

THREE WOMEN PIONEERS IN MANITOBA:  
EVIDENCE OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

by

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This dissertation, submitted by Carolyn L. Crippen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Dean of the Graduate School

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## ABSTRACT

Although leadership was characterized as patriarchal and hierarchical during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pioneer women, including school teachers, journalists, suffragettes, healthcare workers, and social activists played an important role in the development of Manitoba communities. Biographical profiles of three Manitoba pioneer women, Margaret Scott (1855-1931), Margret Benedictsson (1866-1956), and Jessie McDermott (1870-1950), will be analyzed for evidence of leadership. Their particular leadership style can be identified as that of servant-leadership. This qualitative study examines primary archival and secondary source information for evidence of servant-leadership characteristics in their life stories.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The pioneer women of Manitoba hold an important place in Canadian history. No record of our country's past will be of greater interest or more inspiring than the record of their lives, if ever their lives are adequately recorded, as they should be. (Healy, 1923, p. 260)

William J. Healy (1867-1950), the Provincial Librarian for Manitoba, wrote a tribute to the women of an earlier day (1806-1873) entitled, *Women of Red River: Being a book written from the recollections of women surviving from the Red River era*. The above statement appeared near the close of his book. The research which follows will address Healy's (1923, p. 23) plea by reviewing records pertaining to the lives of three pioneer women in Manitoba. By the end of the study, the reader will be able to determine whether these women's lives were as interesting and inspiring as Healy (1923) suggested and if these three women demonstrated specific leadership characteristics in their lives and their communities. This study was not intended to be a full-fledged history of Manitoba or of a particular time in its history. However, sufficient background was provided to give a sense of the society and culture in which these women subjects lived.

#### Background of the Study

The role of pioneer women was clearly influenced by the values of the Victorian Era: a woman's place was in the home. They were expected to be the angel of the household, the nurturer of the child and supporter of their husbands in their private, isolated world. Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black, (1996), note that,

“What was new and confining about the ideal of domesticity was the increasingly sharp distinction it made between the domestic world of women and the public world of men, the growing emphasis on the mothering role, and the negative reactions that greeted most deviations from the norm” (p. 157). Such an environment was confining mentally and physically to women; many were restricted to their homes while their husbands, the breadwinners, attended to earning a living in the public sphere. Mary Kinnear (1998) discussed the concept of women’s work and references Joy Parr:

It comprehends farm work, child rearing, housework, and volunteer public service as well as the work measured by the orthodox criterion of payment. Women’s work is rendered visible to the onlooker. Women themselves have long understood the value of their work for the well-being of their families. As Joy Parr showed in *The Gender of Breadwinners* (1990), women were fully aware “that securing a subsistence and managing the complexities of social and economic existence have required deft balancing of these different kinds of activities.” (Kinnear, 1998, p. 5)

Regardless of these restrictions, as settlers marched across the North American continent during the nineteenth century and into the 1900s, women, including the three in this study, fostered education, social reform, and health care, laid solid foundations of religious faith, and established friendships among each other (Carter, 2002; Kinnear, 1998; Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black, 1996; Weiss & Rinear, 2002). This study hypothesized that women were engaged in unrecognized and covert leadership strategies within that contemporary culture. The life stories and actions of three Manitoba women were examined for evidence of servant-leadership. The term “servant-leadership” is explained in the Leadership Theory section located later in this chapter.

## Leadership Theory

Leadership in the late 1800s and at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was defined in the literature as being hierarchical, patriarchal, and related to wealth and influence (Bennis, 1997, p. 104-105, 185-186; Block, 1993, p. 7, 24-25, 193; Elstain, 1990, p. 98, 141; French, 1992, p. 16-18; Hickman, 1998, 32-33, 345; Matusak, 1997, p. 126-130; Owens, 1995/2001, p. 241-243; Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 68-72; Weiss, 2002, p. 14-15). The premise of a leadership service combination was in direct opposition to the hierarchical model of leadership. In hierarchical leadership the power of the leader was visible and obeyed by those lower in the organization (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, Beckhard, & Schubert, 1998, p. 30, 94; Senge, 1990, p. 213). In contrast, the paradoxical term servant-leadership is inclusive of personal service to society regardless of position (Block, 1996, p. 6-7) and it was through strategies of service and stewardship, that a leader was identified by the people to be a leader among equals (Greenleaf, 1976, p. 16; DePree, 1989, p. 145; DePree, 1992, p. 42-44; Owens, 1995/2001, p. 254-255).

Using this definition it is perhaps possible to view women as performing service activities that were of a leadership nature. These strategies of service can now be linked to a definitive theory: Servant-Leadership. A servant-leader was described by Greenleaf (1970/1991b) as:

servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant- first, to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what of the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 7)

## Early History of Women in Manitoba

“The first white woman in the West of whom there is record came out from the Orkney Islands in 1806 in a Hudson’s Bay Company ship disguised as a young man” (Healy, 1923, p. 1). In December 1807 she gave birth to a male child at a trading post at the mouth of the Pembina River. The mother’s name remains unknown. The second white woman was Marie Anne Lagimoniere. She arrived in the summer of 1807 by canoe from the St. Lawrence, traveling up the Red River from Lake Winnipeg, passing the mouth of the Assiniboine until she arrived at the buffalo hunter headquarters at the mouth of the Pembina. Here she gave birth to a daughter who years later became the mother of Louis Riel (Healy, 1923, p. 2). A few years later Scottish settlers under the leadership of Lord Selkirk arrived in the region to establish the Red River colony in a small corner of Rupert’s Land, in what later was the Province of Manitoba. These Scottish immigrants included men and women “who had been evicted from their small holdings in the Highlands” (Healy, 1923, p. 4), seeking to begin a new life in their new country. In 1829, sixty families of Scottish (Orkney), English and French origin came to the Red River to settle, build homes and establish farms. For the next thirty years, there were few newcomers except for retired officers and servants of the Hudson Bay Company. Some of the latter became wealthy men after careful saving and wise investments. Friesen (1987) stated the “Red River was becoming integrated into the wider world in the late 1850s and the 1860s. Travelers, trade goods, and even settlers were arriving in numbers” (p. 113).

Between 1879-1881, 40,000 immigrants arrived in Manitoba to establish prairie farms (Thor, 2002, p. 185). Immigrants came to the land west of Ontario because of the promise of free homestead land. “The Manitoba censuses of 1881 and 1891 revealed that

men significantly outnumbered women,” (Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black, 1996, p. 113). In 1870 the recorded population in Manitoba was 24,000; by 1901, immigration had increased tenfold and the “foreign-born” share of the Manitoba population was 15%. By 1911 the provincial population was 461,394 (Kinnear, 1998, p.11, 17-18) and the number of men and women was roughly balanced for the next sixty years. Prentice et al., (1996) commented on the move by women into the cities, including Winnipeg:

By 1921, the number of rural and urban Canadians was about equal. Women continued to lead this shift in the population, because they moved to the cities for employment opportunities that the rural areas could not offer them. Consequently, women outnumbered men in most cities, just as men tended to form the majority in rural and frontier areas. (p. 113)

It would not be appropriate to neglect the significant role of aboriginal women, who were the first and original women in the province of Manitoba, plus that of the mixed-blood (Metis) women. Armstrong (2000) emphasized their contribution,

Starting with the indigenous people, women were healers, trappers, farmers, traders, and teachers. Within the aboriginal culture, women prepared the meat, cured and preserved food both for travel and for long northern winters, and ensured that the family was properly clothed. . . . They became enthusiastic participants in the fur trade because of the opportunities it brought for them to access household goods and supplies. These aboriginal women became the link between the newcomers and the original people and were often the reason these invaders survived. (p. iii)

Few histories of this population have been completed (Dickason, 1997, p. 336; McMillan, 1995, p. 293; *Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1996, p. 300-307).

But, this gap in our understanding of the unique/special experiences of these women has been acknowledged and addressed particularly by Sylvia Van Kirk (1995) in her book, *“Many tender ties”*: *The role of women in fur trade society in western Canada, 1670-*

1870. However, this dissertation focuses on the experiences of three women of European descent and should not be construed as denying that similar examples could be found among women of other ethnic backgrounds.

One must be cautious when using the term, “women.” Kinnear (1998) described the difficulty of over-simplifying the word, “women”, especially in relationship to the Province of Manitoba when she stated:

The women of Manitoba were far too diverse to be lumped together into a single category. Race distinguished First Nations (aboriginal) women politically as well as economically; ethnicity loomed large, and class was significant; poor women had fewer resources than rich women and this materially affected how they spent their days. Religion too was important—many immigrants had come to Manitoba precisely because of persecution in Europe and had created settlements or settled in neighborhoods in which religion was the central organizing principle of life. (p. xii)

In Canada and in Manitoba (established as a province in 1870), the latter part of the 1800s until the early 1900s was dominated by the cultural norms of the Victorian Period (1837-1901) and the influence of the British Empire permeated Canada (Confederation 1867). By 1920 teachers were encouraged, “to impress upon the minds of the boys and of the girls that they are Canadian citizens and that they must preserve the heritage that is theirs as members of the great British Empire” (Osborne, 1998-1999, p. 9). Rosa Bruno-Jofre (1998) acknowledges the role of schools in disseminating the British ideal to students:

There was a growing feeling among Canadians that their country was a distinct national entity, but also an important component of the British Empire. . . . schooling was the state agency that was expected to generate unity of thought, to teach English to the children of new immigrants, to educate them in Canadian ways, and to generate a civic culture based on service, duties, and responsibilities. Social integration and cohesion were major objectives. (p. 27)

As mentioned previously, the role of women during these times was defined as the keeper of the home fires, the nurturer of children, and the constant companion and supporter of her husband. This behavior was expected and accepted by the majority of society, particularly the middle and upper classes, including government and church (Elshtain, 1990). “Almost all women, rural and urban, rich and poor, accepted homemaking as women’s work” (Kinnear, 1998, p. 62). Service to others, for the good of others, was a moral obligation felt by the server to be the right thing to do. Middle and upper class women were restricted to the private world of home and family and church. The husband was the breadwinner and went out into the public sphere to make a living to support his family. He was the provider and ruler of his domain.

Women, both culturally and by definition, were not and could not be leaders. Most of what was written at that time about women was related to their connection to men. As Katherine Carter (2002) observed, “Women’s records were saved for what they revealed about the lives of important men or about historical moments made significant by men’s involvement. Women’s lives have not always been considered historically important” (p. 7). Their actions were seldom recorded in the history books. But Carter (2002) stresses that, “the best history is biography and that reading the details from lives of individual women can do much to broaden and challenge our understanding of Canadian history” (p. 6). Russell (1995) wrote of the importance of recording pioneer women stories as connections to present day working environments, “The survival strategies which have worked for them are ones which may well help other women trying to navigate the often confusing world of organizations” (p. 127). Permanent monuments did not exist to honor or illuminate the contributions of pioneer women. Of significance

is the fact that women were not permitted to vote, a rule which also included convicts, the insane, and immigrants. Women only received the franchise in Manitoba in 1916 (Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black, 1996, p. 114, 234).

Mentors and role models for women were found in the neighbor next door or a farmwife on the next acreage, or a mother, grandmother or female church member. The support and example of these women for other women was as a catalyst for dreaming and believing in possibilities.

### Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the activities and accomplishments of pioneer women for characteristics of Servant-Leadership. Qualitative historical analysis methodology was used to examine the lives of three pioneer women who lived in the Province of Manitoba during the period 1870-1930. There was no consistency in birth dates for the three women, but the time period 1870-1930 was common to the lives of all three. The study drew upon various primary sources (archival papers, autobiographies, newspapers, letters, historical photographs, and committee minutes) and secondary sources (texts related to Manitoba history, journal articles, and servant-leadership theory) in order to identify servant-leader indicators in the lives of Margaret Scott (1855-1931), Margret Benedictsson (1866-1956), and Jessie McDermott (1870-1950).

Why were these women selected for study? An earlier project on the topic of Higher Education in Manitoba: “If a Woman Leads and it’s not Recorded, is it Leadership?” was presented to a class and subsequently, at a conference at the University of Nebraska in September 2002. It was during this research that I discovered a small book called, *Extraordinary, Ordinary Women* (Armstrong, 2000) which had been prepared by

the Manitoba Club of the Canadian Federation of University Women. The text included two-page vignettes about many Manitoba women, most of whom had not had much written about their lives. It was through the reading of these vignettes that I was introduced to Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott. Their lives showed remarkable examples of leadership. As a student and teacher of leadership I was intrigued and started searching for other references about them. From secondary sources another paper was prepared entitled, "Servant-Leadership or Servant-Survivor," which was presented at the University of South Dakota in March 2003. I wanted to know more about these female pioneers, why and how they served their communities. These three women were part of the thousands of female immigrants who came to Manitoba, my home province, to live their lives. Each lived a lengthy period (over 30 years in each case) in the province and primary and secondary source materials that detail their lives were available. Their stories had been chronicled by several historians: Bumsted, 1999; DeGraves, 2000; Johnson, 1994; Kinnear, 1987; Kinnear, 1998; Kristjanson, 1965; Macvicar, 1939; Prentice et al., 1996; Shirriff, 2000; Skulason, 1975; Thor, 2002; and Treble, 2000. Thus, it was not the intent of this author to rewrite their histories, but rather to analyze their lives and related data for evidence of servant-leadership.

#### Research Questions

The following research questions provided direction to the study:

1. What information provided in the lives of the three women could be considered as characteristic of servant-leadership, as identified by Robert K. Greenleaf, (1970/1991b, p. 1-37) or their proxies: (1) listening, (2) empathy, (3) healing, (4) persuasion, (5)

awareness, (6) conceptualization, (7) foresight, (8) commitment to the growth of people, (9) stewardship, and (10) building community? (See detailed explanation in Chapter 2).

2. What common traits (distinguishing features) were found between and among the women in terms of their servant-leadership characteristics?

3. Was any servant-leadership characteristic(s), as listed in Research Question One, demonstrated by only one of the women?

4. Was there evidence in the lives of the three women of a particular theme(s), i.e., a subject or topic on which the women wrote, spoke or thought?

5. How was the call to servant-leadership initiated in each of their lives?

6. What were the most common demographic characteristics e.g., marital status, age, ethnic origin, residence, education, religion, and community life that were shared by the three women?

#### Statement of the Problem

In the early years of the 1900s, women were often not credited with leadership qualities. This research explored whether pioneer women in Manitoba did, in fact, practice servant-leadership as defined by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) in his seminal work, *Servant as Leader* (1970/1991b).

#### Methodology

This research was qualitative in nature. Creswell (1998) likened qualitative research to “an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material. The fabric is not explained easily or simply” (p. 13-14). Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as:

an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

The research examined primary sources (including archival materials such as newspaper articles, autobiographies, historical photographs, letters, interview texts, minutes of meetings) and secondary sources (such as historical texts, biographies and journal articles). Three biographical profiles were constructed, one for each woman's life story. Each biography employed qualitative historical analysis to identify evidence of servant-leadership characteristics and similarities and themes detailed in their life stories.

The Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba (Winnipeg) housed all microfiche for *The Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Winnipeg Tribune*, and also had an extensive collection of materials from Iceland, on the third floor. The University of Manitoba Archives, the Legislative Library of Manitoba, and the Provincial Archives of Manitoba preserved photographs, papers, audiotapes, and journals relevant to the lives of the three women. Once the three life stories were constructed, each narrative was analyzed for evidence of any servant-leadership characteristic, proxy events, or qualities related to each characteristic, relevant quotations, and demographic information. This collection of data was used to clarify and respond to the previous Research Questions.

### Analysis

The following process of analysis provided information to answer the research questions outlined above. The primary sources and secondary sources were analyzed for any of the ten indicators of servant-leadership as identified by Robert K. Greenleaf (Greenleaf, 1970/1991b, p. 1-37). They were: listening, empathy, healing, persuasion,

awareness, conceptualization, foresight, commitment to the growth of people, stewardship, and building community. The characteristics of servant-leadership were defined or identified by those proxy qualities cited in Spears (1998, p. 3-6) and described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Examination for common traits was determined by locating actions or incidents that were similar among the three women (e.g., they all devoted themselves to helping others). These specific incidents represented the stewardship quality of servant-leadership. These incidents were coded in the margins of the short biographies of the three women which comprise Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Once evidence for the 10 characteristics was identified for each woman, then an analysis for a common characteristic(s) was determined (e.g., they all displayed empathetic listening). Particular themes in the lives of the women were revealed through analyzing and coding the biographical profile of each woman (e.g., was there evidence of a struggle for economic survival? of a thirst for knowledge? Also, was there evidence to support an actual incident or occasion that triggered the desire to serve?). Lastly, by careful comparison of each life story and the supporting primary and secondary sources for each woman, the common demographic data were identified among the three women.

#### Definitions

The following definitions were provided to give clarity to terms that have special application to this study:

*Manitoba.* The Royal Charter of 1670 granted Rupert's Land to the Hudson's Bay Company. It was originally inhabited by aboriginal peoples. Early in the 1800s Scottish settlers under the direction of Lord Selkirk established a settlement in the southern part of

Rupert's Land. This was followed by the arrival of missionaries and representation of various religious orders. Rupert's Land was ceded to Canada in 1870. A portion of it became Manitoba, the Canadian prairie province that joined Confederation through the Manitoba Act of May 12, 1870 (Dickason, 1997, p. 213, 243-245). A present day map shows Manitoba located geographically in central Canada with the provinces of Ontario to the east, Saskatchewan to the west, the territory of Nunavut to the north and the State of North Dakota to the south (see Map of Manitoba in Figure 1, at the end of Chapter 2).

*Servant-Leadership.* Servant-Leadership was a leadership style originally identified and described by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 and characterized by listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, foresight, conceptualization, commitment to the growth of people, stewardship and building of the community.

*Winnipeg.* The capital city of the Province of Manitoba which is located in the southern portion of the province at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Winnipeg was incorporated as a city in 1873. It is a city with a strong immigrant population. Winnipeg's north end has historically been the home of strong cultural diversity.

*The Winnipeg Free Press.* The Winnipeg Free Press is the major newspaper for the Province of Manitoba and is published in the City of Winnipeg. Its presses began in 1872. The paper was owned by Clifford Sifton whose political orientation was Liberal. Microfilms of the newspaper are available at the University of Manitoba: Archives and Special Collections. The name of the newspaper evolved over the years: the Free Press, the Manitoba Free Press and in 1931, the Winnipeg Free Press (Fetherling, 1990, p. 100).

*The Winnipeg Tribune.* The Winnipeg Tribune was another of western Canada's oldest newspapers. It ran from 1890 to 1980 and was a rival to the Winnipeg Free Press and was opposite in its political orientation, i.e., Conservative. It reported national and international news and had excellent coverage of local events and personalities. Microfilms of the newspaper are available at the University of Manitoba: Archives and Special Collections.

### Assumptions

The assumptions of this study are:

1. Some pioneer women exerted notable leadership in the province of Manitoba.
2. Servant-leadership was culturally more acceptable for women than any other form of leadership style during this period of time.
3. The most likely place to find reporting of women's contributions to Manitoba during this pioneer period of time is in archival primary sources and printed historical secondary sources.
4. Pioneer women in Manitoba had commonalities in their life stories.
5. Many incidents of servant-leadership in Manitoba have gone unrecorded.
6. The newspaper accounts and documents available provided a more or less accurate portrait of the subjects of this study.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study are:

1. This study analyzed the lives of three women. It was not designed to identify all females that demonstrated servant-leadership in Manitoba. Therefore, one is limited by the small sample.

2. Although the time span of the lives of the three women overlapped, they did not match each other exactly in time and location. Therefore, they may not have shared all the same life experiences.

3. The time span covered that was common to the three women in the study was 1870-1930. Therefore, the women were at various ages and stages of their lives during the time that was common among them.

