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THE OBLATE APOSTOLATE*One Hundred Years Later*

The canonical visit of 1935–36 and the recommendations made by Superior General Labouré facilitated the transformation of a missionary institution that was nearly a hundred years old. As a result of the profound changes that had taken place in the western and northern regions of Canada, the Oblates were forced to examine their apostolic activity, re-evaluate their objectives and adopt methods that reflected changing times, circumstances and philosophies. The Oblate involvement in residential schools necessitated a close association with the government and its highly centralized bureaucracy. In view of the role that such schools were to play as adjuncts of missions and the revenues they generated, their continued existence could not be ensured uniquely by the efforts on individual principals and provincials. Consequently, Superior General Labouré called upon all Oblates involved in missionary activity and Indian education to work as a team committed to pursuing a common objective.

Labouré's extensive report contained the first official directives for the establishment of a permanent Oblate agency in Ottawa to represent, defend and enhance the interests of Oblate missions and schools in Canada. This agency was responsible for overseeing the status of missions and presenting requests for grants to the government for the construction, operation and maintenance of residential schools. A permanent representative resident in Ottawa was appointed by the Oblate General

Administration to act as intermediary between the vicars apostolic and provincials of the North West and the Department of Indian Affairs. The agency, initially known as *Missions Indiennes des Pères Oblats*, later assumed the name *Commission Oblate des Oeuvres Indiennes et Esquimaudes* [COOIE] (Indian Welfare and Training Oblate Commission). Its first officers were Gabriel Breynat, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie, president; Émile Bunoz, Vicar Apostolic of the Yukon and Prince Rupert, vice-president; and Joseph Guy, Vicar Apostolic of Grouard, secretary-treasurer. Omer Plourde, who had discharged the duties of a semi official representative of the western Oblates since Guy's elevation to the episcopacy in 1930, was named the agency's official representative in Ottawa.¹

The first meeting of COOIE's management committee was held on 17 January 1936 in Ottawa when it was decided that the representative of the western Oblates would receive the official title of superintendent and provisions were made for his salary and expenses.² Unfortunately, the nomination of an official representative formally approved by the congregation did not put an end to the problems associated with that position. Initially, bishops and provincials continued to submit their individual budgets for schools under their jurisdiction to the authorities and there were also difficulties with collecting the money from the bishops and provincials to fund the bureau and pay Plourde's expenses.³ In addition, his other occupation as director of Canadian Publishers Limited, an Oblate enterprise in Winnipeg, which published Catholic newspapers, made it impossible for him to take up permanent residence in Ottawa until 1942.⁴

Despite these initial organizational difficulties, COOIE was not inactive in promoting Oblate and Catholic interests. At its first meeting on 17 January 1936, it affirmed the principle of confessionality in Native hospitals and informed the Department that this recommendation had the support of the Catholic hierarchy.⁵ In the event that the Department would not recognize the principle of confessionality in health care for Natives, COOIE later insisted on the employment of Catholic personnel in neutral hospitals in proportion to the number of Catholic Indians in the locality.⁶ In pointing to the absence of Catholic functionaries in the Department of Indian Affairs, COOIE took up an issue first raised a half century earlier by Bishop Grandin. COOIE sent a special letter to Cardinal Joseph-Marie-Roderigue Villeneuve and all members of the Catholic hierarchy affirm-

ing that, since 50 per cent of the Native population was Catholic, Indian agencies where Catholics were in the majority should have Catholic personnel and this prerequisite should appear in civil service announcements for agents, inspectors and farm instructors. In an effort to promote good harmony and cooperation, the Department was asked to notify COOIE when such positions became vacant or at least request a list of potential Catholic candidates.⁷ While this contentious issue was not likely to be resolved to the satisfaction of all, others lent themselves to a solution that was acceptable to the interests of both parties. In 1936, for example, COOIE asked the Department to authorize the use of the Butler catechism in all residential schools. For its part, the Department desired the adoption of one single catechism for all the its schools operated by Catholics.⁸

As individual missionaries had done in the past, COOIE, interested itself in promoting and enhancing the welfare of Indians. After the control over natural resources was returned to the provinces, COOIE became concerned that the provinces would exploit these resources without regard of the repercussions for Indians and, hence, deprive them of their own means of subsistence. Breynat contended that, in ceding their lands, Indians had not given up their right to hunt and fish, nor their lifestyle or traditions. Furthermore, many verbal promises had been made to Indians and these had never been kept. Breynat had made the authorities aware of the gravity of the situation and their responsibilities to Natives. Immediate action had been promised but nothing had been done to protect and rehabilitate Indians who were being threatened by resource exploitation. Breynat suggested that COOIE meet with the prime minister and his associates, inform them of the immensity of the problem and convince them to adopt an efficient plan of action to rehabilitate the Native population.⁹ Thus, in 1939, COOIE passed resolutions calling on the government to restore exclusive hunting and fishing rights to Indians on the lands they occupied in order to provide them with a means of subsistence. The federal government was also asked to provide old age pensions to Indians because they were more destitute than the whites or Métis who received this allocation.¹⁰

As could be expected, COOIE's main concern was with missionary institutions such as schools and hospitals and, consequently, it used every opportunity to reiterate Oblate views on the provision of education and health services to Natives. In 1940, it presented a brief to the government

supporting the principle of confessionality in the establishment of hospitals.¹¹ When it became aware that administrators within the Department were becoming opposed to residential schools because of their high cost and alleged impractical curriculum, COOIE affirmed that where Indians were still migratory hunters or dispersed, the residential school was the only institution that could educate them, restore the health of those ravaged by tuberculosis and inculcate the adoption of better mores.¹²

In 1941, the federal government's proposal to reduce the operating grant to residential schools resulted in a meeting between representatives of the Catholic, Anglican, United and Presbyterian Churches with T.A. Crerar, the minister of Indian Affairs. All denominations were quick to denounce the cavalier and unilateral manner in which the government had seen fit to reduce grants without consulting the parties that would be most affected by that decision.¹³ The minister was advised, furthermore, that Indian education was acquiring more importance in missionary work because the Native population was increasing significantly with each passing year. Indians were not disappearing as had been anticipated previously and school budgets had to reflect this demographic pattern in order to provide adequate facilities. After the interview, the churches formed an Indian Co-operating Committee to lobby the government and urge it to pay a cost of living bonus for residential schools.¹⁴ For their part, the Oblates predicted that disastrous consequences would result if the construction of new schools was stopped because of the war and if there were not sufficient funds to educate the existing school population.¹⁵ As a result of this interdenominational pressure, the government agreed to provide a supplementary grant to cover cost of living increases.

In announcing this good news to the principal of the Duck Lake school, Plourde suggested that principals should write and thank the minister and use the opportunity to advise him of the financial difficulties occasioned by the war and thus lay the groundwork for the requests COOIE would make for the 1942-43 fiscal year.¹⁶ When the government convoked a meeting of principals and first class teachers of Indian schools in Winnipeg in 1942 to study curriculum, Plourde advised Oblate principals that, in addition to studying the vocational programme, attention should also focus on a programme of studies that reflected the social and economic needs of Indians. If the curriculum were left unchanged it would be unjust to teachers and students because there would be an insis-

tence on achieving standards set for whites but without providing the appropriate time to meet these objectives.¹⁷

Plourde also advised the Department that Oblate principals were very concerned with the lack of programmes to assist children after they left residential schools. He claimed that when children were dismissed from school at the age of sixteen they were too young to have acquired a trade nor had they received suitable training to enable them to earn a living whereas white children received training. Ubald Langlois, Vicar Apostolic of Grouard, had established a training centre for young girls at his own expense in 1939 and Plourde claimed that it had produced commendable results.¹⁸ For its part, the Department was aware of the keen shortage of skilled labour but indicated there was little hope for additional funds to provide the training suggested by Plourde.¹⁹

