

Chapter 9

 Nimble Fingers and Strong Backs:
First Nations and Métis Women in Fur Trade and
Rural Economies 
Sherry Ferrell Racette

Questions for Critical Reading

1. Racette concludes that the importance of Indigenous women's labour significantly declined in the 19th century. Why was this the case and how did it impact Indigenous women?
2. Why did historians overlook women's role in the fur trade until recently?
3. How did Indigenous women's work differ from the idealized white woman's work at the time?
4. Why did Racette choose "labour" as a lens to examine Indigenous women's bodies? How did the choice of this lens influence her conclusions?

List of Primary Sources

- "Camp Scene including One Métis Man, Two Metis Women, Tipi." Finnie, Oswald S. Photograph. N.d.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3379597&rec_nbr_list=3379597
- "Half Breed (Métis) Ladies." Peters, James. Photograph. 1885.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3246020&rec_nbr_list=3246020
- "Interior of a Southern Indian Tent." Hood, Robert. Watercolour. 1820.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=4730705&rec_nbr_list=4730705
- "Women and Six Children beside a Log Building, Île-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan." Photograph. C. 1905-1931.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3382552&rec_nbr_list=3382552
- "Scrip Affidavit for Birston, Henry George." Textual Document. 1878.

http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=1499587&rec_nbr_list=1499587

- “Portrait of a Seated (Metis) Woman Wearing a Striped Wool Shawl.” Topley, William James. Photograph. 1886.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=4819965&rec_nbr_list=4819965
- “Metis: Two Men, One Woman, One Child Posed in Front of Building at Dufferin, Manitoba.” Dawson, George M. Photograph. 1873-1874.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3248454&rec_nbr_list=3248454
- “Camp Scene: Red-River Cart, Aboriginal Woman.” Mathers. Photograph. N.d.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3392315&rec_nbr_list=3392315
- “Building a Canoe, North West Angle.” Photograph. 1872.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3192495&rec_nbr_list=3192495
- “Portrait of Native Woman of Mixed Ancestry (Labrador).” Burwash, L.T. Photograph. 1926.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3379600&rec_nbr_list=3379600
- “Bay at St. Anthony.” Chesterfield, Albert Alexander. Photograph. 1931.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3828964&rec_nbr_list=3828964
- “Indian women Scraping and Stretching Deerskin, North West Territories.” Photograph. N.d.
http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=3367098&rec_nbr_list=3367098

Multimedia Resources

- Women of the Fur Trade
<http://www.louisrielinstitute.com/women-of-the-fur-trade.php>
- Métis Sash (documentary)
<https://vimeo.com/66841701>
- Life of a Fur Trader Wife
www.unlockthepast.ca/Life-of-Fur-Traders-Wife
- Virtual Museum of New France
www.labradorvirtualmuseum.ca/home/metis_history.htm

- “On the Goose – A Labrador Métis Woman Remembers”
<http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2443171433>