4. The analysis was based on information provided in the primary and secondary sources which created a comprehensive, but not exhaustive picture of each woman's life. Thus, there may be much that is still unknown about their life stories.

5. To be considered part of the study, the three women may have been born outside of Manitoba, but must have resided in Manitoba while involved in service to Manitoba communities.

#### Significance of the Study

The results of this study may be of value to historians, religious leaders, women, practitioners of servant-leadership, instructors for women's studies and social work courses, educational administrators, students of leadership practices, and the general public. This study may stimulate additional investigation into women as early practitioners of servant-leadership. The study will identify women who have made significant contributions to Manitoba and Canada, in part through practicing servant-leadership.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to the research. Three areas of interest were: the concept of servant-leadership, the history of Manitoba as it related to pioneer women, and the role of women from 1870-1930. Discussion centered on issues

related to: (1) the literature about the concept of servant-leadership; (2) those who had written about this concept; (3) the meaning of servant-leadership; (4) the difference in servant-leadership theory from other forms of leadership; (5) the role played by pioneer women in Manitoba; (6) the expectations for women at the time (1870-1930); (7) leadership opportunities for women; and (8) the manifestation of this leadership. The areas of interest and the eight issues identified above will be discussed in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to this study. Three specific issues had an impact upon the research and established a foundation for understanding the study. They were: (1) the concept of servant-leadership, (2) Manitoba cultural history between 1870 and 1930 that may have effected the three women, and (3) the role of Manitoba women from 1870 to 1930 (the time span common to the three women).

#### The Concept of Servant-Leadership

“In order to transform ourselves as leaders, we must recognize and shift the paradigm through which we view leadership itself . . . . A paradigm is a framework, a construct, a contextual perspective through which we view our experience” (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997, p. 71). The old leadership paradigm of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries suggested three particular beliefs: that leaders were born and not made (your lineage or pedigree class endowed you with leadership- a top position); that good management made successful organizations; and that one should avoid failure at all costs (this belief promoted risk avoidance and fear) (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997, p. 72-73; Block, 1996, p. 3-5; Hickman, 1998, p. 32-34). Such beliefs can stifle the opportunity for others to assume leadership, or to attempt something new and different due to risk or challenge.

The term “servant-leadership,” a new leadership paradigm, was introduced by Robert Kiefner Greenleaf in an essay entitled, *The Servant as Leader*, which he wrote in 1970 at the age of 66. Greenleaf worked first as a lineman and eventually moved into organizational management at AT&T between the mid 1920s and 1960s. He lectured at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dartmouth, and the Harvard Business School. Greenleaf (Spears, 1998a, p. 16) tells the story of how he discovered the concept of servant-leadership through reading Herman Hesse’s (1956) *Journey to the East*. The book tells the story of a band of men who set out on a long journey. Accompanying the men was a fellow named Leo; his job was to care for the band of men by doing all of the menial chores and providing for their comfort. The journey progressed well until Leo disappeared. At this point, the journey was aborted by the travelers, when they fell into disarray without Leo.

Many years later, the narrator of the story encountered Leo. It was at this point that the narrator realized Leo was the titular head of the order that sponsored the journey.

He was the leader, but his nature was that of a servant. His leadership was bestowed upon him and could be taken away by the band of men. His desire to serve the group of men came from his heart and was legitimate. Leo wanted to be of service to the band of men. Leo was a servant first by taking care of their basic needs each day while on the journey. Greenleaf believed the message of the story was that one has to first serve society and through one’s service a person will be recognized as a leader. Leadership must be about service (Spears, 1998, p. x).

Greenleaf (Frick & Spears, 1996, p. 290) was a Quaker by faith and practice and as such believed strongly in the equality of all human beings. Although Greenleaf worked with educational, business and industrial organizations, he often worked with religious orders of nuns and also with women in the healthcare profession (Spears,

1998a, p. 7). His goal was for the development of strong, effective, caring communities in all segments of society (Greenleaf, 1976, p. 1; Greenleaf, 1978, p. 1-11; Spears, 1998b, p. 17).

Autry (2001, p. 50) states that the transition to a culture of servant-leadership requires time for the development of necessary features or qualities for a servant-leader. Spears, the Executive Director of the *Robert K. Greenleaf Center* in Indianapolis, Indiana and a disciple of Greenleaf's teachings (1998b, p. 5-8) clarifies the ten (10) characteristics of servant-leadership which are described below.

1. *Listening*. This refers to a deep commitment to listening to others. Autry (2001, p. 178); Frick & Spears, (1996, p. 211-213); Greenleaf, (1970/1991b, p. 9-11); Bennis and Goldsmith (1997, p. 24-25) emphasize the need for silence, reflection, meditation and active listening and actually "hearing" what is said and unsaid. The best communication forces you to listen (DePree, 1989, p. 102). Effective leaders are great communicators and must be good listeners, to themselves (through their inner voice), as well as to others.

2. *Empathy*. A good servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others. But this understanding should be supportive as opposed to patronizing. "It is a misuse of our power (as leaders) to take responsibility for solving problems that belong to others" (Block, 1996, p. 72). Greenleaf (Spears, 1998) wrote that trust could be developed through the use of empathy when he stated,

Individuals grow taller when those who lead them empathize and when they are accepted for what they are, even though their performance may be judged critically in terms of what they are capable of doing. Leaders who empathize and who fully accept those who go with them on this basis are more likely to be trusted. (p. 81)

3. *Healing*. The servant-leader has the potential to heal one's self and others. Sturnick (1998, p. 187) writes extensively about six stages of healing leadership. One must first have an understanding about personal and/or institutional health. She describes the six stages as: (1) consciousness of health or being honestly aware of one's state of health which is often triggered by an event (e.g., a heart attack); (2) willingness to change and realizing that one must do certain things to achieve improved health; (3) a teachable moment or a time when one seeks information or advice; (4) healthy support systems are needed to change behavior and may include one person, a group or an organization; (5) immersion in the duality of our inner lives and the realization of the good and bad or the strengths and weaknesses we each have; and (6) eventually the return to service in leadership through seeking honest answers from friends and colleagues. Sturnick (1998) warns that it is not always possible as a healthy leader to find followers and she believes that, "sick organizations really do contaminate" (p. 191). Gardiner (1998, p. 122) suggests that personal healing can occur with reflection through just quietly being calm and that a "quiet presence is an act of renewal," and Greenleaf, a lifelong meditator, notes that he views the action of meditation as a service because one is taking time to think about things, and reflect. He wrote, "I prefer to meditate; I have come to view my meditating as serving" (Gardiner, 1998, p. 123).

4. *Awareness*. The servant-leader has a general awareness, especially self-awareness. One develops awareness through self-reflection, through listening to what others tell us about ourselves, through being continually open to learning, and

by making the connection from what we know and believe to what we say or do. This is called in the vernacular, “walking your talk” (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997, p. 70-71).

5. *Persuasion*. The servant-leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. Frick and Spears (1996) cite Greenleaf on the topic of persuasion:

One is persuaded upon arriving at a feeling of rightness about a belief or action through one’s own intuitive sense, . . . persuasion is usually too undramatic to be newsworthy. . . . significant instances of persuasion may be known to only one or a few, and they are rarely noted in history. Simply put, consensus is a method of using persuasion in a group. (p. 139-140)

6. *Conceptualization*. The servant-leader seeks to nurture his/her own abilities to dream great dreams. Greenleaf describes conceptual talent in Frick and Spears (1998) as:

The ability to see the whole in the perspective of history- past and future- to state and adjust goals, to evaluate, to analyze, and to foresee contingencies a long way ahead. Leadership, in the sense of going out ahead to show the way, is more conceptual than operating. The conceptualizer, at his or her best, is a persuader and a relation builder. (p. 217)

7. *Foresight*. This is the ability to foresee or know the likely outcome of a situation. Greenleaf (1970/1991b) says that foresight is a better than average guess about “what’ is going to happen “when” in the future. He says foresight is the initiative and knowing within one’s self or “the lead that a leader has” (p. 18). Greenleaf (1970/1991b) goes on to state:

Foresight is seen as a wholly rational process, the product of a constantly running internal computer that deals with intersecting series and random inputs and is vastly more complicated than anything technology has yet produced. Foresight means regarding the events of the instant moment and constantly comparing them with a series of projections made in the past and at the same time projecting future events- with diminishing certainty as projected time runs out into the indefinite future. (p. 18)

8. *Stewardship*. Greenleaf believed all members of an institution or organization play significant roles in holding their institutions in trust (caring for the well being of the institution and serving the needs of others in the institution) for the greater good of society. Peter Block (1996) suggests that stewardship is “accountability without control or compliance” (p. xx). One has the desire to serve not in response to someone’s request or demand; but because the person is internally motivated to do so. DePree (1989), an American businessman, also emphasizes the need for us to make a contribution to society. “The art of leadership requires us to think about the leader-as-steward in terms of relationships: of assets and legacy, of momentum and effectiveness, of civility and values” (p. 13). Service is the rent we pay for living. Sergiovanni (1992) explains that stewardship, “involves the leader’s personal responsibility to manage her or his life and affairs with proper regard for the rights of other people and for the common welfare” (p. 139).

9. *Commitment to the growth of people*. The servant-leader is committed to the individual growth of human beings and will do everything they can to nurture others. “The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. Are the followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving?” (DePree, 1989, p. 12).

10. *Building community*. The servant-leader seeks to identify some means for building community. There are several approaches to building community outlined in the literature; three approaches mentioned include giving back through service to the community, investing financially in the community, and caring about one’s community. When Pinchot, in Hesselbein, Goldsmith, Beckhard and Schubert (1998),

considers the concept of community he suggests that the person who gives or contributes or invests the most in a community has the highest status; in other words, “giving it away, rather than keeping it, earns status” (p. 126). Sergiovanni (1994, p. 146) states that caring is an integral part of shared community. Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers in Hesselbein et al., (1998, p. 13) emphasize the sense of belonging defined by a shared sense of purpose that does not eliminate one’s uniqueness but focuses all energies into a resilient community.

#### The History of Manitoba (1870-1930)

This section will provide information on the demographics, the environment, and the culture of Manitoba during the time period 1870-1930 that was common to the three women in this study. Fine histories of Manitoba have been written covering the period of time from fur trading through incorporation to modern day: *Manitoba: A History* (Morton, 1967); *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Friesen, 1987); and *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Friesen, 1996). However, these histories do not deal in depth with pioneer women’s stories. *The Dictionary of Manitoba Biography* by J. M. Bumsted (1999) lists approximately 1,670 names in total. There were 172 names of females in that list or approximately 10% of the total. These numbers do not provide an accurate representation of the Manitoba women who made contributions to their province. Only recently have women’s issues or stories in Manitoba been given attention by female historians and those interested in educational development, such as: Armstrong (2000); Bruno-Jofre (1993); Kinnear (1998); Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, and Black (1996); and van de Vorst (2002).

The Canadian prairie province of Manitoba is situated between the industrial province of Ontario and the farming province of Saskatchewan. Originally this land was inhabited by several distinct groups of First Nations people: see Dickason (1997); Friesen (1987); Isaac (1995); McMillan (1995); and Morris (2000). Friesen (1987) explains that First Nations were involved in two fur trades:

One controlled by the natives and the other shared by Indians and European entrepreneurs. . . . It is fair to say that from the mid-seventeenth century to the first decade of the nineteenth century, the northwest was remote from the struggles of imperial armies, the missions of religious orders, and the quest for riches that marked the history of European overseas expansion. (p. 45)

By the 1850s there was a change in perception of the western interior. “The land came to be seen not as a wilderness but as a potential home for a great civilization” (Friesen, 1987, p. 109).

The Confederation of Canada occurred in 1867 and Manitoba became the first Canadian prairie province in 1870. In 1872 under the Dominion Lands Act, settlers received a 160-acre homestead for ten dollars (van de Vorst, 2002, p. 15). If settlers could erect a house on the property and clear thirty acres of land within three years, they received clear title to the property. Lured by the offer of free farmland, the second wave of immigrants arrived from Europe in the latter part of the 1800s (1876-1881). Forty thousand immigrants arrived in Manitoba from other parts of Canada and from outside the country in the time period known as “Manitoba Land Fever” (Thor, 2002, p. 185). After Confederation, immigrants were encouraged to settle in groups or colonies on the prairies. Friesen (1987) states that the first significant colonies to settle in the west were the Mennonites from Russia (1874 and later), French Canadians from New England in

1874, and Icelanders in 1875-1881; plus Scots, Romanians, Finns, Swedes and Jews (in the early 1880s) and Germans from Austro-Hungarian and Russian backgrounds, not initially from Germany (p. 186, 262). Friesen (1987) suggests that 1881-1882, the years when the transcontinental railroad was built across the province, was a time of shaping western Manitoba (p. 204). In addition, between 1901 and 1911 the Ukrainian population grew from 6000 to 75,000 on the prairies (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 120). The writer's Ukrainian paternal grandfather from Rivers, Manitoba was a part of the work crews that built the railroad across Manitoba. The growing culturally diverse City of Winnipeg had a booming prairie economy and was a magnet for those looking for work. Local plants produced farm products (flour mills, malting facilities, breweries, dairies). Sources of construction, clothing, and printed materials were available. There were also local fire, property, and life insurance companies, a stock exchange, trust companies, and banks. Winnipeg had become a Canadian financial center and national railway hub (Friesen, 1987, p. 287). The next section will discuss the role of women from 1870 to 1930.

#### The Role of Women (1870-1930)

Although the three women discussed in this study were born in different years during the 1800s (Scott in 1855; Benedictsson in 1866; and McDermott in 1870), there was a period of time in which their lives overlapped. The common time period was 1870-1930 which was influenced by Victorian culture. What were the expectations for women at this time?

The household, always a key aspect of a woman's life had gained even more importance by the end of the eighteenth century. Now it was truly the center of the universe for many women. The Victorians idolized the home as a sanctuary and refuge, where the weary breadwinner could gratefully retire at the end of the day to the embrace of his "better half."

And it was up to the better half to make sure her breadwinner was completely happy with his home and everything in it. (Weiss, 2002, p. 192)

The Victorian Period (1837-1901) defined women as belonging to the private world of home and children:

A woman's place was in the home. Domesticity and motherhood were portrayed as a sufficient emotional fulfillment. These constructs kept women away from the public sphere, but charitable missions began to extend the female role of service and Victorian feminism emerged as a potent political force. (Abrams, 2001)

The term "feminism" noted in the preceding quotation, has no single definition but the writer is comfortable with Kinnear's (1998, p.7) generic description in *A Female Economy: Women's Work in a Prairie Province 1870-1970*. She states feminism has three core components: a belief in sexual equality (e.g., a rejection of a sex hierarchy); that women's condition is socially constructed and changeable; and, a gender group identity (e.g., women as a social group share certain characteristics). Prentice et al., (1996) points out that pioneer women preferred to refer to themselves as part of the "woman movement," which included the participation of all types of women from various cultural groups and ethnicity (p. 190).

Because of the ongoing immigration, relocation of people, and vastness of the prairies, many lives disappeared into obscurity and little if anything has been recorded about these early pioneers. Manitoba pioneer women were a part of this group (Bumsted, 1999, p. viii). Yet, women were an important part of the continuous influx of new settlers. Their responsibilities included home maintenance, laundry, care of the garden, childrearing, preparation of meals, and tending the home fires. The women

pioneers needed to be a hardy lot for they encountered loneliness on the prairie flatlands and they had to have the ability to handle many tasks at once with energy and courage. The demanding role of pioneer women seems influenced by a variety of thought. Several theories have been proposed that explain women's experience of inequity during different time periods and these included: the concept of patriarchy whereby the male rules the house and makes major decisions and the woman obeyed her spouse; the role of the breadwinner- the male went out into the world to earn a living to support his family and the wife maintained the home; the separate spheres concept (public/private worlds) where the man worked in the public world of business, banking, and shop keeping while the woman maintained the private and sometimes isolated world of home; the natural unspoiled woman was considered the weaker and gentler sex and was kept, pampered and protected in the home and could have a housekeeper to do household chores; the ideal woman role defined by clergy and doctors and was referred to as "the angel of the household" who may have been involved in missionary or church work; and lastly, the belief that women were equal but different in their behavior, needs, and roles and could work outside the home in offices, schools, and shops (Elshtain, 1993, p. 102-108, Firestone, 1970, p. 3-14; Heilbrun, 2002, p. 17-25; Kinnear, 1998, p. 5; Prentice et al., 1996, p. 156-157; and van der Vorst, p. 2002. p.1-2).

Several factors seemed to have encouraged women to pursue a more active role in society. These were women's support of their church, missionary work, traditional female roles of support of children and families, and care for the sick and needy. Kinnear (1982) suggests that in the 1800s, "dispensing charity to the poor had long been an acceptable activity for women" (p. 143-144). The public sphere of business, commerce, and politics

was largely a male domain and women did not normally enter these spheres. Some women were able to cross from private to the public sphere (the three women of this study were successful at doing so) by doing their work in setting up soup kitchens, and visiting asylums and volunteering in hospitals. Other women became breadwinners because they were single, or widowed, or needed to support the rest of their family and realized they had to work outside the home in offices, shops, and factories, hospitals, and schools in order to earn and manage their wages to survive. Kinnear (1998) cites Joy Parr in this regard: “As Joy Parr showed in *The Gender of Breadwinners*, women were fully aware that ‘securing subsistence and managing the complexities of social and economic existence have required deft balancing of these different kinds of activities’” (p. 5). Such activities provided middle class women an opportunity to feel useful in morally discouraging situations, to work outside the home and away from family, and to develop a social network among other women.

Armstrong (2000) writes that by 1900,

Women played influential roles both formally and informally in the developing society. Building and maintaining social contact, whether it was at school concerts, box socials, or church picnics, or Chatauquas (a type of summer festival) became essential to preserving a woman’s sanity. Significant cultural activities often resulted from women’s striving for a sense of community and personal contact. (p. iv)

Also, “They used every opportunity to create community connections. Luxury was a cup of tea and a chance to chat with another woman” (Armstrong, 2000, p. iv).

Manitoba was strongly influenced by religion, beginning with the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of England and Scotland (Anglican and Presbyterian)

with the emigration of French and British settlers. Friesen (1987) speaks about a major shift in the focus of the Protestant faiths in Canada and in Manitoba.

In the last decades of the century new currents altered the religious beliefs and the social perspectives of the Protestant churches. . . . this new outlook, the 'Social Gospel,' became an important influence in western Canadian life and the driving force in the development of a distinct western Canadian mission. The Social Gospel was the product of many intellectual currents. In an age when powerful evangelists crossed the continent with the message that God could provoke changes in the life of an individual, hope for such changes became widespread. (p. 350)

Groups within the Presbyterian and Methodist faiths (between 1874 and 1884) created large churches and church organizations (Mission Bands, Ladies Aid Society, Women's League) and worked with thousands of Canadian women, children, and youth to raise an awareness of social and public issues. The major Christian denominations were represented in Manitoba: Roman Catholic (French and Irish), Anglican (English), Presbyterian (Scottish), Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalists (English), United (formed in 1925), Unitarian (Icelandic) and Lutheran (Icelandic and German), Mennonite (German), Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic. This is not an exhaustive list but gives a sense of the variety of faiths at that time. The belief in responsibility to family, church, friends and the community at large was particularly important to women who felt morally obligated, justified, and motivated to become involved in church organizations. Noteworthy, were the actions of feminist Nellie McClung, who carried the message of the Social Gospel in her public speaking and in her campaign for women's suffrage in Manitoba (Kinnear, 1991, p. 72-73; Kinnear, 1998, p. 25).