The concerns raised by Plourde relative to post-school programmes and vocational training reflected the dissatisfaction of Oblates with a system that was not providing Indian children with an education that would enable them to earn a living and contribute to the amelioration of their social and economic status.²⁰ The Oblates believed that vocational instruction would have to acquire a more important status in residential schools and they complained that it was given too early in the school programme and that it was difficult to establish such courses in small schools with low enrolments. The Oblates suggested the establishment of an Indian technical high school at Qu'Appelle where pupils from all over Saskatchewan would be admitted and they argued that it was neither practical nor desirable to place Indian children in technical schools in urban areas. Furthermore, the Oblates stressed that vocational education should emphasize agriculture because it was the main economic activity on the prairies and it would permit graduates to earn their living on a reserve. The Oblates contended that the previous attempt to teach vocational trades to Indians had failed because they could not compete with white tradesmen and returned to their reserves where they found little to do.²¹

Despite Oblate efforts to make education a more meaningful and rewarding experience for Indian children, recruitment continued to be a serious problem affecting Oblate residential schools. In 1942 hardly any school had a full enrolment of students when classes began in September and principals complained that Indian agents were not cooperating with them for purposes of recruitment. According to the Oblates, this lack of

cooperation resulted in principals expending considerable effort and spending significant sums of money to transport children whose parents refused to send them at the beginning of the school term. As a result of complaints from the Oblates, the Department promised greater cooperation and principals were advised to send the list of children to Indian agents in mid-August. The Department would advise agents to accompany the principals on each reserve and assist them in collecting the children and thus avoid numerous voyages. Agents could invoke compulsory attendance legislation whereas the Oblates would not dare to do so. According to Plourde, Indians had a "reverential fear" of agents and would obey them in instances when they would not do so for a principal.²²

While the power of the state could be used to promote Oblate interests in the case of school attendance, there were instances where government policy was deemed to impact negatively. In 1945, Plourde congratulated the federal government for having brought Indians under the provisions of the Family Allowance Act. He claimed that this was a great step forward and, furthermore, it would demonstrate that there was no discrimination between Indians and whites.²³ However, Plourde expressed regret that under the terms of the legislation, financial benefits would not be provided to parents whose children were attending residential schools. He hinted that there would be a temptation for parents to keep children at home to receive benefits and recommended that the Act be altered to safeguard the right of Indians to have their children educated in residential schools and simultaneously allow them to receive benefits. Plourde suggested that the money paid to students attending residential schools should be placed in a trust fund that would be administered by the Department for the benefit of the children after they left school.²⁴

Henri Routhier, the Alberta-Saskatchewan provincial, expressed similar concerns to T.A. Crerar, minister of Mines and Resources. Routhier contended that the exclusion of boarders in residential schools from benefits would produce tragic results. Parents would refuse to send their children to school to obtain benefits and he predicted that this would be the death of residential schools.²⁵ Crerar reassured Routhier by stating that the government would exercise care in the administration of family allowance benefits and cancel payments to parents who refused to send their children to school. According to the minister, this policy would

result in a larger and more regular attendance in both day and residential schools for Indians.²⁶

In the meantime, Superior General Labouré's injunction to the Oblates to find inspiration in their past and re-animate their ministry to inculcate a vibrant and dynamic Christian spirit among Natives struck a responsive chord within the ranks of the Oblates. Over the years, significant changes had taken place in the Oblate mentality. The altruism of the pioneer period had been replaced by a more mature viewpoint that concerned itself more with the process of conversion and the finished product rather than conversion as an objective in itself. At the same time, there was a growing conviction that a missionary had to do more than convert individuals; he also had to win the heart of those whom he evangelized. Bishop Ovide Charlebois advised one of his young missionaries that this could come about only if the missionary truly loved the members of his flock because love diminished faults and enhanced inherent qualities. In addition, the missionary had to be good, amiable and always prepared to be of service to his flock.²⁷

These new tendencies were evident at the Qu'Appelle Residential School that had been destroyed by fire in 1932. While the fire had been a great tragedy for the Oblates, the interim measures that had to be adopted between 13 November 1932 and 23 March 1936 to house the students and continue their education produced unexpected positive results. The Oblates had established a scholasticate at Lebret in 1926 but, prior to the fire, pupils at the school and the scholastics had gone about their respective lives as perfect strangers. With the destruction of the school, pupils were housed in the scholasticate and shared a common room for recreation with the seminarians and both elements began to interact. To further promote the attraction and affection that was engendered by this contact, games and other activities were organized for both groups during their free time. The Oblates felt that contact with the seminarians provided pupils with an exemplary model of Christian virility and strength and they formed an association to promote these values. Two Native students who indicated a desire to become priests were sent to the Oblate juniorate at St. Boniface.²⁸

Since the superior general had made it known that he could not tolerate inactivity or a lack of attention at chapel, Oblates at Qu'Appelle were

confronted with the prospect of interesting the children who attended chapel or sending them out to play. The scholastics formed a liturgical committee and a programme of activities designed to fashion a "truly eucharistic mentality" and win the hearts as well as the souls of the students. As a result, every second morning the pupils sang in their own language in different groups and at the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. All of the children sang at high mass and, during the service, the ritual of the mass was explained to the children by a scholastic. An Oblate also was at the disposition of pupils who wished to confess themselves. In addition, children were taught to serve mass and to play the organ in order that they might continue to exercise those functions when they returned to their reserves. The sincerity and devotion of the scholastics reassured the pupils while the former were rewarded by the love and friendship of the latter.²⁹

In addition to promoting the spiritual welfare of its charges, the Qu'Appelle school also attempted to enhance their material well-being by sending three students to St. Boniface to study mink ranching. In the fall of 1938, the school built cages and bought 50 mink with one thousand dollars borrowed from the Department for this purpose. Mink ranching was seen as an ideal occupation for Indians and it was hoped that the project at Lebret would result in the creation of an industry that would provide an income for many. One student was placed in charge of the mink but lost nine as a result of feeding them too much meat. In the fall of 1939 it was decided to liquidate the mink because of losses and the low prices for the pelts. This had been an expensive venture for the Oblates and they were cautious about embarking on another.³⁰

The need to make the missionary thrust a more dynamic and meaningful experience had also been voiced within the Church and had resulted in the creation of the *Unio Cleri*, an organization of the missionary clergy in 1917.³¹ Several congresses were held in Italy and France under its auspices and, in 1934, it was decided that meetings would be held in Canada to study matters of concern to missionaries. At the request of Cardinal Villeneuve of Quebec, the *Union Missionnaire du Clergé* in Canada became the patron of these proceedings. Villeneuve regarded the UMC as a "normal school" for the preparation of a missionary clergy and he affirmed, furthermore, that "fraternal meetings" of those involved in missionary work were needed to define and enhance Catholic apostolic

activities. These Canadian meetings, the *Semaines d'études missionnaires*, would contribute to a more critical and detailed knowledge of missionary matters.³²

As a result, the first *Semaine d'études missionnaires* was held at the University of Ottawa, 6–9 October 1934. Most of the proceedings revolved around the fundamental theme of missiology in an attempt to identify and resolve problems associated with missionary work. Missiology was becoming a popular term in missionary vocabulary and this is indicative of a more reflective attitude among active missionaries as well as an attempt to enhance their Apostolate by incorporating knowledge from disciplines other than theology. During the Ottawa sessions, Albert Perbal described missiology as “the science of missions” and affirmed that it consisted of critical and scientific approach to the study of the propagation of the Catholic faith its principles and its practical norms.³³ The second *Semaine d'études missionnaires* was held at Laval University in 1936 and had as its general theme problems associated with the conversion of non-Christians.³⁴

