of francophone teachers, however, became increasingly difficult after the consolidation of rural school districts, first placed before the legislature in 1929 and implemented by the Social Credit government in 1936. The larger boards served to reduce the voice of French-speaking trustees in decisions that affected the administration and operation of the schools attended by francophone children.[30]

When French-Catholic schooling was not available, parents were sometimes reluctant to send their children to non-denominational, English-language public schools. Some parents refused to consider moving to areas where French-Catholic schooling was unavailable; others quickly migrated out of such districts.[31] This may in part account for the pattern of school attendance reported by Carl Dawson in his

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[28] Smith, "A History", pp. 88-90; Manoly R. Lupul, The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question, 1875-1905 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) pp. 57-58; Palmer, Alberta: A History, pp. 130-132.

[29] Mahé, School Districts, pp. 2-10.

[30] La Survivance, 31 janvier 1929.

[31] PRHF, Angélina Bienvenu Plouffe; PRHF, Albertine Royer Soucy; IRFSJ, AGG, Fleurette Vaugeois Roberge.

sociological study, conducted in 1932, of French-speaking group settlement on the prairies. He reported that:

> school attendance is exceptionally good for the solidly-settled French-Canadian school districts in town and country. In comparison with English-Canadian school districts, fewer children in French-Canadian districts complete the eight grade, or continue into the high school grades but the lag is not great and there are indications that it will not continue.[32]

Although there is little direct evidence to support this, a number of respondents hint at the fact that for some parents, pulling children out of anglophone, public schools, especially if they were needed to contribute to the family economy either through labour or wages, was an easier decision to make than if they had gone to French-Catholic schools. Parents certainly pulled their children out sooner when youngsters' schooling experience proved too painful.[33]

There is little doubt that for some children, trying to accomodate to schools in which French was virtually absent was a constant struggle. For a number of women respondents, especially for those who had had little previous exposure to English before starting school, schooling had been a frustrating, often unpleasant experience.[34] English was, after all, the language of instruction even for schools comprising mostly francophone students. French-speaking teachers could make schooling more tolerable for unilingual francophone students, but school boards were not always willing to hire or successful in attracting them. Thus, for many francophone children, schooling remained a daily ordeal.[35] Some women remembered

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[32] His study comprised thirty-one schools in the St. Albert area, north of Edmonton, in Alberta and the Ste Rose district of Manitoba. Carl Dawson, Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936), pp. 372-373.

[33] PRHF, Ida Guindon Coté.

[34] In 1916, 12.4% of francophone women ten years and older could not speak English. By 1936, the numbers had decreased to 5.3%. Census of the Prairie Provinces 1916, Vol I, Table 31 and 1936, Vol. I, Table 57.

[35] IRFSJ, ARD, Alma Foisy; IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Laplante Husereau; IRFSJ, IRT, Yvonne Labrie Leduc; IRFSJ, AGG, Célerine Morin L'Heureux.

being punished at school for speaking French and punished at home for speaking English. Others, like Ida Guindon, could hardly wait to quit. She recalled her relief at the realization that she would no longer have to deal daily with a language she never understood.[36]

Parents tried to overcome the linguistic, and religious, difficulties by sending their children to convent schools. Operated by religious communities and scattered across the province, these schools not only provided a French and Catholic education; many, unlike rural schools, also offered a secondary level program of studies.[37] 56% of the women in the study who had received some or all of their education in Alberta had attended convent schools, 45% as boarders, 11% as externals. Four of the boarders had been sent back to Quebec convent schools for part of their schooling. This pattern of francophone girls boarding away from home more closely resembles the schooling experience of Quebec women than that of Alberta women described by Eliane Silverman.[38] Because local schools did not always provide the kind of education - French and Catholic- francophone parents wanted for their daughters, they were compelled to find alternatives.

Daughters were placed in convent boarding schools for other reasons as well. Widowers, unable to cope with younger children, placed them in the care of nuns until such time as the youngsters were old enough to care for themselves or work. Other parents boarded children temporarily while they travelled the province with threshing crews or worked in lumber camps. Still others, who believed that their

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36 PRHF, Ida Guindon Coté. In 1930, Ida had failed her first grade and struggled through the remaining seven years until it became too much for her. She explained: "J'ai pas fini mon huitième grade. J'en pouvais plus; l'anglais là! Si ça aurait été tout en français, je pense que j'aurais aimé ça, mais l'anglais là!"

37 The oldest of these boarding schools opened at the Lac Ste. Anne mission in 1861. Both the mission and the school were transferred to St. Albert in 1863. The Black Robe's Vision: A History of St. Albert and District (St. Albert, Alberta: St. Albert Historical Society, 1985) Vol. I, pp. 20, 33.

38 Silverman, The Last Best West, p. 31. For Quebec women, see: Lemieux and Mercier, pp. 77-82.

children, especially daughters, were too young to walk the three or four kilometres to the local school, sent them to boarding school until they were able to undertake the daily trek.[39]

A variety of arrangements were worked out to send daughters to convent schools. The question of boarding away from home was simplified if parents could scrape together the monthly boarding fees which could be as high as $240 per year.[40] If not, older siblings already working for wages or wealthier relations helped defray the costs. Sometimes, arrangements were made for daughters to board with relatives.[41] But in many cases, it was the exchange of goods and services that kept daughters in school. For example, Marie Hébert and her sisters were placed in families with small children where childcare was exchanged for boarding while Angélina Van Brabant earned her keep by working in the convent kitchen.[42] Many convent schools accepted ice, firewood, soap, milk, meat, potatoes, rice, flour and oatmeal as partial or full payment of fees.[43]

If boarding was not possible, keeping children in school sometimes involved relocating the family or combining a number of strategies to make ends meet. In 1920, Lucienne Langevin's family moved from the homestead to a house in town to make it easier for the children to go to school. Though the land was rented, her father travelled the four kilometres to the homestead morning and night to feed the animals

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39 IRFSJ, DEL, Gaëtane Côté Dion; PRHF, Beatrice Chailler Bruneau; IRFSJ, ARD, Andrée Godelaine Gascon; IRFSJ, JUR, Alice Micheud Ouellette; PRHF, Florida Trudeau Briand.

40 Gagnon, "The Pensionnat Assomption," p. 71. The rate is for 1926. Most schools were more affordable than the elite Pensionnat Assomption. The Morinville school, for example, boarded students without costs but parents provided all of the children's food. Aristide Philippot, Morinville (1891-1941): Cinquante années de vie paroissiale (Edmonton: Éditions La Survivance, 1941) p. 99.

41 PRHF, Marie-Rose Pagée; IRFSJ, AGG, Lucienne Bourbeau Baril; IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; IRFSJ, ARD, Simone Bergeron Blouin.

42 PRHF, Marie Hébert Michaud; Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by Anne Gagnon, Edmonton, Alberta, June 25, 1991.

43 PRHF, Marie Rey Hébert; PRHF, Irène Lemire Boisvert; PRHF, Florida Trudeau Briand; PRHF, Jeanne Dupuis Gerand.

and milk the cows.[44] Alice Boisjoly's mother, who married at sixteen and had had little opportunity for schooling, resorted to a number of strategies to further her twelve daughters' education. She enlisted the assistance of the parish priest who contributed to the convent boarding and tuition fees, she economized the earnings of her husband, produced most of what the family needed on the farm and pushed herself and the small army of children at home to do the work of those away. Between 1913 and 1932, five Boisjoly daughters received their teaching certificate and two became nurses.[45]

This mother's determination to provide schooling for her daughters was unusual in its intensity and in the degree of its success, but the importance she placed on schooling was not. In fact, the women respondents ascribed great value to formal schooling. Overall, francophones went to great lengths to keep their youngsters in school. Nonetheless, sometimes parents simply could not manage without their daughters' contributions, so that while many completed their elementary grades, circumstances such as the illness or death of the mother or the birth of one more child in an already numerous family, precipitated some girls' early entry into full-time work. Census figures indicate that as late as 1946, 14% of young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four were neither at school nor at work.[46] One can easily assume, then, that these young men and women were doing unpaid labour in the home or on the farm.

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44 IRFSJ, ARD, Lucienne Langevin Laing; A number of other women also reported their family's move to facilitate children's school attendance: IRFSJ, CHE, Bernadette Matthieu Levesseur; PRHF, Marie Blanchette Mencke; PRHF, Noëlla Morin Tanguay; PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière and IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gagné.

45 IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry. Though it was more common for priests to help pay for boys' education, a number of women credited priests with financing part of their own or their sister's convent boarding costs. See for example, PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière.
There were also four sons in the Boisjoly family but Alice gave no clue as to the amount and kind of schooling they received. IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry.

46 Census of the Prairie Provinces 1946, Vol. III, Table 27. The breakdown by sex is not given.

3.3 THE END OF SCHOOLING AND THE CONTINUING APPRENTICESHIP OF DOMESTIC WORK:

For some young women, the end of schooling could be a trying experience. Germaine Bussières who had to quit school at thirteen to give her ailing mother a hand with housework and the care of six youngsters, recalled her anguish at learning that she would not be able to enter the secondary-school program. "J'me vois encore, cachée [derrière] la maison, pleurer des heures de temps pour retourner à l'école ... mais non, j'ai pas pu aller. J'voulais faire une maîtresse d'école," she related.[47] Germaine's sentiments mirror the feelings of a number of women interviewed. Many, like her, loved school and were distressed at having to leave. A few were somewhat resentful of brothers and sisters who had received more schooling, while others, claiming that they could read and write sufficiently to get by, felt no loss.[48] Overall, women accepted the end of their schooling experience with resignation. They were needed to contribute to the family economy and few questionned their obligation to do so.

For young women, the end of schooling meant the continuing apprenticeship of the skills they would later require as wives, mothers and housekeepers. But for the many who were forced to assume early the full burden of domestic duties as a result of a mother's illness or premature death, the apprenticeship period was brief. Dolorès Jodoin was eight years old when her mother became ill. From her bed, her mother gave instructions and advice on the work that had to be done. Dolorès recalled that she needed constant directions to keep the household going. When her father was home, he took over the work demanding skills Dolorès had yet to acquire. He baked bread and

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[47] IRFSJ, ARD, Germaine Bussières Desaulniers.

[48] PRHF, Angéline Michaud Adam; IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Gagnon Charest; IRFSJ, IRT, Lucille Préfontaine Bergerin.

cooked meals while Dolorès looked after the three younger children and her bedridden mother.[49]

Many young women like Dolorès were left more or less on their own to acquire domestic skills. They learned through trial and error, by reading recipe books, or relied on other family members to teach them. Dolorès eventually did learn how to bake bread. Although she does not reveal how, her father likely taught her. Another woman who took over the housework at sixteen because of her mother's illness recalled that she taught herself how to preserve food and cook using recipe books.[50] And Agathe Megnan, whose mother was ill for a number of years before succumbing to the disease when Agathe was twelve, attended a convent school on a part-time basis to learn domestic skills. She studied French one hour per day and spent the rest of the time helping the nuns do the laundry and the ironing, the sewing and the cooking.[51]

3.4 PARTICIPATION IN HOME-CENTRED INDUSTRY:

Daughters who worked at home learned and performed much more than domestic skills. They also participated in home-centred industry and thus contributed directly to the family economy.[52] Some helped manage the post offices that a number

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49 PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière.

50 PRHF, Floride Trudeau Briand.

51 IRFSJ, AGG, Agathe Megnan St. Pierre.

52 The concept of the family economy is defined as " the household mode of production typical of preindustrial economy, ...[in which] all household members worked at productive tasks, differentiated by age and sex." Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, Women, Work and the Family (New York: Routledge, 1987) p. 227. Historians of the family also use the concept to refer to the combined work of family members expended to ensure the survival of the household in industrial societies. Tamara Hereven, Family Time and Industrial Time, p. 74.

of settlers and townspeople ran from their homes.[53] Others kept account books for their father's garage and sawmill businesses while still others, like Reine Lefèbvre, cooked for hired men at their father's bush camps. Cooking was but one of Reine's contributions to the family enterprises. After homesteading near Cold Lake in 1910, Reine's father was involved, over the years, in a series of business ventures, including owning and operating two sawmills and a shingle mill, a stopping place, a commercial fishing enterprise, a wild berry cannery as well as fish and wild berry mail order businesses. These enterprises would never have succeeded without family labour power. Reine and her sister, as two of the oldest children, were invaluable. According to Reine, they did most of the farmwork while their father was involved in business and their brothers hunted and fished.[54]

Daughters' labour was especially crucial in family-owned stores, restaurants, hotels, and boardinghouses.[55] From 1932 to 1937, Joseph and Alida Lozeau ran a store, butcher shop and restaurant from their home in a hamlet in northeastern Alberta. While Joseph served customers and freighted supplies to the store, Alida kept the account books, served meals, looked after a boarder, and cared for her ten children. The couple hired domestic help which they paid $8 per month; but the cost of hiring decreased substantially when the three oldest daughters began shouldering part of the workload. With the profits earned, the family purchased a new kitchen range, and in 1937, a better, more spacious home.[56] Another family homesteading near the same

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53 PRHF, Eva Desfossés Johnson; PRHF, Gilberte Lambert Lemay; IRFSJ, RAL, Jeanne Boivin Noël.

54 IRFSJ, AGG, Reine Lefèbvre Lirette.

55 Carl Dawson observed that although, by the early 1930s, English-speaking Canadians had taken over many services in francophone settlements, especially branch establishments such as banks and grain elevators, smaller commercial enterprises such as hotels and general stores were retained by French-Canadians. Group Settlement, p.353.

56 PRHF, Laurette Lozeau Michaud and Ste Lina and Surrounding Area (St. Lina, Alberta: St. Lina History Book Club, 1978) pp. 117-123.

hamlet in 1912 regularly took in three or four boarders. The mother and three eldest daughters looked after the household of fourteen and, according to one daughter, brought in enough money to provide a living for the whole family.[57]

A few of the women respondents voiced resentment at the amount of work their parents had exacted from them, especially when it seemed to have been unequally distributed among family members. Reine Lefèbvre, for instance, was resentful of the fact that she and her sisters had done much of the domestic and farm work as well as provided the labour for their father's businesses while their brothers had 'played' at hunting and fishing.[58] Most women, however, valued the skills and the self-confidence they had gained through their work and were proud of their earlier contributions to the household. In 1916, eleven-year-old Angélina Bilodeau began accompanying her father to the Edmonton farmers' market to sell meat and dairy products. By the time she was seventeen, she worked the market alone six days a week while boarding in the city with her grand-parents. Angélina recalls that after a good week in which everything had sold, she was eager for her father's return to hand him the $5 or $6 she had earned. For her part, Liane David remembered with pride that her father had been able to purchase seed oats for one spring's planting with the money she had made trapping coyotes.[59]

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[57] IRFSJ, CHE, Bernadette Rousseau Riopel. This kind of arrangement was not uncommon. The 1946 census, the only one for which data on lodgers are available, indicates that of the 5,952 francophone families which maintained their own households, 944, or 16% reported keeping boarders. Census of the Prairie Provinces 1946, Vol. III, Table 27.

[58] IRFSJ, AGG, Reine Lefèbvre Lirette.

[59] IRFSJ, AGG, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil; IRFSJ, AGG, Liane David. Antoinette Hermary sold, in halting English, vegetables door-to-door in Red Deer. The money she earned helped pull the family through her father's illness. IRFSJ, LER.

3.5 IN THE WORKFORCE:

For the many young women whose work at home was not sufficient to help keep the family enterprise solvent or whose labour was not needed, there was wage work. 1936 census data indicate that domestic service was by far the most common occupation.[60] In rural areas, there were few other job opportunities for young women so that those who needed to earn money had little choice but to put to use the skills of cooking, housekeeping and childcare that they had so ably done at home. But the work was often temporary and offered little financial security. Many, like Irène Lemire, hired themselves out during harvests to help farmers' wives feed the threshing crews of up to twenty men. Others assisted, with housework and childcare, mothers going through the final term of a pregnancy and the first few weeks with the new baby.[61]

While some domestics were hired on a more permanent basis, none were well paid.[62] During the 1930s, the women interviewed earned from $5 to $15 per month, room and board included.[63] Some received even less. Albertine Belland recalled that she was never paid for some of the work she did for many poor farming families but at times was given articles of clothing, in lieu of wages.[64] Along with the low pay,

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[60] 47% of francophone women in the Alberta labour force were employed in the personal service industry. While only 25% are reported as 'domestic servants', this number is likely grossly under-estimated since the paid domestic work of young women, especially in rural areas, tended to go unreported and would not have appeared in the census. Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 10.

[61] PRHF, and IRFSJ, DEL, Irène Lemire Boisvert; IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Doucet Drolet; IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill; PRHF, Honora Guindon; PRHF, Laura Tanguay Maisonneuve; PRHF, Marguerite Bruneau Chailler.

[62] Irène Hamel Wallace was a domestic for the same German family for nine years, IRFSJ, DEL.

[63] PRHF, Marguerite Bruneau Chailler.
During the 1909 to 1940 period, male agricultural workers in Alberta earned an average of $54 per month, without board. Their highest average monthly wage was $107 reported in 1920, the lowest $35 in 1934. Historical Statistics of Canada, 1983, Series M78-88, "Monthly wages without board for male farm labour".

[64] IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill.

domestic workers had to contend with long, drawn out working days and backbreaking labour. As one woman explained, there were no set hours of work. One just toiled until all the chores were done for the day.[65] Apart from these difficult conditions, there were additional factors which discouraged young women from taking on domestic work. Mathilda Drolet, who at sixteen was hired to care for children, found herself doing the laundry and the housework, including scrubbing twice a week, on hands and knees, the wooden floors of a large house. According to Mathilda, the hard physical labour demanded of her was not part of the agreement the employer had made with her father at the point of hiring. Mathilda exercised control over the situation in the only way she could. She quit. Unfortunately, she went home one day before finishing her month's work and in retaliation, the employer held back part of her salary.[66]

Mathilda's experience reveals some of the conditions of domestic service and the lack of protection from the arbitrariness of employers. Because of these, some parents simply refused to allow their daughters to work in private homes.[67] Others tried to screen employers before letting them work but this process, as Mathilda's case illustrates, did not always detect undesirable placements. Furthermore, because of language difficulties, lack of training, and the scarcity of better jobs in rural areas, most young women could ill afford to turn down work. Domestic service in private homes did have, however, some redeemable features. The temporary terms of employment accommodated the demands of the household economy. Young women were able to combine hiring themselves out for a few months at a time to bring in much needed income with work on the family farm when their labour was required.[68] In other instances, daughters' labour was used to fulfill or balance obligations with kin

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65 IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Doucet Drolet.
66 PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette.
67 IRFSJ, AGG, Fayne Baril Laporte.
68 IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Doucet Drolet.

and neighbours.[69] This seems to have been the case for Albertine Belland who spent several years before her marriage providing assistance to neighbour women, sometimes for remuneration, most often not.[70]

Alternating work between home, lending a hand in a sister's or neighbour's house, and performing domestic labour for pay, was more difficult for the young women who worked as domestics in institutional settings: hotels, hospitals and religious communities.[71] In these, the conditions of employment and the salaries varied. Parish priests as employers were much in demand by both parents and daughters. The pay was generally better than in private homes or other institutions, the work was somewhat easier, and the young workers were usually well treated.[72] Most institutions, however, were not as generous. Marcelle Lord whose family moved to Alberta at the beginning of the Depression, worked at a small town hospital as a combination kitchen help, seamstress and receptionist. During the early part of her workday which began at 6:45 a.m., she sewed as many as one hundred diapers and two dozen pyjamas and nightgowns. Because her work station was situated close to the front entrance, she often acted as receptionist and guide for the many visitors passing through. At 5:00 p.m., she helped prepare and serve meals and washed dishes. For her work she

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69 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Housewife and Gadder: Themes of Self-sufficiency and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England," in Groneman and Norton, pp. 28-29.

70 IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill

71 These categories of domestic work are defined in Claudette Lacelle, "Les domestiques dans les villes canadiennes au XIXe siècle," pp. 181-207. The conditions of employment of domestic servants outlined by Lacelle resemble the work of domestics on the Prairies: Marilyn Barber, "The Servant Problem in Manitoba, 1896-1930," in Mary Kinnear, ed., First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987), pp. 100-119 and Norma Milton, "Essential Servants: Immigrant Domestics on the Canadian Prairies, 1885-1930," in Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., The Women's West (Norman, Okl.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), pp. 207-217.

72 IRFSJ, DRK, Jeanne Bienvenu Chartrand; PRHF, Honora Guindon; PRHF, Laura Tanguay Maisonneuve; IRFSJ, JUR, Alice Michaud Ouellette. Several women indicated that they had enjoyed working for parish priests. IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Doucet Drolet; IRFSJ, AGG, Olivine Blain Lefèbvre; IRFSJ, DEL, Irène Lemire Boisvert.

received $4 monthly, room and board included, with one day off per month when she could be spared.[73]

Some young francophone women with secondary schooling, business training, or exceptional talent found, if not better paying, at least less strenuous employment. Some worked as store and office clerks, telephone operators or secretaries, others as hairdressers or nursing aides. And at least one earned her living as a professional singer and artist.[74] But in the female "occupational hierarchy", especially in the personal service industries and in the expanding 'pink-collar' occupations of sales and clerical work, Franco-Albertan women fared less well than their English-speaking counterparts. In 1936, only 12% of francophone women were in sales and clerical work as compared to 27% of women of English-origin.[75]

Inability to speak English is likely an important factor explaining this wide gap. Cécile Dery told of her eighteen-year-old sister who had worked as a stenographer in Quebec, but upon her arrival in the West in 1911, had to earn her living as a domestic in a French-Canadian home because she could not speak English.[76] A lack of fluency in the working-language of the province obviously limited some young women's career choices. But the ability to speak French also served, at times, to expand job opportunities. Young workers, like Alma Foisy, who, at twenty, left a job she disliked

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73 IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette.

74 IRFSJ, ARD, Sarah Girard; IRFSJ, AGG, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux; IRFSJ, IRT, Yvonne Régimbald; IRFSJ, AGG, Jacqueline Sylvestre Baker; IRFSJ, ARD, Ella Paradis Doucet; PRHF, Cécile Belzil; IRFSJ, SHB, Armandine Corbière; IRFSJ, Bérangère Mercier.
For various reasons such as the brevity of these careers in comparison to the life history of the women, and the agenda of the interviewer, the interviews reveal little about these jobs.

75 Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol II, Table 10. Ann Leger Anderson's comment that "Canadian-born young women [dominated] two rapidly expanding 'middle-class' mainstays, teaching and clerical work, and sales work," needs qualifying. Clerical and sales work was taken over by Canadian-born women of English origin. "Saskatchewan Women, 1880-1920," in Howard Palmer, ed., The New Provinces: Alberta and Saskatchewan (Vancouver: Tantalus, 1980) p. 80.

76 IRFSJ, AGG, Cécile Dery Lirette.

and moved to a distant village to work for an acquaintance, were able to take advantage of francophone networks between communities to find employment.[77]

Knowledge of the French language was especially advantageous for teachers. In French-speaking settlements, school boards were constantly on the lookout for bilingual teachers and some were willing to offer better salaries to attract them.[78] As a result, teaching drew francophone women in almost equal numbers as their English-speaking sisters.[79] Though an occupation of "modest social status", teaching was better paying than other 'female' work, and it was one of the few professions that offered women career opportunities.[80] Furthermore, as a result of the rapid population increase during the first decades of the century, jobs for teachers, whether bilingual or not, were usually plentiful.[81] Seventeen of the 126 francophone women who recalled their lives as young adults (13.5%) had taught school.[82] All spoke proudly of their careers even if working and living conditions had been wanting, at times.

When Alice Boisjoly arrived to take up a teaching position in a rural school and was introduced to the farm couple with whom she would be boarding, she discovered

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77 IRFSJ, ARD, Alma Foisy.

78 Bilingual schools situated in the outback had to pay more to attract teachers. In 1928-29, Alice Boisjoly left her teaching job in St. Paul where she was earning $840 to take up a position in the Peace River region. Her salary increased to $1,250 but dropped to $750 during the Depression. IRFSJ, ARD 7. These figures are in line with salary rates listed in the province's Annual Report of the Department of Education. See annual reports for 1911, p. 21; 1921, pp. 130-131; 1931, pp. 116 and 1935, p. 109.

79 Nursing was also nearly equally represented by francophones and anglophones. While 6.7% of francophone women were nurses or nurses-in-training, 7.1% of women of English origin were. Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 10. But the number of women nurses in the study were few and little information is available about their professional experiences.

80 J. Donald Wilson, "'I am ready to be of assistance when I can': Lottie Bowron and Rural Women Teachers in British Columbia," in Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald, eds., Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 206.

81 Robert S. Patterson, "History of Teacher Education in Alberta," in David Jones, Nancy Sheehan and Robert Stamp, eds., Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West (Calgary: Detselig, 1979) p. 196.

82 This percentage corresponds to the number of francophone women teachers listed in the 1936 census (12.4%). Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 10.

that she was going to share the only bed in the house with the wife, daughter and baby while the husband slept nearby on the floor.[83] Although such boarding arrangements left much to be desired, in the main, settlers did their best to ensure the teacher's comfort. Béatrice Collin recalled that while boarding with a large family struggling to make ends meet, she was served desserts that the rest of the family did without.[84] The close friendships that often developed between teachers and boarding families helped the young and lonely teachers bear the difficult separation from loved ones.[85]

Youth not only made it more difficult to cope with isolation and loneliness, it could also be a source of problems in the classroom. Many of the students, older than the teacher but with little previous schooling, did not take kindly to having a young woman instructor. Alice Boisjoly, recalled having to enlist help from the parish priest to keep the older and tougher boys in line.[86] Being able to control the less than eager students was only one of the skills rural teachers had to draw upon. Though most teachers interviewed had worked in predominantly French-speaking schools, a number had taught in areas settled by European immigrants whose children spoke little if any English and no French. Teacher training had failed to prepare them for these polyglot, multi-cultural classrooms.[87]

Despite the hardships which also included planning and implementing courses of instruction for numerous levels with few resources, travelling to and from schools

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[83] IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry.

[84] IRFSJ, DEL, Béatrice Collin Felsing.

[85] IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry. During the first decades of the century, teachers could teach after completing Grade 11 and eight months of Normal school. While some teachers made a career of teaching, most taught for a few years until marriage. Teachers were, therefore, quite young. See Robert Patterson, "History of Teacher Education," p. 194-197.

[86] IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry.

[87] IRFSJ, CHE, Bernadette Matthieu Levesseur. According to Robert Patterson, there was little preparation of teachers for immigrant communities. Normal schools did not "equip them with the special skills associated with second-language instruction." "History of Teacher Education," p. 198-200.

in inclement weather, freezing in poorly built, uninsulated schoolhouses, not to mention dealing with crises such as medical emergencies, most of the women interviewed looked back favourably on their teaching years.[88] They took pride in having performed difficult tasks well. They still flavoured the feelings of accomplishment they had felt when inspectors had complimented them on their work and relived the satisfaction of students' successes. Teaching had also granted them a measure of independence usually unattainable to most young francophone women. Unlike the many single English-speaking women who ventured west alone in search of work and husbands, teachers were some of the few single French-speaking women respondents to come to Alberta without their families.[89] Few women showed the confidence of a Thérèse Labrosse from Masson, Quebec, who arrived in 1923, with a suitcase, a trunk and a teaching diploma after reading a newspaper advertisement offering good wages to bilingual teachers.[90] Yet many of the ex-teachers interviewed had moved about the province in search of higher wages and better working conditions. These choices, though limited, were rarely available to other young francophone women.

Yet, even when young women, like these teachers, moved away from home to work, ties and responsibilities to the family remained. As one respondent explained: "Nos parents nous élevaient pas à penser qu'on pouvait vivre indépendant d'eux."[91]

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88 The hardships and conditions encountered by rural teachers were common across the West. These are highlighted in Robert Patterson, "Voices From the Past: The Personal and Professional Struggle of Rural School Teachers," in Nancy Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and D. C. Jones, eds., Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), pp. 99-111 and J. Donald Wilson, "'I am ready to be of assistance', pp. 202-229.

89 Rasmussen, A Harvest Yet to Reap, pp. 12-13; Susan Jackel, ed., A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), pp. xiii-xxvii; Eula C. Lapp, "When Ontario Girls Were Going West," Ontario History, 60 (June 1968), pp. 71-80.

90 IRFSJ, JUR, Thérèse Labrosse Vallée; IRFSJ, DEL, Béatrice Collin Feising.

91 IRFSJ, AGG, Jacqueline Sylvestre Baker.

Consequently, young working women's lives were still circumscribed by family needs. For example, Alice Boisjoly went home every vacation to take over the housework, gardening, and canning from her mother.[92] At times, parents made important decisions that affected adult daughters' career choices. Anna Guay gave up teaching to sew for the Hudson's Bay Company in Edmonton at her father's request. He did not want her going to distant schools and suggested that she learn a trade that could be practiced at home while she cared for her bedridden mother.[93] In certain cases, responsibilities to the family interfered with affairs of the heart. Eva Larocque agreed to follow her parents to Alberta in 1910 to help her mother with ten younger children though she would have much preferred staying in Ontario where she had a career as a teacher and a prospective husband.[94]

Responsibilities to the family also included financial contributions. The young wage-earners usually gave over all or part of their earnings to help parents make ends meet. As Table 3-C indicates, the potential financial contribution of working children to the family economy was substantial. The table clearly shows what a number of historians have previously noted: that the greatest period of prosperity in the life cycle of working-class families was the stage in which unmarried children worked and contributed to the household economy.[95] This would also seem to be the case for francophone farm families as well. The data also indicate that for rural non-farm and urban families, the financial contribution of young people was greatest in households where the father was sixty-five years of age and over. By bringing in almost two-

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92 IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry.

93 IRFSJ, ARP, Anna Guay Caron.

94 IRFSJ, IRT, Eva Larocque.

95 Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974); Tilly and Scott, pp. 105-106. Hareven, Family Time, p. 208; Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City," Historical Papers, pp. 85-94.

fifths of family income, children, nearing peak-earning capacity, were thus able to make up for the declining income of an aging parent.[96]

Table 3-C

Average Annual Earnings ($) of Heads of Households, Average Family Earnings ($), and Percentage of Family Income Contributed by Working Children for Rural Farm, Rural Non-farm and Urban Franco-Albertans, 1946.*

Age of head	rural farm			rural non-farm			urban, 1,000 +		
	Head	Family	%	Head	Family	%	Head	Family	%
Total	862	936	8	1,373	1,501	9	1,528	1,793	11
Under 35 years	834	834	0	1,241	1,268	2	1,353	1,391	3
35 - 44 years	954	977	2	1,450	1,500	3	1,635	1,747	6
45 - 54 years	876	1,047	16	1,583	1,832	14	1,658	2,157	23
55 - 64 years	769	1,113	31	1,286	1,591	18	1,591	2,197	28
65 and over	575	750	23	1,110	1,810	39	1,325	2,071	36

* The calculations are based on the assumption that children, not mothers, were the households' secondary wage-earners. The data for the table was compiled from Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946, Vol. III, Table 27. Comparable data are not available for the period 1890-1940.

Although the data contained in the table do not differentiate between male and female children's contributions, an estimate of the yearly financial contribution of

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96 For farm families, the declining contribution of children in households where the head was 65 years old and over would seem to indicate that older children had left the parental home, presumably to set up households of their own.

young women is possible. Assuming that half as many young women as young men worked, since sons, who could earn more than daughters were more likely to go out to earn wages while daughters stayed home to do farm and housework, and that women earned and contributed half as much as men, on average, daughters could bring in as much as $186. per year, about ten percent of the family income.[97] This is likely a very conservative estimate since, unlike sons, daughters often contributed all of their earnings.[98] Eva Larocque's father, for instance, picked up her wages from her employer. He paid his wife the room and board then distributed the rest of the money "throughout the household".[99]

Many parents, considered the payment of room and board as fair and adequate contribution, as long as it was remitted in acceptable currency.[100] Jacqueline Sylvestre, who worked for the provincial government in 1936, recalled receiving her salary in Social Credit 'prosperity certificates' which her mother refused to accept as payment.[101] Like Jacqueline, most young working women living at home or boarding with relatives had some money left over for personal expenses. But women working away, especially in towns and cities, where there were no family members to offer accomodation, often made barely enough to cover rent and living expenses, let alone contribute to the family economy.[102] The inability to make ends meet kept many

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97 The higher figure for urban households corresponds to Jane Synge's findings on the economic contributions of young women in Hamilton. "The Transition From School to Work: Growing up Working Class in Early 20th Century Hamilton, Ontario," in K. Ishwaran, ed., Childhood and Adolescence in Canada (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1979), p. 253-255.

98 Tamara Hareven's interviews with French Canadian families in New Hampshire also point to this. See: Family Time, p. 215.

99 IRFSJ, IRT, Eva Larocque.

100 IRFSJ, JUR, Alice Michaud Ouellette.

101 IRFSJ, AGG Jacqueline Sylvestre Baker. 'Prosperity certificates' were issued by the Aberhart government in 1936 in an effort to placate voters clamouring for their $25 dividend. Palmer, Alberta, pp. 269-270.