Little of pioneer women's actions were considered important enough to be recorded. Heilbrun (1998, p. 18) suggests that the lives of women were often seen, "as

events in the destinies of men.” Death notices during the period (1900-1930) listed in one of the west’s leading newspapers, *The Manitoba Free Press*, (later to be called *The Winnipeg Free Press*), infrequently referred to a woman’s first name; a woman was noted as Mrs. A.W. Brown for example- not Mary Brown. Also, the lives of women were seldom described in their obituaries, while their husband’s or father’s careers or contributions were detailed at length (Crippen, 2003). It appears that women’s lives lacked significance or importance and that they were defined by the relationships with their families and spouses. Further reference is made to the lack of recognition for females and the lack of in-put into political decision-making by women when Elshtain (1990) states,

The social role of women promotes a value system based upon women’s life experience inside “non-political” areas of social relations-marriage, the family, religious and communal associations. Not occupying decision-making roles and arenas, women are severed from the give-and-take of interest-group politics and its rule governed power brokerage. (p. 137)

Heilbrun (1988) discussed the long journey women have made over the years as they moved from the private world to that of the public domain and she proposed that women “need to learn how to declare their right to public power” (p. 18) while Elshtain (1990) emphasized the possibilities for women and their choices of the time when she wrote:

It meant the young women of society could go a number of different directions depending upon her sense of social conscience; on how powerfully she had internalized the concept of duty and how far she saw her duties extending; and on how confined she remained by the lady bountiful tradition and the dictates of society itself. (p. 28)

In Manitoba, industrialization brought the growth and development of industry and business in the cities, especially Winnipeg. Women from the rural areas moved into

the cities in search of work as seamstresses in the garment district of inner city Winnipeg and in various grocery shops and factories. Many middle class women worked in the department stores as salesclerks and some found employment as office secretaries or bookkeepers (like Scott and Benedictsson). After formal education, women taught school (as did McDermott) or found jobs as nurses or even social workers (Kinnear, 1998, p. 52-55). Their private world quickly expanded into the public domain and with it, the awareness of current challenging issues: salaries, conditions of employment, unions, post secondary education, prohibition, healthcare, prostitution, property rights and the right to vote.

During the 1880s and 1890s, voluntary organizations developed that provided women with contact, growth, and opportunity to discuss, question, and advocate for a better society. These local groups had various names (e.g., sewing circles, church ladies' aids, mothers' meetings, or guilds) and were frequently developed by local women and devoted to improving the quality of community life (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 215). Issues of social reform included temperance, working conditions, and the poor and less fortunate. One specific case cited in Prentice et al., (1996, p. 215) tells of the Ladies Aid of the First Icelandic Lutheran Church in Winnipeg early in 1901. The members raised funds and eventually opened Bethel Home, a building for the aged, in Gimli, Manitoba in 1916 (Bethel Home continues today.). The Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) fought against the abuse of alcohol and the results of drunkenness: violence, poverty, family breakdown, and lack of self-respect by those who were drunk. This national organization was a catalyst for socially concerned groups like the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) and the Girl's Friendly Society (Prentice et

al., 1996, p. 197-199, 234), both of which provided shelter and educational programs for single working class women and young single mothers. By 1891, the W.C.T.U. formally endorsed woman suffrage at all levels of government in Canada. They issued petitions, made constant demands of politicians and sent delegations to the federal and provincial governments on behalf of women and their right to vote.

By 1889, the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association was formally founded in Canada and sponsored a lecture series across the country to increase public awareness and support for its cause: the vote for women and the franchise for women in each province. The women of the Icelandic community (Thor, 2002, p. 261) in Manitoba, including Benedictsson, demonstrated relentlessly and consistently on behalf of a woman's right to vote in Manitoba. And women, such as Cora Hind (a journalist), Dr, Amelia Yeomans, and especially Nellie McClung and other suffragettes, "worked for prohibition, factory laws for women, compulsory education, prison reform, and changes to the existing laws affecting women and children; it was to effect reforms in these areas that she and other feminists fought so hard to get the vote" (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205, 224). Finally, in 1916, Manitoba women were granted the vote.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for the study.

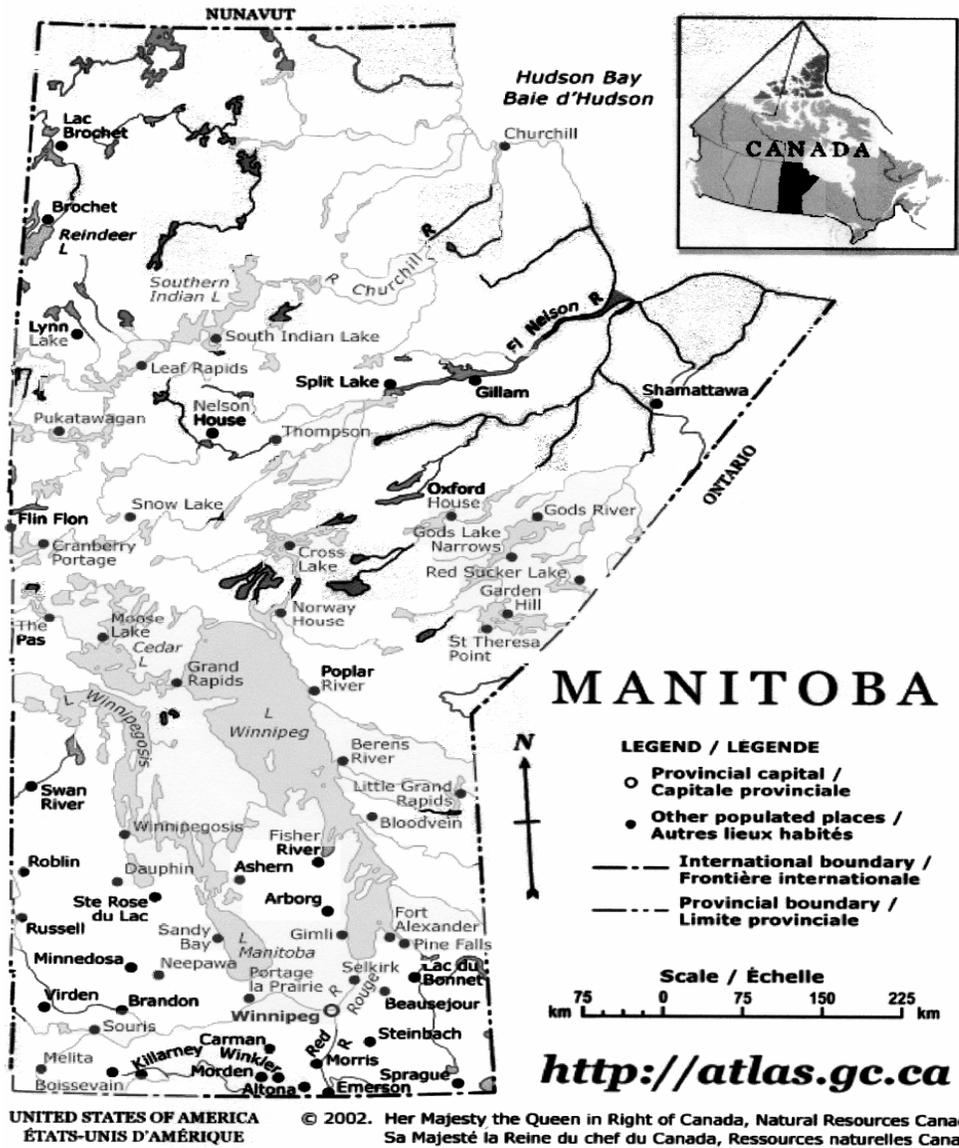


Figure 1. Map of Manitoba.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for this study. It addresses the rationale for qualitative research and the research design. Issues of qualitative historical analysis and the use of existing biographical information are discussed. Also, the process of data collection is explained.

#### Research Design

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) explained the intent of qualitative research in the following statement: “A qualitative study has a focus but that focus is initially broad and open-ended, allowing for important meanings to be discovered” (p. 43). The broad focus for this qualitative research was the concept of servant-leadership and the lives of three pioneer women that provided the basis for the discovery of its meaning. Regarding research methodology in the social sciences Kvale (1996) wrote that,

Today there is a shift toward philosophical lines of thought closer to the humanities. These include postmodern social construction of reality, hermeneutical interpretations of the meanings of texts, phenomenological descriptions of consciousness, and the dialectical situating of human activity in social and historical contexts. (p. 11)

Following both Kvale (1996) and Maykut and Moorehouse (1994); this study will employ qualitative research methods, including historical analysis of biographical profiles constructed from existing primary and secondary resources (of the three Manitoba pioneer women). The search for meaning in the life stories of the three women

was aided by analysis of the narratives for commonalities and differences, plus evidence of servant-leadership.

### Qualitative Historical Analysis

This qualitative historical analysis used biographical profiles that were crafted from primary and secondary sources. A “hands-on approach” to analysis asks, how does one find information and how does one assess it? In answer to the first part of this question, information will be drawn from two categories of information: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources included documents and related materials relevant to the time period (1870-1930) under investigation. Primary sources for this study include archival sources such as: newspaper articles (particularly *The Manitoba Free Press*, later the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and *The Winnipeg Tribune*), formal obituary notices (of the three women under study), minutes from committee meetings (related to organizations or churches to which the three women belonged), autobiographies, letters, and original articles penned by the women under study. *Planting the Garden: An Annotated Archival Bibliography of the History of Women in Manitoba* (Kinnear & Fast, 1987) directed me toward specific primary source material and indicated the location of this information (p. 47, 147, 265, 287).

Secondary sources included articles and books written by historians that relate to a certain time period or event (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 250). My secondary sources included biographies, journal articles, and many historical texts about women, Manitoba, and the development of leadership. However, a word about the quality of secondary sources is needed. Once secondary sources were located, I checked to see if this source

had been cited frequently by others. This frequency helped to determine the value, credibility, and scholarship of that material and whether I should use it in my study. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) provide sound advice to the researcher when they encourage one “to ask questions of all data, primary and secondary sources” and to remember that “in historical research, the data to be used depends upon the question the researcher wishes to answer and the information the researcher can find to answer the question” (p. 239, 257).

### Biographical Profiles

I drew upon primary and secondary sources to develop a biographical profile, that while not a complete and thorough biography that fulfills the standards of professional biography, could provide the essential details of a life in order to answer certain specific questions (as noted in the research questions). Biographical sketches (rich life stories) of three women (Margaret Scott, Margret Benedictsson and Jessie McDermott) were prepared. Maykut & Morehouse, (1994) explained the importance of consulting many and varied excerpts of text to discover meaning. Such examination provides an opportunity for the three women “to speak for themselves” (p. 47) in word or action, and “to provide the reader sufficient information for understanding the research outcomes” (p. 47) and “by rich description should provide the reader with enough information to determine whether the findings of the study possibly apply to other people or setting” (p. 47). Denzin & Lincoln, (1998), explained the broad concept of biography in the following terms:

Life writing comes with many labels- portrayals, portraits, profiles, memoirs, life stories, life histories, case studies, autobiographies, journals, diaries, and on and on- each suggesting a slightly different perspective under consideration . . . . The list continues, but the major point here is

that biography, “life writing,” comes in multiple forms, lengths, focuses, and perspectives. A related point is the importance of insight and creativity on the part of the biographer in the studying, constructing, and writing of lives or parts of lives. (p. 186-187)

How did I provide for trustworthiness in my research? Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 145-148) mention four aspects: (1) multiple methods of data collection, (2) building an audit trail, (3) working with a research team, and (4) member checks. In answer to each of these aspects, I dealt with multiple sources of data, drawing from archival materials from four sites (e.g., the University of Manitoba -Dafoe Library-Archives and Special Collections, the University of Manitoba -Icelandic Library, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the Legislative Library of Manitoba). Within these archives were a variety of primary sources (e.g., letters, committee minutes, autobiographies, newspaper clippings, newspaper microfilm, interview transcripts, photographs, and obituaries). Secondary sources were available in historical texts, journal articles, theoretical texts on servant-leadership, and biographies. All research documents were evaluated for relevance and credibility. An audit trail of materials was built through the collection of data, materials, notes, and “big paper process.” Large sheets of butcher paper were posted on the wall with the information clustered into common themes and coded. While I was not working with a research team, advice and direction was sought from those at the various archives and from colleagues who have undertaken research and could provide some guidance. For example, I was not familiar with the locations and entry procedures for archival retrieval. A colleague, who is a fourth generation Manitoban (with a Masters Degree in Social Work), had used the archives on a weekly basis as a member of the Genealogy Society of Manitoba. This colleague spent two half

days taking me to these locations and teaching me the process for retrieval and utilization of the systems.

### Comparative Analysis

The analysis began with the rereading of each biography several times. Four forms of analysis were useful when making sense of the research data. First, categorical aggregation involved the collection of instances from the data in the hope that issue-relevant meanings would emerge. The details and themes within each biography were identified. Second, I searched for patterned regularities or patterns between two or more categories within the data. Third, direct interpretation involved ascribing meaning to single instances (e.g., the defining moment when each woman chose to serve) in each of the biographies. Next, a thematic analysis was conducted across all three biographies. This is referred to a cross-case analysis. Fourth, when concluding the interpretation of the study data, the “lessons learned” or naturalistic generalizations were presented by the researcher (Creswell, 1998, p. 63, 153-154).

There were six steps included in conducting this study: (1) Construct the lives of three women (Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott) from existing biographical information, historical texts, autobiographies, and archival materials, both primary and secondary sources; (2) Analyze their individual life stories for the 10 characteristics of servant-leadership; (3) Determine if these three women had specific similarities in their leadership style; (4) Determine themes through analysis and comparisons in each biography and common themes across all the biographies; (5) Determine commonalities in demographic information from the three biographies; and (6) Determine what lessons had been learned from the analysis of the biographies.

## Data Collection

Creswell (1998, p. 110-119) presented a “data collection circle” to detail the process for gathering research data. The seven components of the circle are described below:

*Locating the site/individual.* I had written a paper for a course in my doctoral studies titled, “If a Woman Leads and it’s not recorded, is it Leadership?” I investigated pioneer women from Manitoba over a period of 100 years. The years 1830-1930 were of considerable interest to me because of the social issues of that time: the rights of women, prohibition, higher education, working conditions, wages, and especially, women working outside the home. During this research, I discovered the names of many women who had contributed to the province and especially three women who seemed to be leaders in their own right. I wrote a paper about these three women (three mini biographies) and presented the findings at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, at the “One Step Forward: Assessing the Status and Treatment of Women in a New Century” Conference, in March 2003. This was the catalyst for much deeper study and research augmenting the earlier paper with extensive primary sources. As a consultant for leadership in the Province of Manitoba and a student of servant-leadership, I wanted to see if there were links between servant-leadership and these pioneer women. This led to the topic for my dissertation.

*Gaining access and making rapport.* The three women were deceased. The last woman died in 1956 and I did not conduct formal interviews with anyone who knew these women in this qualitative historical analysis. However, the granddaughter of one woman (McDermott) loaned personal family papers to me.

*Purposefully sampling.* There were four possible goals for purposeful sampling: (1) to achieve representativeness or typicality of the setting, individuals or setting selected; (2) to adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population; (3) to select a sample to deliberately examine cases that are critical for the theories of the study; and (4) to establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between individuals (Maxwell, 1996, p. 71-73). The third goal is consistent with my desire to deliberately examine select cases that will illuminate the theory of servant-leadership. The various types of samplings were defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) and cited by Creswell (1998, p. 119) as theory-based sampling.

*Collecting data.* The use of historical analysis with the biographical profiles provided a broad array of data to create an in-depth picture of each woman's life story. Photographs, documents, archival records, historical texts, and journal articles created a rich collection for investigation (Maxwell, 1996, p. 75) and triangulation (collecting information from a diverse range of sources and in a variety of ways). Lastly, I utilized all of the secondary source articles and books that referred to these specific women. Then, I traced the references back to the original source that was identified and listed in the reference books and articles (Armstrong, 2000; Bumsted, 1999; Kinnear, 1982; Kinnear and Fast, 1987; Kinnear, 1991, 1998; Kristjanson, c. 1965; Macvicar, 1939; Paterson, 1989; Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, and Black, 1996; Thor, 2002; Wolf, 1996; McDermott, c. 1904). Materials were copied at the various archives because information was stored in boxes, on microfiche, in old books, in catalogues and in scrapbooks. It should be noted that several Public Archives of Manitoba individual primary sources for Margaret Scott, which were located in catalogued boxes, were not

individually numbered and they are referenced by the box number only. The majority of primary references were copied the same day as examination of the document or within a few days. The various archives and museum were located in the downtown area of the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The important process of data collection required patience and care, and a list of all items that were examined was recorded. While gathering data, I continued to read Canadian and Manitoba history and tried to gain an understanding and comfort with the culture and issues of 1870-1930. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) spoke specifically about historical materials and making meaning of the data:

By historical imagination, I mean some grasp of how a document would have been interpreted in its time. Any researcher has at hand material that help in the process of reconstructing meaning. Because the researcher started this project by reading the work of historians, she or he may have some sense of the period and some “feel” for the materials under investigation, a grasp of “structures of feeling.” (p. 254-255)

*Recording information.* Three file folders were created, one for each woman’s biography. Each file contained a page specifically for quotes and sources, another for incidents that appeared to be connected with servant-leadership and the source, another for unusual facts or data. Once all three profiles were developed, large sheets of butcher paper were posted on a wall and used to chronicle significant incidents and/or behavior of the women. An ethnographic computer program was available to categorize lengthy text, but I chose not to use it. My preference was to use a “hands on” approach with the copies of the archival resources because the individual materials were manageable and I preferred to personally read each piece slowly for meaning. I often compared and reviewed pieces as I worked through the text. I somehow felt a personal connection to the material by touching it with my hands. I looked for common themes or patterns and

attempted to develop a descriptive label. This information was then woven into my findings. A personal journal was also maintained while reviewing the research data and these reflections proved useful when gathering thoughts, conclusions and recommendations later in the writing process.

*Resolving field issues.* Fortunately, all of the archival materials were stored in provincial buildings that were open to the public but were carefully scrutinized. Security guards were posted at the entrance to both the Provincial Archives and the Legislative Library. One had to sign in and produce personal identification. A badge was created and had to be worn at all times while in the building and returned to the security guard upon departure. Much of the archival material was stored and I had to fill out a request form with my table number. This was taken by one of the archivists who brought the material to the specific table. I was required to wear white gloves while handling the primary sources. It was important to allocate half day blocks of time. That time was used for the location of materials, waiting for retrieval, copying of materials, and for preliminary analysis. Some machines would malfunction; some were out of order; some required assistance to use. I found it critical to my understanding of the data collected, that I was able to gather, sort, organize, and reflect on all materials retrieved that same day, before moving on to another days resources. Creswell (1998) identifies the following problems which related to my research study when resolving field issues:

First, document research: one may have difficulty locating materials and one may have difficulty obtaining permission to use materials. There was always the question of how valuable the material was to the research study. (p. 132)

A second issue was storing data and Creswell (1998) explained,

The approach to storage will reflect the type of information collected, which varies by tradition or inquiry. With the advent of the use of computers in qualitative research, more attention will likely be given to how qualitative data are organized and stored, whether the data are field notes, transcripts, or rough jottings. (p. 133)

### Data Analysis

Research question one asks what information provided in the lives of the three women was considered as characteristic (s) (or their proxies) of servant-leadership. In the study, a proxy is defined as words or actions that substitute for the ten servant-leadership characteristics. Each life story was analyzed for behavior or incidents that were direct or indirect indicators of the servant-leadership characteristics. The data gathered contained various descriptors, quotes, historical text, and these materials were compared to the descriptions of the 10 characteristics of servant-leadership or their proxies (Greenleaf, 1970/1991b, p. 1-37). A hard copy of each biography was analyzed for indicators. These were marked and named by characteristic. Proxies for these characteristics were determined by relating the indicators/characteristics to the incidents or activities outlined in chapters for similarities. Characteristics that were found in each woman's story were discussed in the findings. A summative chart of the characteristics listed under each woman's name was created that was simply marked with an "x" if evidence of the characteristic was found; and marked by a "+" if the evidence strongly reflected specific characteristic(s); and marked by a "\*" if the characteristic(s) was frequently in evidence; and marked by "?" if the characteristic was questionable or weak in evidence.