The need for a more rational and unified approach to apostolic work was reflected in the publication of *Directives missionnaires* in 1942 by Martin Lajeunesse, Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin.³⁵ Lajeunesse's purpose was to provide his collaborators with guidelines to unify their work and to enable them to fulfill their obligations as missionaries. These directives reflected the views of his predecessor, Ovide Charlebois, on Christian virtues and the ministry as well as circular letters and other instructions published by other Oblates such as Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop Émile Légal of Edmonton and Superior General Théodore Labouré. Lajeunesse also included the methods and instructions of former missionaries in the directives. The observance of the directives was compulsory for all missionaries in the vicariate beginning on 29 June 1943.³⁶

The growing importance of and interest in the science of missions was reflected in the publication of Joseph-Étienne Champagne's *Manuel d'action missionnaire* published in 1947. Professor of Missiology in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ottawa, Champagne prepared this comprehensive manual to assist in the training of missionaries and to inculcate a new view, that of cooperation between different missionary institutions to achieve a common goal.³⁷ Champagne was instrumental in establishing the Institute of Missiology at the University of Ottawa the

following year. The purpose of the Institute was to facilitate apostolic efforts by adopting a more effective missionary methodology that incorporated the latest scholarly knowledge. Champagne was convinced that an institute would prepare superior candidates to provide direction and leadership and make it possible for Catholic missionaries to enhance their reputation and be equal to the task facing them.³⁸

As the Oblates were reflecting on their past and attempting to enhance the effectiveness of their activities, the missionary frontier had undergone significant change. The penetration of white civilization into the northern regions continued at an accelerated pace and the Oblates were very concerned about the consequences of this presence. In addition to the fatal attraction that the presence of whites presented to the Native community, the Oblates were responsible for ministering to the Catholic population in these new settlements. In 1939, one missionary was given responsibility for Catholics who lived along the rail line between Le Pas and Churchill.³⁹ In the Vicariate of Mackenzie, the discovery of gold on the shores of Lake Athabasca necessitated the establishment of a mission at the embryonic town of Goldfields in 1935.⁴⁰ The pernicious influence of white miners on Indians also was noted but the vicariate's report claimed that frequent visits by missionaries attenuated and prevented many abuses.⁴¹

The Oblates, however, were powerless to counter the economic and social effects of the recession of the 1930s. While the Depression created hardship for all Oblate missions in the western provinces, those in the north suffered more because they were dependent on charitable donations that were more difficult to obtain. The report of the Vicariate Apostolic of Keewatin for 1936 indicated that the poverty of Indians was caused by the cataclysmic drop in the price of furs that provided their only income. Consequently, the Indians were reduced to eating boiled fish and the Oblates complained that they could not provide them with used clothing because Catholics were donating it to the unemployed in the settled areas. The vicariate lamented the fact that, in such circumstances, Indians would be the last to receive charity.⁴²

Métis education in the vicariate was threatened by the reduction in financial support provided by the governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Teachers salaries were reduced significantly and, since the Métis had nothing to contribute, the vicariate had to provide the funds to

keep the schools open. The vicariate also denounced the government's policy of selling licenses for commercial fishing in areas such as Pelican Lake. It was argued that the small revenue generated by the sale of these licenses undermined the interests of the Indians who had been urged to locate their reserves adjacent to these lakes. In addition, government regulations prohibited the killing of beaver, the only fur bearing animal present in the woods that year. The Oblates were pressing the authorities to provide assistance for Indians and Bishop Breynat of Mackenzie had gone to Ottawa to lobby the federal authorities.⁴³

A dismal picture of the status of the Métis in the Portage La Loche region of Saskatchewan was painted by Jean-Baptiste Ducharme at in 1939. He claimed that hunting, fishing and trapping no longer provided a livelihood for the Métis because the payment of relief caused them to abandon their former self-sufficient ways to live at government expense. In the process, the Métis became convinced that they had a right to demand what they needed from the state and the consequences were disastrous because they no longer felt responsible to look after their aged parents or widowed mother.⁴⁴ He claimed that the only reasonable solution was to provide assistance only to those who were in extreme need and who had no one to assist them. Ducharme claimed that the Métis and Indians were able to live from hunting and fishing but not from agriculture or industry. They could not be transformed into whites and, hence, they were best left alone to exploit what nature had provided. He contended that with proper protection and assistance they would again be a happy people.⁴⁵

The condition of the Métis in Alberta was desperate and served as an impetus to the creation of the Métis Association of Alberta in 1932 under the leadership of lay leaders such as Joseph Dion, Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady. The Association was a nonpartisan, nondenominational organization to promote the social and economic interests of Alberta Métis.⁴⁶ The question of a land base figured prominently in the minds of the Métis especially after the federal government transferred the control of Crown lands to provincial governments and the Association began to agitate for the setting aside of land for the exclusive use of the Métis.⁴⁷ At the insistence of the Association and its leaders the provincial government appointed a special commission in 1934, headed by Alfred Freeman Ewing, to study the matter in conjunction with the Métis and suggest

solutions. Bishop Joseph Guy of Grouard appeared before the hearings of the Commission to present the claims of the Métis of northern Alberta.⁴⁸ The Commission's report resulted in the passage of the *Métis Population Betterment Act* on 21 December 1938 that set aside more than a million and a quarter acres of land in northern Alberta for the exclusive use of the Métis.

When Métis families began to establish themselves in colonies on these lands, Oblates were sent to erect churches and missions. At Fishing Lake, Irénée Gauthier arrived in 1939 and established a residence that was reminiscent of Oblate establishments nearly a century earlier. His chapel-residence consisted of two small rooms whose walls were papered with cardboard boxes. The furniture consisted of a table made from rough lumber, while butter cases served as chairs. Gauthier advised the Catholic Church Extension Society that 60 Métis families had settled in the colony and there were 80 children of school age. The residents did not have the means to build a church but were willing to do all the work and Gauthier asked the Society's assistance. The Church Extension provided a gift of five hundred dollars and, with logs cut and provided by the Métis, a church and school were built.⁴⁹

Roméo Levert who arrived in Fishing Lake in 1941 reported that, in terms of material goods, the colonies had not yet attained the success that some optimists had anticipated. He claimed that overnight one could not fashion model farmers out of peoples who had been hunters for centuries. He contended, furthermore, that very seldom did impressive government projects find the competent personnel necessary to implement them.⁵⁰ Levert was pleased with the spiritual and moral progress that had taken place in the colony. Grouped together in a colony the Métis were model Catholics on their own land. They had a church that they had built themselves and a priest who could preach to them in their own language. They could attend church services in their normal attire without fear of being ridiculed by white parishioners. According to Levert, even greater success could be obtained in the spiritual sphere if the school were under the direction of devoted nuns rather than lay teachers.⁵¹

Unfortunately, there were complaints that government officials sent to the colony to assist the Métis were not doing anything constructive. Gauthier charged that these individuals made the condition of the Métis worse because they forced them to work unassisted in the sawmill and

abandon the trapping of muskrat that could have provided a decent living.⁵² For his part, Levert encountered difficulties with officials when he went to teach catechism to the children in the last hour of the school day as permitted under the School Act. In 1942, a school inspector informed him that he could not teach catechism during regular school hours. When Levert protested, he was advised that the children were behind in their studies and, hence, the half hour of religious instruction had to be abandoned to allow them to catch up.⁵³ Levert protested this violation of the Alberta School Act but was informed by the deputy minister of Education that, insofar as Métis colony schools maintained by public funds were concerned, the government would not allow religious instruction in regular school hours. If provided, such instruction had to be given "at hours other than those authorized by law for the holding of school."⁵⁴

The situation at Fishing Lake deteriorated and Henri Routhier, the Alberta-Saskatchewan provincial, authorized Gauthier to inquire into the state of affairs of Métis colonies with respect to the religious and spiritual welfare of the inhabitants. Routhier hoped to obtain a more just treatment for the Métis and the same rights as those given to Catholics in regularly organized districts.⁵⁵ In the meantime, the government had been pressed to provide more assistance to the Fishing Lake colony and the Oblates allegedly were advised by L. Maynard, minister of Municipal Affairs, that such collaboration would be forthcoming only if Gauthier were removed as resident missionary. Some time later, Gauthier advised the minister that while he had been absent for 18 months to prepare his survey, no noticeable improvement in government services had taken place. Gauthier claimed that the missionaries had assisted the government when requested because they were interested in the welfare of the Métis. He charged that the government's sole objective was to thwart the missionaries and cited the government's manipulation of the School Act and the selection of a supervisor on the colony who ridiculed the Oblates and the Catholic religion.⁵⁶