102 PRHF, Noëlla Tanguay; PRHF, Honora Guindon; IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette; IRFSJ, JUR, Alice Michaud Ouellette; IRFSJ, ARD, Sarah Girard.

young women from striking out on their own so that even when they wished to loosen ties with family and kin, they were forced to remain dependent. Nonetheless, like their englophone counterparts, young, single francophone women were part of the rural-to-urban movement of the early decades of the twentieth century.[103]

3.6 CONCLUSION:

Turn-of-the century Franco-Albertan families, who were, on average, larger, poorer, and more rural than Albertan and British-origin families, had to rely heavily on youngsters' labour and economic contributions. As a result, on farms as well as in towns and cities, children were initiated early to the work and responsibilities of adulthood. Daughters were especially versatile and adaptable. In rural and urban areas, girls helped out with household work and childcare. And, in the absence of male labour on farms, they also performed barnyard chores and fieldwork. In both town and country, they contributed directly to the family economy by participating in home-centred industry and by working for wages.

Francophone girls' heavy work responsibilities interfered with schooling. Although few young Franco-Albertan women benefited from extended schooling, the

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In her study of the working young of Edmonton during the 1920s, Rebecca Coulter found that young women's earnings were generally less than the amount needed to ensure an adequate living standard. "The Working Young of Edmonton, 1921-31," Joy Parr, ed., Childhood and Family in Canadian History, pp. 152-153.

[103] This is evident in the growing francophone imbalance between the sexes in the countryside and in the towns and cities of the province. The imbalance is present in the 20-and-older age groups in both the 1926 and 1936 censuses although it is more pronounced in the later census. Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1926, Table 35, pp. 636-639; Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Table 35, pp. 994-1005.
The movement of the young from country to towns and cities in Alberta is examined by David C. Jones, "'We can't live on air all the time': Country Life and the Prairie Child," Pat Rooke and R.L. Schnell, eds. Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective (Calgary: Detselig, 1982) pp. 185-202.

isolation of rural homes, the absence of schools in newly-settled districts, and farm families' greater need for daughters' labour, meant that the period rural girls spent in school was especially brief. While there was a pattern of increased schooling which corresponded to the passing of the frontier, by the mid-1930s, rural girls still received less schooling than rural Albertan and British-origin women. Urban francophone girls stayed in school longer than their rural counterparts but were still disadvantaged compared to urban English-speaking women and Albertan women as a whole. Ethnicity seems to have contributed to some of the disparity. The absence of French-Catholic schools in some areas and the lack of francophone girls' English-language skills undoubtedly limited the quality and quantity of their schooling.

Francophone women's lack of fluency in the English language and their lower levels of education in turn seem to have put them at a disadvantage in the labour market. Like other women in Alberta, their employment opportunities were circumscribed by the sexual division of labour. Regardless of ethnic origin, most women were employed in poorly remunerated jobs in the personal service industry. But francophone women were less likely than English-speaking women to find work in the expanding 'pink-collar' occupations of sales and clerical work. On the other hand, Franco-Albertan women who received secondary-level schooling joined the teaching and nursing professions in nearly equal proportions as women of English origin. The ethnic parity in these female professions is difficult to explain. The majority of francophone teachers and nurses may have originated from urban areas where the educational disparity between English and French was less pronounced. On the other hand, it may simply be that education minimized the effects of ethnicity.

Common to all young francophone women, whatever their work opportunities, were obligations to household and family which inevitably came before school and career. Like the Albertan women studied by Eliane Silverman, French-speaking

women's lives were composed of a 'web of obedience and obligation'[104] to family and household. These ties and responsibilities remained even when they moved away from home to find work. While some respondents expressed resentment at missed schooling opportunities and at the heavy responsibilities they had had to assume, especially when the workload seemed to have been inequitably assigned or their contributions undervalued, most claimed to have derived satisfaction both from their labour and from the knowledge that they had helped to ensure the family's survival. Furthermore, as we shall see, the lives of young francophone women, even those who were saddled with the heaviest workloads and responsibilities, were lightened by periods of leisure and diversions within the circle of family, kin, and neighbours.

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[104] Eliane Silverman, "In Their Own Words," p. 38.

Chapter 4

GROWING UP:
FROM CHILDHOOD GAMES TO MARRIAGE

There is no doubt that hard work was a given for young Franco-Albertan women. Indeed, work was so much a part of their daily existence that few could conceive life without it. Yet, despite the chores and heavy responsibilities thrust upon them at an early age, the French-speaking women respondents held pleasant memories of their childhood and adolescent years. Leisure, like work, had played a prominent part in their lives. Recreation provided, above all else, an escape from the grind of daily chores. But their play also held other equally important if less obvious functions. Through games, children learned to understand their environment. Play also served as a coping mechanism which helped them deal with their concerns and difficulties. Finally, games, by allowing children to experiment with the various adult roles available to them, led to the construction of ethnic and gender identities.

As children entered adolescence, their leisure activities were increasingly incorporated into adult social activities. Informal gatherings of family, friends and neighbours, such as the *veillées*, were important in introducing children to adult society. Within these and other familial settings, girls became better acquainted with male childhood friends and met eligible young men. These contacts between young people allowed girls to appraise potential marriage candidates and become familiar

with the 'rituals of courtship'.[1] Serious courtship was likely to result in betrothal and marriage. At the turn of the twentieth century, the rituals of choosing and taking a spouse were very much anchored in tradition. Francophone women were routinely reminded by the clergy and franco-Catholic press of the religious and social purposes of marriage and the family and advised not to marry for love but to select respectable and reliable providers. This advice young women largely tried to follow. Yet, as the twentieth century unfolded and modern ideas of romance permeated Albertan society through commercial forms of leisure, the englophone press, and the mass-marketing of products, francophone women increasingly began to choose partners for love and personal fulfillment.

4.1 CHILDHOOD:

The family was at the centre of children's existence. From the family the young obtained satisfaction for their basic needs for food, clothing, love and protection. As long as those requirements were being met, children felt free to enjoy themselves, even in unfamiliar situations. This was especially appparent in youngsters' initial reactions to the West. Unlike members of the older generation who looked upon the West through eyes clouded by cultural traditions, past recollections, and future hopes, young people saw their new surroundings for what they were.[2] A glimpse of this acceptability appears in nineteen-year-old Marguerite Trochu's correspondence to relatives in France in which she describes her first impressions of the West. She

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[1] The term is borrowed from Peter Ward's Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990) p. 90.

[2] Elliott West, Growing Up With the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), pp. 26-30.

marvelled at what she saw, readily accepting the least appealing features, and was pleasantly surprised at the small freedoms she was granted.

> The train isn't tiresome at all, for here travellers do what they want; up and down the alleys, even on top if you desire!!! ... I went to get some fresh air on the running board of the car and no one said anything; it is not in France where they would let you do that! I went to the end of the train and I looked at the rails flying under my feet; it was a distraction on the prairie which is not very pretty, all yellow; we met antelope, cattle, and a large quantity of skeletons. From time to time there are masses of crocusses; we can pick them when the train is stopped.[3]

For many young people like Marguerite, coming to the prairies was a grand adventure. Though the reality of homesteading or life in prairie towns and cities had little to do with the visions of the Wild West they might have entertained, the openness of the land, unreliable and infrequent schooling, and the preoccupation of parents with work and survival offered children room to romp, hours of play, as well as some reprieve from parental control. Boys benefited most from this freedom, but girls were also given more elbow-room than they would have in older societies. The small size of living quarters, of necessity, forced children of both sexes outside together to play. Brothers, sisters and neighbours participated in recreational activities which, as a rule, took advantage of what nature had to offer. Children amused themselves with tops and whistles carved from willows, clay marbles, berry and crow-egg necklaces.[4] They climbed trees, played in haystacks, made mud cakes and swam in rivers and streams. Some practiced their hunting skills and learned about the animal world by catching gophers which they later fed to crows.[5] In winter, they built snow forts, skated and tobogganed.

When nature did not supply the recreation, youngsters played games that were easily organized and required little or no equipment. In the summer time, children

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3 Marguerite Trochu correspondence, letter to Andrée dated May 23, 1907, Frère Collection.

4 IRFSJ, RAL, Blanche Tremblay Parkinson; PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette.

5 IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine Villeneuve Magnan; PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette.

developed their physical and social skills by skipping rope and playing ball, hopscotch, horseshoes, tag, hide 'n seek and kick-the-can. At night, or when the weather forced them indoors, they read, sang, played cards and musical instruments. In the 1920s and 30s, a number of homes also had dominoes and boardgames such as, parcheesi and chequers.[6] Often, children turned their work into play thus rendering chores more enjoyable. They squirted milk at each other while milking cows and rode home on loads of hay, the latter activity described by Marguerite Trochu as: "the horses galloping, us rebounding like balls; it was very comical."[7]

For young women living on ranches and the few other farm girls whose parents could afford a spare horse, one favorite form of entertainment was horseback riding. Youngsters on horseback felt a freedom that was difficult to obtain by any other means. Marguerite Trochu attempted to describe these feelings: "The other day I went, on horseback, with papa to mend fences and to examine the crops. I came back galloping all the way with all the open space in front of me; it's so amusing, so amusing."[8] Though the practice of riding was more common among French immigrants, young Canadian-born francophone women also rode to visit friends on neighbouring homesteads and in races. Beyond the freedom of movement which the sport provided, the ability to control the animal undoubtedly also gave young women a sense of power and pride.[9]

Another much-enjoyed activity, and one which provided scope for the imagination, was play-acting. Youngsters re-enacted slices of adult settlers' lives and by imitation learned appropriate behaviour and work expectations for their gender, ethnicity, and class. The children of French immigrants, for example, spent hours

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6 IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Despins Théroux; IRFSJ, GEG, Bella Marcoux Dubrûle.

7 PRHF, Cécile Belzil; Marguerite Trochu correspondence, letter to Andrée dated Sept. 10, 1907, Frère Collection.

8 Marguerite Trochu correspondence, ibid.

9 West, p. 105.

recreating the work of the harvest crews which visited the farm each fall.[10] For most francophone children, adult models included members of the Catholic church. As part of their play-acting, francophone boys said mass, baptised dolls, and performed weddings while their sisters acted as brides and faithful parishioners.[11] Like these mock religious ceremonies, children's dramatizations usually reinforced the separate spheres of activities of men and women. While both boys and girls participated in scenes that recreated domestic life, girls were the ones who played house and practiced childrearing using dolls of wood, potatoes, and socks, dressing them with discarded bits of fabric.[12] Role rehearsals also provided children with an outlet to deal with situations they found troubling. Liliane Durand recalled that after being particularly affected by the death of a young cousin, she and her brothers held a funeral for her damaged doll.[13]

Youngsters' recreational activities had one more important function worth mentioning. Home-centred entertainment taught the young about their society's traditions and values and showed them acceptable adult behaviour.[14] In Franco-Albertan homes, children were included in adult leisure and social activities, the most common being family evening gatherings or *veillées familiales*, which regrouped relatives, friends and neighbours to play cards, sing, and dance. Often, these *veillées* were held to celebrate special events such as civic and religious holidays in which language and traditions held central place. The whole family attended these evenings together. Children amused themselves away from their parents but as they neared

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10 IRFSJ, REG, Juliette de Moissac.

11 IRFSJ, RAL, Blanche Tremblay Parkinson.

12 IRFSJ, REG, Juliette de Moissac; IRFSJ, AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau; IRFSJ, ARD, Carmel Gascon; PRHF, Rose Tétreau Hood; IRFSJ, DEL, Marie Anne Colin Plamondon.

13 IRFSJ, DEL, Liliane Durand Gaultier. These functions of children's play are outlined in West, p. 112-116.

14 Ibid, p. 117.

adolescence, they were increasingly drawn into the circle of adults and their forms of entertainment.

4.2 LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND COURTSHIP:

In this familial setting, under the close supervision of parents, siblings, and members of the extended family, young women began making social contacts which might lead to marriage although years in such mixed company often passed before they openly searched for a mate. The *veillée* certainly brought young people together and provided opportunities for both sexes to meet and examine each other as potential mates, but in some ways, these evening gatherings reinforced the segregation of the sexes; men often sat together discussing politics and work while women, gathered across the room, spoke of domestic concerns. Dancing was one popular activity which broke down the generational and gender barriers.

Everyone danced at the *veillées* despite the Catholic church's denunciation of dancing because of the dangerous, sinful opportunities it provided. According to historian Robert Choquette, the rigoristic, authoritarian French-speaking Prairie bishops understood the church's warnings to mean that dancing should be banned.[15] This is precisely what the archbishop of Saint-Boniface and the bishops of Saint-Albert (Edmonton) and Regina moved to do in the 1910s. While the French-speaking clergy generally fell into step, the anglophone clergy, more responsive to the dominant Protestant environment in which they had to operate, were often hesitant to impose such a ban on their English-speaking parishioners. In fact, John McNally, the bishop

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[15] Robert Choquette, "Problèmes de moeurs et de discipline ecclésiatique: les catholiques des Prairie canadiennes de 1900 à 1930, Histoire Sociale/Social History, Vol. 8, No. 15 (May 1975), p. 108.

of Calgary, allowed dances to be held in his diocese.[16] The contradictions in the western hierarchy's understanding and application of the church's pronouncements resulted in a somewhat lax and uneven interpretation by parishioners.

Most God-fearing parishioners in the rural, northern francophone communities forbade their daughters from going to public dances believing that it was a mortal sin to attend and that just being seen there soiled the reputation of respectable women.[17] Some of the more conservative parents made no distinction between dances held in commercial halls[18] and sponsored public dances in neighbourhood -usually non-francophone- communities, like the dances regularly held in Alberta coal mining towns at which single men were numerically dominant.[19] Because public dances were largely unsupervised and close physical contact between partners was the norm, they were suspect in the eyes of western Franco-Catholic lay and clerical leaders. They were also lumped in with other 'modern' American influences believed to threaten the family and French-Canadian society.[20]

European-born immigrants paid little attention to the church's proscriptions on dancing and continued to enjoy a form of entertainment most popular in their native lands.[21] And French-Canadians in the southern districts of the province and in towns

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16 Ibid. p. 109.

17 IRFSJ, ARD, Antoinette Lajoie Charron; IRFSJ, Jeanne Langevin Gagné; IRFSJ, ARD, Sarah Poirier Girard; IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Laplante Husereau; IRFSJ, AGG, Jeannette Villeneuve Lavigne; IRFSJ, IRT, Jeanne Laforce Lutz.

18 Commercial dance halls had especially bad reputations dating back to Victorian times when they "had been part of an extensive male subculture with links to prostitution, gambling and the 'sporting' life." Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) p. 96.

19 Wetherell and Kmet, Useful Pleasures, p. 233.

20 The clerical condemnation of 'immoral' American influences such as modern dances, fashions and picture shows in Quebec was picked up by the Franco-Albertan clergy and press. For the Quebec discourse, see: Andrée Lévesque, Making and Breaking the Rules, pp. 53-73; for Alberta: Gagnon, " 'Un grand coeur', " pp. 21-32.

21 Marguerite Trochu diary, June 15, 1907, and correspondence, letter to Germaine dated June 19, 1909, Frère Collection.

and cities where Anglo-Protestant influences were the greatest regularly danced in public halls. Even francophones opposed to public dancing saw little wrong with dances held in private homes. Because these were well supervised, it was believed, they provided little opportunity for sinning.[22] Dances thus remained the most popular forms of entertainment for young people. They travelled long distances, even in -40º weather, to attend. Jeanne Boivin recalled walking as far as seven or eight miles after a hard week's work to go to a dance.[23] Because they came from so far away, and it was imprudent to travel after nightfall, young people made the most of their evening out, dancing till daybreak before taking the return road home.

Despite the prevalence of this form of entertainment, a number of contemporary popular legends reveal a certain uneasiness about disobeying the clerical injunctions. The stories had a common theme: a young woman, disregarding the interdiction, went to a ball where she danced away the evening with a handsome young man. Following her return home, she developed a sore on her back which, upon inspection, turned out to be a burn mark in the form of the young man's hand. For her insubordination, she had been branded with the devil's hand.[24] Parents no doubt also used this cautionary tale to warn young women away from public dances, reinforcing the clergy's frequent admonitions from the pulpit. But short of excommunicating offenders there was little priests could do to enforce the ban on dancing. Unlike Quebec which boasted a large clergy, the western provinces had to be content with a few priests, thinly dispersed over an enormous territory. Many villages had no

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22 PRHF, Laura Chapleau; IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gegné.

23 IRFSJ, RAL, Jeanne Boivin Noël.

24 IRFSJ, GEG, Marguerite Viens Despins; IRFSJ, GEG, Rose-Anna Baillargeon Audet.

resident priest. The control of the church over parishioners was thus somewhat restricted.[25]

More acceptable forms of entertainment for young people were provided by the parish which, after the family, was the most important unit of social life for Catholic francophones. Picnics, bingos, card parties, concerts, and amateur theatrical productions brought both leisure and courting opportunities to young people. Some of the best attended and most popular functions were fund-raising and not-so-subtle matchmaking activities such as box socials and 'shadow auctions'. Similar to box socials at which picnic lunches prepared by young women were auctioned off to the highest bidder, in 'shadow auctions' the woman's shadow was sold, the purchaser winning the privilege of eating lunch with its owner.[26] Not infrequently, young courting couples attempted to control the outcome to end up sharing the meal together. These forms of money-making amusements were quite foreign to French immigrants like Marguerite Trochu who made a point of describing the outlandish practice in a letter to a French cousin.[27]

Apart from these amusements, the church contributed to the courting process in other important ways. Religious services themselves often served as meeting places for young people. Jeannette Villeneuve went to vespers to meet friends and to play ball across the street afterwards.[28] Sunday church service was always an important event in the social calender of both single men and women. More than one woman met her future husband in the shadow of the steeple. Béatrice Collin, a newly-arrived teacher

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[25] According to Jean Hamelin and Nicole Gagnon, from 1901 to 1931, Quebec had one of the highest priest-to-parishioner ratio in the world. Histoire du catholicisme québécois, Le XXe siècle, Tome I - 1898-1940 (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1984), pp. 123-125.

[26] IRFSJ, RAL, Jeanne Boivin Noël; IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gagné; IRFSJ, ARD, Andrée Godelaine Gascon; IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Sévigny Piquette.

[27] Marguerite Trochu correspondence, letter to Minette dated Nov. 29, 1908, Frère Collection.

[28] IRFSJ, AGG, Jeannette Villeneuve Lavigne.

in a northwestern hamlet in the early 1930s made the acquaintance of her husband, the local mecanic, when he was recruited to fix her car's flat tire after mass.[29] During the early decades of settlement, Sunday church service offered local bachelors their first glimpse of the latest female arrivals. According to Anna Fontaine, single men lined the church steps to get a good look at the new women. Her husband later admitted that he had picked her out as his the first Sunday she and her family attended mass in Alberta.[30] Religious ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, by bringing families together, also broadened young women's courtship spaces. There, they made new acquaintances and renewed childhood friendships.

Community associations, closely linked with the church, also played an important role in the courtship process. In towns and cities, cultural organizations planned patriotic, religious and social activities which brought young men and women together. E.J. Hart, in his study of the Edmonton francophone community at the turn of the century, notes that a number of marriages between les Bonnes Amies and les Jeunes Canadiens, youth organizations created in 1925 for nationalist and religious ends, took place.[31] By the 1930s, other such organizations, notably the Avant-Garde, existed in francophone villages throughout the north.[32] As well, organized celebrations planned by community associations drew together young men and women who might not otherwise have met. One of the most important of these festivities commemorated Saint Jean-Baptiste Day and regrouped French-Canadians for mass, a picnic, outdoor games and an evening concert. In the period before World War I, Edmonton and neighbouring francophone communities celebrated the Saint Jean-

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[29] Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) 80.331 SE. Autobiography of Joseph Tremblay; IRFSJ, DEL, Béatrice Collin Felsing.

[30] IRFSJ, SYV, Anna Fontaine Van Brabant.

[31] Hart, Ambition and Reality, pp. 110-111.

[32] Though the Avant-Garde was a religious and nationalist school-based organization, it was open to older youngsters who no longer attended school. Branches existed throughout the province. Gegnon, "The Pensionnat Assomption," Chapter 5, pp. 84-104.

Baptiste together, the festivities being held in a different village each year. A great many francophones attended; the 1907 celebrations in Morinville, for example, attracted 1500 people.[33]

The social space in which women could meet eligible men was notably broader for urban and wage-working women than for rural women helping out at home. A number of respondents had met their future husbands while working as teachers, domestics, store clerks and bank tellers; others had become acquainted at boarding houses in towns and cities.[34] Throughout the period, the territories of courtship in urban areas also included public places where a variety of entertainment and leisure activities such as plays, concerts, lantern shows and, by the early 1920s and 30s, movies and restaurants attracted the young as did the more traditional activities of ballgames, dances, parish church suppers, bazaars, and card parties.[35] The occasions for meeting eligible bachelors were even greater for upper middle-class urban girls who kept up busy social lives with balls, teas, and musical evenings.[36] For rural dwellers, public forms of amusement became more available after World War I as a result of improved rail and road travel, but there is no question that urban women enjoyed a much greater diversity of courtship opportunities than young rural women.[37]

The leisure opportunities of young urban middle and working class women did not only expand in the 1920s and 1930s but the new commercial amusements, especially movies, also encouraged a youth-culture which promoted, along with individualism and the ideology of consumption, modern views of courtship and marriage in which

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33 Hart, p. 46.

34 IRFSJ, DEL, Béatrice Collin Felsing; IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; IRFSJ, LER, Yvonne de Moissac Wiart; IRFSJ, AGG, Olivine Blain Lefebvre; IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé; IRFSJ, AGG, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil.

35 Wetherell and Kmet, especially, Chapter 8, pp. 247-278.

36 PAA, P 68.6 Interview with Annette Barry; Clipping from the Edmonton Journal, June 30, 1927, Senator Jean Léon Côté file, City of Edmonton Archives.

37 Wetherell and Kmet, pp. 11-13.

romance held central place.[38] At movies, in novels and short stories, mass-circulation magazines and advertisements for mass-marketed products, young people 'consumed romance'.[39] The romantic ideal focussed on love and the attainment of personal happiness in heterosexual relationships. Unlike traditional marriages which were grounded in the notion of a hierarchical social order, and whose primary function was the bearing and raising of children, modern couples were united in companionate marriages based on passion and love. The reorganization of women's work at the turn of the twentieth century, facilitated the transmission and acceptance of the ideal of romantic love. As young middle and working class urban women took up jobs in sales, the commercial services and clerical sector, their work environment allowed for the development of a workplace culture which promoted an orientation toward leisure. Clustered in offices, stores, and restaurants, young women discussed boyfriends, fashion, and entertainment. Shorter work weeks than rural farm labour and domestic service had previously required, along with wages which provided some spending money in turn allowed young women to take advantage of these new forms of recreation.[40] Young French-speaking women in Alberta were exposed to the ideal of romance in the anglophone press and in pink-collar occupations. And even though the franco-Catholic press in the province denounced this modern trend and attempted to discourage women from subscribing to it, the very shrillness and frequency of its warnings indicate that young francophone women were certainly not oblivious to the appeal of romantic love.[41]

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38 Peiss, p. 6.

39 Suzanne Morton, "The June Bride as the Working-class Bride: Getting Married in a Halifax Working-Class Neighbourhood in the 1920s," in Bettina Bradbury, ed. Canadian Family History: Selected Readings (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992) pp. 364-365.

40 Peiss, pp. 1-10; Morton, p. 367.

41 The women's pages of La Survivance, 19 août, 1931; 4 juin, 1933; 28 février, 1934; 15 mai, 1935 and 31 mars, 1937.

Despite the spreed of romantic love ideals and the widening social contacts of young women residing in towns and cities, and to a lesser extent of rural women as well, courtship continued to be influenced more by tradition than by modern trends. For most young francophone women, kin and community remained the primary locus of potential mates. In fact, most women courted and married within their own locality and social group. Parental control over young women's social activities ensured that this was so. In a few cases, formal marriage strategies were adopted by parents. This was most common among French and Belgian immigrants, with parents at times intervening directly in the search for a son-in-law. In 1907, two years following his settlement on a ranch near Stettler, Georges Figarol, an impoverished Parisian notary, made the fifty-six mile trip to the St. Ann Ranch, owned and operated by a group of French cavalry officers, ostensibly to buy a horse. He in fact went to find, among his compatriots, a husband for his twenty-year-old daughter Valentine. The chosen young man, Leon Eckenfelder, was equally eager to find a wife and accepted, with alacrity, the invitation to visit Figarol's ranch.[42] The couple was quickly betrothed and married later that year.

Unlike Figarol, most parents were much less intrusive in their daughters' selection of marriage partners. But by controlling the nature and the boundaries of young women's social activities, parents, nevertheless, greatly influenced their

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[42] "The Story of the Eckenfelders," by Cécile Eckenfelder, January 1975, Lorene Anne Frère Collection, Glenbow Library and Archives.
Léon Eckenfelder, in a letter to his father describes his marriage plans. "Now that I am settled down and my future is shaping well, I have the intention of searching to get married; after having had an agitated life, I imperiously feel the need of a home. I tell you that between ourselves. I'm trying to find a young lady of good health, having a little dowry to facilitate the beginning of a household. It's rather difficult to find among French girls, who generally have homesickness and find it difficult to adapt themselves to the anglo-saxon customs and state of mind ... ." His plans fitted in remarkably well with Georges Figarol's. Valentine's appearance in Eckenfelder's life must have seemed like a dream come true. "Letters of Léon Eckenfelder to France," letter to his father dated April 14, 1907, translated by Yvonne van Cawenberge, Frère Collection.

daughters' marital choices. Furthermore, to marry, young people needed the consent of parents, so it was important for daughters to choose potential mates who would bear the scrutiny and ultimately win the approval of parents. For young women to want to 'keep company' with neighbours, friends of the family, or even cousins was thus logical since the chances of the prospective husband being accepted by parents was great.[43] This need for young people to obtain parental approval, the high level of sociability of French-speaking communities as well as the lack of alternative potential mates because of isolation and the limited means of communication and transportation all contribute in explaining the high incidence of endogamy in western francophone society.[44]

Most unions also took place within the same socio-economic rank and ethnic group. Religious and linguistic exogamy greatly preoccupied the French-Catholic western hierarchy. Bishops warned parishioners about the dangers of mixed Protestant-Catholic marrieges and proved intransingeant in dealing with delinquents, sometimes withholding the sacraments.[45] Though these interventions may have deterred rural francophones, the urban elite saw every advantage, both socially and professionally, in marrying outside the francophone and, if need be, Catholic-

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[43] Horace Miner in his seminal study of a Quebec parish during the 1930s, extends the need for parental approval as one of the possible explanations for the high level of consanguinity he found occurring among French-Canadians. Horace Miner, St-Denis, A French-Canadian Parish (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939) pp. 71-72. Marriage between blood relatives was not a frequent occurrence among western francophones -only seven cases were found among the respondents and their kin- but intermarrying kin groups were common. For example, Marie-Rose Pagée's widowed father married her husband's widowed mother while the Rousseau sisters married the Riopel twins. PRHF, Marie-Rose Bourget Pagée; IRFSJ, CHE, Bernadette Rousseau Riopel.

[44] Daniel Fournier attributes the elevated rates of consanguinity in a Montreal parish between 1893 and 1932 to the sociability of urban French-Canadians while Seena Kohl in her study of a Saskatchewan farming community identifies the limited alternative of potential mates for intermarrying kin groups. Daniel Fournier, "Consanguinité et sociabilité dans la zone de Montréal au début du siècle," Recherches sociographiques, XXIV, 3 (sept.-déc. 1983) pp. 318-319; Kohl, Working Together, p. 38.

[45] Robert Choquette, "Problèmes de moeurs," pp.116-117.

community. Marriages were thus fairly common between the Edmonton community's English and French-speaking leaders.[46]

Despite these restrictions and the limited social space available to young women, courtship did take place. The age at which young women were allowed to be courted is not clearly defined. The end of schooling, the beginning of paid labour, or the assumption of primary household duties and responsibilities upon the death or illness of a parent signified that a young woman was mature enough to begin seeking a husband. Most were therefore allowed to have suitors by sixteen or seventeen years of age although the range of parental standards varied. Rural parents seem to have permitted their daughters to be courted at an earlier age, some girls having serious suitors as early as fourteen or fifteen. On the other hand, daughters of the urban elite were often not allowed to be courted until their late teens.[47]

Following the initial meeting, it was common for the young man to visit the object of his interest at her home on Sundays. He often accompanied the young woman and her family home from mass and visited for the afternoon. If he were particularly well thought of by parents, he would be asked to stay for the evening meal. As one woman recalled, since young men often came long distances, it was in the girl's best interest to give him a good meal to entice him back.[48] Suitors who lived closer went courting in the evening. The frequency of monthly visits accelerated with the seriousness of the intentions, from one to two visits per month at the onset to once weekly or more as marriage plans solidified. Once a week, however, seems to have been the norm. Odina Côté's mother voiced what may have been a common contemporary

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46 Hart, pp. 56-57.

47 IRFSJ, Reg. Dellamen Plamondon; PAA, 80.31/1 SE, Biographie d'Alphonse Corbière et Dolorès Jodoin par Lucy Ray, août 1975 and PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière; PAA, P68.6, Annette Barry.

48 IRFSJ, AGG, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux.

belief arising out of the heavy work responsibilities of frontier society. "Making love everyday was too much," she claimed. "Once a week was enough."[49]

But no matter how often the young man came courting or how serious his intentions were, the courting process was always closely monitored by the family. Parents attempted to regulate sexuality by limiting their daughters' privacy and by reinforcing the system of control of the Catholic church which equated sex with sin. When Frédéric Plamondon courted Odina in 1917-18, they were never left alone. Odina's mother, in her rocker, and her father, smoking his pipe, shared the living room. Holding hands was the extent of the courting couple's physical contact. Odina kissed Frédéric once and promptly went to confession to acknowledge her sin.[50] Control continued beyond the watchful eyes of parents who were well aware that the opportunities for sexual encounters were many and that the proscriptions against sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage might not always work effectively. Young women's outings were limited to acceptable destinations and when not accompanied by parents, they were chaperoned by younger siblings who were expected to report and to inhibit, by their very presence, any improper behaviour. Few daughters were permitted to go out uncheperoned although the restrictions were relaxed somewhat in the 1930s with the greater mobility afforded by the car and the widening of the physical setting of courtship to public places.[51] Yet, the modern dating trends[52] which

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49 IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.

50 Ibid.

51 IRFSJ, AGG, Aurore Landry; PRHF, Yvette Ayotte Van Brabant.

52 Dating, an increasingly common courtship practice after World War I in the U.S., is well-outlined in Beth L. Bailey's, From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988). Urban Canadian adolescents no doubt adopted this modern trend as early as the 1920s but as yet, no Canadian historian has studied it.

had unchaperoned couples going to restaurants, movies, etc., went virtually unheeded by Franco-Albertan parents, if not by their daughters, before 1940.[53]

The courtship patterns of the period were characterized as much by the brevity of the time that elapsed between the initial meeting and the wedding as they were by constant parental supervision. Because of distances and the difficulties of travel in bush, on trails and poorly developed roads, the time couples spent together was often brief and the momentous decision of taking a lifelong partner taken with surprising rapidity. One homesteader who had to travel fifty miles to court a young woman visited her but three or four times before they were married.[54] The economic value of a wife also led many young men to speed up the courtship process. Although bachelorhood was a condition that many homesteaders had to endure, especially during the early period of settlement, it was a well-known fact that bachelors were at a disadvantage in establishing themselves on the land. Not only did they have to battle loneliness and boredom, they also suffered from general self-neglect, and because of the absence of extra labour that a wife and children provided, they were less likely to succeed economically.[55] Many of the women respondents who married farmers had foreshortened courtships, with only months, sometimes weeks, elapsing between the initial meeting and the wedding ceremony.[56]

For many couples, courtship had to be carried forward by correspondence. The imbalance in the male-to-female ratio so prevalent on the rural Prairie West, especially

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53 Only one respondent, married in 1940, describes her courtship in terms similar to dating. IRFSJ, REG, Juliette de Moissac.

54 IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine St. Pierre Fex.

55 Cecilia Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise': Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880-1930," in Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat, eds., Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996) pp. 157-160.

56 IRFSJ, GEG, Rose-Anna Audet; IRFSJ, EUL, Anne Brody; IRFSJ, ARP, Marie Louise Paradis Charbonneau; Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; IRFSJ, GEG, Laura Langelier.

during the early decades of settlement,[57] meant that a large portion of single male settlers were unable to find marriageable women in their vicinity. Bachelors thus had to expand their search outward, often to their community of origin. They made use of existing social networks among family, friends and acquaintances to find prospective brides. Correspondence allowed couples, who sometimes lived thousands of miles apart, to become acquainted. One such long-distance courtship involved Georges Servant and Emma L'Abbé. In 1915, 13-year-old Georges had migrated to Alberta with his family. Six years later, looking for a woman to share the work of homesteading, he began corresponding with Emma, one of the fourteen children of his mother's widowed friend from Gaspé. After exchanging letters for a year, he went to visit. He stayed for one month at the end of which they were married. Following a one-week honeymoon, she accompanied him to his homestead in the West.[58]

For some young women, the uncertainties of married life were often better than the available alternatives. For Emma, it was the poverty of a large family headed by a widow; for others, the threat of remaining single. Some women, especially those residing in isolated areas, had few opportunities of meeting eligible men. Reine Lefebvre, for example, recalled that she never really chose her husband. Her life was spent working on the farm; she met few prospective marriage candidates and married the first to show interest.[59] Women like her were unlikely to turn down marriage proposals just because they did not know their suitors well. They reasoned that they had their whole future lives together to become acquainted. Marriages also seem to

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[57] In Alberta, the imbalance in the male-to-female ratio of the population over twenty-one years of age, was most pronounced before World War I. In 1911 it was 187, 148 in 1916, 141 in 1921, and 137 in 1926. Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1926, Table 10, p. 570. In rural areas, the ratio was even more disproportionate. As late as 1931, according to Carl Dawson, rural sex ratios for the Prairie Provinces were still between 115 and 125 males per 100 females. But in urban areas, men and women were about equal in number. Carl Dawson and Eva Young, Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process (Toronto: Macmillan, 1940) p. 116.