Spears (1998), who had written extensively about these 10 servant-leadership characteristics identified by Greenleaf (1970/1991b), describes each trait in detail. These

descriptions form the criteria for identification of any servant-leadership trait in each of the women listed. Details related to each of the characteristics are located in Chapter 2. Spears uses the following descriptions and proxies related to each characteristic (1998a, p. 4-6):

- Listening: a deep commitment to listening intently to others, to identify the will of a group, listens receptively to what is said and not said, getting in touch with one's own inner voice, seeking to understand.
- Empathy: a receptive listening, skilled empathetic listening, accepts and recognizes people for special and unique talents.
- Healing: a powerful force for transformation and integration, potential to heal one's self and others, helps to make whole. Greenleaf (1970/1991b) writes in *The Servant as Leader*, "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share" (p. 27).
- Awareness: able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position, it is a disturber and an awakener. Greenleaf (1970/1991b) says, "awareness is not a giver of solace; it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. They (servant-leaders) are not seekers after solace; they have their own inner serenity" (p. 20).
- Persuasion: seeks to convince others, not through coercion, effective in building consensus.
- Conceptualization: dream great dreams, thinks beyond day-to-day realities, stretch thinking to broader based ideas.

- Foresight: the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation, understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of a decision for the future.
- Stewardship: holding an institution or something in trust for the greater good of society, commitment to serving the needs of others.
- Commitment to the growth of people: deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual, nurture the spiritual growth of people, taking a personal interest in people, encouraging involvement of people in decision-making.
- Building community: seek to identify some means to be the primary shaper of human lives; each person demonstrates unlimited liability for a specific community related group.

Research question two asks what common traits were found between and among the women in terms of their servant-leadership characteristics. The chart gave a quick visual answer that is supported by details that substantiate patterns.

Research question three asked if any servant-leadership characteristic(s) were demonstrated by only one of the women. The same chart gave visual indication but the descriptions further explained specifics about the characteristic and the related activity or behavior.

Research question four asked if there was evidence of a particular theme(s) in the lives of the women. Through careful scrutiny of each biographical profile and with the use of a blue highlighter marker, themes were identified and the specifics of the theme were highlighted. These indicators were added to the butcher paper on the wall through jottings and quotations or examples. This took the longest to determine and required

rereading the narratives many times. The indicators were first determined by name and then grouped according to a theme name.

Research question five asked how the call to servant-leadership was initiated in each of the women's lives. Analysis of their lives for unusual circumstances or incidents of a life changing nature were sought. If there was not any clear evidence of such, then a pattern of service was traced back as far as possible in each story to see approximately when this took place in each of their lives.

Research question six asked what were the most common demographic characteristics (marital status, age, ethnic origin, residence, education, religion) shared by the three women. Three "big paper" charts, one for each woman, were constructed and posted on the wall that included the ten servant-leadership characteristics. This permitted a visual comparison with additional supporting printed details.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will present the three biographies and any related information to the lives of the three women. Data analysis was conducted on the biographies that comprise Chapter 4 (Margaret Scott), Chapter 5 (Margret Benedictsson), and Chapter 6 (Jessie McDermott). Chapter 7 will focus upon the results of the research and data. Chapter 8 will address the conclusions, implications of the research questions and make recommendations for further study. The next chapter will discuss the life of Scott.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARGARET SCOTT:

#### VOLUNTEER AND SOCIAL SERVICE INNOVATOR (1855-1931)

During the last half of the 1800s, the development of industry and commerce in cities opened white-collar occupations (i.e., typists, bookkeepers, office clerks, shop assistants) to women and provided them with new opportunities in the work force. It was work that had nothing to do with raising children and it was not done in the home. As a result, women were able to move from the private world of their homes into the public arena of offices, shops, and factories. Arlene Young (1996) suggests that for women clerical workers, “the typewriter, the ledger, and the shorthand writer’s pad were instruments not of oppression, but of liberation” (p. 129). One tenacious widow became a clerk through necessity and would use her leadership skills to change the social conditions for thousands in the City of Winnipeg.

Margaret Ruttan Boucher Scott was born in Colborne, Ontario on July 28, 1855 and later moved to Peterborough, Ontario with her family (January 18, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5). Her father was Judge Robert Grant Boucher and her mother was Mary Ruttan (originally de Rotan), of Huguenot ancestry (i.e., French protestants, many of whom fled to America to avoid persecution for their religious beliefs). Both parents were of United Empire Loyalist background (i.e., those who left the newly created United States after 1783, for the purpose of remaining loyal to the British crown, and moved

north to Nova Scotia or along the St. Lawrence River and the shores of Lake Ontario in what would become Upper Canada). Her mother died when Scott was eleven years old, and this was followed the next year by the death of her father. As a result, in 1867 she went to live with her aunt in Campbellford, Ontario (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 1). There Scott met a girl who had lived in the Muller Orphanage in Bristol, England and this connection reinforced an important memory in Scott's life.

Mrs. Scott said many times that one of the most vivid of her childhood memories was the impression made on her mind and heart as she listened to the story told by her mother, of the work of George Muller in the famous Muller Orphanage in Bristol. There orphans were rescued, cared for and educated, and the institution was kept up entirely through faith in prayer. Mrs. Scott felt at that time she would like to help the poor and unfortunate in some tangible way. (Macvicar, c.1939, p. 6)

At twenty-two years of age, Scott married a prominent Peterborough, Ontario lawyer, William Hepburn Scott, Q.C. (Queen's Counsel), who was a member of the Ontario Legislature (Bumsted, 1999, p. 223-224; August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 1). At the age of twenty-five, in 1881, William Scott died, and left Scott widowed, and without financial means. She had had a relatively sheltered life of ease in Peterborough, and she was then forced to seek employment. In order to support herself, she did clerical work in Peterborough, Ontario for the Midland Railway where she received \$25 a month for sorting tickets (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6). When this company amalgamated with the Grand Trunk Railway, Scott was transferred to the audit office in Montreal, Quebec. In Montreal, she was "put in charge of the work of thirty girls and the conduct of fifty. Scott was not a strong woman, but with her usual sympathetic interest she became absorbed in her new work and overtaxing her strength, had a breakdown in

health” (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7) after 2 ½ years. Her doctor advised that she go west to a drier climate to recuperate.

She moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1886, and after regaining her health, she found employment in the city at the Dominion Land Office. It was because of her office skills and the lack of women with sufficient secretarial skills, that Scott was quickly hired. Her typing was improving, but she did not know shorthand and asked the only person who was teaching shorthand, the court stenographer, W. F. Perkins to help her. He objected to teaching it to a woman. Scott was amused at his stand, but she made her ambition to learn shorthand known to the boss, Mr. Heubach, who personally taught Scott and without charge (January 18, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5). “By hard work she learned typewriting and shorthand and became recognized as the most proficient stenographer in Winnipeg” (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6). She then moved on to the law firm of Hough and Campbell, also in Winnipeg.

It was during this time that Scott met Reverend C.C. Owen of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Winnipeg. Scott had a strong religious faith and was anxious to serve the church community. She began to volunteer on Saturday afternoons at the church office sorting correspondence related to charity work, and eventually became involved in the life and work of the destitute and sick (January 18, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5). Scott and Owens would kneel in prayer before their work began each Saturday. Scott wrote of this turning point in her life,

Mr. Owen prayed me out of office work. He wanted me to work altogether among the poor, but I loved my own office work and wanted my liberty and at first I was unwilling to give it up. However, when repeatedly the words came to me, “This is the way, walk ye in it,” I knew God was speaking to me and I gave up office work to help Mr. Owen among the

unfortunates of the city. I didn't lose my freedom, there was infinitely more. The office was all for self, one's food, clothes, home and just a little margin left for God. There are wide free spaces when one stops thinking only of food and raiment. (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7-8)

Although Scott has said she did not mind giving up her liberty and office work in the previous quotation, it does seem possible that these interests remained important to her because she illustrated her independence (liberty) going about the city at her pace and managing who (the nurses) would help out and where. She also monitored the books and correspondence for the Mission and would have maintained her secretarial skills in the process.

Kinnear (1982) reminds us that "The Victorian social conscience preferred to alleviate suffering on the individual level, and in the realm of private philanthropy women both participated and experienced relief. Dispensing charity to the poor had long been an acceptable activity for women" (p. 143). Scott "relinquished her office post, her sure salary and comfortable home" (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 8) and moved in 1897 to a small room in the Winnipeg Lodging and Coffee House, which was owned by the Holy Trinity Anglican Church. This location was "a place where transients could get a cheap meal and board and where men out of work or in trouble could secure help" (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 8). In 1897, Winnipeg was growing, and Scott had a huge task ahead of her.

This was the time when the west was receiving its first influx of immigrants, brought to Canada on a large scale. Winnipeg was the distributing center for a large floating population, many of them foreigners without resources and the task which Mrs. Scott faced was an immense one. (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6)

Scott had "a calling" one night and believed it was her duty and responsibility to serve the poor (DeGraves, 2000, p. 65-66). She visited the poverty stricken in shacks and

rooming houses in the inner city and provided them with food and clothing. Scott's days were long and one passage in her biography indicates the extent of her stewardship:

Work did not cease for Mrs. Scott when she returned to her quarters in the Lodging and Coffee House. She assisted in all activities carried on in the Coffee House; Sunday school, and religious services for the men as well as lectures and concerts one night a week. On Friday afternoons a Mother's Meeting was held in which many a sad heart was cheered and comforted by the spiritual as well as material help received. (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 10)

Her childhood dream of service to the unfortunates became a reality. In a newspaper article entitled, "The Mission That Never Asked a Dime," the following testimony appeared:

You hear people say that a good cause must have a well organized fund raising campaign. Yet one of the pioneer welfare agencies in Winnipeg was established, grew, and flourished for nearly thirty years without making a single appeal to the public for funds, without so much as a silver tea. The agency was the Margaret Scott Mission. (March 14, 1964, *Free Press*, p. 21)

Scott appears to have been influenced in her approach to not solicit financial support by both the Muller Homes (previously mentioned) and the Barnardo Homes for Immigrant Orphans, originally founded in England in 1866. A Barnardo Home was located in Peterborough where Scott had resided earlier in her life. One newspaper article states, "At the beginning of her mission work Mrs. Scott determined not to accept regular remuneration. She had heard of the Barnardo Home work accomplished entirely on faith, and she decided to cast away every prop and enter the mission service on faith" (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 14). She decided to accept no salary and relied on voluntary donations to exist. Initially, "remuneration was small and food was scarce, yet the first \$5 which she earned went to the Mission as a thank offering. Every Christmas

thereafter the Mission has received her hard-earned mite” (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B9). As the years passed, and as Scott’s good works became known and supported, monies were received from governments, the city council, the Canadian Pacific Railway, the rich and middle class, and men and women from the grateful poor (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6). However, “Mrs. Scott never allowed her mission to be put on the Federated Budget, because she did not wish to deviate from the principle of living entirely by faith” (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 14). Scott was a daily visitor to the jails to assist those who were released to find work, lodging, financial and spiritual support. Scott spent many nights nursing sick women prisoners and even staying with a dying patient in the Winnipeg jail; she had no regular visiting hours and the jail wardens let her come and go as she pleased (Macvicor, c. 1939, p. 9). One cannot help but wonder if Scott was tenacious or stubborn in her quest to help the needy and she appears “to have marched to her own drummer” in her approach to service of the needy. In a letter attributed to Rev. C. C. Owen, the following comments were used to describe Scott: “splendid service of sacrifice,” and “ability and devotion” and “delighted to serve” and “she had so many admirers who were not conspicuous for church connections but admired the splendid unselfish able work she did” (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B9, p. 1167, 1168). In the same letter, Owen mentions that Winnipeg Hospital nurses were training at the mission for a few months and that he “encouraged her [Scott] to take up Deaconess Work” (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B9, p. 1166, 1167).

Scott had no formal medical training, but often read into the night to gain the knowledge to help the sick and needy. She studied, “what was done in other cities by

means of nursing missions, public health departments and federated charities and social service work” (January 25, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 22). Her good works were recognized in 1900, when a local bank manager volunteered a portion of his salary for a trained nurse to assist Scott in her work. In 1904, the attention, respect, and financial support from churches (Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist), influential citizens, and the City of Winnipeg, provided the finances for Scott to establish a nursing station at 99 George Street, Winnipeg, known as the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission (January 25, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 22).

One of the new initiatives that began the following year was described in a local newspaper. “Before the city had started welfare work among men seeking employment, Mrs. Scott had taken over a large back yard and supplied saws, axes and work, so that idle men might earn their bread” (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 1) and gain self respect through useful employment. This wood yard was eventually taken over by the city. Scott would go about the city first by streetcar and then on foot, making home visits. “These visits were of great educational benefit, for the families learned the way to treat the more common ailments and were impressed with the importance of cleanliness” (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B9). One day while she was on her rounds, a man offered to give her a pony, which she gladly accepted. Later on the same day, she met another friend who offered her a cart if she could find a horse. So she had her horse, Joe, and her buggy to help her make her way through the city. The cart was usually filled with donated food and clothing which Scott gave to those she encountered in need (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 9; March 14, 1964, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 21).

Beginning in 1904, the city government made an annual organizational grant of \$2000 and a yearly salary of \$1,200 to the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG 10 B9) and the provincial government directed a grant to the Mission, as well. In addition, the Federal government gave grant payments for services rendered to immigrants who were moving to the Canadian west on a large scale (Moulton, 1913, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG 10 B9, 19). Scott, in a Memorandum for the Superintendent of Immigration, wrote about the work of the Society (the board governing the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission) and the needs of the immigrants moving into the province and City of Winnipeg,

Generally, it should be pointed out that the Society is filling a great demand, and its energies extend far beyond the immigrants on whose behalf the Dominion Government make an allowance. Two years ago it started with the expectation that the demands upon it would be met by some 3,500 visits per year, but in two years time the actual numbers of visits paid by the Society's nurses have increased so that for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1906, the visits entailed amounted to 11,986. Its work is carried on amongst the poor population of the city, and it is found that the demands are greatest by the immigrants who have been in the country for only two or three years. While there are a certain number requiring attention during their first year, it has been found that it is in the second and third years that they are more apt to need medical attendance and that after that they are generally self supporting; therefore, while the grant from the Dominion is limited to immigrants in the first year, the number of immigrants treated in that year only slightly indicate the extent of the Society's work amongst people who virtually are newly arrived immigrants. (Scott, 1906, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG 10 B9, 73-76)

In 1906, Scott moved from the Winnipeg Lodging and Coffee House to the Mission to live (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6). Here she organized assistance for wayward girls, and in 1911, established a hygiene department in the Mission in response to Manitoba's high mortality rate. The previous year, 1910, "every third death

registered in Manitoba was that of a child less than a year old” (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG 10 B9). Every child seen in the hygiene department program was monitored for a period of two years. By 1913, the facility had expanded from patient instruction on health care and hygiene with two nurses and 3,000 home visits to a staff of eight nurses and 30,000 home visits. Through her ongoing reading, medical contacts, and constant learning, “she became valuable to the Winnipeg Health Department and to the many doctors who worked with her” (January 18, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5).

Scott created The Little Nurses League in 1912 which was adopted by the Winnipeg School Board and extended to thirteen of the city schools (June 4, 1921, *Saturday Night*, p. 29). The Little Nurses League taught school girls about food preparation, hygiene and child care and how to care for baby brothers and sisters. One nurse commented, “This is what Mrs. Scott is always doing. She sees things that need doing, starts them properly going and then the right official body goes on with the work” (Moulton, 1913, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG 10 B9, 19). By 1914, the Winnipeg Women’s General Hospital (WWGH) became affiliated with the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission. All nurses in training at the WWGH spent two months at the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission to gain experience in community nursing. Dr. A. J. Douglas, City Health Officer, gave lectures to the nurses at the mission and the number of doctors lecturing on Public Health Nursing steadily increased (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 23). Scott had high standards for herself and her nurses; her hard work was an example for others in the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission. But, “she could always see the comic side of a situation and was ever ready for a bit of good wholesome fun” (Macvicar, c. 1939, p.6). One story Scott told reveals her sense of service and sense of humor:

She was called to one house to visit a sick woman. The house was filthy. So she rolled up her sleeves and scrubbed it. She took away the woman's mattress and burnt it, and made her comfortable on another. When the husband came home he looked round the house in bewilderment. "What the devil's going here?" he growled. "The devil himself has been loose in this house," replied his wife. "And that was me [Scott]." Mrs. Scott used to say with a chuckle when she related the story. (March 14, 1964, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 21)

As mentioned earlier, the various levels of government provided grants to the Mission even though Scott never asked for financial assistance or publicity for herself or the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission. She had faith that God would provide for the needs of the Mission and the donations always arrived. Scott made her strong feelings on this matter clear. Within the boxes of archival papers from the Margaret Scott Mission are two typed pages, "Items of interest now in the files for Historical Data," (#1086), which contained the following,

Margaret Scott Nursing Mission.

Resolution 1920.

The Board also desires to place on record its resolution that so long as the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission is carried on, the policy so long and successfully pursued of refusing to canvas or solicit subscriptions shall be continued. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B9)

Scott was known as the Angel of Poverty Row and Winnipeg's Angel of Mercy (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 1), as well as the Florence Nightingale of Winnipeg (Moulton, 1913, Provincial Archives of Manitoba). Scott and the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission had been pioneers in social service works which today are considered essential (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6).

The work of the mission continued to expand, the staff coping with epidemics such as typhoid (an illness which Scott developed) and influenza, with emergencies in both war and peace, to say nothing of

depressions. The nurses cared for the chronically ill and emergency cases, expectant mothers and new babies. The mission on George Street was enlarged as the need for nurses increased. (January 25, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 22)

An article titled “Canadian Women in the Public Eye: Margaret Scott” (June 4, 1921, *Saturday Night Magazine*, p. 29) described a ceremony in which a new school located at the corners of Arlington and Alfred Streets in the North End of the City of Winnipeg, where she had served and nursed the downtrodden and needy, was named for Scott.