As could be expected Gauthier's report on Fishing Lake was critical of government policy. He affirmed that, since the Oblates were denied access to the school during regular school hours and, hence, the Métis believed that the missionaries had abandoned them. He also accused the government of encouraging a "perfidious materialism" as a sign of progress to entice the Métis. Gauthier charged, furthermore, that the gov-

ernment wanted to displace the residents of Fishing Lake to give the land to the Tulliby Lake Cattlemen's Association. The local MLA was supporting the Cattlemen's Association, but the Métis refused to move and the authorities were punishing them by refusing all assistance.⁵⁷ At another Métis colony in Frog Lake, Alberta, where a church and school were being built, Gauthier encountered difficulties with Malcom Norris, a member of the Métis Association of Alberta. Norris, whose socialist views were well known, was described as "very fanatical" by Gauthier because he insisted on a policy that the missionary alleged would create many difficulties.⁵⁸

In Saskatchewan, the government did not establish Métis colonies and the Oblates had to resort to more traditional means to assist the Métis. In Lebret, they organized a religious vacation school for Métis children in 1935. The religious vacation school lasted four days and had an average attendance of 58 children. Special classes were held for those who had not yet made their first communion. A picnic after the end of classes and prizes were awarded and the organizers judged the venture to have been a success.⁵⁹ The following year in 1936 another similar course was held but over a longer period of time. Ninety-five children registered and the average attendance was 80.⁶⁰

These efforts on behalf of Métis children in Lebret were all that the Oblates could do for the destitute Métis population of the region who possessed neither land nor animals. In addition, the Métis lacked employment, food, adequate nourishment and lodging. The social assistance they received was insufficient to provide basic food and shelter. The Métis had asked the provincial government to set land aside for them and sought agricultural implements from the federal government. They asked to Oblates to assist them in their negotiations with the various levels of government.⁶¹ When the federal government refused to provide assistance, Édouard Lamontagne, the Manitoba provincial, urged the Oblates at Lebret to enlist the assistance of the Archbishop of Regina to obtain immediate help for the Métis from the provincial authorities. Lamontagne supported the proposal put forth by the Lebret Oblates to establish a Métis colony but he indicated that the Oblates did not have the funds to finance the venture. He cautioned that while the proposed colony was a good idea, it would require much money and effort before it could be realized.⁶²

In the meantime, the distress of the Métis continued and no practical solution appeared. For their part, the Métis desired land to cultivate in order to become self-sufficient and sought assistance from the government to obtain unoccupied Crown land. The Métis were willing to accept government supervision and an organizational structure resembling that of a reserve as long as the Oblates could continue to establish themselves in their midst.⁶³ In 1940, Emmanuel Duplain was designated by the Manitoba provincial to establish a Métis colony in the Qu'Appelle valley. Under the terms of a memorandum of agreement, the Province of Saskatchewan would contribute \$5,000 to operate and equip the land owned by the Oblates as a farming unit. The Oblates would allow the Province to use the land for farming purposes and they would provide "continuous supervision, management and direction" for the venture.⁶⁴ Five families were established the first year and the results were so encouraging that in 1941 that the government decided to add one section of Crown land to the Métis farm and contributed an additional \$2,000. The provincial interpreted these results as proof that:

this kind of organization based on discipline, kindness and religious education is the proper system to inculcate the principles of civilization and protect them from subversive doctrines and bring them up to the standard of true and reliable citizens.⁶⁵

As the manager of the farm's advisory board, Duplain reported in 1943 that nine suitable residences had been built in addition to a large granary, a pig pen and a chicken house. The land had been brought into a good state of cultivation and there were sufficient horses and machinery to properly operate the farm, which housed 25 head of cattle, 16 horses, 200 chickens and 50 pigs.⁶⁶ The government was obviously satisfied because it renewed the five-year agreement originally signed in 1940 and signed a 21-year lease of the Oblate property in 1943.⁶⁷ In leasing their land the Oblates were aware that they were alienating potential revenue from its exploitation but they decided to seek no additional compensation from the government because of the assistance the farm was providing to rehabilitate the Métis.⁶⁸

The election of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1944 altered the good relations between the Oblates and the provincial govern-

ment. The new minister of Social Welfare visited the farm in December of that year and the Oblates feared that he wanted to hear complaints from the Métis as a pretext for removing the Oblates and extending complete government control over the farm.⁶⁹ When the government indicated a desire to purchase the land, the Oblates refused because the offer was too low but, to avoid criticism and force the government to transport the nine residences built by the Métis, the Oblates offered to rent the land to the province.⁷⁰ For its part, the government gave assurances that its only interest in purchasing the land was to "benefit the Metis in the district tributary to Lebrét."⁷¹ In the end, the Oblates sold their farm to the government and expressed the hope that "that this property will always be operated in the interest of these people, and for their benefit."⁷² In 1946, however, when the government decided to expand the Métis farm and inquired about purchasing adjacent land owned by the Oblates, it was advised that the property was needed for the residential school.⁷³

The Alberta-Saskatchewan province received the visit of another canonical visitor in 1941 in the person of Anthime Desnoyers. He was pleased to note that the directives given by Labouré in 1936 had been implemented. Former residences and missions had been reoccupied and new ones had been built where possible. Although religious community life may have suffered, the ministry of the Oblates was much more effective as a result of this closer and more frequent contact. Desnoyers lamented the fact that it was impossible to place a resident Oblate missionary in each reserve and, hence, the missionaries were always required to travel. He contended that the dispersal of Native populations over vast areas was the most significant obstacle to the thorough Christianization of the Indians.⁷⁴

With respect to Labouré's directive that Oblates master the Indian languages in order to become successful missionaries, Desnoyers noted that young missionaries had made a sincere effort. Unfortunately, the results were not sufficient because, while one could readily acquire a knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, years of study were needed to master the language and its nuances. Desnoyers urged that young missionaries be relieved of administrative duties as soon as recruitment permitted. He remarked also that Labouré's directives concerning the use of syllabic characters in the publication of prayer and hymn books was not yet fully implemented.⁷⁵

Like Labouré, Desnoyers was concerned with the quality of spirituality among young Indians and he believed that Oblate personnel in residential schools would have to exercise a greater influence over their charges. Children were not to be inculcated with an exterior conformity that they would quickly abandon after leaving school but with an "interior discipline" that would remain forever. It was necessary to develop a spirituality and virtues that would be a source of strength and direction when they left school. The function of religious ceremonies had to be explained in order that children not regard them as mandatory obligations but as sources of grace that had to be tapped to assist them in living truly Christian lives.⁷⁶

Desnoyers identified retreats and post-school activities as "extraordinary" means of spiritual regeneration and preservation. In addition to general retreats held at missions Desnoyers recommended that special closed retreats be held in schools prior to the beginning of holidays. Desnoyers was particularly concerned with what he identified as the critical period in the lives of young Indians, the time between their leaving school and their marriage. He noted that "painful defections" took place during these "perilous years." To prevent this from happening, he affirmed that school children would have to be closely supervised by missionaries and grouped into religious societies. It was crucial to maintain among former students a love for the institution that formed them. As means of accomplishing this Desnoyers suggested meetings and a banquet, the establishment of study groups, cooperatives, credit unions and workshops.⁷⁷

At the end of his canonical visit Desnoyers drafted a series of recommendations to enhance the religiosity of Indians in the Alberta-Saskatchewan province. This document was sent to every Oblate involved in Indian or Métis missions in that jurisdiction for study and comment. Seventeen reports were prepared by missionaries and discussed during their annual retreat in July 1942. Afterwards, the provincial, Henri Routhier, prepared a report incorporating the recommendations and the substance of the discussions that had taken place. Routhier's report contained both old and new elements. With respect to the old, there were traditional theological references to the nature of humanity corrupted by sin and affirmation that Christian traditions were not to be found in the Indian and Métis temperament and environment. The new perspective was apparent in the identification and analysis of causal factors and this

was a continuation of the challenge and innovative spirit generated by Labouré's visit and report.