[58] IRFSJ, GEG, Emma L'Abbé Servant.

[59] IRFSJ, AGG, Reine Lefebvre Lirette

have been quickly entered into for another reason. Because many courtships took place within the context of the kin and long-established frienship networks between families, young women relied on family members and friends to vouch for the merit of the candidates.[60]

The rapidity of these courtships and the reasons for getting married would seem to indicate that love was not the primary motive for contracting unions. Fulfilling material and social needs took precedence. But the choice of marriage partners was not as individualistic, as Kohl and Bennett argue in their cross-border study of the Canadian and American West. The "informal social patterns of the frontier", they claim, ensured that marriage was "not determined by family values but by situational needs."[61] Unlike the predominantly Anglo-American and Canadian settlers of their study, western Canadian francophones responded to 'situational needs' through well-established social networks of extended family and kin. In this sense, Franco-Albertan marriages were less like the 'modern' individualistic unions identified by Bennett and Kohl and more like the traditional Quebec courtships described by Lemieux and Mercier.[62]

The fact that the choice of marriage partners in francophone communities seems to have been largely dictated by social and material needs with courtships following traditional patterns in which the extended family played a central role, does not exclude the possibility of romantic love as the main reason for marriage. Love did form an important bond between some couples, especially in the post-World War I years. Juliette Morin, for example, met her future husband in July 1919. "It was love at first sight!", she related later in her autobiography. They were married four months

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60 IRFSJ, AGG, Lucienne Bourbeau Baril.

61 Seena Kohl and John Bennett, Settling the Canadian-American West, 1890-1915: Pioneer Adaptation and Community Building (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 84.

62 In their study, Lemieux and Mercier note that rapid courtships are characteristic of traditional societies, pp. 142-145.

later to the distress of her parents who felt that the young couple did not know each other well enough and that Juliette, at seventeen, was too young.[63] For some couples, romantic love expressed in letters shortened the distances which kept them apart and made waiting bearable. Zéa Chevigny told of the secret love she and Roland Piquette shared for each other from the time she was fourteen years old. They were separated in 1929 when Roland found work in the Coal Branch of the Rocky Mountains but their long-distance courtship continued for three years during which time they saw each other only infrequently. They kept up a regular weekly correspondence until they were married in 1932.[64]

For this young couple, and for many others, their lengthy courtship was in part imposed by the need to work and save money to begin their life together. When times were uncertain and wages were low, as they were during the Depression, marriages were often postponed.[65] Throughout the period, men often waited to find permanent work before proposing marriage. Some delayed forming households until they had their own land and house to which they could bring their bride. Illness and poverty in the family also prevented young men and women from starting their own households.[66] Léo-Paul Boisvert contributed all of his earnings from bushwork to help raise his younger siblings. He still had no money saved even after delaying his marriage for five years.[67]

Marriages were also postponed for reasons other than financial. The strict code of the Catholic church regarding bereavement could also contribute to the prolongation of courtships since to be married before the proper mourning period had

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63 IRFSJ, REG, D019 "My biography" by Juliette Morin, p. 2.
64 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chevigny Piquette.
65 IRFSJ, RAM, Marguerite Plamondon Ménard; IRFSJ, GEG, Carméline Larivière Kirkland.
66 IRFSJ, AGG, Aurore Landry.
67 PRHF, Irène Lemire Boisvert.

elapsed was badly looked upon by everyone in the community.[68] Finally, the period of courtship was also sometimes extended because of the youthfulness of the couple involved. Odina Côté and Frédérick Plamondon were seventeen and twenty years old respectively when they wed. They had wanted to marry two years earlier but their parents had vetoed the idea because of the couple's young age.[69]

4.3 MARRIAGE:

Seventeen was, for many parents, an acceptable age for daughters to marry.[70] As Table 4-A indicates, over thirteen percent of Franco-Albertan women were married before their eighteenth birthday, according to the 1941 census, twice as many as women of British-origin. Overall, French-speaking women tended to marry younger than their English-speaking counterparts and Albertan women as a whole. Whereas over 80% of French-speaking women married before the age of twenty-five, slightly less than 69% of British-origin women and 75% of Albertan women were married by that age. Rural francophone women married the youngest; 41% were wed by their twentieth birthday.[71] For their part, women of French origin in urban localities of more than one thousand population showed similar marriage patterns as Albertan women but still took on husbands at younger ages than women of British origin.

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[68] IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette.
[69] IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bouressa Côté.
[70] IRFSJ, REG, Sylvia Gagnon Dubé.
[71] Women of some other ethnic groups married at much younger ages. For example, 57% of rural Ukrainian women were wed before their twentieth birthday. Census of Canada 1941, Vol. IV, Table 16, pp. 278-281. These data are included in the Albertan total.

Table 4-A

Percentages of women Ever Married By Age At First Marriage, 1941 *

Age	Albertan	British-origin	Franco-Albertan	Fr.- Alb. rural	Fr.-Alb. urban, 1000 -	Fr.-Alb. urban, 1000 +
- 18	10.7	6.6	13.7	15.1	11.8	11.3
18-19	20.6 (31.3)	16.8 (23.4)	24.5 (38.2)	26.0 (41.1)	23.5 (35.3)	21.5 (32.8)
20-24	43.7 (75.0)	44.8 (68.2)	42.2 (80.4)	42.1 (83.2)	43.6 (78.9)	42.1 (74.9)
25-29	17.5 (92.5)	21.7 (89.9)	14.0 (94.4)	11.8 (95.0)	14.6 (93.5)	18.6 (93.5)
30-34	5.0 (97.5)	6.7 (96.6)	3.6 (98.0)	3.2 (98.2)	5.0 (98.5)	4.1 (97.6)
35-39	1.7 (99.2)	2.2 (98.8)	1.4 (99.4)	1.3 (99.5)	1.2 (99.7)	1.7 (99.3)
40-44	0.6 (99.8)	0.8 (99.6)	0.4 (99.8)	0.3 (99.8)	0.3 (99.9)	0.4 (99.7)
45 +	0.2 (100.0)	0.4 (100.0)	0.2 (100.0)	0.2 (100.0)	—— (100.0)	0.3 (100.0)

* Compiled from Census of Canada 1941, Vol. IV, Table 16, pp. 278-281. Cumulative percentages are given in brackets.

In the turn of the century Franco-Albertan community, women generally married much younger than men. In a sample of seventy-seven women respondents and their husbands for whom date of birth and year of marriage is known, the average age at marriage for women was 22.4 and 27.9 for men.[72] The higher age for men likely reflects the fact that many delayed marriage until they were well established

[72] Although the sample is small, the data is consistent with average age at marriage for Canadian and Prairie men and women for the period 1891 to 1941. Prairie women's age at marriage swung from 23.8 years in 1891 (Manitoba) to 22.6 in 1921, 23.6 in 1931, and 22.2 in 1941 (Alberta). Men's age at marriage ranged from 29.8 years in 1891 (Manitoba) to 28.0 years in 1921, 28.5 in 1931, and 26.3 in 1941 (Canada). Prentice, et al., Canadian Women: A History, p. 165; Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled, pp. 82-85.

financially. For farmers, this meant the acquisition and development of land; for middle-class men, establishment in a profession.[73] Because of the arduous conditions of homesteading in the early years of settlement, single men who ventured west, may have had to wait years before they felt financially secure enough to take a wife. This would account, in part, for the wider discrepancy of age at marriage of men and women at the turn of the century. 57% of all couples in the sample with more than a 10-year-age-difference were wed before World War I. Conversely, over three-quarters of same-age couples (five years difference or less) were married in the 1920s, 30s and 40s. The precise implications of this pattern of decreasing age difference between wives and husbands, which mirrored Canadian trends, is not known.[74] Perhaps it was an indication of a more 'companionate' form of marriage.[75]

What is clearer is the view of women and marriage held by lay and clerical leaders, and by the francophone community in general. Apart from the chosen few who were destined for religious life, marriage was held to be the ultimate achievement for young women.[76] If still single past her twenty-fifth birthday, a woman ran the risk of being considered a spinster.[77] According to some of the women interviewed, those who remained *vieille fille* were not necessarily badly seen by the community. It was understood that they had had to 'sacrifice' themselves to take care of parents and siblings.[78] However, it was felt that their lot was unenviable. Following the death of the parents they had nursed, they were left to manage on the charity of various relatives.[79] The numbers of single women in Alberta was always relatively small

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[73] Lemieux and Mercier, p. 130.
[74] Strong-Boag, The New Day, p. 84.
[75] Peter Gossage, "Family Formation and Age at Marriage in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, 1854-1891," Histoire sociale/Social History, Vol. 24, No. 47 (mai-May 1991) p. 79.
[76] Gagnon, "'Un grand coeur'," pp. 33-35.
[77] Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.
[78] IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.
[79] IRFSJ, REG, Angélina Boulanger.

because of the overabundance of men. In 1936, for example, when the number of women who delayed marriage or remained single was higher than in previous decades because of difficult economic conditions, 9.5% of francophone women thirty-five years of age and older were single at the time of the census.[80] This number had dropped to 4.3% by 1941.[81] Although these figures are low, only two-thirds as many Albertan women (6.5%) remained single in 1936 and half as many in 1941 (2.4%). Since, in 1936, only about ten percent of single francophone women were nuns,[82] there were many *vieilles filles* who would never experience the final rituals of courtship: the betrothal and marriage ceremony.

In rural areas, no official ceremonies announced the couple's decision to marry. After coming to an understanding about their future plans, the young couple approached their parents for approval. The most formal ritual of the engagement period was the young man's request to his future father-in-law for his daughter's hand in marriage. When parents knew the suitor and his family well, they were more likely to see the union as desirable and give their consent. After the young man had received a favourable response to his request, he sealed the understanding with his future father-in-law with a handshake and kissed his fiancée and her mother.[83] No engagement ring was given the future bride. The trend, though known in rural Alberta, was not commonly practiced by Franco-Albertans before 1940, probably because there was little money available to spend on what would have been regarded as an extravagance. Family members and close friends were quietly told of the

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80 Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. I, Table 24, pp. 934-939.

81 Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. IV, Table 3, pp. 36-37.

82 The 1936 census lists only 125 francophone nuns. Although this figure is likely not comprehensive, the number of women choosing religious life over marriage was small. Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 10, p. 958.

83 PRHF, Blanche Plaquin Lamoureux; IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview; IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

engagement; the parish was informed of the planned wedding by the reading of the banns from the pulpit on three consecutive Sundays.

For the middle class, a couple's engagement was more formal and often involved friends and family. The Trochu cavalry officer Leon Eckenfelder received help from his fellow countrymen when he proposed to Valentine Figarol. They arranged for the engagement ceremony to take place at their ranch. According to daughter Cécile, these friends, Eckenfelder, and the Figarols drove to the banks of the Red Deer River where Eckenfelder knelt and asked for Valentine's hand in marriage. Her acceptance was later celebrated with a large engagement party attended by family and friends.[84]

The period following the engagement was for prospective brides one of waiting, anticipation and apprehension. The time passed in much the usual way but with added wedding preparations which included putting together a trousseau, articles of clothing and household linen the young bride brought to the marriage. The practice of preparing a trousseau was fairly common for Franco-Albertan women, but the act did not carry the weight of symbolism that the tradition held for the turn-of-the-twentieth-century French women studied by Agnès Fine. Fine found that the trousseau was such an important aspect of the transitional stage between puberty and matrimony that marriage was practically inconceivable without it. Mothers took it upon themselves to assemble a trousseau for each daughter. Tradition held that the trousseau items be white, intricately embroidered and seldom used.[85] In Quebec, the customs surrounding the accumulation of the trousseau, especially its symbolic aspects, were less rigid, with the women of the family participating in the sewing and the purchase of needed items.[86]

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[84] "The Story of the Eckenfelders," by Cécile Eckenfelder, January 1975. Lorene Anne Frère Collection, Glenbow Library and Archives.

[85] Agnès Fine, "A propos du trousseau: une culture féminine?" in Michelle Perrot, ed., Une histoire des femmes est-elle possible? (Marseille-Paris: Éditions Rivage, 1984) pp. 158-159, 168, 170-174.

[86] Lemieux and Mercier, p. 151.

The francophone women of Alberta, assigned utilitarian values to their trousseau. Since money was relatively scarce and presents were not customarily given at weddings, the prospective brides, with the help of female family members, made and purchased blankets, bedspreads, towels and dishcloths that would be needed in their new households. Many of the smaller items were sewn from bleached flour sacks. Some women like Delamen Plamondon, for example, supplemented the linen with articles such as baking powder and soap obtained free of charge by using coupons clipped from brochures and magazines. The usefulness of the trousseau, as opposed to its symbolic value, is clearly illustrated by the passing on of one young women's trousseau to her sisters after her death.[87]

The tasks involved in putting the trousseau together as well as preparing for the wedding day added to the excitement of the engagement period. Most young women looked forward to the day of the wedding and to the change in status which followed the solemnization of their vows. Many welcomed the establishment of their own households. For others, marriage meant an end to the long separations from the loved one. Zéa Chevigny eagerly awaited the ceremony that would bring her in daily contact with the man she had loved from a tender age but from whom distances had kept her apart.[88] Still others, like Angela Van Brabant who married a man she hardly knew, welcomed marriage as an escape from the strict confines of the parental home.[89]

The anticipation of prospective brides was often accompanied by a degree of apprehension. Odina Bouressa was reluctant to leave the home in which she had found a great deal of happiness. She also worried about her future and the choices she had made. Would she and her husband make each other happy or would they bring out the worst in each other? Her anxiety caused her to suffer a dramatic weight loss prior to

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87 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chevigny Piquette; IRFSJ, REG, Dellamen Plamondon; IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bouressa Côté.

88 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chevigny Piquette.

89 Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

the wedding, a situation which led to further concern.[90] Young women's ignorance of sex increased their uneasiness. Lack of knowledge of sexual intercourse and birth among girls seems to have been common in both French- and English-Canadian societies.[91] Among young Franco-Albertan women, the most uninformed were town and city dwellers, but farm girls were not always sexually knowledgeable either. Although many had ample opportunity to observe animals mate and give birth, many more were shielded from these realities by parents who assumed that ignorance was the best way to preserve virtue and chastity. These social restrictions were reinforced by the Catholic church which tried to limit female sexuality to procreative purposes within the marital union.[92] The end result was that girls were as discouraged from enquiring about sex as parents were reluctant to dispense information on the topic. As a result, more than a few women approached their wedding day with little knowledge of what 'wifely duties' entailed.[93] Placing their faith in God, the solution most frequently adopted, likely failed to put to rest all anxieties.[94]

Despite these misgivings, the much awaited day arrived. The timing of the ceremony reveals the francophone community's close connection to the agricultural cycle. Half of all marriages in the sample took place in the fall and winter months following harvest. With crops and produce collected and safely stored for winter, the workload decreased, and couples could take time to marry. Furthermore, following the sale of grain and produce, money was more readily available to spend on wedding expenses then at other times of the year. The spring planting season saw a corresponding near absence of weddings with the remaining ceremonies evenly

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90 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

91 Silverman, The Last Best West, pp. 41-42; Beth Light and Ruth Roach Pierson, eds. No Easy Road, p. 86; Lemieux and Mercier, p. 153.

92 Lévesque, pp. 53-54.

93 Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

94 IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.

distributed throughout the rest of the year. The choice of a wedding day also had some relationship to the religious calendar, but the correspondence seems weak. According to Horace Miner in his study of the parish of St. Denis in the 1930s, there were few marriages in the Lenten period and in November, the month of the Dead.[95] Yet 39% of Franco-Albertan women in a sample were married during these months. Indeed, more women respondents were married in November than in any other month.[96] Conditions in the West, such as the exigencies of survival which would have put a premium on the agricultural calendar, might have served to modify certain religious customs.

In any season, the favoured days to wed were at the beginning of the week. In one village, weddings were performed on Mondays in winter because the church needed less heating having been warmed up the day before for mass and evening parish activities.[97] In another, Tuesday, the weekly market day, was preferred. The train from Edmonton came to transport cattle and produce brought in by the farmers. After the ceremony, couples who could afford it caught the train to the city for a brief honeymoon.[98] No matter what day or month couples chose to wed, all hoped for beautiful weather -held to be a good omen- to mark the beginning of their union. Even bad weather, however, was not allowed to ruin the day. Popular sayings were reworked to fit the occasion. After Anna Girard's wedding day, held during one of the worst

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95 Miner, pp. 28-29.

96 The sample is based on 32 women respondents who gave their precise wedding day. Seven women were married in November.

97 IRFSJ, AGG, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil. Although circumstances in Alberta influenced the choice of the early part of the week for weddings, the practice was common among the Quebec working classes. In her study of marriage patterns in the Montreal parish of Sainte-Brigide, Lucia Ferretti notes that marriage ceremonies tended to take place early in the year, the week, and the day. "Marriage et cadre de vie familiale dans une paroisse ouvrière montréalaise: Sainte-Brigide, 1900-1914," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, Vol. 39, No. 2 (automne 1985) p. 247.

98 Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette; IRFSJ, ARD, Alberta Viel Fréchette.

storms of 1926, well-wishers assured her that her marriage would be good because the weather was so bad.[99]

The tradition of afternoon weddings was not prevalent before 1940. All of the women in the study were married in the morning, 10:30 being the favoured time. The ceremonies themselves were on the whole very simple. In the early period of settlement before churches were constructed, the ceremony took place in the home. Few people attended, only the immediate family, close friends and neighbours. Although these ceremonies tended to be subdued, a lot of effort went into ensuring that the day was special for the couple. When Bernadette Rousseau's sister married in the early 1910s, her parents lovingly transformed their home for the wedding. Her father carefully plastered and smoothed over the walls of the one big room that served as kitchen-living room before her mother pasted, on two walls, a beautiful rose-patterned wallpaper. The remaining walls were covered with white sheets topped with lace curtains upon which were pinned home-made crepe-paper roses. In the corner, a small table covered with a white cloth was placed, upon which stood a crucifix, two candles and a small dish containing the wedding ring.[100]

During the 1920s and 1930s, couples were married in church but the ceremony of most weddings remained simple. Only the immediate family and a close circle of friends attended. The bride and groom entered the church on the arms of their respective fathers and were brought before the altar for the mass and wedding ceremony.[101] As in earlier years, brides often wore short dresses which could be worn again and again. Irène Rémillard, for example, wore her wedding dress for thirteen years following her 1930 wedding.[102] By that decade, white -sometimes long- dresses,

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99 IRFSJ, REG, Anna Grenier Girard. The symbolism of fine weather marking the beginning of a good marriage was examined by Lemieux and Mercier, p. 156.

100 IRFSJ, CHE, Bernadette Rousseau Riopel; St. Lina and Surrounding Area, pp. 174-175.

101 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

102 IRFSJ, GEG, Irène Soucy Rémillard.

crowns and veils were becoming common in rural areas although pale blue or pink dresses were also in style. In towns, where city fashions were more quickly copied, some brides chose to be married in white as early as 1919.[103] The tradition of the bridal bouquet was later in coming to both rural and urban areas. Fresh flowers could not always be had; instead, brides carried fans or feathers.[104] The customs of attendants and gift-giving were also uncommon before the early 1930s. Attendants were limited to sometimes a best man. Presents were not expected and were seldom given. The few that were offered were small practical items such as tableware.[105]

Some parents were able to offer the newlyweds a dowry or *partance* to help them get established. Odina Côté listed what she and her husband had received from their parents. From hers they were given: a cow, a piglet and twelve hens; from his: a team of horses, a plough, a second cow, a pig and six hens. According to Odina, all children in her family were granted this dowry. While sons received a team of horses, daughters were given smaller animals.[106] The *partance* given to a son could include land. In one case, the paternal land was transferred to the son at his marriage in exchange for the care of his ageing parents.[107]

After the ceremony and the signing of the register, the couple proceeded to the home, usually of the bride's parents, for the mid-day meal and the beginning of the festivities. The wedding party and close relatives later moved on to the groom's parents where the evening meal was eaten. A dance to which friends and neighbours came

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103 IRFSJ, "Feuille sommaire de photographies" A270 (AGG 1.36), Mariage d'Angelo Betoz et Eugène Dusseault, Bonnyville, 1919.

104 Ibid; IRFSJ, "Feuille sommaire de photographies" A82 (AGG 24.7), Mariage de Marie-Anne Taillefer et Adélard Royer, Edmonton, 1926.

105 PAA, 80.31/1 SE, Biographie d'Alphonse Corbière et de Dolorès Jodoin Corbière.

106 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté. The practice of giving a *partance* was fairly common. A number of women interviewed had received one: PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière; PRHF, Evelina Comeau; IRFSJ, ARD, Lucienne Langevin Laing; AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gagné.

107 IRFSJ, REG, Sylvia Gagnon Dubé.

usually followed. Lemieux and Mercier, in their study of Quebec women at the turn of the century, draw attention to the symbolic nature in the order and location of the festivities. The transfer of the celebration from the home of the bride to the groom's parents' signified her departure from her family and her admission into her husband's family.[108] Franco-Albertan wedding celebrations often followed the Quebec pattern but, in the West, tradition seems to have been less important than practicality. If the home of the groom's parents was closer to the church, then, the mid-day meal was offered there. If, on the other hand, the bride's parents had a bigger house, the evening meal and dance were held there.[109] The flexibility of the arrangement may indicate that western francophone weddings did not place as much emphasis on the separation of the bride from her family.[110] Since, more often than not, newly-married couples took up housekeeping with or near parents and the bonds of family relationships continued to be strong after marriage, wedding ceremonies were likely to show more continuity than separation.

Following the ceremony and celebrations, a short honeymoon became more common as the years advanced. Early in the century, the opportunity, time and money had often been lacking. Marie-Rose Leblanc, who had homesteaded in the Peace River region, made no mention of a honeymoon. Following her 1914 wedding ceremony in her parents' home, she and her husband walked to his homestead carrying a rifle to shoot game should they come across any.[111] But even after the passing of the raw frontier period, as late as the early 1940's in fact, honeymoons were still uncommon.[112]

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108 Lemieux and Mercier, p. 162-163.

109 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté; IRFSJ, AGG, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil.

110 John R. Gillis notes this to be the case for British working class weddings. For Better, for Worse: British Marrieges, 1600 to the Present. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 285.

111 IRFSJ, AGG, Marie-Rose Leblanc Dandurand.

112 IRFSJ, ARD, Simone Bergeron Blouin; Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

For the couples who could afford to get away, the preferred destination was Edmonton where the anonymity of the city provided a few days of privacy.[113]

4.4 CONCLUSION:

Franco-Albertan children, both boys and girls, took avantage of the freedom of movement the West provided, making the most of the outdoors and the wide-open spaces. Their play, like children's amusements everywhere, had important developmental and socializing functions, not the least significant being the reinforcement of separate gender roles. Games also made chores less onerous and helped children cope with emotional stress. When their recreational activities overlapped adult leisure time, francophone children learned much about their community's traditions and culture and the world of adults. Within such familial activities, young women met and evaluated prospective marriage candidates. As a rule, the territories of courtship, especially in rural areas, were very narrow; beyond the family, they were the parish and the community. And almost always, francophone parents' monitoring of their daughters' activities was intense.

Although the social space and the territories of courtship were wider for urban women, who were more exposed to the ideals of romantic love through the youth culture of the workplace, the mass-marketing of products, and the anglophone press, Franco-Albertan women's courtship and marriage rituals, on the whole, were influenced more by tradition than by modern trends. Courtships, even long-distance ones, took place within well-established social networks of family and kin. This

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[113] IRFSJ, JUR, Lénora Lamothe Duchesneau; IRFSJ, ARD, Alberta Viel Fréchette; IRFSJ, ARD, Sarah Girard; PRHF, Blanche Plaquin Lamoureux.

familial influence as well as the restricted territories of courtship meant that most unions were endogamous: they took place within the young woman's own locality and socio-economic, ethnic and religious group. And well into the post-World War I years, as late as the 1930s, partners were chosen primarily to satisfy social and material needs. The search for romance, while not absent, did not yet prevail. Francophone marriage rituals reflected the primacy of the traditional over the modern.

Chapter 5

MARRIED WOMEN AND DOMESTICITY: WORK AND LEISURE

The domestic ideals that defined Franco-Albertan women's roles and responsibilities were well outlined. Their work was to ensure the welfare and comfort of their family; the home was to be their universe. Although the reality of their situation was somewhat different than these ideals, family was central to their lives. Neither marriage nor emigration fractured the bonds with family and kin. While newlyweds often set up house with parents, immigrants relied on kin to ease the migration and settlement process. Once established on their own, newly married and immigrant women, in urban and rural areas, had to cope, more often than not, with substandard housing. The primitive first shelters gradually gave way to more permanent homes but these continued to be mostly without services until the 1940s and later. Overcrowding also remained a problem for francophone families.

Poor housing conditions amplified the work of Franco-Albertan women whose days were already taken up with productive and subsistence-oriented activities. They not only ensured the material care and comfort of their family through domestic labour, but also contributed directly to household finances by producing goods to cut expenses or to exchange for cash or for much-needed supplies. Their activities extended beyond the domestic sphere; they worked alongside husbands on farms and in family businesses and supplemented the family income by seeking paid employment

when the family found itself in straightened circumstances. Their numerous occupations left them little time for leisure. What recreation they did enjoy, such as socializing and letter writing, was linked to family and kin and virtually indistinguishable from work.

5.1 IDEALS OF DOMESTICITY:

In turn-of-the-twentieth century Canada, women's primary role centred on the home and family. This focus was not new. Indeed, in the western world, in both pre-industrial and industrial societies, women's lives had revolved around the domestic, "that is the reproductive, the affective and the familial."[1] What was new in Canada at the turn of the century was the stridency of the discourse on the place of women in society. This changed perception of their role came about as a result of industrialization and the re-organization of labour which served to accentuate the separation of productive from reproductive work. The middle-class nuclear family in which the husband left home daily for the workplace while his wife ensured the smooth running of the household, began to be touted as the ideal. The home increasingly came to be seen as a shelter from the harsh, competitive environment of the outside world. Women were to create that haven by providing warm, clean and comfortable homes, well-cooked meals, healthy and well-behaved children, and by maintaining moral standards.[2]

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1 Jane Lewis, "Introduction: Reconstructing Women's Experience of Home and Family," in Jane Lewis, ed. Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850-1940 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p. 1.

2 Catherine Hall, "The History of the Housewife," pp. 60-66; Alison Prentice, et al., Canadian Women: A History, p. 142-143;

French Canada had its own version of the domestic ideal flowing out of Catholic doctrine and conservative nationalism. Women, as wives and mothers, were of crucial importance in the preservation of the franco-Catholic family, and by extension, the French-Canadian nation. While this domestic ideology began to be clearly articulated by ultramontane thinkers in the 1860s, it was promoted with varying degrees of intensity, for over a century. The family was the cornerstone of society; it ensured social stability and the continuation of the Roman Catholic faith. Within the family unit, a wife's role was crucial for she was the 'keeper of the home'. By being cheerful, loving, and supportive, she was to act as the force around which all family members gravitated. To further entice them to see the home as a refuge and to be content to stay there, she was to make the house attractive as well as comfortable and provide for their material and emotional needs. Although considered inferior to her husband, she was nonetheless expected to be his companion and to assist him in all his endeavours. Her total universe was to be contained within the home.[3] Convent schools and *écoles ménagères* reinforced the domestic ideology by teaching women the 'feminine' skills and values associated with being a wife, housekeeper, and mother.[4] To be able to evaluate whether married Franco-Albertan women internalized these domestic ideals, it is necessary to examine their work within the context of the family.

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[3] Diane Bélisle et Yolande Pinard, "De l'ouvrage des femmes québécoises," in Louise Vandelac, et al., Du travail et de l'amour: Les dessous de la production domestique, Deuxième édition (Montréal: Éditions Saint-Martin, 1988) pp. 127-129. A similar domestic ideology was advanced in the Franco-Albertan community. Gagnon, "'Un grand coeur,'" pp. 33-41.

[4] Lucia Ferretti, "La philosophie de l'enseignement," in Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid, eds. Les couventines: L'éducation des filles au Québec dans les congrégations religieuses enseignantes, 1840-1960 (Montreal: Boréal, 1986) pp. 145-149; Sherene Razack, "Schools for Happiness: Instituts Familiaux and the Education of Ideal Wives and Mothers," in Katherine Arnup, et al., Delivering Motherhood, pp. 211-212. For Franco-Albertan convent schools, see: Gagnon, "Le Pensionnat Assomption," M.Ed. thesis, pp. 105-125.

5.2 STARTING OUT:

For French-speaking newlyweds and new settlers alike, starting out was frought with difficulties. Compounding the problems of accomodating to a new way of life - married life or life in the Prairie west- was the need to fufill the immediate daily needs of the family, food and shelter being the most pressing. Because capital was usually in short supply, making do was a necessity. Much of this fell to women. Just as the francophone bride played a crucial role in preparing for the couple's new life together, married women were an important part of the migration and adaptation of settlers to the West. Not only were they actively involved in the decision to migrate, they ensured the well-being of the family during the trip. And just as marriage did not mean the separation of the new couple from the extended family, immigration did not sever the migrating family's bonds with the larger kin group.

The financial situation of newlyweds varied. In agricultural areas, older grooms often already owned partially- or well-developed land and a house to which they could bring their bride[5] while younger men, who had had little time, interest, or opportunity to accumulate money or property, might bring very little to the marriage. In 1934, twenty-six year old John Couture and his nineteen-year old bride Angélina had only two dollars to their name after buying furniture at auctions and paying for a simple wedding ceremony. They lived with John's father for a few months then set up house in a granary.[6] Age, however, was certainly not a firm indicator of wealth; the general economic climate and factors such as the availability of work were as influential. When twenty-two year old blacksmith Lucien Bergevin married Lucille Préfontaine in the village of Legal in 1937, he had saved $375 from which they paid wedding expenses, bought furniture, and put a $25 downpayment on a $500 house.[7] As a

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5 PAA, Hélène Lavigne; IRFSJ, RAM, Maria Labby Lamoureux.
6 Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.
7 IRFSJ, IRT, Lucille Préfontaine Bergevin.

skilled worker, Bergevin was able to provide a firmer financial footing to the marriage than could many farmers and most unskilled labourers.

For many newlyweds, the lack of financial resources left them few alternatives other than to live with parents. While sharing resources no doubt helped all couples in the household financially, combining generations could prove to be a mixed blessing. It meant, first of all, the lack of privacy newlyweds needed to get to know each other. Furthermore, the sharing of space and financial inter-dependence could lead to discord over household maintenance and the allocation of labour. Nineteen-year old Dorilla Bourgeois and her mother-in-law, with whom the young couple lived for the first four years of married life, were constantly at odds over cooking and household expenses.[8] In another family, a series of crises led to violence. After a prairie fire destroyed the hay and pasture of Aimée Gatine's parents, the Lenglets, and the cold winter decimated their herd - 60 heads of cattle perished - the pressures of coping with the meagre resources at their disposal brought the two families to exchange blows over the priority of the work to be done: finish haying the Lenglet field or constructing the Gatine house.[9] Yet, despite the potential for conflict, inter-generational households could also function smoothly, with couples learning to respect each other in spite of their differences.[10] Whether pleasant or disagreeable, those first years with parents or in-laws tended to be glossed over in the reminiscences of the women respondents. For them, married life seems to have really begun when they set up their own households.

Newly-arrived francophone women settlers also looked forward to setting up in their own homes in the Prairie west but could only do so after undergoing what usually turned out to be long, at times trying journeys. The move was more difficult -or at least it was perceived as such- for the women who followed husbands reluctantly. This was

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8 Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," p. 354.

9 Bertin, Du vent, pp. 40-44.

10 IRFSJ, GEG, Françoise Lapalme Despins; PRHF, Laurette Lozeau Michaud.

certainly the case for many women respondents. In the absence of viable financial alternatives or to keep the family together, they were compelled to follow their husbands west even if they, themselves, saw little appeal in western settlement.[11] As unwilling participants or wives kept out of the decision-making process altogether, these women were not in control of their own destiny; they thus fit the traditional image of frontier women as helpmates presented in Canadian and American historiography and literature.[12] These reluctant female settlers were not only more likely to find the journey west more unpleasant, but their adaptation to the new environment also seems to have been more difficult than for women who were active agents in the decision-making process to migrate. Angélina Van Brabant's grandmother, a reluctant settler, never accepted her family's 1909 move. At the time of her death in 1942, she still resented her husband for relocating and had yet to accept her life in western Canada.[13]

But for the many unwilling francophone female settlers, there were active and willing participants such as Delvina Giroux and Lucia Fex. Delvina, who along with her husband worked in the textile mills of Fall River, Massachusetts, was determined that her daughters would not follow suit. She pressured her husband to leave and homestead in western Canada.[14] Lucia Fex and her husband jointly made the decision to

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11 Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," pp. 296-98; This was certainly the case for Jeanne Bienvenu's mother as it was for a number of respondents. IRFSJ, DRK, Jeanne Bienvenu Chartrand; "L'épopée d'Alice Lejeune-1914, de la Belgique à l'Alberta," Femmes d'action," Vol. 15, No. 4 (mai-juin 1986) pp. 18-19; IRFSJ, ARD, Marie-Louise Blanchette Dion.