There was a graceful little function at the opening, the unveiling of the portrait of Margaret Scott, presented by the Board of the Mission that bears her name, a face of spiritual beauty and benignancy to brood over the children of the new school; on a brass plate below, the mainspring of her life set forth for leading, “Bear ye one another’s burdens.” After the speeches by the trustees and the Mayor and the President of the Board, two little girls, Jew and Gentile, on behalf of the pupils, laid a tribute of roses in the hands of the frail little woman in quiet black. She rose to speak her few self-less and moving words, lifting divine eyes, and men’s throats tightened and women wiped sudden tears from their eyes in a surge of emotion that hurt and blessed, poignant-sweet. (June 4, 1921, *Saturday Night*, p. 29)

Scott was hospitalized and an invalid for over three months before she died in the Winnipeg General Hospital. She had worked right up until her death in 1931 giving forty-five years of service to her community (De Graves, 2000, p. 65-66). Upon her death, flags in the city flew at half mast, “in testimony to the city’s loss” (August 5, 1931, *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, p. 5), and her funeral service was held at Holy Trinity Anglican Church and was attended by the Mayor, ten members of the city council, the wealthy, business professionals, the downtrodden, and those who had been touched by her life (August 5, 1931, *Free Press*, p. 5). Her death notice stated,

Mrs. Scott's influence was not that of money or of physical strength. It was an influence which permeated the whole atmosphere in which she moved and which cast a redeeming power over literally thousands of people with whom she came in contact in the long period of her service as ministering angel to those in want and despair. (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 1)

On the same date, August 3, 1931, another Winnipeg newspaper, acknowledged Scott's significance in her obituary,

The contribution made by Mrs. Scott to public welfare was thus much greater than the present scope of the mission indicates, important although that scope is. A portion of the social welfare work now done by the city might not have been undertaken by the city, had not Mrs. Scott pointed out the need and shown the way. (August 3, 1931, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 1)

Friends in the city and province donated funds to erect a monument in St. John's Cemetery to her memory and works. A newspaper article stated,

The monument is quite simple and modest, but at the same time dignified in appearance, just such as the late benefactress, sometimes designated as "Winnipeg's St. Margaret" would have chosen had she been consulted. The inscription closes with a recital of the motto which she adopted and which gave the impulse to her useful life: 'If in trying to serve God I have been privileged to cheer and comfort others, my highest calling has been attained.' (October 19, 1932, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 6)

In conclusion, Scott's life's work was managing one of the most comprehensive home-nursing programs in western Canada. It included home visitations, individual assistance, services to address the needs of immigrants and newcomers to Winnipeg, training of nurses from the Women's General Hospital in community service, teaching children how to care for their younger siblings, coordination of auxiliary volunteers who made linens, clothing, and bandages for patients at home and in the Nursing Mission, and creating neighborhood clinics for the underprivileged (Miller, 2002, p. 287). Her Nursing Mission eventually became a City of Winnipeg Health Department operation after her

death in 1931 and her ideas helped craft the nursing profession in Manitoba. “She was posthumously awarded the Cosmopolitan Service Medal in 1932, and a ward was named in her memory at the Winnipeg General Hospital. The Margaret Scott Nursing Mission Scholarship for Public Health Nursing, is still awarded annually to one or more students in the Faculty of Nursing, University of Manitoba” (Ducas & Linton, 2001, p. 4).

“Although many memorials testify to the affection felt for her and recognize the importance of her work, the greatest memorial of all is the continued social service work carried on in Winnipeg, begun so many years ago by Margaret Scott, pioneer voluntary social worker” (January 25, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 22).

The reputation of the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission spread beyond the confines of the city and province. From Lethbridge, Alberta came requests for information as to the best method of commencing district nursing, and from Medicine Hat nurses applied for permission to live for a time in the Home in order to gain experience in this type of work. Brandon, Manitoba, was also supplied with district nursing information, on request from its city officials. Thus the value of the Mission grew. (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 23)

Another driving force in Manitoba was an Icelandic immigrant named Margret Benedictsson, who put her energies into the fight for women’s rights in Manitoba and Chapter 5 discusses her life story.

## CHAPTER V

### MARGRET BENEDICTSSON:

#### JOURNALIST AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST (1866-1956)

Many immigrants to Canada were attracted by the government's promise of free land (Dominion Lands Act 1872) in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and Manitoba's population grew from 25,000 in 1871 to 610,000 in 1921 (Friesen, 2000, p. 183, 511). Some of the new settlers came from Iceland. They spread across North America to Wisconsin, Ontario, the Dakota Territory (which later became the State of North Dakota in 1883), and Nova Scotia. In October 1875, a group of six Icelandic settlers in Ontario decided to explore the West, especially the Red River Valley. They selected a 36 mile strip of land along the west shore of Lake Winnipeg and they named this territory New Iceland. In October 1875, 280 Icelanders arrived in Winnipeg and proceeded by flatboats to what is now Gimli, Manitoba (Wolf, 1996, p. 4-8). Eventually, the Icelandic immigrants who stayed in the province were located in three main areas: the fishing village of Gimli, the town of Selkirk, and the City of Winnipeg and they were eager to settle in to their new surroundings; Thor (2002) recounts, "Wherever the Icelandic immigrants chose to assimilate and live, mixed with other ethnic groups, their adjustment to North American ways was faster and smoother" (p. 5, 85). Thor (2002) specifically mentions the work of most young women from Iceland who found employment as housemaids in the City of Winnipeg, although the expression "young

women” was perhaps misleading, as in some cases the girls were only fourteen. Overall, however, these girls fared well (p. 86).

Generally, the isolation of the prairies, sparse population, tough frontier conditions and communities, limited feminist networking (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 113, 196). But, Icelandic immigrant women, including Benedictsson, were very active in community life and in their church. They sponsored Sunday school and worked with the poor and new immigrants from Iceland. In 1877, the Icelandic Society was founded in Winnipeg; reorganized in 1881, and renamed The Icelandic Progressive Society (Wolf, 1996, p. 7-8). And, in 1881, the Icelandic Women’s Society was founded in Winnipeg. Its purpose was to help those in financial need and to provide support for the development of good citizenship among young and old alike. Raffles and banquets were held and the monies raised during these events were used in a variety of ways: educational scholarships for young women, financial assistance for newly arrived immigrants, and a counselor to help Icelandic girls find suitable places of employment (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205; Wolf, 1996, p.8).

Icelandic women who settled in Manitoba, especially Benedictsson, brought a belief in equal rights for women from their homeland. Wolf (1996) explained:

That Icelandic women should be among the first in Manitoba to voice the issue of granting women the right to vote, thus, hardly comes as a surprise. They had received the right to vote in church matters, and the establishment of women’s clubs or societies followed quickly whenever an Icelandic religious organization was founded....Women in Iceland had been granted the right to vote in municipal and congregational (church) elections in Iceland in 1881, and, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the issue of women’s rights was hotly debated. (Wolf, 1996, p. 8-9)

Meanwhile, in the east, in Toronto, in 1876, the Toronto Women's Literary Club was formed to address women's lack of access to the political process. The club provided the environment for discussion about women's issues. One of their members, Sarah Curzon, was associate editor of *Canada Citizen*, a weekly temperance newspaper. Curzon wrote a regular column in the paper about Literary Club activities and the need for women's suffrage. When in 1882, Ontario law gave the right to vote on municipal bylaws to spinsters and widows, the Toronto Women's Literary Club disbanded, and the Canadian Women's Suffrage Association was formed. Other women's organizations joined the cause for suffrage. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was established in 1890 in Manitoba and endorsed suffrage. The WCTU was spearheaded by a group of three Winnipeg women: Dr. Amelia Yeomans, journalist Cora Hind, and Mrs. Mark McClung, the future mother-in-law of novelist and suffragette, Nellie McClung (Kinnear, 1998, p. 25; Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205).

In the rural areas of Canada, including Manitoba, Women's Institutes were established, and they focused on raising the general standards of people's health. Their meetings included a wide variety of topics, i.e., housekeeping, supervision of school playgrounds on holidays, hot lunch programs at schools, circulating libraries, war memorials, and child welfare (Kinnear, 1998, p. 147). Women's organizations believed and encouraged self-improvement through self-education. The women of the Icelandic community in Manitoba were champions of such beliefs. The Icelandic Women's Suffrage Society was founded in Winnipeg in 1908; however,

The Icelandic population remained isolated from the Anglo-Saxon majority by its different language and culture. A major distinction between the two communities was the role and status of women. The cultural,

economic, and political participation of Icelandic women drew not only on a solid community base, but also on a long tradition of equal rights for women . . . . Also, under the society's auspices a regular column, written by various Icelandic women, began publication on January 16, 1890, in the newspaper, *Heimskringla*. (Prentice et al., 1993, p. 205)

When Manitoba entered confederation in 1870, the Federal Elections Act stated that, “no woman, idiot, lunatic, or criminal could vote” (Treble, 2000, p. 77), only men could vote. Women in the province began to demand the vote and were aided, in part, by one young immigrant woman who made a significant contribution to the cause of suffrage and human rights in Manitoba. Margrjet (Margret) Jonsdottir (later Benedictsson) who born in 1866, in Hrappsstaoir, Vioifdalur, Iceland. She was the daughter of Jon Jonasson and Kristjana Ebenesarsdottir and was orphaned by 13 years of age and self-sufficient (Prentice et al., 1996, p.205; Wolf, 1996, p. 73). As a child she, “was possessed by wonder and admiration as she read the story of Jon Sigurdsson’s struggle for freedom” (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372) and as a young reader, she immersed herself in articles and books about oppressed people, unhappily married women, and girls who wanted to break free from parental restrictions (Johnson, 1994, p. 122).

Benedictsson wrote,

Angry and distressed I read the laments of oppressed persons, unhappily married women, and the misfortunes of young girls. And it is this evil that aroused in men and in all honorable persons, a yearning to break down all the fetters that tie people to evil and distress, all fetters by whatever name we call them. (Kinnear, 1982, p. 176)

Benedictsson’s parents emigrated to the Dakota Territory in 1877, to an Icelandic community, possibly the Mountain or Lundar settlements, where she lived for four years (Thor, 2002, p. 94). She valued education and worked to put herself through grade school and attended Bathgate College in Bathgate, the Dakota Territory, for 2 years (Bumsted,

1999, p. 21). In 1881, Benedictsson moved to Winnipeg where she continued evening studies at the Winnipeg Central Business College, learning shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping. She also became involved with the Icelandic Women's Society, which was staging plays and holding tombolas (a kind of lottery with tickets usually drawn from a turning drum-shaped container, especially at a fair or festivals) as fundraisers to pay tuition (\$87.00) in October 1881, for two girls to attend a Winnipeg convent school for a year (Lindal, 1967, p. 160-161).

In 1893, she married Sigfus B. Benedictsson (1865-1951), a well-known writer, poet, printer, and publisher in the Manitoba Icelandic community. Sigfus had arrived in Manitoba in 1888 and was familiar with John Stuart Mill's (1867) writing on the liberty of women, "The Subjection of Women" (Kinnear, 1982, p. 151). Sigfus presented public lectures in Winnipeg during 1889-1890 on the emancipation of women (Wolf, 1996, p. 9). Sigfus and Margret were married in and "became charter members of the first Unitarian Congregation west of Toronto" (Treble, 2000, p. 77) in Winnipeg. The First Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg was established February 1, 1891. The majority of Icelanders were members of either the Lutheran or the Unitarian Churches (Wolf, 1996, p. 10). It should be noted that the other two women in this study were members of "the more mainstream denominations"- Presbyterian and Anglican, while Benedictsson's Unitarian affiliation promoted the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the unique concept that "we believe that we do not need to think alike" (2004, First Unitarian Church of Winnipeg) and the need for children to develop their own religious beliefs. Unitarians encourage social improvement, individual freedom, tolerance, and a belief in the unity or oneness of God (<http://online.sksm.edu/univ/>).

On February 2, 1893, Benedictsson gave her first lecture on women's rights to the Winnipeg Icelandic community (Johnson, 1994, p. 121). Together, the Benedictssons established a printing press in Selkirk, Manitoba, and in 1898 began printing the magazine, *Freyja*, which means woman (Kinneer, 1998, p. 31; Thor, 2002, p. 260; Wolf, 1996, p. 9). By the second year of publication, the magazine had 500 subscribers, including both men and women in Manitoba, throughout Canada, and the United States (Johnson, 1994, p. 122). It featured serial stories, biographical sketches of prominent people, poetry, literary reviews and a children's corner. "*Freyja* also published lectures and letters" (Thor, 2002, p. 261). Several historians (Kinneer, 1998, p. 143; Thor, 2002, p. 261; Treble, 2000, p. 77) noted the importance of the creation of *Freyja*. Wolf (1996), in particular, wrote:

The Benedictssons' contribution to the cause (provincial suffrage) finds its most concrete expression in the founding of an Icelandic women's suffrage society in Winnipeg in 1908 and in the publication of *Freyja* (1898-1910), the only women's suffrage paper published in Canada at the time. (p. 9)

Benedictsson became a well-known women's suffrage speaker and organizer. She took the famous American suffragette, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), as her ideal; she also carried on a sporadic correspondence with Dr. Stowe-Cullen, the leader of the Ontario suffrage movement and read the works of the head of the American Woman Suffrage Association, Lucy Stone (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372; *The Icelandic Canadian*, Winter, 1975, p. 44; Weiss & Rinear, 2002, p. 204-205, 209). Because of her daytime household duties and childcare responsibilities as a wife and mother, Benedictsson usually lectured on women's rights in the evening and pursued her writing late at night (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 373).

Weiss and Rinear (2002) stated the importance of women's initiatives to improving temperance, working conditions, and that of the poor and the less fortunate:

The work these women conducted during the nineteenth century on behalf of the less-fortunate and to cure society's ills resulted in a great deal of change. It also changed the women themselves. As they came together to form societies, build settlement houses, and rally support for various causes, they also developed new organizational skills as well as increased levels of self-esteem, self-worth, and independence. No longer were their identities based solely on their roles as wives and mothers. Their successes showed them that they were capable of doing more and gave them the courage to keep moving forward on the one issue that had the potential to create change beyond belief, the right to vote. (p. 199)

The 40-page publication, *Freyja*, focused on matters pertaining to progress and rights of all women. To this end, it supported Prohibition and activities/movements that led to the betterment of social conditions. As well, Sigfus and Margret held meetings in their home for poets at the Verse-Makers Club, Hagyrdingafelagid (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372). Sigfus commented about his wife's literary ability:

She was a good speaker, even eloquent, especially when she spoke of things that were of interest to her. She wrote numerous short stories, but she rarely attached her name to them. Accordingly, I am the one who knows best what she composed and wrote which may be considered poetry and fiction. In addition she was an excellent translator after she became good at syntax, which was in the beginning her weakest point. (Wolf, 1996, p. 38)

She often wrote stories under pen names. Three such stories (translated from Icelandic) are in *Writings of Western Icelandic Women* (Wolf, 1996, p. 74); the articles and pen names are: "The Window" by Herold (1899), "The Messenger of Peace" by Bryhildur (1907), and "They: A Biography in Few Words" by Herold (1901). These particular stories reflect her personal concerns: human rights, women and their responsibilities, poverty, and birth control. These articles advocated political, social,

legal, and economic equality for women. It appears that Benedictsson was astute in utilizing “male pen names” for many of her articles with the knowledge that they would probably receive serious consideration from male and female readers. All three stories appeared in issues of *Freyja*. Excerpts from each story, are included below:

The widow, who was now poor and lonely, had no share in it, and her husband’s work on “Human Rights” had in their eyes no value. Charity for all mankind was forgotten, at least it didn’t include the widow in this instance. (Margret Benedictsson, from “The Widow” in Wolf, 1996, p. 76, 79)

But then finally it happened that they had a serious argument. The first hurtful words were like a razor-sharp sword cuts in the hearts of the lovers. The argument ended, but its consequences spread and created a distance between them.

She felt that he neglected the home, because all her thoughts concerned his and their children’s well-being . . .

How many men haven’t thought the same?

She waited for him at home, tired and worried, and worked and worked for him and the children.

How many women haven’t done the same? (Margret Benedictsson, from “They: A Biography in Few Words,” in Wolf, 1996, p. 79-80)

Pale, skinny, and shivering women suckled their babies at their breasts and fed them the only kind of food they had so far known, although they were almost a year or more, because the scraps which society gives to its outcasts are not suitable for infants. And yet the world shouts: More children! More children! Give us more people. Nonetheless, mothers and children starve. (Margret Benedictsson, from “The Messenger of Peace” in Wolf, 1996, p. 84)

The magazine drew attention to married women who had no choice but to bear children and Benedictsson urged the province to become involved in social welfare. She wanted to see a woman’s role expanded outside the family into the public sphere (i.e. provided opportunities for employment outside the home in shops, offices, and factories). She went so far as to encourage women readers to use “the weapon of love” to influence men to vote for a candidate supporting equal rights for women. This suggestion may have

been considered radical and presumptuous by some women and not appreciated by their spouses. Kinnear (1987) reinforces Benedictsson's concept of equal rights:

While never disowning a woman's role as wife and mother, Benedictsson wished to see the woman in the family recognized as an equal partner, as in a business concern. But there was no doubt that she wished to see woman's role expand out of the family and into public life. She was interested in more than new opportunities for professional and bourgeois women. Benedictsson also emphasized the need to improve conditions for working class women. (p. 26)

She attempted to convert as many women and men to the cause of equal rights for women as possible. Kinnear (1982) explained the political environment: "Nineteenth-century politicians had resisted moves which could serve to detach a woman from her dependence on a family setting. Twentieth-century feminists worked to wean the family away from its patriarchal tendencies, but did not themselves deny the central place of the mother within the family" (p. 155). For many years at the turn of the century, the Icelandic suffrage leaders, including Benedictsson, were alone in carrying on a sustained campaign for women's voting rights in Manitoba (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 373). But, Kinnear (1987) clarifies the differences in Benedictsson's approach,

Benedictsson's inspiration was different from that of Manitoba "mainliners." So was her religion, and her ethnic background....most of the leaders of the Canadian women's movement were Methodist or Presbyterian, with a few from Anglican or other denominations....Benedictsson shared one passion with the Manitoba suffragists- a belief in temperance. But her views on divorce, pacifism, and the need for women to be in all aspects of public life were generally more outspoken than theirs (p. 26).

She became the first president of the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Society of Winnipeg, called Tilraum (translates as Endeavor), which she founded in Winnipeg in 1908 (Johnson, 1994, p. 124; Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205).

*Freyja* ceased publication in 1910, when Sigfus “put a hold on all mail addressed to the journal and refused his wife access to the printing press” (Wolf, 1996, p. 23), which he moved to Winnipeg from Selkirk. That same year, she divorced Sigfus. Kinnear (1998) writes that divorce in Manitoba was always less than 1% up until 1971, so it appears that Benedictsson made a bold, and perhaps courageous step, in seeking a divorce (p. 17). Also, in 1910 a marriage could only be dissolved through an Act of Parliament and usually took a long time, was a complicated process, required proof—usually of adultery, and was costly at about \$500 (Kinnear, 1998, p. 63). In 1912, with failing eyesight, she left Manitoba with her children, son Ingi, and daughter Helen, to live first in Seattle and next in Blaine, Washington. Benedictsson died December 13, 1956, at the home of her daughter in Anacortes, Washington (Wolf, 1996, p. 73). The front page of the Icelandic newspaper, *Heimskringla*, published in Winnipeg on December 19, 1956, contained her death announcement. Translated from Icelandic by Lorna Tergesen on March 5, 2003, in Gimli, Manitoba, it said:

#### Important Woman Dies

Reported by *Heimskringla* from the West Coast last week that Benedictsson has passed away on December 13. She was nearly 91 years of age. She had lived with her son-in-law for the last 2 or 3 years, Mr. & Mrs. Dalsted in Anacortes, California. She had been in failing health and was hospitalized.

She is numbered among the important Icelandic Canadian Women. She was the editor of *Freyja* for 12 years. She was of the Hunavatnssysla (this is district in Iceland) area. Her husband Sigfus died several years ago. Two of her children are living, Mrs. Helen Dalsted and one son, Ingi. She was Unitarian; her memory will certainly not be forgotten. (p. 1)

Benedictsson utilized her writing to become one of Manitoba’s foremost proponents and visionaries of women’s suffrage and social change. Her lectures and her

writings may have contributed to other women writing in the province. Wolf (1996) speculated:

It may well have been the pioneer experience, forcing many women to redefine their feminine role within the family unit and within society around them, that in certain instances gave women a sense of greater personal freedom from constricting societal rules and that, by extension, gave them the confidence to write and prompted literary productivity and she elaborates further, that it seems probable that Freyja and, by extension, the women's movement encouraged women writers to make their debut on the literary scene. (p. 17, 23)

Icelandic historian Jonas Thor (2002) describes the contribution of Benedictsson:

In 1916, the government of Manitoba endorsed the vote for women, the first province in Canada to do so, and there is little doubt that her work contributed to this achievement. Although she concentrated on reaching her own compatriots, she fought for the rights of all Canadian women. The Canadian Suffrage Association invited her to attend a convention of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Toronto in 1909. (p. 261)

In 1914, two years after Benedictsson had left Manitoba, the Manitoba Liberals endorsed the vote for women. And on January 27, 1916, Manitoba was the first province to grant suffrage after an historic third reading of the bill in the Provincial Legislature.