Routhier's report freely admitted that after a century of evangelization the status of Christianity among Indians and Métis left much to be desired. There was apathy and indifference and, for many, Christianity was but a thin veneer. This state of affairs was attributed in part to human nature and sin. Temperament and environment were also deemed to be contributing factors because the passion of Indians for traveling, gambling and sun dances was not conducive to religious discipline.⁷⁸ The Oblates themselves were also to blame for this religious indifference. Routhier contended that there had been an insufficient number of missionaries and, furthermore, they had been changed too often. It was admitted that some Oblates lacked zeal, perseverance and an appropriate missiology. Principals of residential schools were reprimanded for abdicating their authority to nuns and allowing Indian children to be educated and formed in the same manner as whites. The government was also to blame because as a result of alleged Protestant and masonic influences, Oblates schools were not receiving adequate moral and financial support from the authorities. The government's neglect of students after they graduated was regarded as another major factor.⁷⁹

Routhier's report proposed remedies for the problems it had identified. It reaffirmed that the missionary had to have faith in his Apostolate and the redemptive power of grace. Furthermore, the missionary had to love the Indian and not scorn him. Oblates had to become fluent in the Indian languages and it was suggested that young missionaries spend one year in the theoretical study of these languages. Afterwards, young missionaries would be apprenticed to another Oblate who was fluent in the language and the former could begin his ministry while studying the mentality of the Indians and perfecting his knowledge of their language. Frequent contact with Indians through visits in their homes was deemed necessary to overcome apathy and to provide the missionary with first hand knowledge of his flock. Routhier affirmed that it was the best Oblates who were required for service in the missions and not those who lacked intellect.⁸⁰

With respect to specific proposals, Routhier's report affirmed that it was absolutely necessary that Oblates be responsible for boys in residential schools. Furthermore, the personnel in such institutions had to be

trained and constantly upgraded. Oblates had to decide what it was their schools were to do for Indians and then formulate the methods appropriate to achieve that objective. The cumulative experience of the last century had to be documented, analyzed and synthesized and made available to new missionaries to facilitate their task. To produce good Christians it was necessary to have good catechisms and the catechism class had to be as enticing as the other classes. Catholic Action had to be adopted for young people to animate what had been learned in catechism classes and transform the child into a true Christian.⁸¹

While noting the importance of the school, Routhier's report declared that the school was but a preparation for life on the reserve. Hence, it was necessary to have a cordial and fraternal entente between the principal and the missionary on the reserve. Principals and missionaries worked in different areas but pursued the same goal. To ameliorate the economic status of Indians, Routhier recommended the establishment of model farms on reserves where Indians could find employment. It would be on this farm and not at the school that the shops would be located. Unfortunately, the Oblates possessed neither the resources nor the personnel to establish these model farms.⁸²

Routhier's report also focused on a theme that was becoming popular in Oblate circles, the necessity of establishing some sort of continuing education for Indian youth between the time they left school and got married. Since nothing was done for young Indians at this critical time, moral corruption and degradation allegedly took place. At the Hobbema school a club had been established in 1941 to cure those who had been stricken by "social disease" and prevent "healthy" persons from being contaminated. The motto of the club was "Progress in every line" and to progress Indians had to be reminded of their duties toward God and country and provided with assistance to discharge those obligations. Re-education and re-inspiration were to come about through lectures and open discussions that made Indians aware of the corruption and deficiencies around them. Indians were made to realize that if they persevered they could be as successful as whites and be as good and useful citizens. The club organized different forms of entertainment such as picnics and sponsored a hockey team.⁸³

In addition to a continuing education imbued with the principles of Catholic Action, Routhier's report suggested that pilgrimages presented a

unique opportunity to make Indians reflect on the tenets of the Catholic faith. Three days of preaching and religious exercises were recommended as a preparation for the pilgrimage. The proceedings were to be policed to ensure that morality and order prevailed. Each mission was to have an annual retreat but the report noted that there were not enough Oblates to preach these retreats in the appropriate Indian languages. Routhier also recommended the printing of Albert Lacombe's collection of sermons in syllabic characters because Indians in distant posts rarely saw the missionary and suggested that this sermonary be published in Roman characters for children in residential schools.⁸⁴

While both Desnoyers and Routhier had identified deficiencies in the Apostolate of the Oblates in the Alberta-Saskatchewan province, the assessment of one missionary in that jurisdiction was far more critical. According to Victor Le Calvez, Desnoyer's report hinted that not all of the 40 Oblates in the province were capable of relating to their Indian charges but did not state this explicitly. Le Calvez contended there were only three missionaries among the Blackfoot could speak that language, none among the Assiniboine and one among the Chipewyan. Four elderly Oblates could speak Cree fluently while nine others spoke enough to hear confessions and engage in simple conversation.⁸⁵

Le Calvez claimed that at Hobbema, the largest Oblate mission, only a handful of Indians attended mass although the majority had been baptized. He suggested that the reason for this state of affairs was that there was no longer a sermon in Cree and, consequently, the Oblates had lost contact with the Indians. Furthermore, residents of the reserve had recently voted in favour of neutral day schools and he argued this never would have happened if the Oblates had been in close contact with the residents. He claimed that no Oblates had been present at a meeting among the Chipewyan at Le Goff convoked by the Indian Association of Alberta where the question of neutral schools was discussed again. Le Calvez asked the superior general to provide missionaries who were willing to learn the Indian languages and who were not ashamed to serve in the Indian missions. He recommended that these missionaries be placed under the direction of someone who knew the missions, could relate to Indians and provide directives. Only then would the Oblate Apostolate gain ground.⁸⁶

The province of Manitoba also received a canonical visitor in 1941. Joseph Rousseau noted that students in residential schools displayed satisfactory outward manifestations of piety but, nevertheless, he entertained doubts as to the "interior dispositions" of students. He also observed that in some schools attendance at mass during the week was optional in order to avoid creating an aversion among students. As a result of their absence, however, children did not understand the priest's function at the altar and this was the real reason why they no longer assisted. The visitor concluded that if students were to assist at mass they would have to love the ceremony. Worldly attractions could not be utilized to achieve this goal because a love of the mass could only be achieved through comprehension and intimate participation in a "vital act" in which one replaced one's life by drawing from that of Christ.⁸⁷

Twenty missionaries most of whom were young were actively working in the Indian missions of the Manitoba province and Rousseau regarded this "veritable renaissance" as very encouraging. He was pleased to witness the preparation of religious books in Indian languages as well as the publication of a missal in *Saulteaux*. He was also delighted that the residence of the Oblates at Fort Alexander had been altered in 1936 to establish a school for missionaries where they could be prepared for their future ministry as well as learn *Saulteaux* under Joseph Brachet, an experienced missionary and linguist.⁸⁸

Rousseau also noted some deficiencies in the Indian missions of Manitoba. To begin with, there was an insufficient number of missionaries and their apostolic activities were handicapped because they resided in residential schools rather than on reserves and had obligations to fulfill in these schools. Rousseau asserted that missionaries had to be liberated to devote their energies exclusively to evangelization. More serious, however, was the virtual total absence of pastoral guidance for missionaries who had to rely on their individual initiatives. In the vicariate apostolics, the vicar apostolic was the organizer, initiator and promoter of missionary activity. The diocesan authority in the province of Manitoba was not involved in missionary work and, therefore, it was not able to provide the assistance that the Oblates required. According to Rousseau, the Oblate provincial administration had to assume complete authority for missions. To assist the provincial administration in providing this leadership func-

tion Rousseau suggested that missionary congresses be held and that they be organized like those of learned and scientific societies. He also recommended conventions for principals and personnel in residential schools as a means of unifying educational efforts and making them more effective.⁸⁹ These conventions would enhance the authority of the provincial administration by providing it with valuable data upon which to formulate decisions.