12 Beverly Stoelje, "'A Helpmate for Man Indeed': The Image of Frontier Woman," Journal of American Folklore, No. 88 (January-March 1975) pp. 25-41; Joan M. Jensen and Darlis Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," Pacific Historical Review, Vol. XLIX, No. 2 (May 1980) pp. 173-213; Glenda Riley, "Images of the Frontierswoman: Iowa a Case Study," Western Historical Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April 1977) pp. 189-202. For Canada, se: Sara Brooks Sundberg, "Farm Women".

13 Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

14 PRHF, Lucienne Giroux Landry.

begin a new life together in Alberta. In part because she shared in the decision-making, she endured the difficulties of moving with equanimity. Before rejoining her husband in the West two months after his departure in April 1913, she, alone, had to make the final preparations to leave Quebec. This included selling most of the family's household goods and packing what would be brought along while looking after her toddler and baby. During the train trip across the country, she was so preoccupied with the care of her children and by a severe toothache that she kept to her seat, hardly sleeping or eating. Yet in her reminiscences, the comment "nous étions heureux," frequently interrupts her narration of her family's emigration and first years of settlement experience.[15]

Not only did some women play an important part in decisions regarding emigration, and in the preparations for the move, they also ensured the well-being of family members during the journey. Since husbands often preceded women west, the care of children and of older family members often became the sole responsibility of women. While many travelled in immigration trains with other prospective francophone settlers, this was not always the case. Since many francophone immigrant women spoke no English, travelling alone with numerous children in tow could be trying.[16] To avoid such problems, francophone families tended to rely heavily on relatives and friends during this transitional period. This is evident in the composition of family groupings moving together. The respondents' links to family during the move west are shown in Table 5-A.

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15 Biography of "Marie Adeline Lucia Felx Binette Beaulac", PAA, accession no. 75.516/14 and IRFSJ, CHE, Lucia Fex Beaulac.

16 IRFSJ, MAG, Yvonne Hurtubise Gourdinne.

Table 5 - A

Family Groupings of Respondents Moving Together, 1880-1940

Types of households *	Number	Percentage
Nuclear (parents and children)	11	14.3
Joint (several generations)	27	35.1
Extended (married siblings, uncles,cousins, etc.)	21	27.3
Unrelated	15	19.5
Kin Followed	3	3.8
Subtotal	77	100.0
Unknown	176	
Total	253	

* Household categories are based on A. Gordon Darroch and Michael Ornstein's definitions in "Family and Household in Nineteenth-Century Canada: Regional Patterns and Regional Economies," Journal of Family History, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1984) pp. 162-164.

Of the women respondents for whom the role of kin in the immigration process is known, 62% emigrated in joint or extended family groupings. A further 19% came with friends or acquaintances. Overall, few nuclear families travelled alone; in fact only slightly more than 14% of the respondents' families did so. These figures would seem to indicate that most wives and mothers had family and friends to turn to for help and companionship during the journey west. This support certainly eased the migration process.

While moving was made easier by the continued presence of family and friends during the journey, companionship did not, for all that, eradicate the pain of leaving home. The sorrows of parting were not much lessened either for the women who saw the advantages of moving for emigration inevitably meant leaving loved ones behind.

Immigrants felt, and quite rightly so, that years would pass before they were reunited with friends and family. Among the francophone women respondents who had emigrated, mothers who left children behind felt the greatest sense of loss. While most of these separations involved grown children, who for one reason or another, refused to follow parents west, in at least one case, a widow going to homestead left two children in Quebec in the care of family members.[17] Mixed with the pain of separation were fears about what the future might hold and a certain degree of anticipation about the adventure they were about to undertake.[18]

For many, the sorrow of parting was moderated somewhat by the expectation of visiting kin along the way and being reunited with family members who had already moved to Alberta.[19] The large family networks of French-Canadians could provide much needed respite for travellers. The Lafrance family, for instance, left Ile Verte, Quebec, in 1920, for St. Paul, Alberta and made a series of stops along the way: at Manseau and Montreal in Quebec, at Winnipeg, and at Brosseau, Alberta, each time staying with kin. Upon their arrival in St. Paul ten days later, they lived with another family member until they moved to their own land.[20] While immigrant kin networks were not always as extensive, it was quite common for new settlers to stay, upon arrival, with friends and relatives already living in the West. Relatives sheltered and fed them, helped them select land, build a house and find work. In this way, kin facilitated the adjustment of immigrant families to the prairie environment.[21]

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17 IRFSJ, AGG, Emma Poirier; Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," p. 329; PRHF, Maria Hébert Micheud.

18 IRFSJ, AGG, Marie-Rose Leblanc Dandurand.

19 Eva Gagnon and her family were happy to see their father after a year's separation. IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Gagnon Charest. Marie-Louise Blanchette Dion (IRFSJ, ARD) rejoined her sister in the West.

20 PRHF, Eva Léonard Lafrance.

21 PAA, Marie-Anne Charron Dagenais; IRFSJ, RAL, Jeanne Boivin Noël. The effect of kin in fostering the adaptation of immigrants is discussed by: Tamara Hareven, in Family Time, especially Ch. 5, "The dynamics of kin," pp. 85-119; Gordon Darroch, "Migrants in the Nineteenth Century: Fugitives or Families in Motion?" Journal of

5.3 HOUSING:

Despite the generosity of kin, francophone immigrant women, like newlyweds, were generally eager to move into their own homes, if only to avoid the cramped quarters that sharing space with others created. In 1917, Lucia Fex and her husband welcomed her parents and siblings, her mother then pregnant with her fourteenth child. Twenty-six people shared their home for a week until the newcomers moved into a log house on their own land.[22] This family likely would have appreciated the sentiments behind the dictum of one settler: "Vaut mieux un p'tit chez nous qu'un grand chez vous."[23] The many who could not rely on the hospitality of family and friends to ease them through the transitional period of settlement, had to make do with a variety of hastily-built shelters or mostly dilapidated dwellings left by previous owners. In 1916, the Morin family of eight lived in a dugout scooped out of an embankment upon which a roof had been erected.[24] This case seems to be somewhat exceptional since the availability of trees in the parklands, where most francophones settled, made recourse to dugouts and sod houses a rarity.[25] Yet because pioneering conditions followed the line of settlement north, primitive living conditions had to be endured by newcomers, as the Morin case illustrates, until relatively late in the Canadian prairie immigration period.

Family History, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Fall 1981) pp. 268; Franca Iacovetta, Such Hardworking People, pp. 46-49.

22 PAA, and IRFSJ, CHE, Lucia Fex Beaulac.

23 PRHF, Eva Desfossés Johnson.

24 PRHF, Noëlla Morin Tanguay

25 Dugouts and sod houses were common pioneer dwellings on much of the American plains. They were built on the treeless southern Canadian prairies as well but were never a dominant form of housing. Sandra Myres, Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1880-1915 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982) p. 141; Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet, Homes in Alberta: Building Trends and Design, 1870-1967 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1991) p. 39.

According to historians Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet, pioneer housing in Alberta tended to be built in three phases. The first stage was meant to fulfill immediate shelter needs and was perceived by settlers as temporary; the second phase was improved housing but still temporary while the third was to be permanent.[26] Upon arrival, Franco-Albertans, in both urban centres and rural areas, often lived in tents, hastily erected small log houses, or machined-lumber shacks. Tents were a quick solution to housing problems. Some rural francophone settlers lived in them for weeks, even months, until a sturdier structure could be built, usually before winter came.[27] Tents were also commonly used in cities until World War I to house the steady flow of immigrants who could not find affordable housing or space in immigration halls. As late as 1912, some 2,500 people, single men and families, were reported living in tents in Edmonton.[28]

In rural areas, wherever timber was available, log homes could be quickly erected and provided better shelter than tents. They could be put up in one season by one family and required little capital outlay and few tools. When properly constructed, they were sturdy, cool in summer, and warm in winter.[29] But many were hastily constructed to fulfill the dwelling requirements for homesteads or to provide immediate shelter; they thus tended to be mostly very small structures, from twelve to thirty-five feet square, and were little better than shacks.[30] More common than log houses were tar-paper shacks. These were small square or rectangular structures framed with 2x4s over which boards were nailed, the whole covered with tar paper held down by thin strips of wood. They were cheap to build, required few materials which settlers brought with them or could buy from the nearest lumberyard, and they could be put up

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26 Ibid, p. 4.
27 IRFSJ, GEG, Marie-Anne Leblanc Gravel.
28 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, pp. 33, 35.
29 Ibid, pp. 18-19; IRFSJ, ARD, Marie-Louise Dion.
30 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, p. 22.

by almost anyone. But they had little or no insulation and were unbearably cold in Alberta winters. On farms, and in towns and cities, they remained the permanent housing of the poor long after 1940.[31]

Despite the generally unsatisfactory housing conditions offered by these types of temporary housing, they were often used by immigrants far longer than was originally intended. Most hoped to build better quarters before the first winter and move to permanent homes within the first two or three years of settlement. But for various reasons, usually lack of labour, time or money, this supposed brief period often stretched into half a decade or more. A history of the town of Beaumont shows that settlers there lived in 'temporary' homes, on average, seven to twelve years.[32] Immigrants were not the only ones to live in such housing. Newlyweds who took up farming or moved to homes of their own in villages, towns and cities were starting over as well and their houses often did not greatly differ from those of newly-arrived settlers.[33]

By 1918, a full-fledged building industry had developed in the province so brick or frame houses made of milled lumber, in theory at least, were available to all but the most isolated Albertans. According to Wetherell and Kmet, owning a 'modern', permanent, single-family, detached frame house was the dream of most Albertan couples. Immigrants who ventured west came because of the possibility of owning land and their own home. Most believed that they would do so eventually.[34] This may have been the ideal but reality was much different. While no breakdown of home and farm tenure by ethnic group exists for the period 1890-1940, the 1946 Census of Alberta indicates that home ownership for Franco-Albertans was most widespread among farm

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31 Ibid, pp. 35, 38-39.
32 Ibid, p. 4.
33 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bouressa Côté; IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gagné.
34 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, p. 45-47.

families. 83.2% of French-speaking farm families owned the property on which they resided. This is slightly higher than Albertan farm families as a whole (78.4%) and farm families of British origin (75.4%).[35] There is little evidence to indicate why farm ownership was greater for francophones. Perhaps the larger size of francophone farm families which translated into more hands to work the land, gave them somewhat of an edge in fulfilling homestead requirements leading more families to obtain clear title to their lands.

The primitive housing of the early immigration years also characterized farm housing in the post-World War I period. Since Alberta lumber was of inferior quality, imported wood products costly, and brick even more expensive, many francophone farm residents had to live with small improvements for many years. Renovations often consisted of adding a lean-to to serve as a kitchen, porch, or extra bedroom. Some settlers who had access to sawmills and could plane their own lumber were able to erect frame houses earlier. But even when construction had begun, houses were unlikely to be finished quickly, building progressing only when time and money were available.[36] Unfinished houses were not the warmest and even when completed, they were not always well insulated. While farm housing conditions were poorest in recently-settled areas such as the Bonnyville-St. Paul and Peace River regions, where most francophones lived, quality also varied within areas. Solid, well-contructed farm homes could be found next to inhabited shacks.[37]

This lack of uniformity could also be found in villages, towns, and cities. Some like the French gentry of Trochu who built large colonial-style homes, and the early Vegreville settler and businessman Benoît Tétreau who, in 1907, built for himself and his numerous family, a large, two-storey frame house with running water and a 'baby

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35 Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1946, Vol. III, "Housing and Families", Table 27, p. 398.

36 IRFSJ, GEG, Belia Marcoux Dubrûle; IRFSJ, GEG, Irène Soucy Rémillard.

37 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, p. 173.

grand' piano, were housed in comfort.[38] Most francophone urban residents, however, could afford only modest housing. Throughout the province, the price of land and housing varied with the state of the general economy. In boom years, from the 1880s to 1911, for example, housing was in short supply and speculation rampant, especially in urban areas. This pushed prices up, and along with inflation, placed house-ownership beyond the reach of many. While prices declined during economic slumps, slightly in 1912-13 and substantially during the 1930s, unemployment again made owning a house difficult. Using census data for the pre- and interwar periods, Wetherell and Kmet estimate that for the period 1880 to 1930, most working class Albertans could not have afforded to own their own homes. Better-paid skilled labourers, trainmen for instance, might have been able to buy only the smallest -800 to 1,000 square feet- largely unserviced houses.[39]

While there are no census data on the wage rates of francophone workers for the period 1880 to 1940 to allow for estimates on the affordability of houses for this group, it will be recalled from Chapter 3, that in the post-World War II period, French-speaking households made do with smaller incomes, about 15 % less than Albertans as a whole. This earning discrepancy was likely no different for the earlier period, and may have been even worse. This would account for the low incidence of home ownership among urban Franco-Albertans as shown in the following table. While urban francophones as a whole were less likely to own the homes in which they lived than either Albertans or residents of British origin, their chances of owning decreased as the size of the urban locality increased. Only 32.4 % of French-speaking Albertans in cities with a population of 30,000 or more owned their homes, as opposed to 54.5 % in small towns.

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38 Darlene Polachic, "Armand Trochu's Home on the Range, The Beaver, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Aug./Sept. 1991) p. 34; PRHF, Rose Tétreau Hood.

39 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, p. 73, 115.

Table 5-B

Albertan households classified according to tenure (percentage of owners) and ethnic origin of head in urban localities, 1936*

Localities	**All Albertans**	**British-origin**	**French-origin**
Total urban	46.9	47.1	42.3
30,000 plus	43.2	45.0	32.4
10,000-30,000	46.3	44.7	37.5
1,000-10,000	53.4	52.6	49.4
Less than 1,000	52.9	50.6	54.5

* Compiled from Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 60, pp. 1228-1229.

Overall land and houses cost less in small towns but like the cheaper homes in larger cities, often located in expanding suburbs, they were mostly without services. Town planning, building codes, housing standards, and health regulations were more or less absent before 1920.[40] This lack of regulation resulted in generally poor housing conditions. As late as 1910, impure water supplies in the two largest cities, Edmonton and Calgary, caused periodic outbreaks of cholera and typhoid. Many homes in these urban centres were still not connected to water and sewer systems by World War I.[41] And although some attempts were made, in the 1920s, to legislate and enforce bylaws that would provide better standards, little improvement in fact occurred. In smaller localities, housing conditions continued to be poor. In the 1930s, for example, recently-founded villages and towns, such as the francophone hamlet of Falher in the Peace River region, were "still facing all of the sanitary, water supply, and housing problems of a frontier town."[42]

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[40] Ibid, p. 122.
[41] Ibid, pp. 50-52, 83.
[42] Ibid, p. 173.

Another indicator of the quality of housing is size of dwelling, or more precisely, the number of rooms available per occupant. With a predominance of housing consisting of one-room shacks, Alberta was well below the national average for the pre-World War I period.[43] Small dwellings continued to be common in the following decades. In 1911, for example, 69% of the population lived in houses consisting of four or fewer rooms. This had dropped to 58% a decade later. Still, in 1931, 25% of households in Edmonton and Calgary lived in three rooms or less while the national average for similar size cities was 16%.[44]

While there are no data on the number of rooms occupied by Franco-Albertan households before 1936, the Depression-era figures illustrated in Table 5-C show that, in a period of general economic hardship, francophone households were worse off than many other Albertans. While 58.5% of all Albertans and 49.9% of Albertans of British origin lived in four or fewer rooms, 62.3 % of Franco-Albertans did so. These figures mask rural/urban differences. In rural areas, the majority of households in all three groups lived in dwellings of four rooms or less, roughly the same proportion of Albertans (66.4%) and Franco-Albertans (66.7%), with slightly fewer residents of British origin (58.7%) living in comperably small quarters. But the fact that francophone families were generally larger means that for them, overcrowding was worse. In 1936, rural francophone families were, on average, composed of five people, while Albertans and families of British-origin had 4.5 and 4.2 members respectively. Family composition for all three groups is similar in urban areas, with members per family varying slightly, from 3.9 for Albertans, 3.8 for British-origin residents, and 4.3 for Franco-Albertans.[45] The latter, however were housed in smaller homes: 52.5% of

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43 Ibid, p. 101.

44 Ibid, pp. 158-159.

45 Family composition data are compiled from Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 69, pp. 1272-1279.

urban francophones lived in four rooms or less as compared to 46.5% of urban Albertans and 46.5% of British-origin citizens.

Table 5-C

Albertan households classified according to number of rooms occupied (given in percentages) and ethnic origin of head, for rural and urban, 1936*

	Albertans			British-origin			French-origin		
Rooms occupied	Prov.	Rural	Urban	Prov.	Rural	Urban	Prov.	Rural	Urban
1 room	10.3	12.5	6.9	7.4	9.0	5.9	11.6	12.8	8.9
2 rooms	15.5	18.8	10.5	11.1	13.5	8.8	17.1	19.0	13.0
3 rooms	14.3	16.1	11.6	12.7	15.0	10.5	15.6	16.9	12.6
4 rooms	18.4	19.0	17.5	18.7	21.2	16.3	18.0	18.0	18.0
5 to 7 rooms	34.0	26.4	45.5	41.5	32.9	49.8	29.4	24.7	39.4
8 or more rooms	6.4	5.8	7.5	7.6	6.8	8.3	7.2	7.1	7.4

* Compiled from Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol. II, Table 59, pp. 1227-1228.

5.4 THE DAILY RHYTHMS OF FRANCO-ALBERTAN WOMEN'S DOMESTIC LABOUR:

The generally cramped and poor conditions of Franco-Albertan rural and urban housing affected women the most since the home was both their home and their workplace. Substandard housing added work to the housewives' normal workday which already stretched from dawn until late evening. Because of the lack of space, rooms often served multiple functions so that the daily chores began and ended by putting away and setting up mattresses, cots or trundle-beds in kitchens and living-rooms which served as additional bedrooms. There is no question that cramming people into

few rooms that had a near absence of dressers, closets, and general storage space made it difficult for housewives to keep their homes tidy.[46] Small, poorly built dwellings also expanded the amount of work to be done. In the early period of settlement, for example, the sod roofs which covered many homes leaked after heavy rain. Women had to attempt to cover personal effects with oilcloth and catch the flow of dirt and water in strategically placed buckets. A great deal of supplementary labour, such as washing dripped-on clothing, was needed.[47] Trying to do housework or cook around these obstacles would have been near impossible.

For farm and urban housewives, the daily round of chores was similar. It constituted of preparing breakfast, sending the children off to school -if they went- and the men to the fields or workplace, clearing and washing breakfast dishes, making beds, sweeping, dusting, and cooking the noon and evening meals. Interwoven among these tasks were weekly and seasonal chores. For farmwives, the demands of the farm largely determined the rhythm of their work. Béatrice Fex explained that the cows had to be milked and fed at regular times but the rest of the chores were done when she got around to them.[48] Sticking to a strict schedule of work was, for her, out of the question. This was not necessarily the case for all farmwives, however. Despite the demands of the farm and the lack of household technology some farmwives, like town and city housewives across the country, by the 1930s, had adopted time-management principles and methods advocated by home economists and popularized in women's magazines.[49]

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[46] IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Lepiente Huxereau; IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé; IRFSJ, CHE, Angéline Lavigne Goudreau; IRFSJ, AGG, Fleurette Vaugeois Roberge.

[47] PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière; IRFSJ, Ard, Simone Bergeron Blouin; IRFSJ, AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau.

[48] IRFSJ, AGG, Béatrice Fex Gamache.

[49] Meg Luxton, More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1980) pp. 119-159; Denyse Baillargeon, Ménagères, pp. 176-180; V. Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country,": Canadian women at Work in the Home," in Craig Heron and R. Storey, eds., On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada (Kingston & Montreal: Mcgill-Queen's, 1986) p. 132.

Gertrude Rousseau, a farm women raised during the Depression years was taught by her mother that following a strict schedule of work would ensure time for all domestic tasks. Monday was laundry day. Tuesday, the ironing was done, Wednesday, the darning and mending, Thursday, the baking, and finally, on Friday and Saturday, the house was cleaned in preparation for Sunday.[50]

Doing laundry was perhaps the most onorous and time-consuming of all household chores, especially in homes lacking running water and electricity. These services were by no means universal in urban homes, even by the 1940s and they were virtually absent in rural areas until the post-World-War II period. While electricity was installed in some houses in the larger urban centres in the 1890s, its use did not become widespread in towns and cities in the south and central areas of the province, until the 1920s and later, during the 1930s, 40s and 50s in northern urban communities. Rural electrification became common only in the post-World War II period. Until that time, gas- or wind-powered generators provided electricity to only a few farms.[51] Similar rural and urban patterns characterized water systems. While piped-in water was virtually universal in middle and upper class urban housing by 1918, poorer dwellings, even in Edmonton and Calgary lacked such facilities. Small towns were without water systems until much later. And only a few farms had cisterns bringing water directly into the home before the 1940s and 50s.[52] Without electricity and water systems, only hand-powered washing machines and wringers lightened the burden of doing laundry. These were relatively inexpensive consumer items, washers costing $4 to $7 and wringers slightly less than $4 in the first decades of the century.[53]

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50 IRFSJ, CHE, Gertrude Rousseau Charest. Françoise Lapalme Despins, who farmed in the 1920s and 1930s also reported doing weekly housework according to a fairly rigid schedule (IRFSJ, GEG).

51 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, pp. 86-87, 199.

52 Ibid, pp. 82-84.

53 Thelma Dennis, "Eaton's Catalogue: Furnishings for Rural Alberta, 1886-1930," Alberta History, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Spring 1989), p. 30.

Still, few rural farm Franco-Albertan housewives had hand-powered cradle- or tub-style washers before the 1920s and virtually none had gas or electric washers prior to the Second World War. The absence of household labour-saving devices in prairie farmhomes has been attributed, by early twentieth century feminists, to farmers' preference for spending capital on the farm rather than in the home.[54] This explanation was reprised by modern-day historians.[55] There is certainly some validity to this contention but it does not tell the whole story. The priority for Franco-Albertan farmers, as for other prairie agriculturists, was no doubt the productive aspects of the farm, but poverty also accounted for the absence of domestic technology. Given that a generator for electricity and water system cost about $ 1,000 in 1912, far exceeding the yearly income of francophone farm families, and electric washers sold for another $90 to $100, they were beyond the means of most farmers.[56] During the Depression, even hand-powered washers were, for many, too expensive to purchase.[57]

Until the 1940s then, many francophone rural and small town housewives, as well as the poorest urban residents continued to do the weekly wash using tub and washboard. This was a process which took the better part of a day since a myriad of other household tasks such as childcare and cooking had to be fitted in around laundering. Water first had to be carried from the stream, well, collecting pond[58] or from outside barrels used to collect rainwater. Despite the fact that men and children

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54 Marilyn Barber, "Help for Farm Homes," pp. 3-25.

55 Alison Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, p. 118.

56 The price for generators is given in Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, p. 86; the cost of electric washers is for 1926 and given in Thelma Dennis, "Eaton's Catalogue," p. 30. It will be recalled from Chapter 3, that average Franco-Albertan farm earnings were, as late as 1946, only $938.

57 Bourgeois Tenove, Canada, My Home, p. 471.

58 In much of the Peace River Parkland, the water table was more than 600 feet below the surface, so few farmers could afford to dig wells. The practice was to dig ponds which filled up during spring runoff. This "slough" water was hard, teemed with insects and algae, and had to be strained before use. Marie Cimon Beaupré, ed., Leurs Rêves: Nos Mémoires, p. 62-63.

often helped by hauling water to the farmyard and into the house, women still had to carry it to the stove for heating and to the washtub. Clothes were sorted, soaked, boiled, scrubbed, rinsed, wrung out, and hung on the line to dry. In the winter months, they were hung outside and left to freeze to draw out moisture, brought in, and re-hung on lines stretching across every room, cluttering up the house for days until all items were dry.[59]

Although people wore the same clothes for the better part of the week, the amount of washing was great, what with diapers, household linen, women's long skirts, men's and boys' long underwear, etc.. Not surprisingly, women respondents described washday as "misérable" and rejoiced at the purchase of automatic washers.[60] Dolorès Corbière who did the laundry with a washboard for a family of fourteen until the early 1940s, remembered that "ça été quesiment une fête quand il m'a acheté un moulin à laver..., un moulin à gas pour commencer."[61] While motorized washers certainly reduced a good part of the drudgery of washday, it did nothing to decrease the size of the loads which, in fact, may have actually increased over the period in question. Children attending school with increased regularity and adults working in white-collar occupations needed to look presentable; they would thus have needed more and cleaner clothes. Corresponding to this shift were new ideas of personal hygiene and household germs which led to greater concerns about cleanliness.[62] So in effect, although washing machines reduced and sometimes eliminated the most toilsome work, the time spent doing laundry probably did not greatly diminish.[63]

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59 IRFSJ, AGG, Lucienne Séguin Bourgoin; PRHF, Cécile Houde Aubin; IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine Villeneuve Magnan; IRFSJ, Sarah Poirier Girard; IRFSJ, AGG, Agathe Magnan St-Pierre.

60 PRHF, Maria Hébert Michaud; IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette; PRHF, Blanche Plequin Lamoureux; PRHF, Evelina Comeau.

61 PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière.

62 Alison Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, pp. 121-122.

63 According to Ruth Schwartz Cowan, several late-1920s American time studies trying to establish the effects of labour-saving devices on housework showed that "housewives

For the whole period, 1890-1940, married Franco-Albertan women's identity was very much defined by the quality of their housekeeping, even in the most difficult frontier conditions. It was important for them to provide clean and unwrinkled clothes for family members to wear. Most women, rural as well as urban, thus spent hours in hot kitchens ironing household linen and clothing with flatirons.[64] Smoothly-polished floors as well as clean and well-blackened stoves were also important marks of a good housekeeper. Once a week the rough floorboards were washed and scrubbed with *lessis* so that over time they acquired a golden sheen.[65] Keeping the cast-iron stove or larger cooking range clean and shiny was equally necessary for it reflected on the housewife herself. In the 1930s, Angéline Van Brabant's grandmother taught her that: "Si tu'n tiens pas ton poële propre, t'es pas propre."[66]

5.5 FOOD PREPARATION:

But more than keeping a clean house, how well women could feed their family told of their housekeeping skills. Contributing to the Franco-Albertan married women's image of herself as a good wife, mother, and homemaker was her ability to cook hearty, if not always healthy, meals for her family. Since resources were often

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with conveniences were spending just as much time on household duties as were housewives without them." "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century," in Technology and Culture, No. 17 (January 1976) p. 14. Meg Luxton's study of three generations of Canadian housewives in Flin Flon, Man. arrived at similar conclusions. More Than a Labour, pp. 117-158.

64 IRFSJ, GEG, Françoise Lapalme Despins; IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette.

65 *Lessis*; meant for Franco-Albertan women both 'washing powder' and 'lye', the residue extracted from wood ashes left to soak in water for several days. For highly polished floors see: IRFSJ, AGG, Anne-Marie Paradis Demers; IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Gagnon Cherest; IRFSJ, AGG, Dorilda Nault Désilets; IRFSJ, AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau; PRHF, Rose Tétreau Hood.

66 Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

limited, how she accomplished and succeeded at these tasks depended largely on her ingenuity, her ability to 'make do'. But the preparation of food also demanded a great deal of time and energy. On farms, much of the food consumed came from home production and required additional work from housewives to grow, raise, and prepare for consumption. Town and city housewives had to rely more on purchased products but home production was by no means absent. Furthermore, urban housewives played an increasingly important role in having to stretch insufficient wages to meet the dietary needs of their family.

With the first difficult years of pioneering behind them, food for farm families was usually adequate, if not always plentiful, but the fare and the quantity varied according to season. Spring and early summer, before new vegetables were harvested and animals butchered, were often lean times. Yet the variety of resources that farms provided meant that food was almost always available, even when money was scarce. This was due, in large measure, to women's efforts. Respondents pridefully stressed that although the fare at their table was simple, and often monotonous - "du pâté de lièvre, ragoût de lièvre, rôti de lièvre et boulettes de lièvre"- their families never went hungry.[67] This was the case during the Depression as well. In fact, for well-established farm families, food was then more available year round than in previous decades because of home canning, not commonly used by Franco-Albertans before the late 1920s and 1930s, mostly because of the cost and the unavailability of sealers.[68] By the late 1920s, francophone housewives were putting away hundreds of jars of

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[67] The many ways of cooking hare were described by Marie-Louise Cherbonneau (IRFSJ, GEG). Among some of the respondents who asserted that their families always had enough to eat were : IRFSJ, DEL, Lidwine Diederick Albinati; IRFSJ, IRT, Lucille Préfontaine Bergevin; PRHF, Cécile Houde Aubin; IRFSJ, AGG, Béatrice Morin Desfossés; "Biography," PAA P73.585, Clarice Lambert Demers; IRFSJ, AGG,, Anne-Marie Paradis Demers; Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; PRHF, Béatrice Cheiller Bruneau; IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; PAA, Hélène Leblanc Lavigne.

[68] PRHF, Blanche Plaquin Lamoureux; IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill; PRHF, Mathilde Drolet Blanchette; IRFSJ, DRK, Jeanne Bienvenu Chartrand.

vegetables, meat, fruits, jams and jellies.[69] As a result, Franco-Albertans' diets became more varied and consistent throughout the year and it became easier for families to weather hard times.

This was also true for urban families. Annette Berry's mother, who moved to Edmonton with her husband at the turn of the century, planted a garden soon after their arrival and canned her own produce.[70] In later decades, vegetable plots continued to be recommended as an essential part of city gardens to provide families with a modicum of self-sufficiency.[71] Given that pigs were still kept in Edmonton in 1903, and that urban planning, land use and health regulations were minimal in most urban communities until the late inter-war years,[72] it is likely that small farm animals were routinely raised by residents of smaller cities and towns until at least 1940. Still, the small size of urban lots, especially in the larger centres, meant that only a portion of the family's food could be grown or raised. The housewife's skill at managing and stretching the family wage took on added importance. By careful shopping, she could keep expenses to a minimum. Many Edmonton francophones by-passed retailers and purchased low cost farm produce at the weekly farmers' market located on the north side of the city.[73] When there was little money for meat, they bought cheap cuts such as pig's heads with which to make headcheese, and *cretons*; or did without meat altogether, substituting oatmeal and pancakes.[74]

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69 PRHF, Irène Lemire Boisvert; IRFSJ, AGG, Lucienne Berti; IRFSJ, IRT, Lucia Quesnel Montpetit; IRFSJ, RAL, Blanche Tremblay Parkinson.

70 PAA, Interview with Annette Berry.

71 Wetherell and Kmet, Homes in Alberta, p. 96.

72 Ibid, pp. 52, 163-164.

73 IRFSJ, AGG, Angéline Bilodeau Gobeil.

74 IRFSJ, AGG, Aurore Gaucher Landry. *Cretons* are seasoned pork paste.

3.6 HOME PRODUCTION:

Home production greatly reduced the cost of consumption but it demanded surplus labour from Franco-Albertan housewives. While men usually helped with the initial preparation of the garden by clearing land and working the soil, once prepared, the planting and upkeep, as well as harvesting and canning were mothers' and daughters' responsibilities.[75] The larger the family, the greater the quantity of vegetables and fruits needed for the year, the larger the garden and the more work expended. Raising farm animals, especially milk cows, pigs, and poultry was another task usually allocated to women.[76] Feeding animals, milking cows, collecting eggs, separating cream, and churning butter all had to be inserted into the daily and weekly schedule of housework. The yearly, sometimes monthly, butchering of animals further increased housewives' workload. Women helped cut and prepare the meat for storage.[77] To housewives' already long list of tasks must be added breadmaking. Until the Second World War, virtually all farmwives baked their own bread. Kneading dough was among their most physically demanding tasks so men were often enlisted to help. Quite a few husbands were competent bakers since many had had to cook for themselves before marriage. Indeed, several had taught their wives.[78] But men were

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[75] PRHF, Noëlla Morin Tanguay; PRHF, Cécile Houde Aubin; IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill; IRFSJ, CHE, Gertrude Charest; PRHF, Florida Trudeau Briand.

[76] IRFSJ, GEG, Béatrice Morin Desfossés; IRFSJ, AGG, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil; PRHF, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière.

[77] To feed a family of fourteen, Dolorès Jodoin Corbière (PRHF) and her husband butchered monthly. Others did so 'regularly' or yearly. IRFSJ, MAG, Yvonne Hurtubise Gourdinne; IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé; Coulombe; IRFSJ, JUR, Germaine Généreux Hamel.