The oldest member of the house declared he had never seen anything like it in his life. Galleries were filled to overflowing with eager and excited women. Third reading was moved by Acting Premier T. H. Johnson, son of an Icelandic suffrage pioneer. (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 375)

It seemed fitting that the response to the motion was supported by a person of Icelandic descent. (The country of Iceland formally enacted suffrage in 1915.) Although this specific legislation for Manitoba women occurred after Benedictsson had left the province, surely her spirit was present in the gallery that day.

Both Scott and Benedictsson devoted their lives and efforts especially, but not exclusively, to the City of Winnipeg. The third woman in the study, Jessie McDermott,

lived and spent her energies in the rural community area of Portage la Prairie. Chapter 6 discusses the life of McDermott.

## CHAPTER VI

### JESSIE MCDERMOTT:

#### TEACHER AND RURAL COMMUNITY BUILDER (1870-1950)

The last of the three women to be discussed in this study was a rural school teacher and farmer. It is important that her life story be included to provide a contrast to the stories of Scott and Benedictsson. McDermott seems to typify a “rural pioneer woman” who taught in a country school; who was a member of a large farming family; and who remained on the farm with her parents until she got married. A foundation for McDermott’s story begins with an understanding of schools and education in the 1800s.

In 1829, the first school for girls in western Canada was opened by Angelique and Marguerite Nolin, daughters of a fur trader (Bumsted, 1999, p. 188; Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black, 1996, p. 74) and located in St. Boniface on the east side of the Red River (in the Winnipeg area). French Roman Catholic mixed-blood families (French and aboriginal unions, also known as Metis) settled in the region and religious orders of women were not far behind. After a contingent of Grey Nuns arrived in St. Boniface in 1844 to establish the first women’s religious community and to provide social services for the French and Roman Catholic community on the east side of the Red River (Kinnear, 1998, p. 12), they taught children at the elementary level and founded a secondary academy for girls.

Regardless of the type of schools available (e.g., public or domestic schools- which were set up in homes, or church owned schools and convents), “women

participated in varying degrees in a female culture that increasingly valued learning. These schools provided forums where women could exercise initiative, but only while separating both teachers and the students from the public world” (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 94). Women were taught what was suitable to their environment (i.e., needlework, cooking, gardening, manners, and caring for the home and children), and by the 1850s it was believed that “a more advanced education was essential to fit women for their vital and enhanced educational role as mothers” (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 94) and the first teachers of their own children.

“The emphasis on preparing women to be vanguards of morality for their children paved the way for teaching as a profession. It remained one of the few professions; nursing was another one, considered acceptable for women to pursue well into the next century” (Weiss & Rinear, 2002, p. 197). Manitoba educational historian, Dr. Sybil Shack (1993a) wrote in her autobiography after teaching for 44 years in Manitoba, “Of all the jobs available to women and having a little more prestige than domestic service, teaching was the easiest to get into” (p. 443) and “Teaching in rural Manitoba was clearly a woman’s job. The ‘lower’ or ‘junior’ grades did not need teachers with very much education” (p. 437).

Women considered education the key to improving the conditions of women. However, the idea of an educated woman was often ridiculed. In 1872, Dominion statistician George Johnson announced that the decline in the birth rate was the result of women who became educated and worked outside the home. That same year, the conservative Canadian newspaper, the *Christian Guardian*, stated that “very intellectual women are seldom beautiful; their features, and in particularly their foreheads, are more

or less masculine” (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 173). Two different avenues for education were suggested: women could gain access to post-secondary education, which led to small numbers of women entering normal schools or they could improve the conditions in the home by receiving practical training. The government reinforced and spread the predominant Victorian message of the time that “a woman’s place was in the home” through a domestic science initiative. Kinnear (1998) elaborated on this approach,

Women received advice about their housekeeping from all sides. In Manitoba the growing application of scientific principles to housewifery, reflected in the establishment in 1910 of a Department of Household Science at the University of Manitoba, was designed to train the future wives of male university graduates in the modern ways of housekeeping. The same motivation prompted the formation of home economics associations and the work of Women’s Institutes in rural communities throughout the province. They were to promote the improvement of individual homes in Manitoba’ through the discussion of ‘subjects directly concerned with the general well-being of the family and the affairs of the home.’ (p. 69)

But, the prospect of women with post-secondary education caused concern: were women abandoning their roles and responsibilities of motherhood and childcare?

Religious and medical male leaders emphasized the role of women: their place was in the home raising children (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 157-159). The purpose of education was limited. “An educated woman would use her experience mainly to be a better mother” (Kinnear, 1982, p. 133).

Education beyond grammar school really began for women with teacher training at the Manitoba Normal School, which was established by the provincial government in 1882. McDermott trained there in 1886. Early that same year, four women applied for admission in Winnipeg at the Manitoba College, founded by the Presbyterian Church in 1871. Opposition to the request at once arose. Archbishops Machray (Anglican, St.

John's College) and Tache (Roman Catholic, St. Boniface College) were the chief objectors. Just one of the four women eventually enrolled in the Manitoba College for fall 1886 (Kinnear, 1995, p. 3-52). Resistance to post-secondary education for women continued during the latter part of the 1800s and beginning of the twentieth century.

By 1911, Canadian boys and girls spent eight years in classrooms and could leave school at 14 years of age. Attendance was influenced by ethnicity and class, i.e., "Many working-class and immigrant families who needed their girls at home also retained traditional practices, such as rotating school attendance among their daughters" (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 169). Many girls were needed to help with the maintenance of the home and provided childcare, as was the case for McDermott, while their mothers helped with the farming in the fields.

Manitoba public schools were agencies to develop national unity, teach English, and educate everyone in the Canadian way. Teachers played powerful roles in transmitting ideology of Anglo-conformity, assimilation, and social stability (Bruno-Jofre, 1996, p. 73-108). Bruno-Jofre (Autumn/Winter, 1998-1999) quotes Dr. R. S. Thornton, Minister of Education for Manitoba in his 1918 public address, "Our aim is to plant Canadian schools with Canadian teachers setting forth Canadian ideals and teaching the language of the country" (p. 27). McDermott, was one teacher whose formal (in the classroom) and informal (in the home and community) contributions addressed children and the community.

Much of the information related to the life story of McDermott was extracted from materials (personal papers/notes) mailed to me by Wilma Shirriff, granddaughter of McDermott. Included were items written by Shirriff and others penned by her mother,

Frances. Shirriff also forwarded the book, *Tales from Bellemeade* (c. 1904) to me. These items have provided very personal and subjective accounts of McDermott's life.

Jessie Isabel (Belle) Grant McDermott was born June 10, 1870 to Hugh Grant (1831-1908) and Ann Ross Grant (1840-1901) in Blythe, Ontario (in Bruce County). She was one of 11 children. In 1871, the family moved to Burnside, Manitoba to farm. An inventory of the Grants' goods and chattels on May 17, 1871 listed many items including, "three span horses, one buggy with certain supplies, one parlor stove, one Brass Kettle, one set of China Tea Dishes in box, two dozen Common dishes in box, two bed spreads, 28 yards of carpeting, one Bag containing boots and shoes, one Buffalo Robe, one Sewing machine, one Box of Tea" (Paterson, 1989, p. 133). Such items give a hint of the gentility and relatively good financial circumstances of the Grants. A story "The Promised Land" was written c. 1904 by McDermott about her family (the Grants) trip to Manitoba. One amusing section stated, "They neared Fort Garry and the little girls inquired if they paddled in the Red River would their white stockings get dyed red" (Paterson, 1989, p. 132). The book *Beside the Burn: Burnside Area History* (Paterson, 1989) describes the signing of a treaty with the Indians with Hugh Grant in attendance,

In August 20, 1871, a treaty was signed at Selkirk, or Tower Fort, at which hundreds of Indians gathered to be entertained, which twelve oxen were butchered daily and other stuff in abundance.

Each chief signed the treaty by drawing a picture of his crest on totem (an Indian's coat of arms) - the mournful tom tom constantly going. People were not allowed to cross Rat Creek until after the treaty was signed. My father bought his farm from Alex McLean- who had quarreled with the Indians, and thus built his house- the first house then to cross Rat Creek. (p. 132)

Hugh Grant became friends with the Indians and Metis. The family hosted the first Sunday school in the district in their home and Hugh Grant was a superintendent of the Sunday school (Paterson, 1989, p. 11, 132). The family fought many hardships (i.e., prairie fires and the death of three children), but maintained their strong religious faith. In *Beside the Burn: Burnside Area History* (1989), mention is made of “Belle Grant” who was elected leader of Mission Band in 1899-1900, at the age of 29 years, and that her group made a quilt and raised \$15.00. Mission Bands were similar to Sunday school classes, only the group of children met during the week, usually after school, to study the Bible, sing hymns, and learn about missionary work in foreign countries. The children made small items (i.e., quilts, book bags, scrapbooks, and to collect donations of money to support the missionaries). The leaders of Mission Band were young women or mothers of children in the local church. Charter members of Mission Band included McDermott, her mother Ann Grant, and her sister Rachel Grant (Paterson, 1989, p. 11-13).

Two photographs of McDermott appear in the book *Beside the Burn: Burnside Area History*, (Paterson, 1989, p. 13). One formal head and shoulders portrait shows a petite young woman with dark, curly hair pulled back from her face and wearing a high-necked dark dress in what appears to be a group presentation of a church board of governors, both male and female. Shirriff wrote that McDermott was just barely 5 feet tall and weighed about 110 pounds, a tiny woman. “Even when I was a child she seemed tiny to me, so she must have been pretty small,” W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). The second picture depicts the Burnside Temperance League in 1900 and includes her sister Rachel standing in the back row and McDermott in the front row

seated beside the minister, Reverend McRae. Both women wear dark, conservative long sleeved, Victorian high-collared, full-length dresses.

McDermott's parents encouraged her to further her education and she completed high school in Portage la Prairie and went on to normal school in Winnipeg. In 1886, at the age of 16 she had her first teaching job in a Kindergarten to Grade 8 rural school in Dundonald, Manitoba. Sybil Shack (1993a) described the responsibilities of the rural school teacher,

Many were excellent teachers. Especially in rural Manitoba, they achieved the impossible. They taught large classes in substandard buildings, with little or no resources, and even less recognition . . . They spent hours making seatwork and preparing lessons to keep children at various levels gainfully employed while they, the teachers, were trying to teach the rest. They were responsible for coaching teams, organizing track meets and field days. . . . In rural Manitoba they often had to teach a 10 month program in fewer than eight months as children were kept out of school for seeding and harvesting, the girls as well as boys. They were also expected to take part in community activities, of which teaching Sunday school was by no means the least. (p. 446)

While a teacher, she met Robert McDermott, "a prominent citizen of the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie," and "a gentleman who served as reeve (1923-1925), the chief magistrate for the district" (Collier, n.d., p. 46, 304). Robert McDermott had panned for gold in the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. (Two years later he returned with enough gold for an engagement ring and he and McDermott were married.) Her granddaughter, Wilma Shirriff, now owns the ring. (McDermott died when Shirriff was nine years old.). The McDermotts settled in the community of Edwin, Manitoba and their homestead was called, *Bellemeade*, in honor of McDermott's middle name, Isabel or Belle. McDermott no longer taught formally, as this was not an option for married women. The Edwin house was described by McDermott's daughter, F. McDermott

(personal communication, January 24, 2003) who wrote “It was a log house & I don’t think too well chinked, for one summer morning dad asked mother to come and stand beside him & when she complied he asked to look up the wall & directly above where she had been sitting was a garter snake. No comment”!

About 1900, McDermott had one story published in the *Nor-West Farmer* for which she received \$10.00. A small booklet of stories called *Tales from Bellemeade* (McDermott, c. 1904) followed four years later. This previous information supports that McDermott did the majority of her writing before she had any children, between the ages of 30-34 years, and immediately after leaving the teaching profession at the time of marriage. In the story “The Day of the Prairie Fire” (Paterson, 1989), McDermott recalls a fire she had witnessed as a child. The story included a reference to her faithful practice of Bible reading:

Then came the cooling period. Interested discussions of each detail of the fire. The part taken by each, even the children demanded a place in the glory. But it was getting late. Tomorrow was before them with its full quota of duties. Before they rested there must be the taking of the Books. They sang the 125<sup>th</sup> Psalm.... Following the reading from the Bible and a prayer, in Gaelic, which the children did not understand, but knew it was something good; they sought their bed in peace. The day of the fire was over. (Paterson, 1989, p. XIII)

The McDermotts had three children. In 1905, at the age of 35 years, McDermott bore her first child., Winnifred, who had a shortage of oxygen at birth, never spoke, and suffered from many seizures. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). McDermott was concerned for the girl’s safety during these seizures and created a special room for her with thick straw under a carpet. The second child, daughter Frances Isabel was born in 1907 and became a nurse. That same year, 1907, the McDermotts were

among the first to have telephone service in their home and many neighbors came to use the phone (Collier, n.d., p. 334). Hugh, their only son, was born in 1913, may have had learning problems, farmed close by, and never married. McDermott was rather old at 43 years when she bore Hugh.

As Winifred grew, the child needed more and more attention to clothe and feed and protect her from injury. When Winifred was moved into the Manor in Portage la Prairie for special care, this seemed almost a failure to McDermott on her part. Winnifred died of pneumonia at eighteen years of age. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003) said, “The concept of failure did not go well in our family.” The death of Winifred occurred when Robert McDermott served as Reeve and his wife was 53 years old. McDermott’s determination and strength of character allowed her to meet her added challenges during her lifetime: a prairie fire; living with 10 siblings; leaving the family farm to attend normal school in the city; beginning to teach at 16 years of age; caring for one handicapped child; home schooling her daughter (Frances) who developed diphtheria; and supporting a spouse who was a politician. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003).

Shirriff (2000) wrote of two key interests in McDermott’s life, “Her strong Christian beliefs and her love for teaching never waned. She dedicated herself to youth work and she lived what she believed” (p. 5). W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003) wrote “she was highly successful where she taught and she had high standards for her self and thus people tended to live up to the high standard she asked of them.” A handwritten story by W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003) describes McDermott, “the teacher”, and her “hands on” teaching methodology in 1915:

When my mother was 8 years old she contracted diphtheria and was very ill. Eventually she recovered, but she took her schooling at home for quite a while. Two stories about this- Grandma was teaching the topic of Cancer & the Tropic of Capricorn. She took 2 books- the smaller Cancer (6 letters) the larger Capricorn (9 letters) and asked Mom to pile the books. Naturally, Mom put the larger on the bottom. Grandma affirmed that, and said “Now you can have a way to remember it.”

My mother also told me how grandma made a globe out of brown paper and that way they worked on geography. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003)

McDermott’s creativity, practicality, and thriftiness were evident when she turned her hand to making soap, painting in oils, and story writing. McDermott’s daughter wrote about one soap-making episode,

Every spring mother would collect all the fat that had accumulated during the winter [sic] and put it in a large furnace like contraption which was used to cook grains to feed the stock & I remember coming home from school one day & mother was making soap. She looked like a witch, for she had on an old hat of dad’s & his smock & was standing out in the trees and with a big stick was stirring the fat, water & a can or two of Gillet’s Lye. It was good soap if one didn’t mind having their hands nearly skinned, but it cleaned the overalls & shirts. F. McDermott (personal communication, January 24, 2003)

Written reflections about McDermott, W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003) stated that, “She was generous to a fault and sometimes my mother (Frances is now 96 years old and resides in the Manor in Portage la Prairie.) would come home to find her things given away to the Indians who lived near Bellemeade.”

McDermott would say, “They needed them more than you do.” She would give away what she could to those in need. Not one to be afraid, she would side-step snakes with complete calm and it was more often her husband that was moved to tears on several occasions. On Sundays, McDermott, a staunch Presbyterian, would permit her children only to play the piano, go for a walk, or read the Bible. Shirriff remembers McDermott’s

guidance and influence to always read the Bible and say her prayers. It seems likely that McDermott was influenced by the Social Gospel, described earlier by Friesen (1987), and by Prentice et al., (1996),

Women were particularly active in the Protestant Social Gospel movement at the turn of the century, a movement which links to earlier evangelicalism and devoted to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth and thus to the reform of the temporal world. To work for social reform seemed to the women in the movement a logical extension of their maternalism." (p. 164)

McDermott "was a good musician as well, and taught Uncle Hugh and my mother to play the piano. I was told the Christmas Concert (a highlight of any community) was always highly successful where she taught. She valued education." W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). "She was way ahead of her time; she allowed and encouraged her daughter Frances to go to Portage la Prairie, away from Bellemeade, to go to school. Jessie recognized talents in her daughter, and suggested that Frances go to Montreal for a year to become a nurse" W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). Montreal was a long distance from Manitoba. At that time, c.1924, the trip from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, to Montreal, Quebec of 1516 miles (one way) would take approximately four days by train. It appears that McDermott was a progressive female in her thinking and wanted her daughter to receive post-secondary education and training as a nurse away from home.

In addition to her active community work, McDermott maintained the household, generously sharing garden produce, pickling, canning, and supporting her husband and his political career. However, socializing with the community was important and she made time for the Burnside summer picnics and one undated photo (c. 1925-1930s)

shows her with a group of 17 people at a picnic: men in suits and women in mid-calf length dresses, and all the women wearing hats.

McDermott was listed as a member of The Children's Aid Society of Central Manitoba: "Born out of need, and the concern of private individuals for the welfare of neglected children, the CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF CENTRAL MANITOBA was formed May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1934" (Collier, n.d., p. 172). Kinnear (1998) in discussing the initiatives of the Children's Aid explains that "Women maintained this sort of social welfare work during the post-World War I generation with strength and assurance. There was less emphasis on foreign missions and more on community work at home as the teachings of the Social Gospel came to be widely accepted" (p. 142).

Although McDermott was a Presbyterian for many years, she eventually became a member of the United Church and Kinnear (1998) noted "The Presbyterians and Methodists joined together in the United Church, which dominated the southwest part of the province," (p. 17) possibly the Portage la Prairie area. She was considered politically astute, liberal by persuasion, and advocated on behalf of the creation of the United Church. She was also a member of the Women's Missionary Society.

McDermott's family was a priority in her life. She relied upon the buggy in the spring, summer and fall, and a cutter was used in the wintertime (a sleigh with long metal blades to cut through the snow and drawn by horses), to reach the homes of her grown children. Later, she would take the train frequently from her home in Edwin to High Bluff, near Portage la Prairie, to visit her daughter Frances and her grandchildren. McDermott felt this was important because, as a child, she had not known her own grandmother, and she believed in the strength, support, and interdependence of the family

connection, especially being one of 11 children in her family. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003).

In 1917, after appearing before the Gladstone Trustees, McDermott was refused permission by the all-male school board to lead Mission Band in local schools. Because there were few churches in the surrounding locations, McDermott wanted to see the schools used for mission meetings because the schools were accessible to every child. Upon refusal of her request, and with patience and care, McDermott scoured the Manitoba Public Schools Act and discovered that if requested, religious education could be conducted for one hour per month in the school building. Later in 1917 McDermott received approval in Gladstone, Manitoba, to introduce Mission Band to that area. She drove many miles in a horse and buggy to encourage interest in these missionary groups and to gain community support. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003) wrote that her grandmother “was witty, feisty, was strict, and was like a saint to her, yet, was open to new experiences.” The Mission Band initiative proceeded successfully.