The canonical visits, discussions and reports created an atmosphere in which individual Oblates began to make a serious introspective evaluation of their apostolic and educational efforts. Siméon Perreault asked his provincial to relieve him of his duties at St. Philip Mission because there was too much work for one elderly person. Perreault claimed that the mission required the services of two zealous and dedicated young missionaries who spoke *Saulteaux* fluently. He alleged that provincials had never taken the number of Catholic Indians into account and, furthermore, had staffed the mission with persons who were devoid of zeal and could not speak the language. Consequently, the spiritual interests of Indians was neglected and they ceased to attend services and practice their faith. On the four neighboring reserves there were 705 Catholic Indians and 250 white Catholics in the region and he was responsible for ministering to them. Given the distance that separated these individuals, the apathy of the Indians and his advanced age Perreault asked to be sent elsewhere.⁹⁰

Paul-Émile Tétrault, another Oblate sent to the mission in 1942, informed the provincial that an immense work of moral reconstruction was required. To accomplish this objective, he would require the assistance of young missionaries who possessed "courage, energy and enthusiasm." Individuals who had vegetated for years would not be capable of undertaking the work that was required. Tétrault claimed that Indians desired the priest and religious services. A chapel would have to be built because distances were too great to travel to the mission itself. He claimed that Indians could not remain good Christians if they were only visited by the missionary once a year.⁹¹

Other Oblates made suggestions to enhance the function and role of the residential school. While some of these proposals were related to administrative procedures such as the location of schools or the entrance age of pupils others raised far more fundamental issues.⁹² There was a

reaction on the part of some Oblates to the undue emphasis that had been placed on the school as an agent of conversion and Christianization. Henri Delmas, long time principal of St. Michel's Residential School in Duck Lake allegedly stated that with one school he could accomplish as much as five missionaries on reserves. According to Clément Chataigner, this dictum had resulted in missionaries being removed from reserves and placed in schools to serve as a "court" for principals. Chataigner believed that so much importance had been attached to schools and education by all levels of the Oblate hierarchy from principals to vicar apostolics and provincials that the missionary was lost sight of.⁹³

These views were shared by Joseph-Amédée Angin, a former principal of residential schools at Delmas and St. Paul. He claimed that the school had crammed religion down the throats of students with the result that they were disgusted. He alleged that the school had attempted to make novices out of Indian students by insisting on a rigorous conformity that went against the dictates of common sense. Once they left school it was only natural that students rebelled against religion and abandoned religious practices. The "illogical methods" used by the Oblates were best suited to dechristianizing Indians. Angin suggested that students should have been made to observe the duties of a Christian in a progressive manner that suited their temperament rather than those of a religious novice. More freedom should have been permitted to Indians with respect to religious exercises that were not mandatory for Catholics such as attendance at daily mass and communion.⁹⁴

For his part, Chataigner contended that the solution lay in Catholic Action whose goal was to transform an unfriendly environment into one where it was possible to think and live as Christians. According to Chataigner, Indians and Métis were underprivileged elements confronted by hunger and misery and they possessed neither education nor Christian traditions. Catholic Action implemented by a trained elite could alter this state of affairs. He proposed to make the church the centre of all activity, the soul of the parish. Thus, he advocated the creation of Indian parishes and the immediate establishment of perfect Christian institutions in their midst.⁹⁵

The importance of being proficient in Indian languages was recognized by missionaries in the field. In 1938, for example, Marius Rossignol advised his superior, Martin Lajeunesse, Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin on



△ △ *Bishop Martin Lajeunesse's episcopal hat being used to filter gasoline after his boat capsized while on a pastoral visit, 1944. (AD)*

the most appropriate ways of directing the Métis in the vicariate. Rossignol recommended that Lajeunesse be accompanied by Patrick Beaudry, the second Métis Oblate, on his forthcoming pastoral visit. According to Rossignol, Beaudry would be more than the bishop's interpreter because the Métis would accept what he said.⁹⁶

As the Oblates attempted to come to grips with the problems facing their ministry among the First Nations, they were confronted by the perennial problem of limited financial resources. The funding traditionally obtained from institutions such *l'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* had long proved insufficient and other avenues had to be exploited. Unlike parishes in settled areas, the Oblate missions could not expect the faithful to provide adequate financial support. While individual acts of charity towards Oblates by Indians were not unknown, the Sunday collection was not an ingrained tradition. Oblate attempts to inculcate in Indians notions of tithing and support for the clergy were seriously hampered by the recession that further reduced the meager income of the latter.

The economic recession forced the Oblates to seek other sources of revenue for their missions and institutions. The construction of churches and chapels was assisted by grants for the Catholic Church Extension Society.⁹⁷ From time to time, individual brothers and missionaries had returned to their native parishes or to areas where they were known and

collected money for their missions. Others contacted their former seminary classmates and asked to make collections in their parishes. Mass intentions also provided a modest source of revenue for missions. Since priests were allowed to celebrate only one mass a day, they passed on excess masses to missionaries and paid them all or part of the honorarium that had been given.

For his part, Bishop Breynat had a detailed report on the teaching of French in the residential schools under his jurisdiction for Paul Suzor, the French Consul for western Canada. During his visit of western Canada Suzor had been impressed with the knowledge of French displayed by students at the residential school at Fort Chipewyan and others in Breynat's vicariate and he requested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide an annual grant of 10,000 francs to Breynat. Suzor also wanted France to recognize the services of the older French Oblates by awarding them an honorific distinction.⁹⁸

In addition to seeking new sources of funding, the Oblates also utilized new developments in technology to facilitate their apostolic ventures. In 1933, for example, Bishop Ovide Charlebois of Keewatin used radio station CKY in Winnipeg to transmit messages to his missionaries in the north. Messages sent to the station were broadcast on Wednesdays. The news of the death of Superior General Dontenwill was telegraphed to Le Pas at 10:00 A.M. and twelve hours later it was broadcast to the Oblates serving in the north.⁹⁹ The introduction of aircraft transformed the travel of missionaries. In 1936, Jean-Baptiste Ducharme flew from Beauval to his mission at Portage La Loche in one hour and fifteen minutes. This voyage normally took four days by dog team.¹⁰⁰ Three consecutive summers were normally required for a pastoral visit of the missions of the immense Vicariate of Keewatin. This time was reduced dramatically by using an airplane and the vicar apostolic was able to remain for a longer period in each mission.¹⁰¹ In the Vicariate of Mackenzie, Breynat purchased an airplane, the *Sancta Maria*, and was able to visit all his missions in a three-week period. The flight from Edmonton to Aklavik took eleven hours by air as compared to two months by dog team.¹⁰² In 1939, Breynat's famous *Sancta Maria* was used to transport the Apostolic Delegate during his visit of the missions. The plane was also used to transport students to residential schools in the northern vicariates of Mackenzie and Keewatin.¹⁰³

With the introduction of modern technology in the form of the radio and the aircraft the curtain fell on the formative period of the Oblate Apostolate in the western provinces. This "classical" era had been characterized by a somewhat naive belief that the missionary's task was to announce the Gospel and prepare an environment that was conducive to the Gospel taking root and flowering. It was assumed that once Christianity matured it would be such a powerful force that a better society would emerge spontaneously within the Indian and Métis communities. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, the discrepancy between this ideal and reality was too great to be ignored and it had to be addressed directly by the Oblates.