[78] IRFSJ, MAG, Marie-Cécile Spohn.

often absent from the farm, so women and girls did most of the work of producing the twenty to fifty loaves required weekly to feed their large farm families.[79]

Housewives extended their home manufacture to more than the production of food. As late as World War I, many Franco-Albertan women still made soap, carded and spun wool, and confected footwear, hats, and clothing for family members.[80] Because of the unavailability and high cost of factory-produced items in frontier Alberta, this household production was most crucial and thus more commonly practiced by first generation francophone settlers. Yet, many skills survived into the inter-war years or were revived by second and third generation women who needed ways to economize to see the family through hard times, especially during the 1930s.[81] The home manufacture of clothing continued, for both urban and rural francophone women, well into the post-World War II years.

Nearly all French-speaking women knew how to knit. Mothers and daughters spent rainy summer days and winter evenings making toques, mittens, scarves, sweaters, socks, and underwear for family members. When yarn was scarce, worn-out knitted goods were unravelled and remade into new items. Just as important as knitting was sewing. Franco-Albertan housewives produced most of their own and their children's clothing. Few bothered sewing men's clothes which called for too much work and sewing skills that were, they believed, beyond their abilities.[82] Housewives worked with new fabric from stores, used coton salt, sugar, and flour bags, or second-

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79 IRFSJ, AGG, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux; IRFSJ, ARD, Sarah Poirier Girard; IRFSJ, JUR, Germaine Généreux Hemel; PRHF, Eva Desfossés Johnson; PAA 77.219p, "Biography," Blanche Fluet Staniland.

80 IRFSJ, GEG, Béatrice Morin Desfossés; IRFSJ, GEG, Marie Parker; IRFSJ, IRT, Jeanne Laforce Lutz; IRFSJ, DEL, Aurore Pronovost Prévost; IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Doucet Drolet; IRFSJ, AGG, Lucienne Séguin Bourgoin; IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry.

81 IRFSJ, ARD, Ella Paradis Doucet; IRFSJ, ARD, Berthe Joly Marcoux; IRFSJ, AGG, Béatrice Fex Gamache; IRFSJ, AGG, Fleurette Vaugeois Roberge; PAA 77.219p, Blanche Fluet Staniland; PRHF, Noëlla Morin Tenguay; IRFSJ, GEG, Rose Anna Audet.

82 IRFSJ, ARP, Anna Guay Caron; IRFSJ, AGG, Cécile Déry Lirette; IRFSJ, DEL, Eva Roy.

hand clothing passed on by relatives which had to be unstitched, recut and re-sewed.[83] After the 1920s, ready-made clothing from mail-order stores, Army and Navy, Dupuis et Frères, Simpson's, and especially Eaton's, were frequently worn by Franco-Albertans.[84] These ready-made items relieved housewives of a time-consuming chore, but they also imposed dress conformity. As purchased clothing became more common in Alberta society, home-made clothes came to be linked with immigrants and poverty, and their use was increasingly perceived as undesirable.[85]

5.7 FARMWORK:

The labour that farmwives performed was largely subsistence-oriented or reproductive. That is, it ensured the maintenance of the family by providing goods for home consumption. Although husbands also contributed to the farm's subsistence -by tending cattle, butchering, etc.- their labour was directed more toward the production of cash crop for the marketplace. This production-oriented work brought in money to hire workers, pay taxes, and to buy seed and farm implements. While this division of labour was generally maintained, one cannot speak of a clear-cut separation of productive from reproductive spheres for farmwives. Their field work, as well as their cooking and housekeeping, especially at harvest time, contributed to the farm's production.

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[83] IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine St. Pierre Fex; IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Lapointe Husereau; PRHF, Yvette Ayotte Van Brabant.

[84] IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; IRFSJ, ARD, Carmel Ouellette Gascon.

[85] IRFSJ, GEG, Marie-Luce Ouellette. Dress conformity as a result of mass-produced clothing is examined in Cynthia Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption," in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, eds. Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) p. 240.

Prior to the widespread ownership of tractors and the appearance of the combined reaper-tresher (combines) on Canadian prairie farms in the late-1920s and 1930s - the 1940s and later in northern areas- farmers hired itinerant threshermen to harvest their crops.[86] For the duration of harvesting, from ten to twelve days and longer depending on the size of the cultivated acreage, crews consisting of a dozen or so men had to be sheltered and fed. Franco-Albertan farmwives rose at 4:00 a.m. to begin preparing the first of five meals they would feed the men each day. Following supper served around sunset, there was still the work of cleaning-up which often carried on until 10:00-10:30 p.m.. To accomplish the complex task of feeding the crews, women had to carefully plan menus and stretch the yearly food supply, not to mention manage the extra labour resources -female relatives and neighbours, as well as hired girls- that were brought in to lend a hand. Hungry men were not likely to work well so a farmwife's efforts to contribute substantial and wholesome meals were crucial to a successful harvest.[87] Furthermore, since room and board was often included in hired men's wages, her cooking and cleaning was more closely tied to the farm's productive operation than to the family's subsistence.[88]

Married Franco-Albertan women also contributed directly to the productivity of the farm by working alongside their husbands clearing land, picking roots and rocks, preparing the soil for cultivation, and harvesting. Their contribution was especially

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[86] Ernest B. Ingles, "The Custom Threshermen in Western Canada, 1890-1925," in David Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds., Building Beyond the Homestead: Rural History on the Prairies (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985) pp. 150-152.

[87] IRFSJ, ARD, Andrée Godeleine Gascon; IRFSJ, AGG, Elizabeth Charbonneau Royer; IRFSJ, REG, Anna Grenier Girard; Glenbow, Fort Macleod History Book Committee, Family History 'L', BI .6F 736 f9, Aldora Lemire Gegné; IRFSJ, IRT, Yvonne Desmarais Régimbald; PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette.

[88] Corlann Gee Bush, " 'He Isn't Half So Cranky...,'" p. 217. Anne-Geneviève Chateney and her husband Paul regularly employed and provided room and board for six hired men in the late 1930s and 40s (IRFSJ, LER 2.1-2.17).

required when there were no children old enough to provide extra labour.[89] Fieldwork was arduous. Rose-Anna Audet reported having walked at least eleven miles a day behind the plough. Far from complaining about having had to undertake this surplus labour, she valued her accomplishments, boasting that she had never tired.[90] Other women were more modest, but their description of how they had wedged fieldwork between their daily and weekly domestic chores indicates that they had coped quite well. Delia Pelletier, who cleared sixteen acres with her husband, did the breakfast dishes, baked bread, put a large pot of beans in the oven then left for the fields.[91]

Married francophone farm women not only helped with farmwork, they managed the farm in their husband's absence. This occurred often, especially in the early days of settlement, before farms became commercially viable and men had to absent themselves to earn wages. While they were away, women took over their work in addition to their own childcare and domestic responsibilities.[92] Maria Labby had to milk thirty cows when her husband was away, a job which took her three hours.[93] When asked about the hardship of coping alone, women were generally proud of their ability to have been able to manage. Lucie Fex explained that: "Tout était bien gardé en son absence."[94] For Lucia as for many others, the extra work was not unwelcomed for it acted as a way of combatting loneliness which could, at times, be almost unbearable.[95]

She, like other women, greatly benefited from the mechanization of fieldwork. Canadian women's historians who insist on the hardship borne by turn-of-the-century

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89 PRHF, Albina Dupuis; IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé; IRFSJ, GEG, Delia Pelletier Benoît; PAA, Clarice Lambert Demers.
90 IRFSJ, GEG, Rose-Anna Bailliargeon Audet.
91 IRFSJ, GEG, Delia Pelletier Benoît.
92 IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine St. Pierre Fex; PRHF, Cécile Arcand; PRHF, Cécile Houde Aubin.
93 IRFSJ, RAM, Maria Labbé Lamoureux.
94 IRFSJ, CHE, Lucia Fex Beaulac.
95 Ibid.

prairie farmwives because farmers preferred buying farm implements instead of household technology, situate farmwives solely within the domestic sphere.[96] Women on farms accomplished farmwork in addition to their domestic chores and the mechanization of fieldwork freed them from this backbreaking labour they had so often shared with men. Furthermore, because farm mechanization replaced hired labour, it relieved housewives of the work involved in providing paid employees food and shelter. This meant a substantial reduction of housework which women certainly did not fail to appreciate. In sum, they welcomed any change that promised to ease part of their labour.[97]

5.8 GENERATING INCOME:

Married Franco-Albertan farm women not only contributed to the farm's productivity by doing fieldwork, boarding and feeding hired hands, and managing harvest cooking operations; they, like urban housewives, also generated income for the family. These activities took place within both the informal and formal sectors of the economy. On the informal side, the surplus from home production was sold for cash or exchanged for goods and services for the family. In the 1920s, Rose-Anna Audet

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[96] Marilyn Barber, "Help for Farm Homes," pp. 7, 16; Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, p. 118; Beth Light and R. R. Pierson, eds, No Easy Road, p. 213; Linda Rasmussen, et al., A harvest Yet To Reap, p. 42.

[97] IRFSJ, GEG, Delia Benoit; Association Canadienne-française de l'Alberta, Edmonton, Trousse de documents sur Vegreville, famille d'Alphonsine Benoit. In her Palouse study, Corlann Gee Bush found that women readily agreed to the purchase of tractors, even if it meant doing without washing-machines. They reasoned that the greater productivity and profits which were bound to result from farm mechanization would allow them to eventually acquire domestic conveniences ("He Isn't Half So Cranky...," pp. 228-229). And given that tension management was part of housewives' jobs (Light and Pierson, No Easy Road, p. 212), farm machinery, by lightening husbands' workloads, made them easier to live with, and thus indirectly improved women's lives.

churned and sold, for eighteen cents a pound, up to twenty-five pounds of butter per week. She used the money to buy sugar and flour.[98] Apart from dairy products, francophone women also sold eggs and poultry, bread, seneca root, freshly-picked berries and home-made jams, knitted goods, and home-manufactured garments.[99] These marketing activities did more than supplement the family income. In many cases, they kept the family enterprise solvent.[100] In towns and cities where home production was potentially limited, married women brought in cash by keeping boarders and taking in laundry.[101]

Just as married French-speaking women's services and surplus production could mean the difference between making ends meet and poverty for the family, so could their waged work. It is clear that many of these women did not leave their providing role behind upon marriage, despite official statistics pointing to the contrary. According to the 1931 census, only 3.56% of married female Albertans were engaged in 'gainful occupations'.[102] This proportion applied to Franco-Albertan women would seem to indicate that at census time, only about seventy-five married women from the francophone community worked for wages.[103] The oral testimonies seem to point out, however, that this is an underestimation of the actual numbers involved in the labour force. For many married francophone women, their participation in the workforce was interrupted by marriage and children, but resumed later, albeit intermittently,

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98 IRFSJ, GEG, Rose-Anna Beillargeon Audet.

99 PAA, Blanche Fluet Staniland; PRHF, Albina Dupuis; IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Doucet Drolet; IRFSJ, JUR, Lénora Lamothe Duchesneau; IRFSJ, AGG, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux; PRHF, Jeanne Dupuis Gerand; IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé.

100 IRFSJ, AGG, Angéline Bilodeau Gobeil; IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Lapointe Husereau.

101 PAA, Blanche Fluet Staniland; PAA, 80.272/1 SE, "Histoire de la famille François-Xavier Gauthier"; IRFSJ, AGG, Fleurette Vaugeois Roberge; IRFSJ, LER, Antoinette Hermary.

102 Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. II, Table 26, p. 37.

103 The only census which includes 'gainfully occupied' Franco-Albertan women is the 1936 Census of the Prairie Provinces (Vol. II, Table 10, pp. 950-960). No census includes a breakdown of the proportion of married Franco-Albertan women in the labour force.

varying according to the economic and emotional needs of the family.[104] Economic crises and illness sometimes forced women to work for wages. After spending a decade at home raising children, schoolteacher Thérèse Labrosse returned to the classroom in 1935 to help get her family through the most difficult years of the Depression.[105] While her husband worked the farm, Lilly Morin went to Edmonton daily to do housework to supplement the income of her impoverished family.[106]

But much of married women's direct financial contribution to the household remained hidden from census takers. Mme Turcotte and Lucia Beaulac, for instance, ran hotels and restaurants while their respective husbands worked the homestead and taught school.[107] Others worked alongside their husbands in such establishments, doing the cooking, cleaning, book-keeping, and the administrative work. Still others were employed in family-owned stores, bakeries and butcher shops.[108] Many more followed their husbands to bush camps, farms, or on threshing crews and road construction where they worked for wages as cooks and housemaids.[109] In this paid work as on the farm, men and women shared responsibilities for the economic survival of the family. Again, husbands relied on their wives to support them in their work and to cover for them in their absence. Jeanne Langevin, whose husband was municipal secretary, opened her house to the councillors, offering them meals and a bed when

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104 Such was also the case for American and Quebec women. See: Carole Turbin, "Beyond Dichotomies: Interdependence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Working Class Families in the United States," Gender & History, Vol. I, No. 3 (Autumn 1989) pp. 294-296. Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Weaving it Together: Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," Labour/Le travail, Vo. 7 (Spring 1981) pp. 113-125.

105 IRFSJ, JUR, Thérèse Labrosse Vallée.

106 PAA, 81.249 SE, "History of Lilly Beaudry and Firmin Morin".

107 PRHF, Mme Roméo Turcotte; IRFSJ, CHE & PAA, Lucia Fex Beaulac.

108 PAA, acc. no. 75.516/118, Marie Normandeau St. Arnaud; IRFSJ, REG, Deliamen Plamondon; IRFSJ, CHE, Ida Croisetière Latour; IRFSJ, EUL, Anne Cotte Brody; IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine Villeneuve Magnen; IRFSJ, GEG, Carméline Larivière Kirkland.

109 IRFSJ, ARD, Annie Chrétien; PRHF, Albina Dupuis; IRFSJ, ARD, Andrée Godelaine Gascon; PRHF, Noëlla Morin Tanguay; Aldora Gagné.

the meetings lasted late into the evenings. When her husband was away, she took over as unofficial secretary, collecting taxes, etc..[110] This partnership in the family economy is apparent in women's work as accountants and purchasers for family businesses. This was by no means an insignificant contribution, especially since a number of men were illiterate and could not have managed without their wives.[111]

5.9 LEISURE:

At first glance, married Franco-Albertan women's exhausting work schedule seems to have left little time for leisure activities. Their free time was indeed limited but the struggle for survival was not so all-consuming that they were completely without recreation. But leisure had to be interwoven into the rhythms of their domestic labour, so much so that often it was not clearly distinguishable from work.[112] Married francophone women considered as pastimes many of the activities such as knitting, rug-making, needlework, and berry-picking which produced useful goods to sell for cash or for the family's use. This work was pleasurable and satisfying and it provided a respite from the domestic routine and from daily cares and responsibilities.[113] Time for such activities, however, had to be snatched between cooking, cleaning, childcare, farmwork and income-earning activities.[114]

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110 IRFSJ, ARD, Lucienne Langevin Laing; IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gegné.
111 PRHF, Laurette Lozeau Michaud; IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; PRHF, Marie-Rose Pagée; Angéline Van Brabant Couture, Interview conducted by author.
112 Lemieux and Mercier, p. 320; Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements, p. 5.
113 IRFSJ, CHE, Lucia Fex Beaulac; IRFSJ, ARD, Simone Bergeron Blouin; PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette; PRHF, Alice Faucher Benoit; IRFSJ, DEL Aurore Pronovost Prévost.
114 PRHF, Irène Boivin Picard.

As important as the above recreational activities were for women, they took second place to socializing. Indeed, much of housewives' brief periods of leisure were spent visiting or entertaining neighbours and relatives. That many French-Canadian families were large and kin often settled near each other in predominantly francophone areas, promoted this form of sociability. It was customary for families, like the Côtés, to come together on Sunday.

> On n'a jamais travaillé le dimanche. Le dimanche c'était pour aller à la messe. Ordinairement après la messe, on passait chez les grand-parents Labreque ... Soit on déjeunait là en passant ou bien après avoir fait une petite visite, on se rendait chez nous... . Et puis dans l'après-midi, c'était bien ordinaire de retrouver tous les parents, les oncles, les tantes avec tous les cousins. On se ramassait soit chez un oncle ... chez les grand-parents ou bien chez nous.[115]

Then, as during the *veillées* frequent throughout the winter months especially during the Christmas Holiday season, people played cards and music. They sang, danced, told stories, drank a little, but mostly talked.[116]

For married Franco-Albertan women, this type of social interaction centred in the home was not divorced from work. In fact, the family's leisure largely depended on women's labour.[117] Extra work was required to receive kin and neighbours: the house had to be cleaned; more and fancier food cooked; meals had to be served and dishes washed. Going to a picnic, or an outing to someone else's home demanded that children be cleaned, bundled up against the cold, etc.. In many ways, these family leisure activities, were hardly relaxing for women. But socializing reinforced the networks created through the exchange of goods and work, by sharing food and clothing, and

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115 IRFSJ, DEL, Geâtane Côté Dion.

116 IRFSJ, AGG, Annette Gobeil Bérubé; IRFSJ, GEG, Marie Cimon Beaupré; IRFSJ, AGG, Jacqueline Sylvestre Baker; PRHF, Marie Blanchette Mencke.

117 Kathy Peiss, "Gender Relations and Working-Class Leisure: New York City, 1880-1920," in Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., "To Toil the Livelong Day," p. 100.

helping family and neighbours with childcare. These provided married women an opportunity to share personal concerns, laugh, and gossip together.[118]

Correspondence was another way in which kinship links were maintained. There is no doubt that writing and receiving letters from family and friends remained among francophone women's greatest pleasures. They looked forward to the arrival of the mail, and shared the content of letters with family.[119] For many, letter writing substituted for the confidant left behind. Correspondence could be a veritable lifeline.[120] But maintaining these kinship ties, just like the organization of kin gatherings, had a strong labour component as well. It competed with childcare and domestic work for their attention and when not accomplished, it was usually followed by guilt.[121]

Involvement in church and community activities were other areas of leisure. Attending religious services, pilgrimages, processions and retreats provided women opportunities to get together, as did community activities such as the annual Saint-Jean Baptiste day celebrations, bazaars, card parties, plays, and picnics. Membership in formal women's organizations such as Les Dames de Ste-Anne, Les Dames d'Autel, and Le Club des Fermières provided married women with opportunities for socializing that were removed from the household and independent of husbands. In these organizations, women could be free to enjoy the companionship of other women and

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118 IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; IRFSJ, CHE, Bernadette Rousseau Riopel; Glenbow D971.238 F881 M4589, "Family history", Valentine Eckenfelder.

119 IRFSJ, REG, Juliette de Moissac.

120 Bertin, Du vent. Between 1898 and 1944, Aimée Gatine kept up a regular correspondence with her sister-in-law Marie -whom she had met only once in 1907- in which she charted the difficulties of ranching on the dry prairies and the resulting physical and emotional collapse of her husband. This sister-in-law was the only one with whom Aimée could share her hardships.

121 Micaela Di Leonardo, "The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship," Signs: Journal of Women and Culture, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1987, p. 443-446.

share common experiences.[122] But it is not always clear where leisure ended and work began. Léda Fortin, for example, could spend whole afternoons washing priests' vestments and cleaning the church.[123]

Reading may have been the only recreational activity completely divorced from work that married Franco-Albertan women enjoyed. Many families, rural as well as urban, received, through subscription or from relatives, a variety of newspapers, from the Alberta-produced La Survivance to papers originating in Quebec City, Montreal and further.[124] Women read them to keep in touch with developments in their new and former communities, as well as for pure enjoyment. A few were able to obtain French novels from relatives while those who could read English relied on local resources.[125] Some women wanted more than escape; a number looked for spiritual solace and support in "Les Annales de Ste-Anne de Beaupré," for instance.[126] All in all, it seems that married francophone women's leisure time was somewhat limited and almost always involved work. The idea of leisure as a unit of time completely divorced from work may in fact have been foreign to them.[127]

5.10 CONCLUSION:

Married Franco-Albertan's work responsibilities were heavy and time-consuming. Interwoven among the daily cooking and cleaning tasks were numerous

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122 IRFSJ, GEG, Françoise Lapalme Despins.
123 IRFSJ, IRT, Léda Fortin L'Heureux.
124 In a letter written in the winter of 1898 from Rosebud, near Gleichen, Aimée Gatine thanked her sister-in-law for "un journal de mode" and copies of the Petit Journal, a Paris daily. Bertin, Du vent, p.37.
125 IRFSJ, ARD, Simone Blouin; IRFSJ, ARD, Yvonne Bellerive.
126 IRFSJ, IRT, Raymonde Perras Riopel; IRFSJ, ARD, Marie-Louise Hamelin Desaulniers.
127 Peiss, Cheap Amusements, p. 33.

subsistence and market-oriented activities which ensured the care and comfort of family members as well as their financial survival. Farmwives grew or raised much of the family's food supplies. Most also extended their home production to the confection of clothing. In towns and cities, factory-produced items replaced some home production but the transformation was far from complete. Married urban francophone women also cultivated gardens, preserved fruits and vegetables, sewed and knit for family members. Their ability to economize could see the family through hard times. In both urban and rural areas, francophone women's work was intensified by poor housing conditions, lack of amenities, and overcrowding. Although all married francophone women's work was centred on the home, their labour extended beyond the domestic sphere. Selling or exchanging their surplus production took them outside the home as did working in family businesses or for wages. They contributed directly to the market-oriented production activities of farms by working in the fields alongside husbands or by taking over farm operations when necessary. The sheer amount of work and the great diversity of tasks left them little time for leisure which, of necessity, was closely integrated with labour.

Their productive work on farms, in the market place, and in the labour force shows that in reality, the separation of the spheres was far from complete. Francophone women's activities were neither restricted to the home nor to the subsistence of their family. Their work to ensure the survival of the household took place in both private and public spheres. Yet, domestic ideals, in some measure, helped define how Franco-Albertan women saw themselves. They based their identity on the quality of their housekeeping skills. Maintaining a clean house in spite of mostly substandard housing conditions, providing clothes free from dirt and well-ironed for family members to wear, and keeping husbands and children fed when food supplies were limited, contributed to their self-image of being good wives and mothers. But unlike the stereotypical weak and passive women of domestic ideals, they were capable,

adaptable, resilient, and resourceful. Far from feeling inadequate because they had not conformed to the ideals, the respondents were proud of their toughness, their readiness to undertake a variety of roles, and their ability to 'make do'.

Chapter 6

CHILDBEARING, CHILDREARING, COPING WITH ILLNESS AND DEATH

The duties and responsibilities of Franco-Albertan women at the turn of the twentieth century were not restricted to domestic labour. Prairie francophone women did not escape the influential discourse on motherhood which arose out of the conjuncture of a number of social and demographic changes in both English and French Canada. For most Franco-Albertan women, reproductive roles did in fact hold central place in their lives. Many spent much of their adult lives pregnant, recovering from childbirth, or caring for children. While most women found maternity rewarding, primitive living conditions and financial worries could make repeated pregnancies difficult to accept. Declining fertility rates would seem to indicate that despite the Catholic Church's prohibition of contraception, francophone women found ways of limiting pregnancies. Between the end of the nineteenth century and 1940, women's childbearing experiences also underwent major transformations. From a woman-centred affair in the home, the birthing process gradually became medicalized and institutionalized.

Franco-Albertan women's mothering responsibilities also included nursing the ill and injured. Because of the isolation of many homes, the cost of commercial medicines and professional medical care, most francophone women relied extensively on folk or popular medicine. To Franco-Albertan women also went the care of the orphaned and the disabled. While coping with invalid children and elderly parents was

difficult, especially in homes with few amenities, the hardships endured did not compare to the difficulties women encountered as a result of the illness or death of husbands. The loss of the primary male breadwinner's income left widows in precarious financial circumstances. Most of the options available to them, such as poorly remunerated labour, and reliance on their children and kin, provided a meagre living. While the death of children was less financially taxing, the emotional toll may have been greater, especially when women believed they had somehow failed in the performance of their maternal duties.

6.1 *IDEALS OF MOTHERHOOD:*

Childbearing and childrearing held central place in the middle-class 'separate spheres' discourse promoted in Quebec and English Canada. Indeed, the separation of work roles between the private world of the home and the public world of business and politics was largely justified by women's physiological ability to conceive and bear children. To ensure the bonding between mother and child nature endowed women with maternal instincts. From this 'feminine' nature other qualities, such as tenderness, selflessness, generosity, and intuition, were believed to be derived. Women thus came to be largely defined by their reproductive role; motherhood became their primary, if not exclusive, and ultimate function.[1]

A number of demographic and social trends at the turn of the twentieth century, reinforced the connection between the feminine ideal and motherhood. The decline in Canadian fertility compounded with massive foreign immigration led to fears

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[1] Jane Lewis, "Motherhood Issues," p. 10; Light and Pierson, eds. No Easy Road, pp. 24-25.

of race suicide. These concerns were added to anxiety about the rapid urbanization of the population and the large numbers of young women taking up work in factories, stores, and the personal service industries. Anglo-Canadian clergymen, physicians, politicians, and maternal feminists, among others, reacted to these apparent attacks on the family by promoting an increasingly restricted and idealized vision of motherhood.[2]

Lay and clerical leaders in Quebec believed that the family and nation were under siege. Like their English-speaking counterparts, they feared the desintegration of the social order as a result of declining birth rates, urbanization, the increasing numbers of women in the labour force, and feminism. They were also worried about Quebec's declining demographic presence within Canada.[3] In an attempt to stem the crisis, the Church, the state, educators and the medical profession, articulated a normative discourse which emphasized women's proper roles, especially motherhood. The church maintained that the primary goal of marriage was procreation and that women's ultimate and inescapable fate was maternity. The use of contraceptive measures was thus proscribed. Doctors supported this interdict by stressing the physiological and psychological dangers of contraceptive practices for women while nationalists further reinforced the importance of fertility by linking it to ethnic survival. "The sacred calling of the French-Canadian mother," was to provide large families to protect the nation against assimilation.[4]

Franco-Albertan women were exposed to similar messages about women's destiny and duties, especially through the Church and the francophone print media.

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[2] Alison Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, pp. 142-145; McLaren and McLaren, The Bedroom and the State, pp. 15-17.

[3] Lévesque, Making and Breaking, pp. 18-22, 30. For the perceived dangers in English-Canada, see: Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, pp. 142-145; McLaren, pp. 15-17.

[4] Liberal minister Anathase David, Le Devoir, 7 March 1933, as quoted in Lévesque, ibid, p. 30. The discourse on motherhood in Quebec is also drawn from Lévesque, pp. 23-30.

Quebec newspapers were read by some and many more had access to the Western Franco-Catholic press which advanced a similar discourse. The columns of Henriette Dessaules Saint-Jacques, for example, a journalist for Le Devoir identified by Andrée Lévesque as an ardent popularizer of the motherhood ideal, were regularly featured in La Survivance in the early 1930s.[5] More pervasive was the influence of the Church. In convent schools, young women were taught that their destiny lay in having numerous children.[6] The glorification of motherhood was further reinforced in sermons from the pulpit, in the confessional, and at religious retreats.[7] Franco-Albertan women could hardly have avoided being affected by the message, especially since those who spoke English would have also come under the influence of the maternal ideals advanced by Anglo-Albertans.[8]

6.2 CHILDBIRTH AND FRANCO-ALBERTAN WOMEN'S LIVES:

The ideal of motherhood was not completely removed from reality. For many Franco-Albertan women, married life was consumed by childbearing and childrearing. Table 6-A shows their relatively high fertility. At the turn of the twentieth century, francophone women on the Prairies bore an average of 5.9 live children.

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5 Lévesque, ibid, p. 24; Anne Gagnon, "'Un grand coeur'," pp. 14-15.

6 Gagnon, "The Pensionnat Assomption," pp. 109-113.

7 IRFSJ, AGG, Olivine Blain Lefèbvre; IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette.

8 According to Veronica Strong-Boag, in "Pulling in Double Harness or Hauling a Double Load: Women, Work and Feminism on the Canadian Prairie," Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 21 (Fall 1986) p. 39, prairie mothers were innundated with advice about motherhood. Eliane Silverman describes how the discourse on motherhood held true for women in the west as a whole. The Last Best West, p. 59. See also: Terry Chapman, "Women, Sex and Marriage in Western Canada," pp. 1-12.

Table 6-A

Average number of children born to ever-married women for Prairie francophone and British-origin women, and for Prairie women as a whole.*

Period of birth of women (approx.)	Prairie Women	British-origin	French-origin	French-origin Urban (1000 +)	French-origin Rural Non-farm	French-origin Rural Farm
Before 1896	4.19	3.51	5.92	5.24	6.69	6.49
1896-1901	3.54	3.02	5.06	4.18	6.09	6.38
1902-1906	3.09	2.81	4.89	4.02	5.61	5.91
1907-1911	3.10	2.63	4.66	3.67	5.64	5.57
1912-1916	3.17	2.69	4.26	3.55	4.84	5.28
1917-1921	3.19	2.94	4.37	2.77	5.33	5.40
1922-1926	3.13	2.99	3.96	3.39	4.46	4.67

* "British" category includes Irish. Data compiled from Census of Canada, 1961, Vol. IV, Table H-4.

This is much higher than the average number of children borne by Prairie women as a whole (4.1) and women of British origin (3.5), although the gap became less pronounced as the twentieth century advanced. Francophone women still had more children but by the late 1930s, early 1940s francophone women (born between 1917-1921), gave birth to, on average, four children while prairie women had 3.1 and women of British origin had 3.0. Within the francophone group itself, the number of children per family also varied according to place of residence. Throughout the period in question rural women, both farm and non-farm had more children than women in larger urban centres. This likely reflects the greater need for children's labour in rural areas and the higher cost of childrearing in urban centres.[9]

The obstetrical histories of some of the respondents demonstrate the importance of childbirth in Franco-Albertan women's lives. For many, married life centred around

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9 Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, p. 166.

pregnancy, birth, and postpartum recovery. Most of the respondents were pregnant within the first year of marriage and subsequently gave birth every two years or less. In her first twenty-three years of married life, Dorilla Pellerin gave birth to fifteen children. Married in 1908 at the age of twenty, she had her first child within a year. Two years later a second child was born. By her sixth wedding anniversary, she was the mother of five children. She was to bear ten more during the next seventeen years. Her first twenty-five years of marriage were thus continuously taken up by pregnancy, birth, the nursing of children, or recovering from delivery.[10] Because all of Dorilla's children lived past infancy, the size of her completed family is an accurate indication of the centrality of childbearing and rearing in her life, but this is not always the case since miscarrieges and stillbirths are not included in census data on the average children born to married women. Irène Lemire's mother, for example, gave birth to eleven living children during the course of her married life which began in 1914. But the years consumed by reproductive duties were greater than her completed family would seem to indicate since four more of her pregnancies ended in miscarrieges.[11]

This is not to say that all Franco-Albertan women had large families. On the contrary, as the Clio Collective has demonstrated for Quebec, of the women born before the end of the nineteenth century, only one in five produced ten or more children. About half of Quebec children born to this generation of women came from these large families. Of women born between 1916 and 1921, only 7.6 % would have ten children or more. The children of this generation made up about 25% of all children born in the period.[12] While these figure show that families of ten or more children were never very common, it also indicates that, approximately half the children growing up in the

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10 Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," p. xvi.

11 PRHF, Irène Lemire Boisvert.

12 The Clio Collective, Quebec Women: A History, p. 192.

early decades of the twentieth century, had experienced life in a large family. Furthermore, these large families tended to be clustered in rural areas.[13] Since more than 80% of Franco-Albertan women respondents were from rural areas, this may account for the high proportion of women who reported a childhood lived among numerous siblings. Franco-Albertan women also had more children than Quebec women. By 1940, Quebec women had an average of three children; Franco-Albertans had four.[14] It must not be forgotten that this is an average: some women had none or few children while others had seven, eight or more.

6.3 SEXUALITY AND CONTRACEPTION:

For many Franco-Albertan women repeated pregnancies were a reality. How did they react to these? Because of the delicate nature of the subject, the information that the respondents supplied about sexuality and contraception is minimal, yet a few clues are available. Most women expressed pleasure at their first pregnancy.[15] Prospective parents eagerly anticipated the new life that would liven up their homes. Since in the eyes of the Catholic Church, reproduction was the purpose of marriage, the presence of a child undoubtedly added to the legitimacy of the couple's union. For women, the pregnancy also confirmed their womanhood.[16] Second and third pregnancies also seem to have been welcomed, but more, fourth, fifth, etc., were often greeted with more resignation than joy. A mother's numerous household duties,

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13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette; IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.

16 Lévesque, Making and Breaking, p. 26-27; Lemieux and Mercier, p. 178.

including childcare led to fatigue. When this was added to financial worries, the arrival of one more child could be difficult to accept. In 1940, when she found herself pregnant with her fifth child, Antoinette Chrétien was disheartened. The family lived in a renovated granary on the homestead, the main bedroom already overcrowded with two small beds next to the couple's own. Where were they going to put one more child? Antoinette confided her worries to the parish priest who assured her that, " ... le bon Dieu va prendre soin de ça. Laisse faire."[17] She and her husband eventually came up with enough money to build a small addition to the house to accommodate the new arrival. Like many women, Antoinette's faith kept her strong. She gave birth to two more children before the family was able to move to a larger home.