In the local history book *Gladstone Then and Now* (2001) is a description of the many church activities in McDermott’s community:

From Sunday school to mid-week groups, young people’s organizations have been a priority in church life. . . . Sunday school was well established in the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and continued after union in the United Church. Through the years classes have varied in number, size, and ages, but always the aim has been to guide young people in Christian ways. Students will have happy memories, too, of Christmas concerts, projects, spring teas, class parties, the annual skating party, and taking time in church services.

Mid-week groups included Baby Band (preschoolers), Mission Band (early school years), Explorers (ages 9-12), C.G.I.T. (Canadian Girls in Training), Cubs, Scouts, and later, Youth Group. Members were

encouraged to plan their agenda and learn to run a good business meeting.  
(p. 136)

In 1917, the McDermotts established a Community Club for young people at  
Edwin, Manitoba, that offered debating and activities to support the war effort.

McDermott believed that people should use the talents they have for the benefit of other  
people (Shirriff, 2002, p. 6). “She would use the power of fact and the conviction and the  
strength that one gets from something right and true to tackle any problems” W. Shirriff  
(personal communication, January 24, 2003). F. McDermott (personal communication,  
January 24, 2003) wrote about her mother’s community service:

Young people were the apple of her eye. She would give time & effort to  
all activities concerning young people. She was on the executive of the  
Portage Presbyterial (1917) and with that backing mother came home from  
a Presbyterial meeting in Gladstone & began to work. Baby Bands and  
Mission Bands were in their infancy & mother spent hours on the  
telephone stirring up interest in Mission Bands.” She wanted to call the  
Edwin Mission Band, “The Joyful Gleaners.” (personal communication,  
January 24, 2003)

McDermott “lived an active life on a farm, until her husband’s death in 1947 at  
the age of 80, one day after he came in from working with horses on the land. She lost  
her will to live and died two years later” F. McDermott (personal communication,  
January 24, 2003). The local Portage la Prairie newspaper, *Daily Graphic*, noted  
McDermott’s death on November 1, 1950 and documented her community service  
(Shirriff, 2000, p. 6). Her obituary described her Christian lifestyle and stewardship:

Last surviving member of the original family to first settle in Burnside,  
Mrs. Jessie Isabelle McDermott, wife of the late Robert McDermott, died  
in Winnipeg yesterday after a lifetime of community service in this  
district. Eighty years of age, she had lived in this area since 1871.

Mrs. McDermott built her life on the solid foundation of her family and the church. She was a charter member of Edwin Women's Missionary Society and served on the executive of the Portage la Prairie Presbyterial .

Mrs. McDermott was a witness to the many great changes in this district, as it grew from a pioneer settlement to a modern farming community.

Devoted to her family, her health first began to fail after the shock of her husband's death. (November 2, 1950, *Portage la Prairie Daily Graphic*, p. 4)

“Belle McDermott was a diminutive woman whose influence on the community belied her stature” (Shirriff, 2002, p. 6). McDermott was described as “a feminist who felt women could do anything they wanted, and that if you wanted something to happen, you did it. That's just what she did. She was an equal opportunity person.” W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). The following story reinforces the faith, care, and determination that permeated McDermott's life.

One time my granddad came back and he had a tree. Grandma wanted it planted in a certain place. Granddad said it would not grow in that specific place. Grandma Jessie would go out everyday and give it a pail of water. She made up her mind it would grow and it became the centerpiece of the property, a huge, bushy, tree. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003)

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 described the biographical profiles of Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott. Chapter 7 will discuss the findings of the research and respond to the research questions defined in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER VII

### FINDINGS

Chapter 7 addresses the findings of the research study and responds to the six research questions posed in Chapter 3. These six research questions provide direction to the study, “Three Pioneer Women in Manitoba: Evidence of Servant-Leadership.”

In order to answer the research questions, an analysis of each narrative was undertaken. To provide structure to the process and the information gathered, the following chapter will contain six sections with each section addressing one research question.

The life narratives constructed from the primary archival and secondary source materials for each woman discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 were analyzed by rereading the individual narrative several times looking for evidence of servant-leadership characteristics that was coded in the text with ten key words to represent the ten characteristics. The key words were: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, and community or their proxies. Printed material, which included descriptors or quotes, was included to give credibility to the finding of servant-leadership characteristics or their proxies.

Table 1 provides a summative display to indicate evidence of each characteristic or proxy of servant-leadership exhibited by each woman.

Table 1. Characteristics of Servant-Leadership.

Characteristic	Scott	Benedictsson	McDermott
Listening	X *	X	X
Empathy	X +	X	X
Healing	X +	?	X
Awareness	X +	?	X
Persuasion	X	X +	X
Conceptualization	X	X + *	?
Foresight	X	?	?
Stewardship	X +	X	X + *
Growth of Others Building Community	X +	X	X +
	X +	X	X

*Note.* X indicates the presence of evidence of that particular characteristic  
+ indicates a particular strength demonstrated in the characteristic(s)  
\* indicates a particular characteristic(s) that was best exemplified by the woman.  
? indicates weak or uncertain evidence of a particular characteristic

#### Research Questions

*Research Question One.* What information provided in the lives of the three women was considered as characteristics of servant-leadership, as established by Robert K. Greenleaf (1970/1991b, p. 1-37) or their proxies: (1) listening, (2) empathy, (3) healing, (4) persuasion, (5) awareness, (6) conceptualization, (7) foresight, (8) commitment to the growth of people, (9) stewardship, and (10) building community?

## *Margaret Scott*

1. *Listening*. Primary source evidence indicates Scott listened to her mother tell the story of the Muller Orphanage and it made a lasting impression upon her life (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 6); she listened to herself when making the decision to give up working in the office and work among the poor in the city (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7-8); she visited the jail daily to hear how she could help the prisoners find work, lodging, or support (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 9).

2. *Empathy*. Through her caring, empathetic, attitude Scott wanted to help the poor and unfortunate in some tangible way (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 6); she believed it was her duty to serve the poor (De Graves, 2000, p. 65-66); while in Montreal, she worked hard and “with her usual sympathetic interest” (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7).

3. *Healing*. When Scott’s health was threatened by a break down in Montreal, she listened to advice from her doctor and moved west to Winnipeg for a drier climate in which to heal. First, she healed herself and then she worked to heal others. She read into the night “to gain knowledge to help the sick and needy” (January 25, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 22); she established a hygiene department and monitored children in that department for two years; she became valuable to the Winnipeg Health Department and to the doctors for her knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the health problems in the inner city (January 18, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5). Scott understood the stresses upon mothers and held Mother’s Meetings on Friday afternoons in the mission to support the women and to provide spiritual healing and materials (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 10).

4. *Persuasion*. Scott wanted to learn shorthand and realized it would improve her secretarial skills. She continued to mention her eagerness to learn shorthand until the owner of the firm finally took it upon himself to teach her directly, because her immediate supervisor would not (January 18, 1975, *Free Press*, p. 5). She maintained the mission for over thirty years through consistent and persistent actions and service and without “making a single appeal to the public” (March 14, 1964, *Free Press*, p. 21); her acts of service convinced and influenced others to give to her cause for over thirty years. Although she did not adhere to regular visiting hours at the jail, the wardens were convinced of her devotion to the prisoners and let Scott come and go as she pleased, during the day or night (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 9). Her years of good works persuaded others in the Winnipeg community to support her initiatives and in 1904 funds were provided to establish the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6).

5. *Awareness*. Scott’s awareness of the high mortality rate of infants in the inner city of Winnipeg caused her to try to do something about the situation. She went into the homes to demonstrate good home hygiene, often scrubbing the floors herself (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B9). She was aware that many men who were released from the jail and many of the immigrants had no employment and Scott established the wood yard (which was eventually taken over by the city) so the men could make a living chopping wood and selling it (August 3, 1931, *Free Press*, p. 9).

6. *Conceptualization and 7. Foresight*. Scott was always looking ahead to the future while planning (foresight) and dreaming (conceptualization): “she sees things that need doing, starts them properly going and then the right official body goes on with the

work” (Moulton, 1913, n. p.). Through the mission, her childhood dream became a reality (March 14, 1964, *Free Press*, p. 21). She established the Little Nurses League to teach children how to care for younger brothers and sisters and this concept was eventually adopted by the school board (June 4, 1921, *Saturday Night*, p. 29). She was a pioneer in social service works (June 13, 1931, *Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6); and pioneered neighborhood clinics, and established healthcare in the community (Miller, 2002, p. 287).

8. *Commitment to the Growth of People.* Scott realized she was not a trained nurse and would read late at night to improve her skills and become more knowledgeable about healthcare (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 10) so that she could teach others. Scott put in long hours of service at the Mission, in the homes of the sick and needy, at the jail, and in the Sunday school to help others. The mission became a training and learning center for community nursing. Nurses from the General Hospital had several months of placement at the mission as part of their formal program of study (January 25, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 22). Programs such as the “The Child Hygiene Department launched in 1911, long since taken over by the city and the Little Nurses’ League, started the following year, was adopted by the School Board” (June 4, 1921, *Saturday Night*, p. 29), are evidence of her commitment to the growth of others.

9. *Stewardship.* Scott did not seek recognition for her service and went about her daily work in Winnipeg until her death. Scott moved among the needy “with gentleness and awoke in them (the needy) new respect” (August 3, 1931, *Free Press*, p. 9). In an undated letter, attributed to Rev. C. C. Owen, the writer emphasizes “The splendid service of sacrifice, the ability and devotion, which Mrs. Scott showed in her years of splendid service for the sick, poor, suffering and sinful- whom she delighted to serve at

the best of her power and often at her own suffering and overstrain” (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MB10 B9, p. 1166, 1167).

10. *Building Community*. By 1913, the mission had grown from serving 3,000 homes to 30,000 home visits and from two nurses to eight nurses on staff (January 18, 1975, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 5). Scott’s contributions to the community received further recognition when a school was named after her in the north end of the City of Winnipeg (June 4, 1921, *Saturday Night*, p. 29); the city flags were lowered to half staff upon her death (August 5, 1931, *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, p. 5); and a beautiful monument was erected in St. John’s Cemetery by the city and her friends (October 19, 1932, *Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 6). De Graves (2000, p. 65-66) stresses her long service of 45 years to the Winnipeg community.

These findings in the biographical profile of Scott provide evidence of all ten characteristics of servant-leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community.

Next is the analysis of the data for Benedictsson as it relates to Research Question One.

### *Margret Benedictsson*

1. *Listening and 2. Empathy*. The biographical profile of Benedictsson provides evidence of empathetic listening and caring when she states, “I read the laments of oppressed persons, unhappily married women, and the misfortune of young girls” and she had, “a yearning to break down all fetters that tie people to evil and distress” (Kinnear, 1982, p. 176). The three excerpts from her stories in *Writings of Western Icelandic*

*Women* (Wolf, 1996, p. 74-84) stress her concerns for human rights, the responsibilities of women to their families, poverty, birth control, and issues of social, physical and mental health. Kinnear (1987, p. 26) describes Benedictsson's interest in the need to improve the working conditions for women. Benedictsson listened to herself, and her thoughts, reflections and ideas were expressed in her writing. (Krsitjanson, c. 1965, p. 373).

3. *Healing*. The concept of healing is less obvious when directed to Benedictsson personally. But, she never wavered in her quest to improve the social conditions for women. One could say this was a healing attitude directed toward society's ills.

4. *Persuasion*. Benedictsson and her husband, Sigfrus, published the suffrage magazine, *Freyja*, in Selkirk, Manitoba. This 40-page publication circulated for 12 years throughout Canada and the United States and included stories, biographical sketches, poetry, literary works, and a children's corner. Many historians write of the positive impact of Benedictsson's beliefs and ideals which were consistently and regularly circulated in the magazine to men and women readers (Johnson, 1994; Kinnear, 1998; Kristjanson, c. 1965; Thor, 2002; Treble, 2000; Wolf, 1996). She sought to convince, or persuade, her readers to the cause of human rights, especially in Manitoba, through the written word and through her lectures.

5. *Awareness*. This characteristic is confusing in Benedictsson. As a member of many women's organizations (i.e., The Icelandic Women's Society, the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Society, the Icelandic Progressive Society, and the Women's groups within the Unitarian Church), Benedictsson was constantly aware of women's issues and concerns. Her relationship with other suffragists through letter writing and through

reading their works kept her apprised of women's rights issues. However, her ideas and approach were considered radical by the Anglophone community and one wonders if the women of the Icelandic and Anglophone communities would have worked more closely if this had not been the case.

6. *Conceptualization*. Her vision for women's rights was related to her founding an Icelandic Suffrage Association, Titraum (Endeavor), in Winnipeg in 1908 (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205). Her conceptualization of the future possibilities for women (i.e., the vote, improved working conditions and home life), was recorded in *Freyja* and spoken about in her speeches. "Mrs. Benedictsson was an able speaker and she continues her campaign work in Winnipeg and in the rural districts" (Kristjanson, c.1965, p. 373-374).

7. *Foresight*. Benedictsson's actions at times seem puzzling and perhaps lacked foresight. The incident of telling the women in the Unitarian congregation and Icelandic community to withhold affection from their husbands, in order to get them to support certain initiatives, seems not well reasoned. She learned from Sigfus, who had read the works of John Stuart Mill (1867), about the liberty of women. But, her articles in *Freyja* were written under a pen name and didn't match her strong character and support of feminism, although she probably realized that the use of a male name as author created broader readership.

8. *Commitment to the Growth of People*. There are several examples of Benedictsson's commitment to growth in herself and in others. First, she attended Bathgate College for 2 years (Bumsted, 1999, p. 21; Johnson, 1994, p. 121) and Winnipeg Central Business College (Lindal, 1967, p. 160-161) to further her own education. Second, she maintained an ongoing correspondence with Dr. Stowe-Cullen,

the leader of the Ontario suffrage movement and third, she read the works of American suffragette, Lucy Stone (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372). At the same time, she developed her beliefs and spread the word of the suffrage movement throughout Manitoba. She “delivered her first lecture on women’s rights to members of Winnipeg’s Icelandic community” (Johnson, 1994, p. 121-122) on February 2, 1893. The couple published *Freyja* to promote learning and growth and understanding in others of women’s rights; she helped raise money to pay for girls to attend school (Lindal, 1967, p. 160). She and her husband opened their home to meetings of the Verse-Making Club where poets shared their verses and discussed their literary works (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372).

9. *Stewardship*. Benedictsson managed to serve the needs of her family; the writing and editing of *Freyja*; her membership in various organizations; her ongoing church participation; and her lecturing in Winnipeg and the province during her residence in Manitoba. Sergiovanni (1992, p. 139) suggests evidence of stewardship involves, “personal responsibility to manage one’s life and affairs with proper regard to the rights of other people and for the common welfare.” Johnson (1994) writes “she wasn’t satisfied with a merely passive interest in justice for women; she determined to do something about it. She felt that her part in the struggle would be that of converting the Icelandic women to the Cause” (p. 121).

10. *Building Community*. Her contribution to the cause of provincial suffrage and the communities in Manitoba are recognized by historians Kinnear, (1998); Thor, (2002); and Wolf, (1996), in particular. Her obituary in the Icelandic Manitoba paper, *Heimskringla* (December 19, 1956, p. 1), acknowledges her as an “important Icelandic Canadian women” and “editor of *Freyja* for 12 years.” Wolf (1996, p. 17, 23) speaks of

the momentum generated among Manitoba communities by the lectures Benedictsson delivered. Her sense of community building was evident in her contribution of time and money to the Unitarian Church and Icelandic communities and the community of women in Manitoba for whom she advocated.

The preceding findings provide evidence of the 10 characteristics of servant-leadership in the biographical profile of Benedictsson, although the demonstration of healing, foresight, and awareness are somewhat weaker than the other characteristics.

Next, will be a discussion about McDermott as it relates to Research Question One and any evidence of servant-leadership found in her life.

#### *Jessie McDermott*

It should be noted that the amount of archival materials available for McDermott was much less than that of Scott and Benedictsson. This may be because she lived in a rural area and did not enjoy the same visibility or media recognition in newspapers as the two women who worked mostly in the City of Winnipeg. Much of the McDermott data was based upon the personal reflections of her daughter and granddaughter. Was the impact of McDermott as great as that of Scott and Benedictsson? McDermott lived and worked in a rural setting with a smaller population. Her initiatives (Mission Band, Debating Club) seem to pale in comparison to the major issues of healthcare and the vote for women. Also, McDermott's story tells of someone who was involved in many areas and dealt with many issues. Perhaps this diversification produced less recognition. The other two women focused their energies all in the same area (e.g., Scott read, went into the homes, jails, worked in the Mission, created organizations in the schools, monitored newborns, all to promote better healthcare. She received recognition for her overall

healthcare initiative.). But, to support the good works of McDermott are the words of Greenleaf (2002, p. 151) that, “Effective servant-leaders can be so subtle about it (serving) that all that anybody is likely to see is the result. They don’t see the cause.”

1. *Listening, and 2. Empathy.* McDermott’s powers of attention, listening, reflection, and caring are evident in her writing of *Tales from Bellemeade* (c. 1904.). Her details about the prairie fire that she witnessed as a child and the interview with her father about his life story are carefully related in these short stories. Her observation and listening skills were evident when she wrote that the family spoke a Gaelic prayer after the fire (Paterson, 1989, p. xiii). When challenged by the Board of Trustees in Gladstone, Manitoba about the possibility of starting a Mission Band, she listened patiently and then set about scouring the Manitoba Public Schools Act and found “a loophole” that allowed the program to proceed. W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003).

3. *Healing.* McDermott had a strong religious faith. She was originally a Presbyterian and later a member of the United Church of Canada. Her inner strength was maintained through a strong faith, reflection, and prayer (*Gladstone Then & Now: 1871, 2001, p. 136*). She healed or ministered to herself through prayer and then set out to heal others spiritually through Mission Band, the Temperance Society, Sunday school, and the Children’s Aid. McDermott’s concern for the health and safety of her daughter Winifred, who had seizures, was demonstrated by McDermott’s foresight in placing straw under a carpet in a room for the young woman (Shirriff, 2000, p. 6) and later, she moved her to the Manor in Portage la Prairie for additional health care.

4. *Persuasion.* This characteristic is clearly displayed by McDermott. “She would use the power of fact and conviction and the strength that one gets from something right

and true and tackle any problem.” W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). She convinced the trustees to allow Mission Band by patiently searching the Public Schools Act for the written legislative support she needed. She used her telephone and buggy to travel and to lobby for support for the Mission Bands in the community by calling neighbors and inviting their support. Even the story of the little bush and the consistent actions that she took to see it thrive, validate her persuasive behavior.

5. *Awareness*. McDermott’s awareness of specific family and community needs acted as a catalyst for action. She rode in horse and buggy across central Manitoba roads to advocate for Mission Band; she took the train from Edwin to High Bluff (both in Manitoba), back and forth, to see her grandchildren and to maintain the family ties which she valued. She saw a gap in the supports for youth in her community and lobbied hard for the implementation of community youth programs to develop debating and speaking skills. She was steadfast in her beliefs to the important things in her life: her faith, her family, and her community.

6. *Conceptualization*. This characteristic is weakly illustrated in McDermott’s story. However, her vision of the establishment of school Mission Bands became a reality.

7. *Foresight*. This too is a rather weak area. McDermott showed foresight when she prepared a cushioned floor of straw under a matting to protect Winnifred when she fell down during her seizures. She had seen the repercussions of these falls and used that experience to design something to help lessen the impact on the child when she fell.