Internal Oblate reports, and those of canonical visitors, were articles of faith in the very essence of the Oblate Apostolate. The concept of mission and the nature of the missionary edifice were never questioned, only the results of the Oblate enterprise were scrutinized and found wanting. As the products of a West European Christian society the Oblates assumed that which had contributed to the welfare of that society was *ipso facto* beneficial to other societies. Thus Oblate reports tended to comment on an idealized vision of the society of the First Nations rather than the true social and economic status of those peoples or the poverty and lack of opportunity on reserves. The Euro-Christian virtues of thrift, hard work and sobriety were likely to be recognized and rewarded in a society where there was a surplus of resources and where all citizens had equal access those resources.¹⁰⁴

For their part, the First Nations were quick to realize the discrepancy between theory and reality and the designs of church and state lost whatever appeal they initially had. As time passed, Indians expressed greater dissatisfaction and discontent with concepts and institutions that were not relevant to their culture and traditions and that did not ameliorate their social status and poverty. In the period after World War II, the First Nations would no longer be satisfied with resisting, they would claim the right to fashion their own institutions and forge their own destiny.¹⁰⁵

It was during this examination of means and objectives that the Oblates became aware of the importance of a suitable social and economic environment in nurturing the fragile seed of Christianity. Powerful though Christianity might be, it was recognized that it could not grow in the midst of the poverty and associated social ills that increasingly charac-

terized life on Indian reserves and among the landless Métis. Thus, on both moral and practical grounds, it was imperative that the Oblates attempt to improve the social and economic well being of the Indian and Métis communities. Since the reserve would remain the basic institution in Indian life, the Oblates felt that the school would have to provide children with suitable skills to earn a livelihood on the reserve and become productive citizens in the process. The Oblates also identified the period immediately after leaving school and returning to the reservation as a critical time in the life of the young. Thus, proper post-school supervision and direction were necessary to prevent a return to traditional ways and the contamination of the young by an immoral milieu. Catholic Action was deemed to be an important instrument with which to transform an otherwise hostile environment.

Labouré's canonical visit and report had demonstrated the necessity of unity of action and collaboration of all elements involved in missionary activities. In the meantime, the Oblates became aware of the complex nature of missionary activities and the necessity of accessing knowledge from anthropology, history, linguistics, pedagogy and other disciplines to enhance their apostolic activities. The economic recession and WWII had imposed restraints on the Oblates and their limited resources and this is one of the reasons why no dramatic innovations are to be found in the period prior to 1945. In addition, the involvement of the Oblates in Indian residential education imposed restraints on the freedom of action of the missionaries because of the importance that was attached to these institutions as apostolic adjuncts and as sources of funding for the missions themselves.

The doctrinal rigidity within the Catholic Church in this era also imposed severe limitations on Oblate attempts to make Christianity a more relevant spirituality for the First Nations. While Oblates could relax discipline and reduce compulsion in schools with respect to attendance at religious services, there could be no deviation in the response to the Christian message or the structure of the church that they established. At this time, the universality of the Roman Catholic Church was identified and proclaimed through the conformity of its constituent parts to the parent institution in Rome. Indians and Métis who adhered to Catholicism had to accept the western values and traditions that were inherent in that faith, in other words, they became Latinized and westernized. Institutional

conformity and rigidity would be breached only after the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, which met in 1962–65. The ecumenical spirit resulting from this assembly made it possible for a later generation of Oblates to begin to truly preach the gospel as had the early Apostles instead of presenting a Christian message clothed in western cultural accretions. In the meantime, those who were concerned with making Christianity a more meaningful spiritual expression had to content themselves with minor alterations to the manner in which the message was presented rather than encourage a unique response to the message based on the needs and traditions of those to whom the Gospel was being preached.

12 THE OBLATE APOSTOLATE: ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER

1. *Acte général de visite des missions indiennes*, pp. 70–71.
2. AD, HR 8001 C73R 2, Notes tirées des minutes de la Commission des Affaires indiennes, 17 jan. 1936.
3. PAA, OMI, Adm., Correspondance avec J.O. Plourde, Plourde to Langlois, 15 oct. 1936.
4. AD, HR 8001 C73R 2, Notes tirées des minutes de la Commission des Affaires indiennes, 25 nov. 1937.
5. AD, HR 8004 C73R 0.1, Procès verbaux, comité directeur COOIE, 17 jan. 1936, p. 1, 24 nov. 1937, p. 23.
6. *Ibid.*, 12 oct. 1939.
7. *Ibid.*, 24 nov. 1936, p. 11.
8. *Ibid.*, 23 nov. 1936, p. 6; 24 nov. 1937, p. 17.
9. *Ibid.*, 25 nov. 1937, pp. 36–38.
10. *Ibid.*, 13 oct. 1939, pp. 52–53.
11. *Ibid.*, 22 mai 1940, p. 58.
12. *Ibid.*, 12 oct. 1939, pp. 46–47.
13. PAA, OMI, Duck Lake 4, Plourde to Mon rév. père, 27 nov. 1941. An examination of Anglican sources suggests that the proposed reduction of grants would cause “very great difficulty” and that this financial consideration motivated the joint meeting with Crerar. Anglican Church of Canada Archives, MSSC, Executive Committee Minutes GS75–103 Series 1–4, 22 Sept. 1941. The Board of Home Missions of the United Church had suggested that the government be asked to provide a bonus to cover the operating costs of residential schools, *ibid.*, MSSC, Indian and Eskimo Residential School Commission Minutes, GS 75–103, Series 2–15, 21 Oct. 1941. On the government’s proposal to close two Anglican residential schools and replace them with day schools, however, the MSSC stated

- that “any alteration in the status of the Society’s Schools must be contingent upon similar action being taken in connexion with Schools administered by other Church societies, and in due proportion to the number of those Schools,” *ibid.*, 9 Dec. 1941. That the various denominations were able to come together in such a meeting is amazing given traditional Protestant-Catholic jealousies and animosities. In 1940, Anglicans attempted to persuade the minister of National Defence to reduce the number of Catholic chaplains in the Canadian armed forces. The following year, Baptist Churches described their efforts to convert Catholics to Protestantism as a positive contribution to the Canadian war effort. At a conference of United Church Indian Workers held in Norway House, Manitoba, in 1942, the Rev. E. Young stated that the progress of Catholic missions was a loss to the United Church and concluded that “we must fight it [the Catholic Church], not merely to save our investment and effort, but also to save the Indians from a system which more and more reveals itself as a pagan and perverted thing.” United Church of Canada Archives, Board of Home Missions, General Files, 83.050C, Box 25, File 376, Report of Conference of Indian Workers, p. 10.
14. United Church of Canada Archives, Board of Home Missions, General File: Re Indian Co-operation Committee, 83.050C, Box 25, File 376, Memorandum for the Honourable T.A. Crerar, 10 Jan. 1942.
 15. PAA, OMI, Duck Lake 4, Plourde to Mon rév. père, 27 nov. 1941.
 16. *Ibid.*, Plourde to Latour, 31 oct. 1942.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. *Ibid.*, Plourde to Hoey, 9 Aug. 1941.
 19. *Ibid.*, Hoey to Plourde, 22 Aug. 1941.
 20. *Acte de la visite générale de la province du Manitoba par le T.R.P. Rousseau, O.M.I. Mai-Octobre 1941*, p. 71.
 21. Nowakowski, “Indian Residential Schools,” pp. 70–75.
 22. PAA, OMI, Duck Lake 64, Plourde to Latour, 31 juillet 1942.
 23. PAA, OMI, Hobbema 143, Plourde to Hoey, 3 May 1945.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. PAA, OMI, Adm., Correspondance avec le gouvernement 1945–56, Routhier to Crerar, 4 April 1945.
 26. *Ibid.*, Crerar to Routhier, 10 April 1945.
 27. *Acte général de visite des missions indiennes*, pp. 59–60.
 28. AD, L231 M27R 116, Séjour des enfants indiens au scolasticat de Lebrét entre le 13 nov. 1932 et 23 mars 1936.
 29. *Ibid.*