Regardless of the family's situation, few women in the study indicated that they had tried to limit pregnancies. Several revealed that they were very much aware that preventing conception was sinful in the eyes of the Church and that this had influenced them. But they added that the thought of using contraceptive measures had never occurred to them.[18] While some women had wanted and enjoyed large families,[19] most felt that childbearing was women's lot and that: "c'est le bon Dieu qui les envoyait."[20] Their religious socialization may have been too solidly entrenched for them to consider alternatives or they may simply have had little knowledge of effective ways of preventing conception.[21] They were generally aware, however, that prolonged

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17 IRFSJ, AGG, Antoinette Chrétien Tellier.

18 IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette; IRFSJ, AGG, Olivine Blain Lefèbvre.

19 Both Angéline Van Brabant and Anna Grenier had wanted more children than the eight and seven living children they respectively had. They both mentioned that their husbands had been more concerned about preventing more pregnancies than they had. Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; Anna Grenier Girard in IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.

20 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette; IRFSJ, AGG, Marcelle Lord Ouellette.

21 Section 179c of the 1892 Criminal Code of Canada made it illegal to disseminate information about contraception. Although this law served to restrict the discussion of birth control, it did not eliminate it. Information was available in the mass-produced medical and self-help manuals, of mostly American origin, which circulated in Canada, but for women who had little mastery of the English language, like many Franco-

nursing served to distance pregnancies, and many did so as long as possible.[22] Beyond this less than reliable method, the respondents revealed few other means considered. Even the Ogino-Knaus or rhythm method does not seem to have been frequently practiced. This method of spacing birth was sanctioned by the Catholic Church only in the 1930s. But to be effective a woman's ovulation cycle had to be well understood. Women could share information or obtain it from their doctor, but for Catholics, the fact that a prior consultation with the parish priest was required to establish the legitimacy of its use, certainly would have discouraged many from even considering it, let alone practice it.[23]

Nevertheless, Franco-Albertan women respondents' silence on the subject does not reveal all. Table 6-A shows the slow but steady decline, from the late nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century, of Prairie francophone women's fertility, a decline that paralled a similar but more pronounced trend in English Canada.[24] The falling birth rates would seem to indicate that, like English-speaking women, francophones practiced some form of birth control, likely abstinence and withdrawal, although only continence was endorsed by the Catholic Church.[25] Despite religious

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Albertan women, these would have been of little help. "Mechanical" means of preventing conception such as the condom and the pessary were equated with prostitution. As such, they were outside the realm of the respectable and use of them was frowned upon. More commonly used were prophylactic douches, a variety of which were produced commercially and advertised in such publications as the T. Eaton catalogue, for example. In English Canada, evidence suggests that women also produced homemade douches and shared recipes with female friends and relatives. McLaren and McLaren, especially pp. 20-21.
Since no such evidence has come to light for Prairie francophone women, the paucity of information makes it difficult to gauge Franco-Albertan women's historical understanding of contraception.

22 IRFSJ, IRT, Eva Laroque Desnoyers.

23 Lévesque, p. 28; McLaren and McLaren, p. 22.

24 Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, p. 163 and Appendix, Figure A.7 and Tables A.8 and A.9, pp. 414-416.

25 Lévesque, pp. 27-28.

censure, abortion cannot be ruled out either as a means of limiting births.[26] As Dorilla Pellerin's predicament illustrates, some women questioned the limitations the church imposed over their ability to control their own lives and the decisions they came to might not always have conformed to official doctrine. Just before Christmas 1922, Dorilla learned that she was pregnant for the tenth time. She was in despair.

> She was sure God had forsaken her. How unjust and merciless could He be? Did He not know she would not be able to cope with one more child? Who did He think had to raise these children, ... certainly not Joe [her husband]? ... And what about her mother-in-law? Did He not know she would highly disapprove of another pregnancy, that she had made it quite clear eight children were enough. ... It was all these thoughts that gnawed at her insides day in and day out that led to such shameful and unspeakable wishes. "Comment se démancher?" (How could she miscarry?) She could try to fall down the stairs. Maybe there was something she could take. She had heard taking castor oil would bring about a miscarriage. She had heard there was a woman who knew what to do. And in the depths of her despair Dorilla went to see her. She did not know exactly what was to take place but at the sight of the long needle that was to be used to perform the operation, she felt her whole body becoming clammy, she became nauseated, ... she slid to the floor. When she came to, she realized the seriousness of her undertaking. Trembling and mortified, she wept bitterly, not at her condition but at her depravity.[27]

Although Dorilla did not go through with the abortion, other western Franco-Catholic women in similar circumstances may well have availed themselves of the services of abortionists, despite the feelings of guilt.

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[26] Andrée Lévesque has demonstrated that despite religious and social injunctions, abortion was part of the female reality in Quebec, although the numbers performed are impossible to estimate. Making and Breaking, pp. 84-94.

[27] This incident is related by Dorilla's grand-daughter to whom Dorilla confided in later life. Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," pp. 391-392.

6.4 PREGNANCY:

Franco-Albertan women's daily routine underwent little change because of pregnancy. During all eight pregnancies, Rose-Anna Baillargeon continued the heavy fieldwork and chores she normally performed. One child was born barely three hours following the evening milking.[28] Women carried on with their normal routine because they had little choice -the work could not wait- but also because childbirth was considered a normal part of life. "On prenait ça comme ça venait," one interviewee reported.[29] By maintaining the usual activities, francophone women could also conceal their condition longer. However much children were wanted and for all that pregnancy was considered normal, it was still affiliated with the sexual act; turn-of-the century expectant mothers, in both English and French Canada, looked upon their condition as being somewhat shameful and best kept away from public view.[30] This belief is captured to some degree in the saying "elle s'est fait attraper."[31] The knowledge of the pregnancy was thus kept within the family and life carried on as usual.[32] Few restrictions were imposed on pregnant women. Two were lifted: religious fasting and the wearing of corsets.[33] Both likely met with some relief.

In preparation for the arrival of the first child, a layette had to be prepared. Baby clothing and equipment were confected at home and only rarely purchased. In some families, custom decreed that they be prepared by the mother of the pregnant woman, not by the expectant mother herself.[34] Unlike Quebec society, there did not seem to be any beliefs among Franco-Albertans that starting the baby trousseau too

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28 IRFSJ, GEG, Rose-Anna Baillargeon Audet.
29 IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.
30 Strong-Boag, The New Day, p. 152; Lemieux and Mercier, p. 181.
31 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.
32 IRFSJ, REG, Group interview.
33 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette; IRFSJ, Jeannette Villeneuve Lavigne.
34 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

early would tempt fate and bring disaster on the child.[35] On the contrary, for the expectant mother with few female relatives living nearby, starting early was of the essence since working at the sewing machine became increasingly difficult as the pregnancy advanced. In extended families, as soon as the pregnancy became a certainty, the expectant mother, and female relatives all contributed to the assembly of items needed for the care and comfort of the newborn. They knitted blankets, sweaters, bonnets and booties, sewed mattress covers, long dresses, undershirts, nightgowns, diapers, and swaddling clothes. These items were handed down from child to child so that only worn articles had to be replaced during subsequent pregnancies. To the father-to-be or grand-fathers went the task of constructing the child's cradle.[36]

The months of waiting were spent not only in preparation, but for some, it was a time to speculate about the sex of the unborn child. Although most women claimed to have been little concerned with this -"on se confiait à la Sainte Vierge"[37] - there were usually one or two members of the family with alleged abilities to foretell. Zéa Chévigny's uncle asserted that the location of the fetus in the womb was the indicator. "Quand elle portait haut, c'était un garçon; quand elle portait bas, c'était une fille."[38] Others claimed to be able to tell by the shape of the pregnant women's stomach.[39]

Along with the prediction of the child's sex, there were a number of Franco-Albertan beliefs associated with pregnancy. Influences on the unborn child were thought to be many but were rarely well understood. Franco-Albertans, like many Canadians and Americans at the turn of the century, believed in 'marking'. Because the mother and fetus shared the same flesh and blood, certain strong emotions felt by

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35 Lemieux and Mercier, p. 182.

36 Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," p. 438; Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; IRFSJ, Marie-Rose Dandurand; IRFSJ, REG, Anna Girard; IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview; IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.

37 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

38 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.

39 IRFSJ, REG, Group interview.

the mother could be passed on to the child in the form of skin 'marks'.[40] Amilda Tétreau was disturbed by the long ears of hares during her 1895 pregnancy. Her son snared them, then carried them home by the hind legs, the ears dragging in the snow. Since there was little else to eat on the homestead, Amilda had to prepare them for food nearly every day. She became convinced that her baby would be born with long ears and refused to see the child after delivery until she was reassured he was without this defect.[41] Some Franco-Albertans also believed that a pregnant woman should not act as god-mother for another child for fear of bringing on a miscarriage.[42] And that birth would be delayed by two weeks should the due date fall during a full moon.[43]

6.5 GIVING BIRTH:

Although childbirth continued to be central in Franco-Albertan women's lives, from the early years of settlement until World War II and later, their childbearing experiences underwent major transformations over the period. At the turn of the century, most Franco-Albertan women gave birth at home, assisted by midwives and female kin. But by the late 1930s, the majority delivered their babies in hospitals,

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40 Austin E. Fife, "Birthmarks and Psychic Imprinting of Babies in Utah Folk Medicine," in Wayland D. Hand, ed., American Folk Medecine: A Symposium (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) pp. 273-274; According to Karen Dubinsky and France Iacovetta in "Murder, Womanly Virtue and Motherhood: The Case of Angelina Napolitano," turn-of-the-century Canadian medical texts indicated that a pregnant woman could impart to her unborn child "peculierities which have made a strong impression upon her mind." (p. 175) In Tina Loo and Lorna McLean, eds., Historical Perspectives on Law and Society in Canada (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994).

41 ACFA, Edmonton, Trousse de documents sur Vegreville, famille Tétreau. The belief in marking was common among Acadians, Quebecers and western francophones. Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, Héritage de la francophonie canadienne: traditions orales (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986) p. 59.

42 IRFSJ, DEL, Irène Hamel Wallace.

43 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.

where they were attended by doctors and nurses. Like Albertan and Canadian women in general, they were affected by the medicalization of childbirth of the post-World War I years. Women's own wishes to obtain better medical treatment during pregnancy and delivery combined with the monopolization of obstetrics by the male medical profession increased hospitalization of the birth process.[44] For Alberta, this meant an increase in the percentage of live births occurring in hospitals, from 33.5% in 1926 to 72.9% in 1940. This was much greater than the national averages of 17.8% and 45.3% for the same period.[45]

The childbearing experiences of Anne-Marie Mercier and of her step-mother exemplify this transition towards medicalized childbirth. Within eighteen months of her 1907 arrival in Alberta, Anne-Marie's step-mother gave birth to two children. Both births took place at home with midwives attending. During the course of her own marriage which began in 1913, Anne-Marie had twelve children. She gave birth to the first five in her home on the Bonnyville farm, assisted by midwives for the first two and by doctors for the next three. Despite the presence of a physician, the fifth child was stillborn and likely as a result of this incident, the last seven were born in hospital.[46] The female respondents of this study generally followed the pattern of childbearing illustrated by these two generations of women. Typically, older respondents gave birth at home, with perhaps the last one or two children of large

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[44] The medicalization and hospitalization of childbirth has been the subject of numerous studies. For the United States, see Judith Walzer Leavitt, Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. 3-12. Canadian studies include, among others: Strong-Boag, The New Day, pp. 155-157; Katherine Arnup, Andrée Lévesque and Ruth Roach Pierson, "Introduction," in Arnup, Lévesque and Pierson, eds., Delivering Motherhood, pp. xiii-xxv; Deborah Gorham, "Birth and History," Histoire Sociale/Social History, Vol. 17, No. 34 (novembre-November 1984) pp. 383-394.

[45] Data given in Strong-Boag's, The New Day, pp. 156-157.

[46] IRFSJ, SHB, Anne-Marie Mercier Croteau.

families being born in hospital. Their daughters' birthing experiences, however, mostly occurred in institutions.

The scarcity of hospitals in Alberta in the early period of settlement meant that there was little choice for most women, especially rural residents, but to deliver their children at home. To provide services beyond the private and public hospitals of the larger urban centres, the province set up a system of municipal hospitals in 1917. However, by the mid-1930s, the twenty-two or so existing hospitals served only about one-third of rural inhabitants.[47] In 1919, these hospitals were supplemented by a provincially subsidized government program to provide maternity care through district nurses trained in obstetrics. To these professionals were added, in 1930, four female doctors from England recruited for the province's remote northern areas. In other districts, the government subsidized physicians in private practice to provide care for women during pregnancy and labour.[48]

The predominantly rural nature of the French-Canadian population, their geographic isolation, the poor road conditions, not to mention the cost of doctor-assisted births and hospital rooms[49] meant that before the 1930s, few francophone women were able to avail themselves of these professional services. Nurses and doctors had to travel miles, often under difficult conditions, to visit parturient women and often arrived too late to be of any help.[50] Moreover, some women had little confidence in professionals. According to Mélina Fortin doctors made house calls to establish a clientele but from

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47 Nanci Langford, "Childbirth on the Canadian Prairies, 1880-1930," Journal of Historical Sociology, Vol. 8, No. 3 (September 1995) pp. 291-292. Private maternity homes, often called 'cottage hospitals' could also be found in both rural and urban areas. Silverman, The Last Best West, p. 68-70.

48 Langford, p. 292.

49 During the 1920s and 1930s, doctors charged approximately $25 to assist at a birth. Langford, p. 283. Laura Tanguay Maisonneuve reported that in the 1930s a hospital birth cost $20 plus daily room charges. PRHF.

50 IRFSJ, AGG, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil; Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; IRFSJ, REG, Group interview.

then on were virtually inaccessible. Furthermore, the care they provided was not always first rate. Albertine Belland was so dissatisfied with the care she received from a doctor at the 1920 birth of her first child that she refused to be attended by physicians during subsequent births.[51]

Women often showed more confidence in midwives, who were relatives, neighbours or women from the community who had proven their competence by having previously delivered dozens of babies. The fact that midwives often had numerous children of their own also served to reassure expectant mothers.[52] Called when women went into labour, midwives organized and directed the preparations for delivery. They interfered as little as possible, letting the natural process of birth take its course. Some might administer castor oil or hard liquor to dull a woman's pain but mostly they waited and comforted the parturient through her labour.[53] The midwife's work did not end with the safe delivery of the child. She often stayed for up to two weeks, taking over domestic chores and the care of older children, as well as watching over the mother and newborn.[54] They seldom received cash for this work but sometimes were paid with meat or produce.[55]

The training and skill of midwives varied. Although most seem to have been capable of coping with normal births, some were more knowledgeable and careful than others.[56] Their competency could make the difference between life and death for the mother and child. On one of her first calls as midwife in the inter-war period, Olivine

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51 IRFSJ, CHE, Melina Fortin L'Heureux; IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill.

52 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chevigny Piquette; PAA, Accession no. 77.219p, Blanche Fluet Staniland; PAA, Accession no. 75.516/118, Marie Normandeau St. Arnaud; IRFSJ, DEL, Béatrice Collin Feising.

53 IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé; Angélina Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bouressa Coté.

54 PAA, Accession no. 77.219p, Blanche Fluet Staniland.

55 IRFSJ, SHB, Anne-Marie Mercier Croteau.

56 This also seems to have been the case in England and the United States. See Deborah Gorham, p. 388 and Judith Leavitt, pp. 37-39.

Aubin was required to manually extract a stillborn fetus from its mother's womb. The mother survived but Olivine was understandably reticent to continue her midwifery services. Yet she was better prepared than most. In 1898, she had spent several months with a doctor who had her assist at a number of births and instructed her about procedures to follow should complications arise.[57] She, like several other midwives, knew about asepsis and brought her own disinfected supplies. Others carefully sterelized towels, sheets, and instruments in preparation for each birth.[58]

Some of the best midwives, according to the Franco-Albertan respondents, were Métis and Native women. They were very skilled and frequently used herbs to reduce pain and promote healing.[59] Approximately sixteen percent of the respondents reported having given birth with their help. Such collaboration between white anglophone settlers, and Métis and Native women was, according to sociologist Nanci Langford, 'atypical'. She found little evidence of it in her readings of letters, diaries and memoirs of seventy-eight, mostly English-speaking, homesteaders.[60] The fact that French-speaking immigrants had been encouraged by Roman Catholic priests to settle, and as a result had established a number of communities near existing Métis settlements,[61] as well as the common language shared by members of the two groups may explain the closer relationship between Franco-Albertan and Métis women.[62]

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57 Marie Cimon Beaupré, Leurs Rêves; Nos Mémoires, p. 6.

58 IRFSJ, GEG, Delia Pelletier Benoît; IRFSJ, AGG, Fayne Baril Laporte; Zéa Chevigny Piquette described the aseptic measures taken by her midwife mother (IRFSJ, REG).

59 IRFSJ, AGG, Lucienne Bourbeau Baril; IRFSJ, REG, Sylvia Gagnon Dubé.

60 Langford, pp. 286-287.

61 Robert Painchaud, Un rêve français, pp. 2-3. All but one of the women who reported having been assisted in childbirth by Indian and Métis midwives lived near Métis colonies or Indian reserves.

62 Most of the midwives had francophone names: Grandbois, Laboucane, Laframboise, Daigneault. One midwife by the name of Johnson was identified as being a French-speaking Métis by the respondent Sylvia Gagnon Dubé (IRFSJ, REG). See IRFSJ, AGG, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux; Jeanine Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," p. 376; IRFSJ, ARD, Alberta Viel Fréchette.
The notion of a closer relationship between francophones and Native and Métis people must be qualified. Franco-Albertans' practice of explaining to older children the

Between 1908 to 1938, two male midwives or *accoucheurs* also made their services available to Franco-Albertan women. Between them, Joseph Plamondon and Z. A. Lefèbvre delivered over one hundred babies in the Cold Lake and Lac la Biche regions. Both men were farmers and fathers of large families, fifteen and twelve children respectively. Perhaps they became *accoucheurs* as a result of this last characteristic. Both were patriarchs who had instigated the immigration of their families and once settled had continued to maintain control over all aspects of their dependent's social and economic lives. After bringing their own children and grandchildren into the world, they extended their services to the francophone community. Both could claim not only experience but also some training. Lefèbvre had studied medicine for one year in Quebec, and Plamondon, midwifery for two weeks in Michigan.[63] How did women react to having a male midwife? A grand-daughter whom he assisted, claimed that she was quite comfortable having him in the birthing room; she, like other women, thought of him as a doctor.[64]

Even when experienced midwives, doctors or nurses were not available to assist with birthing, women rarely went through the ordeal alone. There were of course unforeseen circumstances such as miscarriages, premature deliveries or intemperate

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arrival of newborns with the story that *les sauvages* had brought them may have had unfortunate repercussions by fueling racism against Native and Métis people. While this explanation had been traditionally used by Quebec and Ontario francophones (Lemieux and Mercier, p. 194), who like some Franco-Albertan parents embellished the tale to explain why mothers were bedridden (The Clio Collective, p. 192). After first giving the baby, the *sauvages* had wanted it back. The mother had fought to keep it, had received blows to the legs, and had thus become incapacitated. That *sauvages* left babies sounded especially plausible to Franco-Albertan children since they sometimes saw Métis and Native midwives in the house prior to the newborn's arrival. One respondent recalled that, as a nine-year-old, she had been told this story to explain the presence of her newborn brother. She was thereafter terrified of Natives and unable to forgive them for what they had apparently done to her mother (IRFSJ, REG, Sylvia Gagnon Dubé).

63 IRFSJ, AGG, Reine Lefebvre Lirette and Treasured Scales of the Kinosoo (Cold Lake, Alberta: Society of Cold Lake and District, 1980), pp. 42-45; IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bouressa Côté and From Spruce Trees to Wheatfields/ Des épinettes au blé d'or (Plamondon, Alberta: Plamondon History Book Society, 1988), pp. 653-654.

64 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.

weather conditions that prevented help from arriving.[65] But on the whole, francophone women were not cut off from the traditional female support they had counted upon before emigrating to Alberta.[66] Indeed, in large, close-knit French-Canadian families, women going through childbirth relied on mothers, grand-mothers, sisters, aunts, or in-laws to be at their bedside. When relatives were not available, neighbours helped. Attending each other's confinements was part of the female system of exchanges which simultaneously reinforced patterns of mutuality within the francophone group and community self-sufficiency. Women assistants prepared necessary linen and instruments for the birth, made the expectant mother comfortable, sustained and encouraged her throughout her labour, and prayed when the labour was particularly protracted or when complications arose. When doctors and nurses were present, these female assistants still took care of most of the preperations.[67] Home births thus continued to be controlled and organized by women; they remained 'women's affairs'.[68] As a number of historians have argued, it was not the medicalization of childbirth, *per se*, which lead to women's loss of control over the birthing process but, rather, the shift to medical institutions.[69]

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[65] IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; IRFSJ, CHE, Lucia Fex Beaulac; IRFSJ, AGG, Liane David.

[66] Nanci Langford makes the point that the English-speaking women in her study were cut off from the traditional female support in childbirth. "They had no regular access to the care and knowledge of mothers, sisters and aunts, or even of friends and neighbours..." (p. 280). For women supporting each other through pregnancy, labour, and delivery in Quebec, see Lemieux and Mercier, pp. 189-190.

[67] IRFSJ, GEG, Delia Pelletier Benoît; IRFSJ, REG, Sylvia Gagnon Dubé; IRFSJ, AGG, Angéline Bilodeau Gobeil; PRHF, Irène Boivin Ricard; IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine St. Pierre Fex; IRFSJ, ARD, Albertine Belland Gill; IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chevigny Piquette; PRHF, Marie Blanchette Mencke; PRHF, Mme Briand Turcotte.

[68] Leavitt, p. 36; Gorham, " p. 388.
Apart from the two experienced *accoucheurs*, husbands were sometimes obliged to take an active part in the delivery. One male respondent claimed to have delivered seven of his own children, all born before help could arrive (IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview). In the later period, at least one husband chose to stay by his wife's side even when there were female assistants. Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

[69] Gorham, p. 391; Leavitt, p. 173.

The transition from home to hospital deliveries was due to the medical profession's appropriation of childbearing, doctor's belittlement of midwifery, and to birthing mothers' own desire to obtain better medical care.[70] Despite the competence of many midwives, the familiarity and comfort of the home environment, and the support of female friends and relatives, pain and fear of death was a reality for turn-of-the century Franco-Albertan women. Many had lost female kin as a result of childbirth-related causes. Yvonne Hurtubise and Blanche Fluet's mothers both died during childbirth as did Eva Gagnon's aunt and mother-in-law.[71] Other women had themselves felt the 'shadow of maternity'.[72] In 1919, Germaine Crouzé nearly died from a hemorrhage following a miscarriage in the seventh month of a pregnancy. She recovered but remained ill for over a year.[73] Such close calls reinforced the dangers of pregnancy. Believing that hospitals with their attendant professional staff and technological and medical innovations in obstetrics provided additional security against the perils of childbirth, Franco-Albertan women, like women elsewhere in North America, increasingly chose to bear their children in medical institutions.[74]

Yet, there is little evidence that hospitalization did much to reduce maternal mortality rates.[75] Maternal deaths remained high across the country until the late 1930s. Nationally, maternal mortality rates were as high as 5.7 per thousand live births

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70 Gorham, p. 389; Leavitt, Chapter 7, pp. 171-195; Pierson, Lévesque and Arnup, "Introduction," in Delivering Motherhood, p. xvii; Strong-Boag, The New Day, pp. 154-155.

71 IRFSJ, AGG 17.1-17.16 & 20.13-21.4, Eva Gagnon Charest; PAA, Accession no. P77.219, Blanche Fluet Staniland.

72 Used by Leavitt in Brought to Bed, p. 20.

73 PAA, Accession no. 81.279/103, Germaine Crouzé interviewed by Eliane Silverman, June 1976.

74 IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Laplante Husereau; PRHF, Florida Trudeau Briand.

75 Two studies, the first by Jo Oppenheimer, "Childbirth in Ontario: The Transition from Home to Hospital in the Early Twentieth Century," (pp. 51-74) the second by Strong-Boag and Katherine McPherson, "The Confinement of Women: Childbirth and hospitalization in Vancouver, 1919-1939,"(pp. 75-107) in Pierson, Lévesque and Arnup, eds., Delivering Motherhood, indicate that reduction in maternal deaths did not result from hospitalization.

in 1921-25. They had declined to 4.9 by 1937 but did not drop to 4.2 until 1938. Throughout the 1920s, Alberta maternal mortality rates, at 6.3 and 6.6 per thousand live births between 1921-25 and 1926-30 respectively, were the highest in the country. They dropped during the 1930s but continued to fluctuate throughout the decade, from a high of 5.8 in 1936 to a low of 3.6 in 1939.[76] The introduction of sulpha drugs to combat sepsis in the late 1930s along with better public health care and, especially, improved socio-economic conditions account for much of this decline.[77]

The campaign to improve sanitation and public health was largely derived from concerns about high infant and child mortality rates which, in turn, were a consequence of the First World War's devastating impact on Canada's population. The loss of lives led to mounting social concerns over the high Canadian child mortality rates. Infant mortality was particularly worrisome. In Alberta, for example, 9.4% of all children born in 1920 died in their first year of life.[78] The mortality rates of infants in the Franco-Albertan community appears to have been equally high.[79] One can only guess at the heavy emotional toll on mothers such as Lilly Beaudry who lost three infants in the decade prior to 1919.[80] The life chances of Canadian children began to

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[76] Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Vital Statistics, 1939-40, D.B.S. 84-202, Table 17,"Maternal mortality by province, 1921-39," p. 28.

[77] Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled, p. 153; Pierson, Lévesque and Arnup, "Introduction," Delivering Motherhood, p. xvii; Light and Pierson, No Easy Road, pp. 168-169.

[78] Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Vital Statistics, 1921-22, D.B.S. 84-202, Table 5,"Infant mortality by totals for provinces, 1921 and 1920, ..." p. xiii.

[79] Assuming that infant mortality was equally distributed across ethnic groups in the province, one would expect to find relatively the same proportion of infant mortality cases as the proportional population representation of each group. This is the case for Franco-Albertans who accounted for 5.1% of the population in the province and 5.5% of infant mortality cases in 1939. The greatest discrepancies occurred in the British (51.8% of the population but only 29.8% of provincial infant mortality cases), Ukrainian (8.2 % of the population but 13.8 % of infant deaths) and Native people (only 1.6% of the population but 17.7% of infant deaths). Compiled from Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Vital Statistics, 1939-40, D.B.S. 84-202, Table 45,"Deaths of children under one year of age ..." p. 135 and Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Table 35, p. 994.

[80] PAA, Accession no. 81.249 SE, "History of Lilly Beaudry and Firmin Morin".

improve partly as a result of expanding provincial and federal public-health bureaucracies, with their departments of public health and child welfare. Within these government agencies and numerous private institutions, health experts such as Helen MacMurchy, pushed for uncontaminated milk and water supplies, immunization, and increased pre- and post-natal care by nurses and doctors.[81] Better nutrition and improved working and living conditions for expectant mothers further contributed to the decline of infant mortality, especially in the Post-World War II period.[82]

6.6 THE CARE OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN:

After giving birth, whether at home or in the hospital, women were confined to complete bedrest for at least nine days. While most were thankful for this brief respite from the heavy workload, some were impatient with the prolonged period of inactivity.[83] During the confinement, female relatives and neighbours or hired girls looked after the housework and took care of the couple's older children. With homebirths, these attendants also provided post-natal care to the mother and newborn. The bedridden woman spent her time getting acquainted with the new baby and receiving visitors, relatives and neighbours, eager to offer congratulations and inspect the new addition to the family.[84]

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[81] The material on the campaign against infant mortality is drawn from Katherine Arnup, Education for Motherhood, Chapter 1, pp. 14-31.

[82] Prentice, et al., Canadian Women, p. 323. The causes of the decline in Canadian maternal and child mortality rates have not been precisely identified and the issue is still hotly debated among historians. For a good summary of this debate, see: Arnup, Education for Motherhood, pp. 136-139.

[83] IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Coté.

[84] IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette; IRFSJ, REG, Anna Grenier Girard; IRFSJ, REG, Group interview; IRFSJ, AGG, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux.

The newborn did not become a full member of the community, however, until the baptismal rites were performed. The high infant mortality rates meant that the baptism could not be delayed since an unbaptized soul would be barred from heaven. The ceremony usually took place within the first three days of the child's life. In especially inclement weather, when it was believed that a long trip out of doors would endanger the life of the child, the parish priest performed the rites in the parents' home.[85] More often than not, the bedridden mother missed the baptism. Her absence, it has been suggested, related to traditional beliefs which held that a woman, whose body after giving birth was in a state of upheaval and disorder, was too impure to appear before God.[86] Franco-Albertan women were likely not aware of the reasons behind the prohibition since they accepted their absence from this important ritual in their children's lives with equanimity.[87]

A name for the child was sometimes chosen by the god-parents but final approval rested with the parents. By tradition, all boys received the first name Joseph and all girls the name Marie. This could present problems in Alberta. One respondent mentioned old-age pension cheques of numerous male siblings all made out in the same name.[88] To the first name was added a second or a third -sometimes a god-parent's name, the name of a famous person or simply a name well-liked- by which the child would be known. Parents were often quite creative in their choice of names. Odina Bourassa's name, for example, was derived from Odile, her mother's name.[89] A distinct pattern in naming children emerges over the years. Whereas the first settlers often had old-fashioned, unusual names such as Lumina, Tarsélia, Panteléon, Théodé, Edmé,

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[85] Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author; IRFSJ, REG, Juliette De Moissac; IRFSJ, REG, Group interview; IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.
[86] Lemieux and Mercier, Les femmes au tournant, p. 201.
[87] IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette; IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Coté.
[88] IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.
[89] IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

Célerine, Adjuton and Exelona, the next generation of Franco-Albertans were given more simple, perhaps more 'stylish' but certainly less creative names such as Jacques, André, Marguerite, Cécile and Jeanne.

The child was considered a baby for the first year of life or, as one of the respondents specified, until the next one came along.[90] The mother's use of endearing names such as, "mon p'tit minou" and " mon p'tit chou" conferred baby status as did the child's hair which, as a rule was not cut until after the first birthday. When it was, a lock was kept to mark the event. Other milestones in the child's early life, the first tooth, smile, words and steps were noted with pleasure and pride. Parents found it difficult not to boast about their children's early accomplishments. One mother recalled that her especially precocious son was talking at one, reading at five, and as an eight-year-old performed operations on chickens.[91] Even when children displayed little unusual talents, parents were thankful for their health and protected them as best they could and, for added security, invoked the children's "anges gardiens" to watch over them.[92]

The care of mothers extended to their offspring's moral education. As soon as children could speak, they were taught to recite short prayers by heart. Many mothers had to continue their children's religious instruction past infancy since access to a Catholic education was not always available. Jeanne Nobert described how, after the family's settlement in southern Alberta, her mother had taken over this responsibility previously assumed by nuns at the Quebec convent school the children had attended:

> On s'assisait autour d'elle, ... puis elle nous montrait le catéchisme ... Il fallait apprendre nos réponses. Elle a continué comme le couvent nous avait montré, apprendre ça par coeur, donner une petite explication,

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90 IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.

91 For all his talents, the boy did not take up a career in medicine. IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.

92 IRFSJ, REG, Zéa Chévigny Piquette.

> plus ou moins. On a tous fait notre première communion, confirmation. C'est de même que ça continuait.[93]

Out of necessity, some mothers also taught their children to read and write French.[94]

Beyond providing for their children's physical survival and supervising their moral and linguistic development, Franco-Albertan mothers had little time left to spend on other activities, despite the growing importance of the discourse of child care professionals about the necessity of closely guiding children's physical, intellectual and emotional development. Especially prevalent in the inter-war years, Canadian infant and childcare advice literature, rooted in behaviourist theories and scientific management principles, promoted the regimentation and scheduling of all aspects of childhood.[95] The western Franco-Catholic press forwarded a similar message. For example, the early 1930s women's column of La Survivance advocated childrearing methods based on order and habit.[96] But since childcare had to be juggled around mothers' numerous domestic responsibilities, Franco-Albertan women's childrearing methods largely continued to be based on the practical and traditional. This is evident in Rose-Anna Baillargeon's attempt to reduce the conflict between farmwork and childcare. For seven or eight years following the birth of her first child in the early 1920s, Rose-Anna brought her children to the fields with her. She placed the babies and toddlers in a large box with a straw mattress in the bottom and a screen on top. Her three- or four-year-olds remained outside the box amusing the younger children inside and warning Rose-Anna of potential problems.[97] Just as childrearing was interwoven

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93 IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Nobert Hamel.

94 IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview; IRFSJ, AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau; Bertin, Du vent Gatinel, pp. 113-114.

95 Veronica Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five, 1920-1940," in Joy Parr, ed., Childhood and Family in Canadian History, pp. 172-176; Light and Pierson, No Easy Road, pp. 171-173.

96 La Survivance, 4 mai 1932, 26 avril and 11 octobre 1933, 15 août 1934, 6 mars 1935.

97 IRFSJ, GEG, Rose-Anna Baillargeon Audet.

with mothers' work, so was work linked to children's development. They were kept busy and acquired skills by giving parents a hand at a very early age.

Despite the apparent predominance of traditional childrearing practices, there is some indication that inter-war Franco-Albertan mothers were receptive to the advice of childcare experts, especially regarding the use of oral forms of entertainment. The older generation loved to tell stories of *loups-garous* and *revenants* to distract and entertain children. Some tales carried messages about good and evil and served to teach moral values to youngsters. Others were used to ensure discipline, to keep children in after dark, for example.[98] The younger generation of francophones who became parents during the 1920s and 1930s seldom approved of telling children such stories.[99] This was perhaps a result of their increasing exposure to the experts' messages advocating rational and scientific childcare. Children were not to be misled by such fantastical yarns.[100]

6.7 NURSING THE SICK AND INJURED:

Mothering was a seemingly never-ending responsibility and mothers had to be constantly vigilant of their children's health and lives. The reminiscences of the francophone women reveal the multitude of dangers awaiting youngsters. One parental worry was that children would get lost in the forests which in the northern

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98 IRFSJ, RAM, Aurore Bouressa Plamondon; IRFSJ, AGG, Jacqueline Sylvestre Baker; IRFSJ, AGG, Agathe Megnan St. Pierre; IRFSJ, AGG, Eva Gegnon Charest; IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview; IRFSJ, AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau; IRFSJ, ARD Alberta Viel Fréchette.

99 IRFSJ, AGG, Célerine Morin L'Heureux; IRFSJ, REG, Anna Grenier Girard; IRFSJ, AGG, Blanche Lapiante Husereau.

100 Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," p. 176. The increasing literacy of the western francophone population may also have contributed to the gradual displacement of oral forms of entertainment.

part of the province surrounded the homesteads, or in the tall grasses covering the southern plains. Prairie and forest fires as well as house fires could trap children and adults alike. Broken limbs and fatalities from falls -from trees, into wells, etc.- were not uncommon, nor were accidents with guns and horses, important tools of pioneer farms with which children worked at an early age. In overcrowded homes, youngsters often had access to poisons of various kinds such as lye and moonshine. More feared than any of these dangers, however, were the various diseases that afflicted children. The extreme temperatures throughout much of the province and the poor housing conditions of many pioneer families led to colds, pneumonia, and frostbite. Intestinal disorders caused mostly by contaminated water and milk were not unheard of in the West. But more common were contagious diseases which particularly afflicted children and often proved fatal: tuberculosis, smallpox, whooping cough, scarlet fever, meningitis, and diphtheria.[101]

During illnesses, Franco-Albertan mothers devoted themselves unsparingly to comfort, ease the suffering, and bring about the recovery of their children. The respondents mentioned but did not dwell on the worry, work and fatigue they endured nursing children back to health. When more than one child was sick at a time, as was often the case in large families, women were left drained by the demands on their time and energy. When the ten David children came down with the measles, their mother

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101 For fear of losing children, see PRHF, Mathilda Drolet Blanchette and PRHF, Maria Hébert Michaud; for dangers of forest and prairie fires, IRFSJ, AGG, Liane David and PAA, Accession no. p73582, Alma Fortin Leblanc; for falls, IRFSJ, SHB, Armandine Ouimet Corbière and IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bouressa Côté; for accidents with guns, horses and poison, PRHF, Eva Léonard Lafrance, and PRHF, Cécile Houde Aubin; for colds and pneumonia, IRFSJ, AGG Fleurette Vaugeois Roberge. Contagious diseases took numerous children. See: IRFSJ, ARP, Marie-Louise Paradis Charbonneau, IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine Villeneuve Megnan; IRFSJ, ARD, Berthe Joly Marcoux, IRFSJ, AGG, Emma Poirier. In her correspondence written during her years of practice in northern Alberta, Dr. Mary Percy Jackson refers to treating patients for intestinal disorders as a result of contaminated water. Suitable for the Wilds: Letters from Northern Alberta, 1929-1931. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) p. 27.

hardly slept for three weeks and finally had to be relieved by an aunt.[102] This was surely often the case during epidemics when whole families were struck down. In the memories of the women, the Spanish Influenza of the winter of 1919-20 was the most notable. Then, women were not the only ones to nurse the afflicted; any family member spared cared for sick parents and siblings.[103] But women who escaped the infection were more likely to extend their care to the community, at their own risk since there was little understanding of the disease, how it spread and how it could be prevented.[104]

To treat people with influenza and others suffering with a variety of aches and ills, Franco-Albertan women relied heavily on folk or popular medicine. In rural areas, the isolation of many francophone settlers, the rarity and expense of doctors, as well as the distance to pharmacies and hospitals meant that most illnesses were treated at home and that commercial medicines were few. Remedies were made using products readily available in the home or found in nature. It was generally believed that colds, fever and pneumonia, in fact any number of diseases, were caused by cold and could be cured by applying heat.[105] Mustard and onion plasters were therefore frequently applied to the chest and back. To prevent or draw out infections from cuts, boils and abcesses, poultices of boiled flax, hot milk and bread, or salt-pork were used. For burns, salves made with goose, bear, skunk, or other animal fat were applied. A teaspoon of coal oil served as both a cough remedy and for expelling intestinal worms; cigarette or pipe smoke blown in infected ears relieved earaches.[106] Franco-Albertan mothers did

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102 IRFSJ, AGG, Liane David.

103 IRFSJ, ARP, Anna Guay Caron.

104 IRFSJ, LER, Antoinette Hermary; IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine St. Pierre Fex; IRFSJ, AGG, Béatrice Fex Gamache; IRFSJ, AGG, Angéline Bilodeau Gobeil.

105 Horace Miner found this to be a common belief among the parishioners of St. Denis (p. 132).

106 For the use of mustard and onion plasters, see: IRFSJ, Delia Pelletier Benoit and IRFSJ, AGG, Elizabeth Charbonneau Royer; for treatments to prevent infection: IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé and IRFSJ, AGG, Jeannette Villeneuve Lavigne; for burns:

not restrict themselves to curing; they also provided preventative treatments such as the yearly spring purging, usually achieved by ingesting sulphur and molasses, meant to "cleanse the blood and clear the bowels."[107]

These remedies were, as a rule, traditional knowledge handed down through the generations, from mothers to daughters,[108] and brought West by the settlers. Alongside these, Franco-Albertans borrowed cures from western Métis and Native healers. To treat her children's diphteria, Liane David's mother was advised by Indian neighbours to use as a demulcent the oil from the stink glands of a skunk mixed with sugar.[109] After watching a Native woman treat a sufferer's abcess by first chewing then preparing a decoction of plantain leaves to apply as a poultice, Germaine St. Pierre's mother added the plant to the family's medicine chest.[110] Medicinal herbs and plants were commonly used by francophone women, some adopted after contact with Native people. While mint, yarrow, and black poplar bud teas were used as antipyretics, willow, highbush cranberries, and raspberry root and stem infusions were ingested to purify the blood, strenghten the heart, and alleviate abdominal cramps and diarrhea.[111]

To increase the effectiveness of such remedies or when they failed to bring about the desired cure, francophone women asked for divine intervention, by praying,

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IRFSJ, AGG, Dorilda Nault Désilets; for treatment using cigarette smoke: IRFSJ, JUR, Cécile Blouin Préville and IRFSJ, AGG, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé.

107 Norah Lewis, "Goose Grease And Turpentine: Mother Treats the Family Illnesses," in Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds. Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, Second Edition (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991) p. 241. According to Lewis, the practice of the spring tonic was common in most homesteading families. For the treatment in Franco-Alberten families, see: IRFSJ, AGG, Béatrice Fex Gamache; IRFSJ, DEL, Gaëtane Côté Dion; IRFSJ, AGG, Elizabeth Charbonneau Royer.

108 According to Zéa Chevigny Piquette, mothers passed on their medical recipes to their daughters at marriage. (IRFSJ, REG).

109 IRFSJ, AGG, Liane David.

110 IRFSJ, AGG, Germaine St. Pierre Fex.

111 IRFSJ, AGG, Anne-Marie Paradis Demers; IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté; IRFSJ, GEG, Pierrette Chénard; IRFSJ, REG, Angélina Boulanger; PRHF, Béatrice Chailler Bruneau; IRFSJ, ARD, Berthe Joly Mercoux.

or by using consecrated objects. Holy water brought from Quebec reportedly cured earaches suffered by Germaine Généreux's brother. Germaine went on to use the water to help others suffering similar pains.[112] Another woman "avait bien confiance à l'huile de St. Joseph."[113] Numerous Franco-Albertans resorted to traditional faith healers who practiced within the community. Several respondents claim to possess or to have known someone with such healing abilities and could thus personally attest to their effectiveness.[114] By touching the affected areas with the hands, or more rarely by simply thinking of the sufferer, these healers were purported to have the ability to stop bleeding, minimize the pains and scars from burns, or remove boils and warts. The latter remedy was based more on magic than on faith since healers placed special importance on the performance of specific rituals "owing as much to incantation as to prayer."[115] To remove boils, for example, Rose-Anna Baillargeon used a consecrated wedding ring with which, using her left hand, she circled the rising sun three times saying: "... clou, disparaît comme t'es venu."[116] Faith healers did not know why they had special gifts but those of seventh sons or daughters were deemed to be hereditary.[117] And it was generally believed that healing gifts could only be passed on to members of the opposite sex.[118] Franco-Albertan communities also had

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112 IRFSJ, JUR, Germaine Généreux Hamel.

113 IRFSJ, DEL, Gaëtane Côté Dion. In Quebec, Saint Joseph was believed to have a particular ability for healing. See: Horace Miner, pp. 120-121; Luc Lacourcière, "A Survey of Folk Medicine in French Canada from Early Times to the Present," in Wayland D. Hand, ed., American Folk Medicine: A Symposium (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) p. 205.

114 IRFSJ, ARD, Annie Ayotte Chrétien; IRFSJ, ARD, Marie-Louise Blanchette Dion; IRFSJ AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau; IRFSJ, ARD, Lucienne Langevin Laing; IRFSJ, AGG, Célerine Morin L'Heureux.

115 Lacourcière, "A Survey of Folk Medicine," p. 212.

116 IRFSJ, GEG 6.40-6.77, Rose-Anna Baillargeon Audet.

117 Belief in the healing capacity of the seventh child, especially of seventh sons, goes back to the Europe of the Middle Ages. Robertson Cochrane, "A deluge of sons and sevens," Globe and Mail, September 3, 1994.

118 Miner also noted this "alternate-sex rule." (p. 118).

remancheurs, or bonesetters. These were often men and like faith healers, they offered their services free of charge.[119]

This reliance on traditional healers and folk medicine had to do with Franco-Albertans' need for self-reliance. Most francophones were not opposed to professional medical care nor were they hesitant to use medical knowledge when it was available and affordable. To treat their family's illnesses, parents thus tended to combine a variety of approaches, ranging from contemporary medical information to traditional folk practices. In Sarah Poirier's family, for example, her father read pertinent sections from the family's home care manual, while her mother carried out the instructions. Mrs Poirier also regularly made use of folk recipes and cures.[120] Like the Poiriers, many families owned home treatment manuals which could be purchased from a variety of suppliers, including Eaton's Mail Order Catalogue.[121] And by the 1920s and 1930s, the medical supplies of many homes included antiseptics such as iodine and hydrogen peroxide, and a variety of commercial medicines available from local stores, mail order catalogues, and travelling salesmen.[122]

6.8 THE CARE OF ORPHANED AND DISABLED CHILDREN AND DEPENDENT ADULTS:

To Franco-Albertan women's work and responsibilities of housekeeping, mothering, and nursing were added the care of orphaned and disabled children and dependent adults. For many women, caring for others could extend a lifetime to

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119 IRFSJ, GEG, Marie-Luce Thibeault Ouellette; IRFSJ, AGG, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau.
120 IRFSJ, ARD, Sarah Poirier Girard.
121 Norah Lewis, p. 237.
122 IRFSJ, ARD, Alberta Viel Fréchette; IRFSJ, AGG, Jeanne Langevin Gagné; IRFSJ, IRT, Lucille Préfontaine Bergevin; IRFSJ, ARD, Simone Bergeron Blouin; IRFSJ, ARD, Alice Boisjoly Landry; IRFSJ, ARD, Berthe Joly Mercoux.

encompass the care of disabled offspring and siblings, ailing spouses, and aging parents and relatives. Children orphaned by the death of close relatives were often integrated into the family unit. Antoinette Lajoie, after raising thirteen of her own children, took in her nephew following the death of both his parents in the 1920 influenza epidemic.[123] For other families, the adjustment that had to be made to accomodate the newcomers may have been greater. When Gaëtane Côté's mother died in 1930, her father, unable to cope with his six children, aged three to eleven, placed them in a convent school. A few years later, all six were taken in by an aunt who had but one child. Although Gaëtane reveals little about those years, and the reminiscences of the aunt are absent, the instantaneous acquisition of such a large family could not have been easy.[124]

The care of dependent adults also fell to women. When mothers were incapacitated or died as a result of illness or injuries, oldest daughters living at home became surrogate mothers. Burdened at an early age with the care and responsibility of the family and household, some never married and, in their adult years continued to look after aging parents. Even after marriage, daughters, more often than sons, sheltered and nursed elderly parents. Marie-Anne Leblanc's parents moved in with her family in 1924. She cared for them until they passed away, her mother in 1929, her father in 1935. He had been paralyzed for five years. Marie-Anne and her parents were some of the first settlers in the Donnelly-Falher region in 1912. By 1935, she was no longer living in a log shack but amenities such as running water, which would have made her job of caring for an invalid easier, were still lacking.[125] The care of in-laws was more difficult to assume since the bonds of love and duty were considerably weaker. Lucienne Langevin found it impossibe to juggle her five children with work

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123 IRFSJ, ARD, Antoinette Lajoie Charron.
124 IRFSJ, DEL, Gaëtane Côté Dion.
125 IRFSJ, GEG, Marie-Anne Leblanc Grevel.

in the family store and the guardianship of her incontinent mother-in-law. Other arrangements were eventually made for the elderly woman's care.[126]

Possibly even more demanding for women, but for different reasons, was the care of disabled husbands or children. Children born with mental and physical disabilities were not uncommon and many more became handicapped as a result of accidents and disease. The lack of institutional facilities meant that most of these children, except for the worst cases of mental illness, were cared for in the home.[127] For mothers, a disabled child was a constant source of grief: guilt for what might have been prevented and sadness at lost possibilities.[128]

Disease and accidents also eroded the health of husbands. Their illnesses and disabilities could be devastating for the household; not only did women have to devote much time to their care but medical expenses compounded by the loss of labour and income could easily result in hardship and poverty for the family. The best account of the repercussions of a father's illness was given by Angéline Van Brabant whose father was bedridden for the last five years of his life. Gentiel was a demanding man and an even more exacting patient whose wife Anna's ministrations, no matter how devoted, never completely appeased his fears, frustrations and anger. Along with these concerns, Anna had to shoulder the responsibilities and labour of the farm, her children being too young to carry much of the burden. These demands and her anxiety about providing for her family, took their toll. More than half a century later, daughter Angéline tearfully reflected on the lack of affection in the household and their dysfunctional family life.[129]

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126 IRFSJ, ARD, Lucienne Langevin Laing.
127 IRFSJ, REG, Group Interview.
128 IRFSJ, DEL, Aurore Pronovost Prévost; IRFSJ, ARD, Lucienne Langevin Laing.
129 Angéline Van Brabant Couture, interview conducted by author.

6.9 COPING WITH DEATH:

The Van Brabant family's financial situation worsened with Gentiel's death. To provide for herself and her four children, Anna resorted to a number of strategies, some of which proved unworkable. After renting her farm, she took a house in a nearby town but unable to make ends meet, moved in with her recently-widowed brother. Conflicts between her four children and his five convinced her that she was better off on her own. After moving out, she maintained her own household by cleaning banks after hours with her children's help. Eight years after her husband's death, with her three sons finally old enough (thirteen to eighteen) to work, she moved back to the farm.[130] Anna's travails illustrate the vulnerability of widows, their determination to survive, and a few of the limited options available to them: difficult yet poorly remunerated waged-work, reliance on children's labour and on kin for assistance.[131]

Farm women without husbands had an especially difficult time maintaining farm operations especially if their children were not yet of working age, even when husbands had made provisions for their widows. Although farm women were used to fending for themselves when their husbands had to be absent, sometimes for months on end, most were nevertheless unprepared to take over completely the work and responsibilities involved in running a farm, especially since these duties came in conflict with childcare.[132]

For widows with children of working-age, however, farming could be more attractive than poorly paid waged-labour in towns and cities. This is certainly evident

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[130] Ibid.

[131] Anna's plight resembles that outlined by Bettina Bradbury and Suzanne Morton for working class widows in Montreal and Halifax respectively. Bradbury, Working Families, pp. 182-213; Morton, Ideal Surroundings, pp. 88-107.

[132] IRFSJ, JUR, Alberta Viel Fréchette.

in Anne's case; she moved back to the farm as soon as her children were old enough to lend a hand. Along with the widows already on farms who chose to remain after their husbands' deaths, there were three respondents' families headed by widows which turned to farming in order to make ends meet. The widows Marie-Anne Gravel and Cécile Hébert, immigrated to Alberta, in 1912 and 1915 respectively, to take up homesteads in their own names. Marie-Anne had earned a living for herself and her two small children by working in the woolen mills of New Hampshire. She disliked the work and was happy to accompany her parents and siblings when they chose to emigrate to the Canadian West. Cécile used the money from a life insurance claim her husband had held to establish her family of seven in Alberta. Both widows worked their own land but had the help and support of kin: Marie-Anne had her parents, sister and brother-in-law living nearby, while Cécile had the assistance of her brother until her eldest son left school at fourteen to help full-time.[133] Much less is known about the move to the land of the third family, but it appears that two older daughters of the widow Eliza Blain took the opportunity offered by the 1930 amendment to the Dominion Lands Act which allowed women over eighteen, and not just heads of families, to apply for a homestead. In 1936, after thirteen years of trying to eke out a living in the village of Fort Kent on paid work and a mother's monthly allowance of $25, the family of nine moved to the land.[134]

Many widows, on the other hand, had little choice but move to towns and cities and work for wages to support their families. Looking at the distribution of Franco-Albertan widows across the province in 1936, this seems to have been a frequent option. The census that year lists 699 French-speaking widows in Alberta. While twice

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133 IRFSJ, GEG, Marie-Anne Gravel Leblanc; PRHF, Marie Hébert Michaud.

134 IRFSJ, AGG, Olivine Blain Lefèbvre. The Mothers' Allowance Act, enacted in 1919, provided publicly-funded relief to poor widows. Elise Corbet, "Alberta Women in the 1920s: An Inquiry into Four Aspects of Their Lives," M. A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1979, p. 17.

more francophone women lived in rural areas than in urban centres (12,422 as opposed to 6,368), only half the widows (352) lived in the countryside.[135] In her brief autobiography, Juliette Morin describes the struggle that she waged to survive as a poor working class widow with four children. Following her husband's death in 1934, she moved to Edmonton to be near her parents. She had accumulated savings of $50 from the auction of farm tools and implements.

> I was paying $15.00 a month for a comfortable house [with] four rooms, by then I was able to get the widow allowance, $15.00 a month, which help pay my rent. ... Being so close to my parent[s] helped me with [the] children while I went to work. ... I started to work for Dr. Morris Weinslow Office ... every wednesday morning, and a few other places such as Mrs. Thibault, Pigeon Daignault every saturday and my dearest friend, Mrs. Cantin ... every Monday. She sure encoureged me to marry Wilfred instead of working so hard ... . I also took in washing and did housework for 25¢ an hr, which kept me and my boys in food and clothes. I also did washing for 9 or 10 priests, for $15.00 a month... . I was also cleaning the Leroy Beauty Parlor every wednesday afternoon, besides my own housework, washing, etc. ... . It was hard work, but my boys André and Léonard were a great help, they would come after school and help with the waxing and polishing... . I would go to bed around 1 or 2 o'clock and up next morning at 6 A.M. and did this kind of work for 9 1/2 years.[136]

Not surprisingly, to alleviate such insecurity and backbreaking labour, many widows chose the solution proposed by Mrs Cantin. Financial difficulties may have forced many to form alliances relatively quickly after a husband's death. Laura Chapleau, for example, who was widowed in June 1914 with four children to care for, remarried before the year was out.[137] It would appear that in the West, likely because of the greater ratio of males to females, widows had a better chance of finding a second husband than widows in central and eastern Canadian cities.[138] Of the fifteen Franco-

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135 Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Table 22, p. 930.

136 IRFSJ, D019 "My biography" by Juliette Morin, p. 10.

137 PRHF, Laura Chapleau Adam.

138 Bradbury and Morton, in their respective studies of Montreal and Halifax, both note the unlikelyhood of widows, especially older ones, of remarrying. Bradbury, Working Families, p. 85; Morton, Ideal Surroundings, pp. 96-97.

Albertan widows in this study whose subsequent marital status is known, eight remarried.[139]

Marriage, however, whether a first or a second, by no means ensured financial security. Desertion, separation, and divorce could leave women temporarily or permanently in charge of their household. Although infrequent in Canada for the period of this study, and, in principle, impossible for practicing Roman Catholics, there are nonetheless twenty-eight divorced Franco-Albertan women listed in the 1936 census.[140] Since none of the respondents or their mothers divorced, there is no information about the difficulties these women might have encountered. However, two respondents belonged to families abandoned by the father.[141] These abandoned women had virtually no legal protection and no right to public relief.[142] The situation undoubtedly spelled hardship for the family. Abandoned by the father in the 1910s, the Mercier family was forced to live on the $4 weekly wage of the eldest daughter.[143] In such cases, charity may have been the only recourse.

Owning property provided women heads of the household the best chance of achieving financial security. But since married women did not usually have property in their own name[144] and many husbands died without having accumulated much wealth, most widows had to live without that security. Few Franco-Albertan respondents were in fact well-provided for in their widowhood. Cécile Gagnon, the wife of Jean Léon Côté, surveyor, entrepreneur, member of the Alberta Legislature(1909-1923), and Senator (1923-1924), was left a large house in Edmonton

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139 There were seventeen widows altogether, but the subsequent marital status of two is unknown.

140 Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Table 22, p. 930.

141 IRFSJ, D017, Interview No. 8, Bérengère Mercier; IRFSJ, Madeleine Periseau Welter.

142 Catherine Cavanaugh, "The Limitations of the Pioneering Partnership: The Alberta Campaign for Homestead Dower, 1909-25," CHR, Vol. LXXIV, No. 2, 1993, pp. 208-209.

143 IRFSJ, D017, Interview No. 8, Bérengère Mercier.

144 Cavanaugh, pp. 198-225.

upon her husband's death. For all his money, her financial situation after his passing may not have been very rosy since during the Depression, she subdivided her house into four suites.[145] Only a few widows in this study were in fact financially well-off. The widow Tétreau was left to administer a farm, a store, and five houses upon the death of her husband in 1913.[146] Annette Berry, for her part, took over from her husband as manager of a mine in Coal Valley.[147]

Although the death of children had less serious financial repercussions, mothers did not resign themselves easily to their loss. This despite the Church's reassurance that their children had been specially chosen for the Kingdom of Heaven and women's own willingness to surrender to the will of God. Dorilla Pellerin never recovered from the death of her fourteen-year-old son in 1931. The manner of his passing, from drinking moonshine, likely accentuated her pain since she and her husband held themselves partially responsible for the accident.[148] The sense of loss seems to have had little relationship to the age of the child with the death of a toddler often as devastating as the death of an older child, especially when parents believed the child had suffered before dying. Juliette Morin's grief is poignant in her brief description of the death of her fifteen-month-old daughter.

> On April 11, 1928, our dear little girl passed away after two days[']
> sickness with spinal meningitis, she had 94 convulsions in 32 hours. ... I
> was quite sick with [the] shock of losing my little girl when [sic] I loved
> so much. I don't remember for two days.[149]

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145 J. G. Côté, "J. L. Côté, Surveyor," Alberta History, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Autumn 1983), p. 29.

146 PRHF, Sr. Angéline Tétreau.

147 There is no indication how the French and Belgian mine owners reacted to her or how long she acted as manager; it may have been only for the interim period until a replacement was found. PAA, p68.6, Interview with Mme Annette Berry, by N. Radford, Dec. 1967.

148 Bourgeois Tenove, "Canada, My Home," pp. 449-451.

149 IRFSJ, D019 "My biography" by Juliette Morin, pp. 7-8.

The needs of their remaining children often kept women going. The support of family and neighbours and of the community as a whole as shown through mourning practices, such as that of "vieiller le corps," were also extremely important during the early period of grieving. After female relatives and friends had washed and dressed the body, it was laid out for at least two days and nights in the home of the bereaved family. Friends and relatives of the deceased congregated at the house taking turn reciting the rosary throughout the days and nights. This show of sympathy and solidarity with the family as well as other funeral customs, including the wearing of mourning, eased the passage of the individual out of the family and society.[150] The inability of satisfactorily fulfilling these rites of passage left some mothers unable to overcome their grief. When Odina Bourassa's twenty-two-year-old sister died from tuberculosis in 1916, she was buried, like many, in a homemade coffin. Mrs. Bourassa never overcame her anguish at being unable to provide a 'proper' casket for her beloved daughter.[151]

6.10 CONCLUSION:

At the turn of the twentieth century, motherhood -childbearing and childrearing- consumed the adult lives of many married Franco-Albertan women. It was not uncommon for women of large families to spend up to twenty-five years or more pregnant, giving birth, or recovering from delivery. At the same time, the ideology of motherhood, pervasive in French and English Canada, taught them that maternity was both their duty and their most important contribution to society. The

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150 Miner, pp. 220-221.

151 IRFSJ, REG, Odina Bourassa Côté.

Catholic Church reinforced this message by insisting that procreation was the fundamental goal of marriage and by prohibiting all forms of contraception. Although Franco-Albertan women tended to accept pregnancies as God's will and a woman's lot, Prairie francophone women's declining fertility rates over the period suggest that although they might have stayed away from the use of mechanical means of birth control they still managed to prevent and space pregancies, likely through continence and withdrawal.

Because of the importance of pregnancy and childbirth for Franco-Albertan women, these events were incorporated into the rhythms of their lives. Before the mid-1930s, francophone women gave birth at home attended by experienced midwives or female neighbours and kin. But the pain of childbirth and women's fear of dying combined with the Canadian campaigns for greater medicalization of childbirth to reduce infant and maternal mortality led to the hospitalization of the childbearing process. By the end of the 1930s, most Franco-Albertan women were giving birth to their children in institutions. This younger generation of mothers was also increasingly exposed to the professionals' recommendations of the need for close maternal supervision, regimentation, and scheduling of children's development. But it is not clear whether or not they adopted these 'modern' childrearing methods. They seem to have largely continued to use practical and traditional methods of childrearing.

Women's domestic responsibilities also included nursing sick and injured family members and caring for orphaned children and elderly relatives. These duties were physically demanding and time consuming and could stretch a lifetime. To treat their family's injuries and illnesses, Franco-Albertan women resorted to a variety of measures ranging from putting their fate in God, to using the services of faith healers, and employing herbal recipes and traditional folk cures. By the 1930s, a greater number of families were using commercial medicines and depending on medical professionals when these were available and affordable. Franco-Albertan women's

best ministrations were often insufficient, however, and they were forced to cope with the death of family members. While the loss of children was emotionally devastating, it did not lead to the financial vulnerability that the death of husbands entailed. For many Franco-Albertan women, widowhood could be the most trying stage of their lives.

CONCLUSION

The French-speaking settlers who came to the Alberta area of the North-West at the turn of the twentieth century hoped to find a better life for themselves and their children. Migrating from other Canadian provinces or immigrating from Europe or the United States, they settled across the province, but especially in northern areas: around Edmonton, St. Paul, and Peace River, where they formed substantial communities. Their immigration was promoted by the Western Roman Catholic Church hierarchy which had visions of creating a chain of French-Catholic settlements across the West. The hierarchy and its missionary-priest agents were unsuccessful in attracting large numbers of francophone immigrants but they ensured that the settlers who came were surrounded by the institutions with which they were familiar. The clergy took an active role in overseeing the foundation of new settlements. In newly-established parishes, priests oversaw the construction of churches and schools, and they encouraged the creation of religious and nationalist organizations to preserve the French language and Roman Catholic religion.

Within the francophone communities, women played a vital role. Their experiences of migration, settlement, and of daily life were shaped especially by their gender, and ethnicity. All francophone women, whether of North-American or European origin, were exposed to the Victorian concept of separate spheres and the accompanying domestic ideals which defined women's place and roles in society. With industrialization, the physical separation of the home from the workplace occurred. The middle class ideal of men earning a living in the world of paid work and women staying home to maintain the household and raise children was increasingly presented

as the norm. Powerful gender ideologies based on biology validated and strengthened this separation of spheres. Because of women's reproductive functions, the care of children was also held to be 'natural' for them. Men's greater strength and aggressiveness, on the other hand, made them better suited for the competitive world of business and commerce. By the early twentieth century, women's motherhood role came to be especially idealized.

Franco-Albertan women's gender identity was further fashioned by culturally determined ideals, especially by the conservative, clerical nationalism promoted in French-Canadian communities across Quebec and in the New England states which stressed the need for a well-ordered society with the church as supreme authority. The family was considered to be a fundamental unit of society and was, like society and the Church, hierarchically structured. Although wives were to be subservient to husbands, they nevertheless played a crucial role in the family. They were to bear and raise children, create comfortable homes, and guarantee the spiritual, moral, and physical well-being of family members. They were also to pass on cultural traditions, including religion and language, to the next generation. These gender and ethnic influences, along with class and region, combined in a variety of ways to shape each stage of Franco-Albertan women's lives.

In childhood and youth, Franco-Albertan girls played games and engaged in work which taught them adult female roles. Work was an integral component of their early years. Parents believed in the intrinsic value of work: to build character, instill moral values, and teach children responsibilities and skills they would later need as adults. But in the pioneering prairie society of the turn-of-the-century, daughters' labour, as much as sons, was needed to ensure the economic survival of the family. Daughters were the most versatile of workers. In rural areas, when their labour was required in farmyards or in the fields, the traditional sexual division of labour was suspended to accomodate the needs of the household. Heavy farm labour, however, did

not discharge daughters from housekeeping duties. Most girls, in the countryside as well as in towns and cities, were expected, from an early age, to give mothers a helping hand by doing household chores and by minding younger children. Barring the illness or early death of mothers, girls thus learned the skills they would later require as wives, mothers and housekeepers. Their contributions to the family economy also included participation in home-centred production, family businesses, and paid employment.

The labour requirements of Franco-Albertan families, which were on average poorer, larger, and more rural that Albertan families as a whole, encroached on Franco-Albertan daughters' schooling opportunities. Schooling had to be fitted in around household and farm labour and was often prematurely cut short when young women were required to take paid employment or to relieve mothers' work in the home. Overall, rural girls received less schooling than their urban counterparts. Some of this disparity was due to the frontier conditions which existed in much of rural Alberta until the First World War, and later in newly-settled northern areas. The isolation of many homesteads, the absence of schools, impassable trails, and inclement weather, also infringed upon girls' schooling. Although the number of years spent in school increased as frontier conditions disappeared, francophone rural and urban girls, continued to receive less schooling than girls of British-origin. Ethnicity seems to have contributed to this inequality. The inability of many girls to speak English could make attending classes particularly difficult and may have led some to leave school early. Similarly, the absence of Catholic schools made some parents reluctant to keep their children in school longer than absolutely necessary. Convent boarding schools were an alternative but beyond the financial means of many families.

Less schooling in turn spelled fewer job opportunities. In rural areas, the consequences of fewer years of schooling likely did not greatly affect francophone women's career choices, since paid employment opportunities were few. The work

available mostly consisted of domestic labour which provided only meagre wages and little security. For town and city women, however, less education could limit job prospects. This, along with lack of English-language skills may account for Franco-Albertan women's restricted participation in pink-collar, service-sector jobs. Education, however, seems to have minimized ethnic differences. In the 1930s, there were almost equal proportions of Franco-Albertan and English-origin female teachers and nurses.

Schooling and work did not occupy all of young Franco-Albertan women's time. Leisure was also an important part of their lives. As children, the games girls played served to reinforce gender and ethnic identities. In recreating religious ceremonies and scenes of domestic life, for example, they tried on adult female roles. As they grew older, their leisure was increasingly incorporated into adult social activities. In kin and community gatherings, young women made social contacts and met potential marriage partners.

For many Franco-Albertan women, especially rural ones, the period of adolescence was brief; one quarter of them were wed before their nineteenth birthday. Perhaps limited work and schooling opportunities contributed to this early age at marriage. The factors leading to foreshortened courtships in rural areas are more apparent. Long distances that needed to be traveled over rough roads, lack of time and money, and the economic necessity for both rural men and women to find partners meant that couples often married quickly following the initial meeting. The narrow social space of rural women -the family and parish- encouraged endogamous unions. Most married within their own locality, socio-economic, religious and linguistic group.

For urban francophone women, the territories of courtship extended to public areas such as parks, restaurants, movie houses, and the workplace. In the latter, as well as in the Anglo-Albertan press and in the mass-marketing of products, they were exposed to romantic ideals which advocated a conception of marriage based on

companionship and romantic love. Despite these influences, the marriages of Franco-Albertan women, both rural and urban, were based more on the traditional than on the modern. Most couples united in economic partnerships, to create a home in which to bear and raise children. Wedding rituals reflected this continuity with the past. In the country, the ceremonies were timed to correspond to the agricultural cycle and in both rural and urban areas, they tended to be simple, non-commercial affairs which took place within the circle of family, neighbours, and kin.