30. AD, L 281 M27C 4, *Codex historicus*, École industrielle des Saints-Anges; "Province du Manitoba," *Missions* 73 (1939): p. 132.
31. *Semaines d'études missionnaires du Canada, Ottawa, 1934* (Ottawa: Le Secrétariat des Semaines, Université d'Ottawa, n.d.), p. 15.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
33. *Ibid.*, "La missionologie et les Semaines missionnologiques," p. 43-44.
34. "Province du Canada," *Missions* 70 (1936): p. 171.
35. Lajeunesse, *Directives missionnaires*, 629 pages.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. vi-viii.
37. Joseph-Étienne Champagne, *Manuel d'action missionnaire*, pp. 15-18.
38. AD, HF 224 C44R 5, J.-É. Champagne, o.m.i., Projet d'institut scientifique missionnaire, 1 mai 1948.
39. "Vicariat du Keewatin," *Missions* 73 (1939): p. 138.
40. "Goldfields «Aux mines d'or du Lac Athabasca»" *Missions* 70 (1936): pp. 66-67.
41. "Vicariat du Mackenzie," *Missions* 73 (1939): p. 405.
42. "Vicariat du Keewatin, Rapport annuel, 30 juin 1935-30 juin 1936," *Missions* 71 (1937): pp. 37-38.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 39, "Vicariat du Keewatin," p. 387.
44. AD, HPK 2033 N82R 1, Jean-Baptiste Ducharme, OMI, Report on the Indians and Half-Breed Question, 10 August 1939, La Loche, Saskatchewan.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Murray Dobbin, *The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris Metis Patriots of the 20th Century* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981), ch. 4, "L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord Ouest," pp. 54-65.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
48. "Vicariat de Grouard," *Missions* 69 (1935): p. 445.
49. PAA, OMI, DP, I. Gauthier 1934-39, Gauthier to Blair, 24 July 1937, AD, L2681 A33R 1, Roméo Levert, Fishing Lake, p. 2.
50. AD, L 2681 A33R 1, Levert, Fishing Lake, p. 2.
51. *Ibid.*
52. PAA, OMI, Paroisses noninventoriées, Fishing Lake Correspondance 1939-50, Gauthier to Buck, 5 April 1940.
53. AD, L2681 A33R 1, Levert, Fishing Lake.
54. PAA, OMI, Paroisses noninventoriées, Fishing Lake Correspondance 1939-50, McNally to Levert, 22 Dec. 1942.
55. *Ibid.*, Routhier to The Métis, Missionaries and People, 4 Jan. 1943.
56. *Ibid.*, Gauthier to Maynard, 7 jan. 1943.
57. PAA, OMI, DP, I. Gauthier 1940-52, Rapport sur la situation des Métis, 1943.
58. PAA, OMI, DP, I. Gauthier 1934-39, Gauthier to Mon rév. père [Routhier], 22 fév. 1939.
59. AD, L 301 M275 16, Lessard to Joyal, Religious Vacation School, 23 Aug. 1935.
60. AD, L 301 M275 15, P. Dumouchel, G. Michaud, Catéchisme aux enfants métis, [1936].
61. AD, L 301 M27S 3, Welsh to Lamontagne, 27 oct. 1936.
62. AD, L 301 M27S 4, Lamontagne to Welsh, 29 nov. 1936.
63. AD, L 282 M27T 4, Welsh to Lamontagne, 2 nov. 1936.
64. AD, L 282 M27T 9, Memorandum of Agreement, 10 June 1940.
65. AD, L 282 M27T 17, Memorandum of Supplementary Agreement, 25 April 1941; *ibid.*, Lamontagne to Dawson, 22 May 1941.
66. AD, L 282 M27T 24, Duplain to Parker, 2 Feb. 1943.
67. AD, L 282 M27T 23, Memorandum of Agreement, 1 Jan. 1943.
68. AD, L 282 M27T 30, Magnan to Lavigne, 17 fév. 1943.
69. AD, L 282 M27T 38, Jalbert to Lavigne, 19 déc. 1944.
70. AD, L 102 M27C 3, Procès verbal, Conseil provincial, Manitoba, 20-21 fév. 1945, p. 251.
71. AD, L 282 M27T 47, White to Franke, 15 Oct. 1945.
72. AD, L 282 M27T 48, Franke to White, 12 Oct. 1945.
73. AD, L 282 M27T 49, Silman to Dear Sir, 21 Oct. 1946, *ibid.*, 50, Lavigne to Silman, 9 Nov. 1946.
74. *Acte général de la visite de la province d'Alberta-Saskatchewan, Avril-Octobre 1941* (Montréal: 1201 rue de la Visitation, 1942), p. 13.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10. Catholic Action involved activities by lay groups under the authority and supervision of the local bishop. Within this context, Catholic Action "denotes a highly structured organization that serves as an arm of the hierarchy in lay life," see: "Catholic Action," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, pp. 262-63.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-16.

83. Ibid., pp. 16–17. The club is only identified by its acronym HIPC [possibly Hobbema Indian Progress Club?].
84. Ibid., pp. 18–19.
85. AD, L 2031 A33R 2, Victor Le Calvez, o.m.i., Quelques notes.
86. Ibid.
87. *Acte de la visite générale de la province du Manitoba, Mai-Octobre 1941*, p. 70.
88. Ibid., p. 77; AD, L 3 M27C 16, p. 5.
89. *Acte de la visite générale de la province du Manitoba, Mai-Octobre 1941*, pp. 73, 79–80.
90. AD, L 1052 M27K 148, Perreault to bien cher père [Lamontagne], 21 nov. 1936.
91. AD, L 1052 M27K 175, Tétrault to Lavigne, 8 oct. 1942.
92. PAA, OMI, Hobbema 141, Rhéaume to Plourde, 6 sept. 1939; *ibid.*, Adm., St. Paul IRS, Blue Quills, Correspondence 1937–42, Balter to Routhier, 9 oct. 1939.
93. PAA, OMI, DP, C. Chataigner: Divers Documents, Réflexions sur l'avenir de nos oeuvres oblates."
94. PAA, OMI, DP, J. Angin: Divers, Mémoire sur l'évangélisation des Indiens, [1943].
95. PAA, OMI, DP, C. Chataigner: Divers Documents, évangélisation des Indiens et Métis.
96. PAA, OMI, Adm., Vicariat Apostolic Keewatin, Correspondance 1938–40, Rossignol to Mgr [Lajeunesse], 25 nov. 1938.
97. "Province du Manitoba," *Missions* 73 (1939): p. 307; "Vicariat de Grouard," *ibid.*, pp. 415–16.
98. AD, LC 3 M14R 11, A. Autilly, Références sur les missions du Mackenzie, 1934; *ibid.*, LC 3 M14R 4, Suzor to S.E. Mon. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 10 juillet 1934.
99. "Vicariat du Keewatin," *Missions* 67 (1933): p. 224.
100. "L'avion au service du missionnaire," *Missions* 70 (1936): p. 177.
101. AD, LC 6003 K26R 8, "Au Pays du Keewatin," 22 juin au 31 juillet 1937," p. 1.
102. "Vicariat du Mackenzie," *Missions* 71 (1937): p. 385.
103. AD, HEB 1646 E24C 3, Ducharme to Chers parents et amis, 27 juin 1940. For an account of Oblate air travel in the Arctic consult William Leising, OMI, "Air Transportation in the Arctic," in *Western Oblate Studies 2 / Études Oblates de l'Ouest 2*, ed. by R. Huel (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992): pp. 31–36 and the same author's *Arctic Wings*.
104. In a political context George Potter argues that the United States' mission

- to preach the gospel of democracy to the world failed because American freedom was based on abundance. When the concept of democracy is exported "to countries which see no means of attaining abundance, the message does not convey the message which it is meant to convey." There was a similar flaw in the preaching of the Christian message. David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 127.
105. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, ch. 22, "Shift in Attitudes."