Franco-Albertan women occupied a pivotal place in the family. In the migration of francophone families to the Prairie West, women, often traveling without husbands, were responsible for the well-being of their family. They could count, however, on the support of female relatives on the journey and on the extensive networks of kin along the way and at the point of arrival to facilitate migration and adjustment to the new environment. Like newlyweds, who frequently lived with parents for several years before moving into their own homes, francophone immigrants' initial period of residence in the West included residing with kin. Despite the economic benefits of combining households, women looked forward to setting up their own homes, even when they were likely to live in small, hastily-built shelters without services. Yet, overcrowding, the lack of amenities and labour-saving appliances, and generally substandard housing conditions did not prevent francophone women from trying to maintain tidy homes, provide clean clothes, and serve adequate meals to their family. Their identity as housekeepers hinged on how well these tasks were accomplished, even in difficult conditions.

Cooking and cleaning were but some of the tasks performed by Franco-Albertan women. Especially on farms, but also in cities to a lesser extent, women's home production ensured a better standard of living for the family and contributed to the family economy by keeping expenses at a minimum. Most women raised animals, cultivated gardens, picked wild berries, prepared meat, vegetables, and fruits for

storage, and sewed and knit articles of clothing for family members. The first generation of women settlers also made soap, carded and spun wool, and confected footwear, and hats.

For many housewives, no clear distinction existed between productive and reproductive work. Surplus home production such as egg and dairy products, bread, home-made preserves, knitted goods, and home-sewn garments brought income to the household or were traded for items needed for the home or farm. Farmwives contributed to the farm's production of cash crop for the marketplace by working in the fields alongside husbands. Furthermore, their cooking and cleaning for hired hands and for the harvest crews of itinerant threshermen directly affected the farm's productive operation. In villages, towns and cities, wives laboured in family-owned businesses. Economic crises and illness also forced some married women into the workforce. Obtaining waged work was easier for urban women, but rural wives also made arrangements to find paid employment when the need arose.

But more important than domestic work and income-earning activities in defining the contours of Franco-Albertan women's married lives wes motherhood. The relatively high fertility of francophone Prairie women meant that a large portion of their married lives was preoccupied with pregnancy, birth, postpartum recovery, and childcare. French-speaking women expected to have children and most bore the repeated pregnancies with resignation if not with eager anticipation. The Catholic church's proscription of contraception and the social and religious conventions of secrecy surrounding sexuality left francophone women either uninformed about means of preventing conception or unwilling to limit pregnancies. Still, declining francophone birth rates from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, indicates that couples were engaged in some form of family planning.

For francophone women, pregnancy was considered a normal part of life and as such was incorporated into the regular rhythms of their work. At the turn-of-the-

twentieth century, childbirth took place in the home with experienced midwives or female neighbours or kin assisting. Barring premature deliveries or intemperate weather conditions that precluded help from arriving, francophone women rarely went through the childbirth experience alone. But following the First World War, the Canadian public-health campaigns to reduce infant mortality, the aggressive self-promotion of the medical profession, and women's own fears of dying during childbirth, led first, to increased supervision of pregnancy and childbirth by medical professionals and second, to the hospitalization of the birth process. By the late 1930s, most Franco-Albertan women were giving birth in hospitals. Possibly less intrusive on francophone women's mothering practices was the flood of advice literature, coming, during the inter-war years, from various levels of government, promoting control over and careful guidance of all aspects of children's development. Franco-Albertan mothers, at least the ones living in rural areas, continued to use childrearing methods based on the practical and traditional. Through work, children were kept busy and were taught practical knowledge and skills.

The duties of wife and mother also included nursing the sick and injured and caring for orphaned children and dependent adults. Accidents and disease plagued the childhood years and Franco-albertan women battled these as best they could. The absence of doctors and nurses in rural areas forced families to be self-reliant. Women treated their family's ills with a combination of folk medicine handed down from mothers to daughters. These medical recipes brought West were used alongside herbal remedies, some borrowed from Métis and Native neighbours. To increase the effectiveness of popular medicine, women asked for divine intercession either through prayer or consecrated objects. Many also relied on faith healers and *remancheurs* who offered their services within the francophone community. Increasingly, certainly by the 1930s, families were also using commercial medicines and the services of medical professionals as these became more available and affordable.

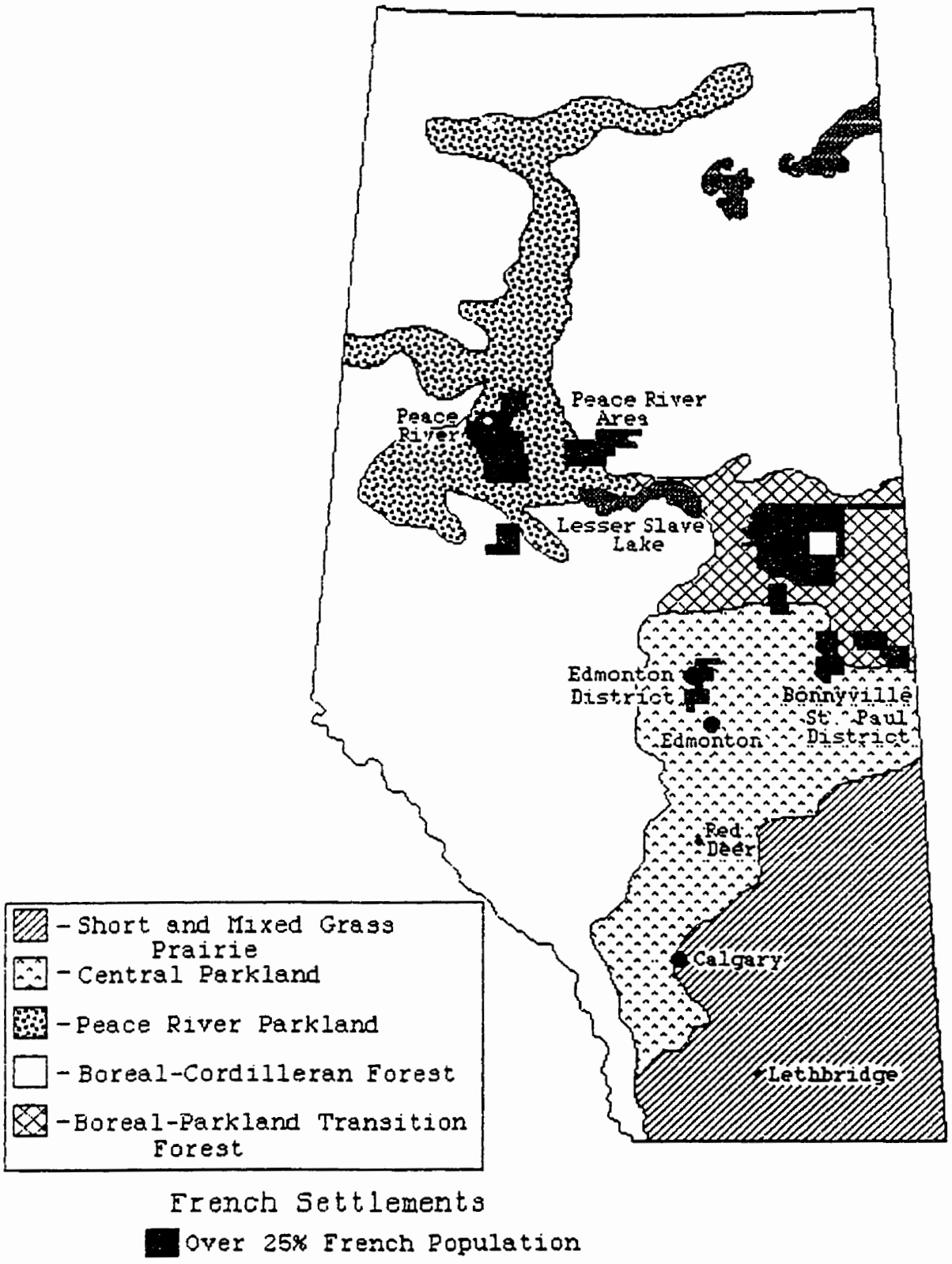
Franco-Albertan women's care of others extended to dependent children and adults. While the orphaned children of kin were quickly integrated into the family unit, the care of aging parents and in-laws could prove more difficult, especially since the required commitment could extend over much of women's youth and married life. The disability, illness, and death of husbands could be both emotionally demanding and financially devastating. The loss of the male breadwinner's wages usually resulted in a drastic reduction of the family's standard of living. The inadequacy of women's wages made it virtually impossible for most widows to support their family; they were thus forced to rely on their children's labour, on the help of family and kin, or on charity. The death of children, though frequent occurrences, did not have the potential to be as financially devastating as the loss of husbands. They were, however, no easier to accept. Mothers found it especially difficult to recover when the child had greatly suffered before dying or when they believed they had somehow failed in their motherly duties.

The lives of Franco-Albertan women were certainly circumscribed by the domestic ideals so fervently espoused in the Franco-Albertan community. They were to be wives, mothers, keepers of the home, and auxiliaries to husbands; their lives were accordingly devoted to the performance of these duties. They attempted to create comfortable homes even under primitive conditions. They ensured the physical well-being of family members, and supported husbands whenever they could: within the family, on farms, and in family businesses. They also did their part in the survival of the race by bearing children, and by transmitting religious, linguistic and cultural traditions to them. But the conditions of the rural prairie west frontier, required that francophone women also be strong and adaptable. They were capable of dealing with most situations as a result of their determination, skills, and creativity. They certainly were not the weak women presented in domestic ideals.

Nor were their lives spent completely within the private sphere. There were no clear lines demarcating the work they performed for the household and for the marketplace. Furthermore, when needed to support the family, or supplement inadequate earnings of their husbands, they sought paid employment in the public sphere. They may not have been isolated in the private sphere, but they were still very much constrained by the sexual division of labour in Alberta which made certain that all women, francophones included, worked at low paying jobs. The attendant gender ideologies which kept property in the hands of husbands ensured the economic dependency of women on men. The vulnerability of francophone women is especially apparent in the case of widows or deserted wives who barely managed to provide for their family on meagre incomes.

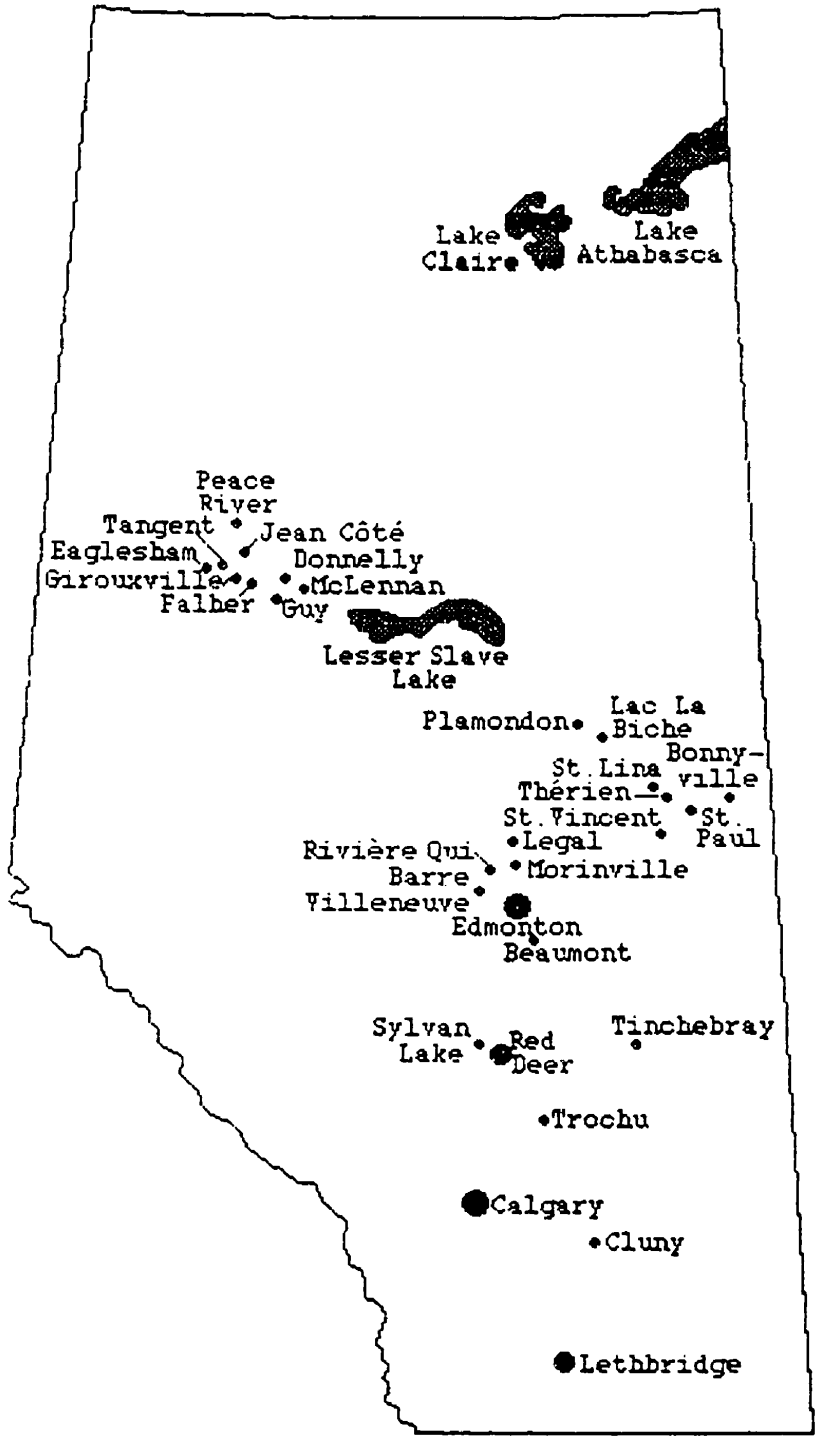
Apart from this gender inequality, there was also an ethnic disparity which showed up as less schooling and limited participation in pink-collar jobs of francophone women, and lower average family incomes as compared to Albertans as a whole and residents of British-origin. While some of the factors which might account for this disparity, such as the greater rural residency of francophones and lack of fluency in the working language of the province, have been identified in this study, more research is required to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the differences. Community ethnic studies, comprising especially quantitative analyses that focus on the masses rather than on the elite, would allow for comparisons of immigrant societies, including those of British-origin. Until such studies are written, however, Alberta history will continue to be primarily concerned with the dominant English-speaking elements.

Appendix 1



Map drawn by Jessica Heninger from information given in Donald B. Smith "A History of French-Speaking Albertans," p.89; Palmer & Palmer, Alberta: A New History, p.vi.

Appendix 2



Map drawn by Jessica Heninger from information given in Atlas des francophones de l'Ouest, Winnipeg, 1979.

Appendix 3

Oral History Archival Collections with Franco-Albertan women respondents grouped by interviewer:

Glenbow Museum and Library, Projet de Recherche Historique Francophone (Glenbow, PRHF): Acc. No. 325.7123 p964f

Interviewer Laurette Gamblin, 1989
REF (F-08), Dolorès Jodoin Corbière
REF (F-13), Blanche Plaquin Lamoureux
REF (F-14), Laurette Lozeau Michaud (08/89)

Interviewer Marie Beaupré, 1989
REF (F-09), Albina Dupuis Dupuis

Interviewer Raymond Paquette, 1989
REF (F-06), Angéline Michaud Adam (12/89)
Laurette Martin Amyotte (12/89)
REF (F-08), Laura Chapleau Adam
REF (F-08), Germaine Garrière Mullen
REF (F-11), Marie-Rose Gelot Tieulié

Interviewer Diane Rondeau, 1989
REF (F-06), Cécile Arcand (08/89)
Cécile Houde Aubin & Auxiliatrice Lessard-Aubin (08/89)
Cécile Belzil
REF (F-07), Alice Faucher Benoît
Yvonne Tardif Boissoneault
Irène Lemire Boisvert
Florida Trudeau Briand
REF (F-07-2) Béatrice Chailler Bruneau
REF (F-08), Marguerite Bruneau Chailler
REF (F-08), Ida Guindon Côté
REF (F-08), Eva Audet Couillard
REF (F-11), Jeanne Dupuis Garand
REF (F-07), Honora Guindon Bégin
REF (F-12), Marie Rey Hébert
REF (F-12), Eva Desfossés Johnson
REF (F-13), Lucienne Giroux Landry
REF (F-13), Gilberte Lambert Lemay (1990)
REF (F-14), Laura Tanguay Maisonneuve
REF (F-14), Marie Blanchette Mencke

REF (F-16), Claire Gariepy Owens
REF (F-19), Noëlla Morin Tanguay
REF (F-19), Mme Roméo Turcotte
REF (F-19), Mme Albert Turcotte

Interviewer Thérèse Siemers, 1989
REF (F-07), Mathilda Drolet Blanchette
REF (F-13), Marianne Léonard Lafrance
REF (F-13), Margo Langlois Lagacé
REF (F-14), Maria Hébert Michaud
REF (F-08), Evelina Comeau Paul
REF (F-16), Irène Boivin Picard
REF (F-07), Yvette Ayotte Van Brabant

Interviewer Pierre Soucy, 1989
REF (F-18), Albertine Royer Soucy

Interviewer (unknown), 1989
REF (F-19), Rose-Anna Tétreau Hood
REF (F-19), Victoria Tétreau Laurenceson
REF (F-07), Marie-Rose Bourget Pagée
REF (F-16), Angélina Bienvenu Plouffe
REF (F-19), Sr. Angéline Tétreau

Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA)

Mme Annette Berry, Interviewed by N. Radford, December 1967, Accession No. P 68.6

Germaine Crouzé, Interviewed by Eliane Silverman, June 1976, Accession No. 81.279/103

Marie-Anne Charron Dagenais, Interviewed by L. Bérubé & D. Despines, June 1972, Accession No. P 73.586

Amelda Blackburn Hérard, Interviewed by L. Bérubé & D. Despines, June 1972, Accession No. P 73.583

Alphonsine Landry & Blanche Landry Cook, Interviewed by E. Kreisel, 1971, Accession No. P 71.151

Hélène Leblanc Lavigne, Interviewed by C. Lavigne & R. Magnan, July 1972, Accession No. P 73.590

Eulalie Magnan, Interviewed by L. Bérubé & D. Despines, June 1972, Accession No. P 73.580

Octavie St. Pierre, no interviewer identified, 1956, Accession No. P67.174

University of Alberta, Institut de Recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean (IRFSJ):

AGG, Interviewer Agathe Gaulin, 1981

19.22-19.27, Jacqueline Sylvestre Baker (09/03/81)
22.14-23.12, Lucienne Bourbeau Baril
23.19-23.34, Rachel Bilodeau Bérubé
25.1-15.24, Annette Gobeil Bérubé
8.38-8.56, Lucienne Seguin Bourgoin
17.1-17.16 & 20.13-21.4, Eva Gagnon Charest
26.43-27.1, Marie-Rose Leblanc Dandurand
15.1-15.2, Liane David
9.34-10.13, Anne-Marie Paradis Demers
6.7-6.16, Dorilda Nault Désilets
7.3-7.28, Germaine St. Pierre Fex
1.1-1.11, Jeanne Langevin Gagné
9.21-9.33, Béatrice Fex Gamache
16.1-16.35, Angélina Bilodeau Gobeil (12/01/81)
22.1-22.11, Eugénie Lambert Goudreau
5.18-6.6, Jeanne Nobert Hamel
2.24-3.29, Blanche Laplante Husereau (26/05/81 & 01/06/81)
25.32-26.42, Thérèse Morin Lamoureux
6.33-7.2, Aurore Gaucher Landry
17.17-18.4, Annie Lambert Laperle (20/02/81)
1.12-1.38, Fayne Baril Laporte
20.2-20.12, Jeannette Villeneuve Lavigne
12.1-12.12, Olivine Blain Lefebvre
25.15-25.29, Célerine Morin L'Heureux
7.29-8.18, Cecile Déry Lirette
11.2-11.14, Reine Lefèbvre Lirette
18.5-18.32, Germaine Villeneuve Magnan (26/02/81)
10.14-11.1, Marcelle Lord Ouellette
24.25-24.33, Florence Roberge Ouimet
5.2-5.13, Emma Poirier
16.36-16.53, Fleurette Vaugeois Roberge
23.35-24.13, Elizabeth Charbonneau Royer
27.2-27.18, Agathe Magnan St. Pierre
9.1-9.16, Antoinette Chrétien Tellier
24.14-24.24, Eva Despins Théroux

ARD, Interviewer Arlette Duicque, 1984

4, Yvonne Bellerive
14, Simone Bergeron Blouin
8, Antoinette Lajoie Charron
13, Annie Ayotte Chrétien
33, Germaine Bussières Desaulniers
34, Marie-Louise Hamelin Desaulniers
18, Marie-Louise Blanchette Dion
2, Yvonne Drolet Doucet
30, Ella Paradis Doucet
11, Alma Fradette Foisy
21, Alberta Viel Fréchette

10. Andrée Godelaine Gascon
22. Carmel Ouellette Gascon
24. Albertine Belland Gill
23. Sarah Poirier Girard
3. Lucienne Langevin Laing
7. Alice Boisjoly Landry
9. Berthe Joly Marcoux

ARP. Interviewers Barry Necyk & S. Ingram. 1973
6. Anna Guay Caron

ARP. Interviewer D. Despinet. 1972
9. Marie-Louise Paradis Charbonneau

CHE. Interviewer Claire Labrosse-Régimbald. 1979
20. Lucia Fex Beaulac
6. Gertrude Rousseau Charest
14.1. Mme Doucet Forestier
15. Angéline Lavigne Goudreau
7. Ida Croisetière Latour
12. Mélina Fortin L'Heureux
10. Léda Lagassé Pétrin
13. Irène Bacon Ricard
2.1. Bernadette Rousseau Riopel
1.2. Anne Rostaing
9. Alvina Lafleur Sévigny
8. Thérèse Michelot St. Jean

CHE. Interviewer Sabina Quereschi. 1979
11. Liliane Côté Chatain
23.1. Suzanne Côté Croteau
24. Anne-Marie Gadbois Désilets
23.3. Bernadette Matthieu Levasseur
17. Cécile Langlois Szaszkewiecz

CHE. Interviewer (unknown) 1979
29.2-30.1. Rose St. Pierre

DEL. Interviewer Denise Lafleur. 1981
1.41-1.53. Lidwine Diederick Albinati
2.62-3.7. Marguerite Marceau Audet
2.50-2.54. Aline Fillion Bouchard
6.18-6.51. Gaëtane Côté Dion
2.13-2.23. Jeanne Brassard Dunn
6.52-6.69. Béatrice Collin Felsing
7.45-7.97. Liliane Durand Gaultier
2.24-2.31. Florence Beaudoin Girard
3.18-3.25. Germaine Hurtubise
3.29-3.36. Renée Socquet Labrecque
1.16-1.40. Rachelle Jacob Langlois
1.1-1.12. Rose-Anna Audet Lejeune
3.44-4.5. Marie-Anne Bouchard Payeur
1.13-1.15. Marie-Jeanne Marcil Pivert
7.98-7.112. Marie-Anne Colin Plamondon

5.44-6.6, Aurore Pronovost Prévost
3.8-3.17, Eva Roy
6.70-7.15, Nathalie Perrat Roy
2.32-2.42, Irène Hamel Wallace

DRK, Interviewer Denise Rougeau-Kent, 1978
1-2, Jeanne Bienvenu Chartrand

EUL, Interviewer Euclide Landry, 1981
4, Anne Cotte Brody
3.4, Anna Lagassé
3.5, Alexina Fex Zrim

GEG, Interviewer Marie Beaupré, 1975
18.6, Marie-Anne Leblanc Gravel

GEG, Interviewer Gertrude Girard, 1981
6.40-6.77, Rose-Anna Baillargeon Audet
4.21-4.41, Rose Gauthier Baudet
7.2-7.19, Marie Cimon Beaupré
2.3-2.18, Della Pelletier Benoît
10.48-11.12, Béatrice Morin Desfossés
9.65-10.24, Françoise Lapalme Despins
9.50-9.64, Marguerite Viens Despins
1.19-1.62, Bella Marcoux Dubrûle
20.33-21.7, Andrée-Anna Roy Guénette
7.51-7.75, Carméline Larivière Kirkland
1.63-2.2, Germaine Fréchette Laîtres
11.13-11.36, Marie-Luce Thibeault Ouellette
8.59-9.9, Charlotte Lapalme Proulx
7.92-8.32, Irène Soucy Rémillard
7.35-7.50, Emma L'Abbé Servant
4.42-4.60, Madeleine Pariseau Welter

GEG, Interviewer Roger Prieur, 1963
18.3, Brigitte Bernard Bugeaud
18.8, Marie-Louise Bisaillon Charbonneau
17.15-17, Pierrette Chénard & Alice Beaudoin
18.5, Laura Langelier
19.39-19.71, Marie Parker

IRT, Interviewer Irène Tremblay, 1981
7.2-7.3, Marie-Anne Boisvert Beaupré
3.4-4.2, Lucille Préfontaine Bergevin
6.1-6.3, Louise Bourque Billo
2.6, Adéline Brochu
6.3-7.1, Odélie Côté Chevalier
3.2-7.1, Eva Laroque Desnoyers
6.1-6.3, Yvonne Labrie Leduc
1.1-1.3, Léda Fortin L'Heureux
5.2-6.1, Jeanne Laforce Lutz
3.4-4.2, Lucia Quesnel Montpetit
3.4, Mme Paul Montpetit
1.1-1.3, Aline D'Orléans Pelletier

1.1-1.3, Yvonne Desmarais Régimbald
1.5, Diane Laurier Rémillard
8.4, Raymonde Perras Riopel
2.1-2.5, Marie-Laure Bazinet Rousseau
1.3-3.3, Elise Brissette Sabourin
3.4-4.2, Rose-Marie St. Louis
1.6, Jeanne Tieuliè
3.1, Valéda Trottier

JUR, Interviewer Jules Rocque, 1981
1.3, Laura Doucet Belzil
8.25-8.36, Lénora Lamothe Duchesneau
7.20-7.41, Germaine Généreux Hamel
9.8-9.21, Oliva Girard Massé
1.2, Alice Michaud Ouellette
8.37-9.7, Cécile Blouin Préville
2.8-2.24, Thérèse Labrosse Vallée

LER, Interviewer Léo Richer, 1981
2.1-2.17, Anne-Geneviève Chatenay
3.1-3.25, Antoinette Hermary
4.1-4.13, Mathilde Ducarme Selvais
5.1-5.11, Yvonne De Moissac Wiart

MAG, Interviewer Martine Gravel, 1981
2.1-2.11, Yvonne Hurtubise Gourdinne
1.1-1.16, Marie-Cécile Hubert Spohn

RAL, Interviewer Raymond Lanteigne, 1981
1.1-1.7, Jeanne Boivin Noël
2-3, Blanche Tremblay Parkinson (1982)

RAM, Interviewer Raymonde Ménard, 1981
2.10-2.12, Delia Charest Labby
3.19-3.23, Maria L'Abbé Lamoureux
3.8-3.18, Marguerite Plamondon Ménard

REG, Interviewer Réal Girard, 1984
10, Martha Campagna Blais
19, Angélina Boulanger
14, Odina Bourassa Côté
17, Sylvia Gagnon Dubé
24, Group Interview - Laura Duperron, Odina Bourassa Côté, Sr. Marina Duperron, Rose Bourque (Other respondents not identified)
15, Anna Grenier Girard
27, Juliette de Moissac Lafleur, 1985
25, Zéa Chevigny Piquette
20, Dellamen Plamondon

SHB, Interviewer Henri Bourgoin, (1978)
17.2, Georgianna Bérubé Gamache
20.1, Ernestine Ouimet Marcotte (1977)
15.4, Marie Husereau Nadeau

4. Alice Dusseault Vallée (1980)
15.3, Alberta Séguin Vézeau

SHB. Interviewer Guy Goyette, (date unknown)
7, Armandine Ouimet Corbière
16-17.1, Anne-Marie Mercier Croteau
19, Irène Hétu Dumont
12, Elizabeth Lirette Vasseur

SYV. Interviewer Sylvia Van Brabant, 1976
2, Giorgianna Tremblay Longchamps
1, Anna Fontaine Van Brabant

YVL. Interviewers Yvon Laberge & Marie-Josée Leblanc, 1983
2.1-2.28, Germaine Mahé Champagne

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Tenove, Jeanine Bourgeois. "Canada, My Home, My Native Land," unpublished family history, Calgary, 1982.

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REG D019, "My biography," Marie Juliette Irma Morin.
REG D003, Adèle Mathieu Blais
REG D017, Bérangère Mercier

Lorene Anne Frère Private Collection, St. Ann Ranch, Trochu, Alberta
(All documents translated by Yvonne van Cawanberge):

Marguerite Trochu's Diary, April 21, 1907 to June 18, 1907.

Marguerite Trochu Correspondence, May 10, 1907 to July 22, 1911.

Letters of Léon Eckenfelder to France, April 14, 1907 to August 14, 1907.

Other miscellaneous correspondence by French settlers, 1906-1935

Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta:

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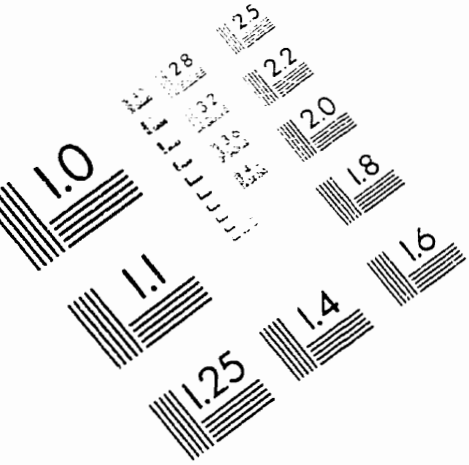

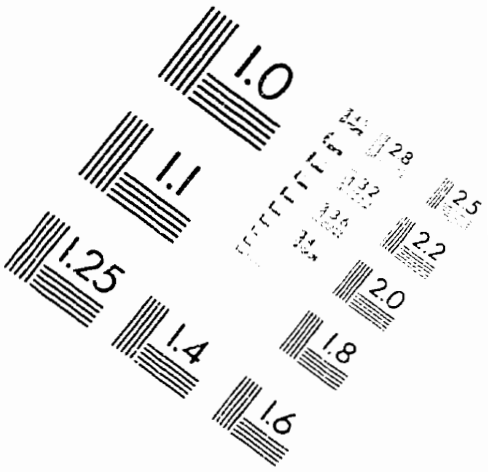

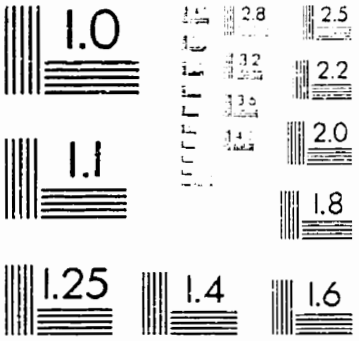

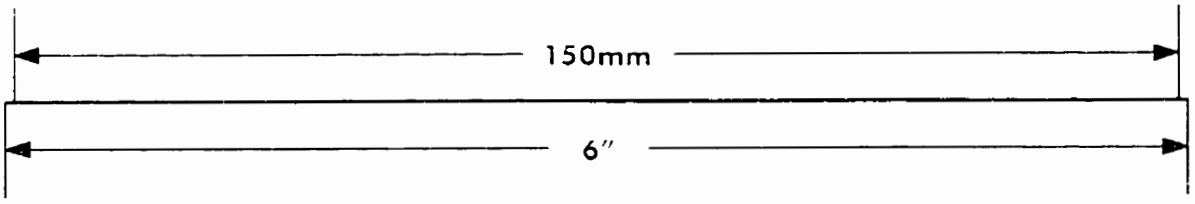

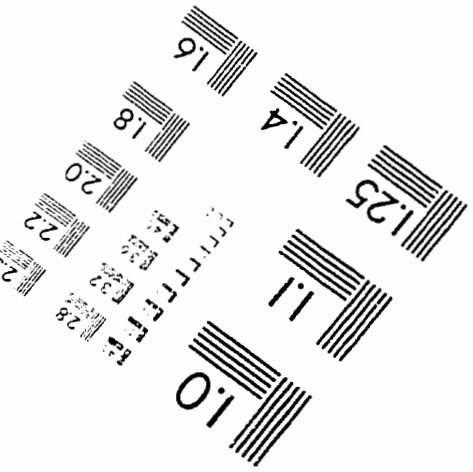

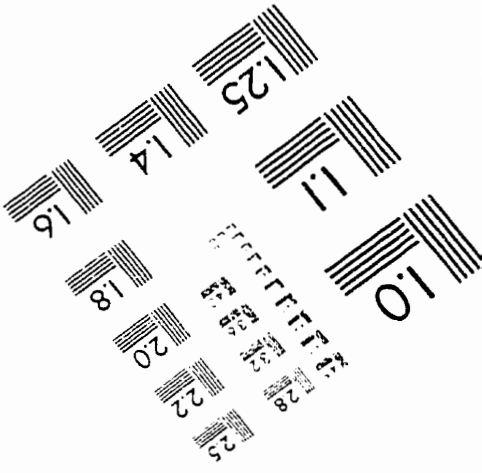

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