8. *Commitment to the Growth of People*. McDermott believed in her own growing and learning and demonstrated this when she finished high school and went on to normal

school in Winnipeg to become a teacher. Evidence of her commitment to the growth of people is shown by her support and encouragement toward her daughter Frances' moving to Montreal to become a nurse, and of setting up community clubs. McDermott created debating clubs to empower students in the community to practice speaking in front of groups of people; she established the Mission Bands to spread the Christian gospel.

9. *Stewardship*. McDermott served her family through maintaining her home, working the garden, caring for her children, Winnifred, in particular. She spent hours pickling, canning, making soap, painting pictures, writing stories, all the while supporting her husband, who was a local reeve. She served her church and community through her participation in the local organizations and activities, i.e., the Burnside Picnic held on the banks of Rat Creek (*Beside the Burn: Burnside Area History*, 1989, p. 57) and the political Liberal Party (November 2, 1950, *Portage la Prairie Daily Graphic*, p. 4). Her stewardship was evident in her ability, "to manage her life and affairs with the proper regard for the rights of other people and for the common welfare" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 139). Her efforts were recognized in the local paper.

10. *Building Community*. McDermott had the first telephone in the district in her home and members of the community often came to use it. F. McDermott (personal communication, January 24, 2003). She was a teacher in the community for several years and a member of the Children's Aid Society of Central Manitoba (Collier, n. d., p. 172), the Women's Missionary Society, the Temperance Society, and the Portage la Prairie Presbyterial (November 2, 1950, *Portage la Prairie Daily Graphic*, p. 4).

The findings within the biographical profile of McDermott provide evidence of the 10 characteristics of servant-leadership, but evidence for conceptualization and foresight are weak.

All three women appear to have one or more examples of each of the ten characteristics of servant-leadership in their life stories.

*Research Question Two.* What common traits (distinguishing features) were found between and among the women in terms of their servant-leadership characteristics?

Careful review of each biographical profile reveals that all of the 10 characteristics were present to some extent in the written evidence of the lives of each of the women. However, it should be noted that there were differences in strengths or abundance of the servant-leadership characteristics. Given this development, perhaps a better question to have asked of the data was “What strengths did each woman express, in terms of servant-leadership?” The writer believes that Scott strongly demonstrated all ten of the characteristics. This is evident as she listened to, worked and cared for, and encouraged the prisoners in the jails. Scott was relentless in her “mission” to make inner city Winnipeg a healthier place for children and families. Scott’s utilization of the schools and the Mission as vehicles to reach the community with practical hygiene techniques was unique and she remained humble in her 45 year stewardship until her death.

Benedictsson had greater evidence of persuasion and conceptualization in her work on behalf of women’s suffrage and in her writing to promote human justice in *Freyja*. McDermott emphasized stewardship to her community, church and family and commitment to the growth of others in church groups, school, and community organizations.

*Research Question Three.* Was any servant-leadership characteristic(s) as listed in Research Question One demonstrated by only one of the women?

Given that each of the women displayed evidence of all ten characteristics of servant-leadership, perhaps the better question to have asked was “Which characteristic did each woman best exemplify?” Although they all demonstrated evidence of the 10 servant-leadership characteristics, each woman had her own particular environment, her own life circumstances, and her own specific interests. Hence, evidence of each particular servant-leadership characteristic varied according to each profile.

The story of Scott, in particular, provided frequent mention of her strong listening skills. She listened:

- To her inner voice when deciding to devote her life to serving the poor, sick and needy.
- To her mother tell stories about the Muller orphanage.
- To her doctor when she became ill in Montreal and he advised she move west.
- To Reverend Owen when he encouraged her to work with the needy instead of in the church office.
- To the plight of immigrants coming into Winnipeg on the train and tried to find them financial and medical support.
- To the prisoners released from jail and tried to find lodging, employment, and support for them.
- To the women in need in the inner city when she visited their homes and brought them food and clothing.

- To the nurses and doctors who shared knowledge about healthcare.
- To the statistics about infant mortality rates and vowed to do something to change them.

The story of Benedictsson frequently reflects evidence of conceptualization, of having a vision and seeing a “big picture” in her mind. She formulated ideas:

- To create poetry and prose.
- To fight for human rights.
- To champion women’s suffrage.
- To motivate women to challenge the status quo.
- To provide opportunities for girls in education.
- To co-create *Freyja*.
- To make a difference in society. Even as a young girl Benedictsson was concerned about injustice and vowed to address these.

McDermott’s biographical profile often reflects her stewardship:

- To her church (Presbyterian, then United).
- To youth through community programs.
- To her family in the support of her 3 children and political husband.
- To her Christian faith and devotion to Bible reading.
- To the Children’s Aid Society.
- To young children through Mission Band.
- To the community through sharing her telephone and attending picnics.

Although Research Question Three does not address the concept of frequency of representation of servant-leadership characteristics, one must be aware of the existence of frequency in each woman's story.

*Research Question Four.* Was there evidence in the lives of the three women of a particular theme(s) (i.e., a subject or topic on which the women wrote, spoke or thought)?

Four themes permeate the lives of all the three women: (1) learning, (2) religious foundation, (3) enabling others, and (4) altruism.

1. *Learning.* Each woman integrated training, instruction, development, or some form of education into their lives and encouraged other people to learn, to keep learning and to share that knowledge with others. This learning could include academic instruction; or an awareness of social concerns (Children's Aid Society or Temperance League); or the study of one's own religious beliefs in a Sunday school; or learning how to debate ideas or speak in public; or how to bathe a baby and prepare nourishing food in the home. Scott knew that she required special training to develop the skills necessary to obtain employment as a secretary. Also, because she was without formal medical training, Scott was wise enough to read extensively about health care, and hygiene, to inform herself first, and then, to disseminate this information to volunteers, nurses, doctors, and the sick and needy in Winnipeg. She formed partnerships with the Winnipeg Hospital so nurses could be trained in community healthcare. Her Little Nurses League program for children taught hygiene to youngsters so the children could pass on this knowledge in their homes to their families.

Benedictsson also valued learning and worked to earn money so she could attend Bathgate College for two years, and the Winnipeg Business School, where she developed

her secretarial and written skills. She raised money in her church and in Icelandic organizations to sponsor girls in school and to create scholarships. Her lectures encouraged Manitoba women to lobby for the vote. As editor, she steered the publication and content of *Freyja*. Readers (mainly Icelandic women) of this publication could learn about critical issues related to human and women's rights. She wrote stories (although often under a pen name) to inform the public and readers of issues relevant to human rights. She lectured on human rights and issues of suffrage to inform and garner support for the suffrage movement. Benedictsson pursued continuous learning through letter writing to key suffragettes, developing articles for *Freyja*, writing short stories, and directing church work and local organizations to help the needy, particularly, Icelandic immigrants, and lecturing. As mentioned earlier in Prentice et al., (1996, p. 172-173), members of the women's movement believed that education was one means for women to improve their lot in life. This pattern of continuous learning and sharing about women's issues could provide a visible example to other women and girls in her church, organizations, and Manitoba communities (Weiss & Rinear, 2002, p. 199).

McDermott was a teacher by profession. She left her home near Portage la Prairie as a young adolescent to attend the Manitoba Normal School in Winnipeg. She first taught in a small rural school when she was 16 years old. She encouraged her own daughter, Frances, to leave home and travel to Montreal for training as a nurse. She fought for the right to establish Mission Bands in central Manitoba to provide religious foundation for children. She established community clubs for children to encourage debate, discussion, and community service. McDermott home schooled her daughter, Frances, W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003) and shared her

knowledge with Frances. As a member of the Temperance League she helped inform the public on the evils of alcoholism as it related to violence, family breakdown, and poverty in her community. As a member of the local Children's Aid Society she advocated for the welfare and education of children in central Manitoba. McDermott wrote about her family and community in *Tales from Bellemeade* (c. 1904) to share the family and local history. And, in her own special way, she remained a teacher and a continuous learner outside the formal school classroom well into her old age.

2. *Religious Foundation.* Each woman's biographical profile provides evidence of their active membership and participation in the church and religious denomination: Scott (Anglican), Benedictsson (Unitarian), and McDermott (Presbyterian and later, United Church of Canada). Their stories tell of service in volunteering in the office (Scott); of working as a member of the Ladies Aid (Benedictsson); of reading the Bible and singing hymns when dealing with crisis (McDermott), of being married in the church (Benedictsson); of taking up the challenge of serving the needy through her personal Christian charity (Scott); of utilizing the women's church group to spread the importance of suffrage (Benedictsson); of leading the Mission Band and hosting Sunday school in their home (McDermott); and of believing it was their duty to improve the lot of others in society. Scott was supported and connected closely with all the main denominations in Winnipeg, especially the Anglican Church; Benedictsson worked with the Unitarian Ladies Aid in her church; and McDermott worked through her Presbyterian Church and the Women's Christian Temperance League to help those addicted to alcohol and then lobbied for the formation of the United Church of Canada (Shirriff, 2003). Their religious foundation was critical in their lives and to the service they gave to their communities.

3. *Enabler of Others*. It is understood that the term *enabler* refers to the concept of giving a person the means to do something; making possible; or empowering a person to take certain action. Each woman reached out to others to help them learn, grow, and understand important issues of the day. Scott started her crusade to deal with high mortality rates, poverty, and poor hygiene by first visiting the jails and empowering those released to find jobs and by setting up a wood yard for unemployed men to make productive use of their time, and to earn money to support themselves and their families. Her high standards, hard work, and long hours provided the example for nurses and volunteers (Moulton, 1913) in Winnipeg to understand health services and for them to reach out into the community. Her service to the destitute encouraged those with money to donate funds and enable their communities through their contributions, i.e., the Canadian Pacific Railway, the various churches within Winnipeg, lawyers, business leaders, the city council and many others. Also, the Margaret Scott Mission was the outcome of others who wanted to do for society in a tangible way (i.e., by providing financial resources to establish the mission and pay for some of the staff). Although Scott had no children and did not remarry, it appears that the City of Winnipeg became her family and she nurtured and cared for it until her death.

Benedictsson enabled others through her example as a speaker, writer, wife and mother, church member, and organizational leader. Her stories could cause people to reflect upon issues of human rights, working conditions, suffrage. Kinnear (1987) stated, “Her importance in Manitoba derives from her editing, printing and publishing of *Freyja*, 1898-1910. The magazine served a responsive audience” (p. 25). The advertisements in *Freyja* were both in Icelandic and English. Her commitment to the suffrage movement in

Manitoba and her lectures across the province and her leadership and voice in various social, cultural and religious organizations enabled the development of a profile of importance for women's issues. One Icelandic writer, Kristjanson (c. 1965) suggested Benedictsson balanced her household and childcare responsibilities with her passion for the suffrage movement, by writing and speaking in the evenings (p. 372). In addition, Benedictsson helped raise funds in the Icelandic community to provide the means for others to better their economic position through education and training.

McDermott enabled her daughter by sending her to Montreal to train as a nurse W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003). She empowered youth to learn to speak and present their ideas clearly by establishing debating clubs in local communities. McDermott empowered children to make a difference through their service to Mission Band and empowered men and women through her involvement with the Burnside Temperance League and the Children's Aid Society (Collier, n. d., p. 72).

4. *Altruism*. The final theme of altruism, or concern for others, permeates the lives and actions of Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott. The regard for others was a principle for their action. Altruism refers to unselfishness and concern for other people, usually outside the family. The importance of the Social Gospel movement surely influenced and may have been a driving force behind their actions. This concern for others is woven through the various characteristics of servant-leadership.

Scott's life was an example of altruism. She dedicated her life to the service and concern for others. For some time, she used her few resources to help the needy, while she lived in a small room in the Winnipeg Lodging and Coffee House and did not receive a salary (DeGraves, 2000, p. 65-66). Scott's unselfishness and concern for others were

reflected as she walked the streets daily with her cart and pony and distributed food to needy families. Scott spent evenings in the jail listening to the problems of inmates and even stayed through the night, once with a dying woman (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 9). Over a period of 45 years, she gave support to her fellow human beings without once asking for financial help (March 14, 1964, *Free Press*, p. 21); she continually moved forward based upon her faith and strength of conviction that her role in life was to serve society (DeGraves, 2000, p. 65-66) and that financial means and necessary materials would always come, and it always did. Scott wrote that the following words kept coming to her, “this is the way, walk ye in it” (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7-8) and she believed this was the voice of God speaking to her and directing her to go among the unfortunates in the city. Scott believed she did not lose her freedom in service to the needy because “there was infinitely more,” (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7-8) that enriched her life as a result of this service to the needy.

Benedictsson knew as a young girl in Iceland that she wanted to help those women who were oppressed and unhappily married (Johnson, 1994, p. 122). She supported those in her church and held tombolas (a kind of lottery) to raise funds for girls to attend school. She used the magazine, *Freyja*, and her short stories (Wolf, 1996, 76-84) plus her lectures to spread the message of hope for women in Manitoba. The fact that her articles were penned under another name is evidence that she was not looking for personal gain or recognition; she just wanted to get the information to women about human rights. Although, some outside the Icelandic community felt she was radical in her feminist tenacity (Kinnear, 1987, p. 26), she did not appear to waver from her effort to gain the franchise for women.

McDermott's concern and caring for the religious training of the children of the Portage la Prairie area resulted in the establishment of the Mission Band program as recorded in *The History of Burnside: Beside the Burn* (1989, p. 11-13) and her participation in the Burnside Temperance League reflects her concern for alcohol abuse and the possible destruction to the family structure as a result. Even as a young woman of 16 years she began teaching children in a Kindergarten to Grade 8 School in Dundonald, Manitoba (Collier, n. d., p. 46). Her granddaughter reflected that, "she had the strength of going forward on the basis of her convictions to help build the community." W. Shirriff (personal communication, January 24, 2003).

*Research Question Five.* How was the call to servant-leadership initiated in each of their lives?

The primary source materials for Scott provide three incidents whereby she connects with the concept of serving others. First, as a child she heard stories of the Muller Orphanage in England from her mother and felt she would like to help the poor and unfortunate (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 6); while living with her aunt she met a young girl who had lived in the Muller Orphanage and this meeting reinforced her initial desire to serve the poor and needy. Second, the Reverend C.C. Owen prayed for her and she heard the words, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Macvicar, c. 1939, p. 7-8) and decided to give up volunteering in the church office and serve the sick, needy, and destitute. Third, Scott had "a calling" one night and believed it was her duty and responsibility to serve the poor (DeGraves, 2000, p. 65-66).

As a young girl in Iceland, Benedictsson read articles and books about oppressed people, unhappily married women, and girls who wanted to break free from parental

restrictions (Johnson, 1994, p. 122). She wrote that she was “angry and distressed” at the stories of “oppressed persons, unhappily married women.” She wrote of a “yearning to break down all the fetters that tie people to evil and distress” (Kinnear, 1982, p. 176). This appears to be the earliest evidence of her desire to serve society.

Both Scott and Benedictsson received their calling while young girls.

McDermott’s call to serve is less definitive. Her description in *Tales from Bellemeade* (c. 1904) of the fire and the religious fervor of reading the Bible and singing hymns immediately after the fire may indicate that the seeds for her future labors may have been planted at that time. One wonders if being a child in a large family with ten other siblings provided a comfort level with the idea of serving and helping others?

However, one cannot overlook the fact that she became a classroom teacher at the age of 16 years and began formal service to children at that time.

*Research Question Six.* What were the most common demographic characteristics (e.g., marital status, age, ethnic origin, residence, education, religion, and community life that were shared by the three women)?

The most common demographic characteristic shared by all three women is that they were all immigrants to the Province of Manitoba. . Both Scott and McDermott were born in Ontario, Canada, of British ancestry and immigrated to Manitoba. Scott settled in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Benedictsson emigrated from Iceland to the Dakota Territory in the United States of America and then moved north to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. McDermott resided near Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

A second commonality involved their strong religious affiliation. All three women were active members of churches. Scott attended the Anglican Church;

Benedictsson was a member of the Unitarian Church; and initially, McDermott was a Presbyterian who later became a member of the United Church of Canada, upon its creation.

A third demographic feature that was common to the three women was their education and training. In order to gain employment as young women, they needed special training of some type (secretarial and normal school). All three went on to further public education or formal business training. Scott took secretarial training in Montreal and Winnipeg and learned shorthand from her employer. Scott read extensively on health care issues and practices and integrated this into her service to the Winnipeg community. Benedictsson attended Bathgate College for 2 years in the Dakota Territory and took additional secretarial courses in Winnipeg. McDermott, graduated high school in Portage la Prairie, and went on to receive training as a teacher at the Manitoba Normal School in Winnipeg. Scott used her secretarial skills while leading the Mission and in all her correspondence on behalf of the sick, needy, and immigrants. Benedictsson held many executive positions in organizations that would require correspondence, especially on behalf of the suffrage movement. She wrote her stories and ran a publishing company with her husband in Selkirk, Manitoba using her business skills. McDermott made use of her teacher training in establishing church groups, debating clubs, community organizations, and in home schooling her daughter.

A fourth common demographic relates to their marital status. All three women were married at one point in their lives. However, Scott married in her early twenties but became a young widow by the age of 25 years and did not remarry. Benedictsson married in 1892 at the age of 26 years and divorced eighteen years later at the age of 44.

McDermott married at age thirty (1900) and remained married for nearly 44 years until she was eventually widowed, approximately a year before her death at 75 years.

Their residence provides a fifth commonality among them. All three lived in Winnipeg at some time in their lives. Scott lived in the City of Winnipeg. Benedictsson lived in Gimli, Winnipeg, Selkirk and moved back to Winnipeg. McDermott lived most of her life in rural Manitoba, around the Portage la Prairie area, but she did live in the City of Winnipeg for a time while attending the Manitoba Normal School.

Their life spans provide evidence of a sixth demographic commonality. All three women lived into old age: Scott (1855-1931) lived just over 75 years; Benedictsson (1866-1956) lived to be 90 years; and McDermott (1870-1950) lived to 80 years of age.

Chapter 7 has provided the findings to the six research questions that directed this study. Chapter 8 will address the conclusions to the research and related implications. Recommendation for further study will also be presented. The last portion of Chapter 8 will close with a brief summary of the concept of servant-leadership as it relates to the lives of the three pioneer women.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

The following chapter will provide a formal conclusion to the preceding research study and address related implications to the findings. Recommendations for further study will be included. The chapter will close with a final summary that connects servant-leadership with Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott. Each research question will be addressed and conclusions will be made based upon the findings discussed in Chapter 7.

1. *Research Question One.* What information provided in the lives of the three women was considered as characteristic of servant-leadership, as established by Robert K. Greenleaf (1970/1991b, p. 1-37) or their proxies? As discussed at length in Chapter 7, these three pioneer women provided evidence of the 10 characteristics of servant-leadership: (1) listening, (2) empathy, (3) healing, (4) persuasion, (5) awareness, (6) conceptualization, (7) foresight, (8) commitment to the growth of people, (9) stewardship, and (10) building community. It is concluded that each of the three narratives contained evidence of all 10 characteristics of servant-leadership.

2. *Research Question Two.* What common traits (distinguishing features) were found between and among the women in terms of their servant-leadership characteristics? The ten traits were common among the three women. But, it was noted that particular characteristics appeared in greater strength or abundance in each of the women. Scott's areas of strength were: awareness, empathy, healing, stewardship, commitment to the

growth of others and building community. Benedictsson demonstrated greater strength in areas of persuasion and conceptualization, while McDermott showed abundance in the characteristics of stewardship and commitment to the growth of others.

*Research Question Three.* Was any servant-leadership characteristic(s), as listed in Research Question One demonstrated by only one woman? A review of the matrix in Chapter 7, (Table 1), indicates ‘the presence’ of all ten characteristics of servant-leadership demonstrated in the biographical profile of each woman. It was mentioned in the previous Chapter 7 outlining the findings of the study, that even though all ten characteristics were demonstrated by all three women, that some of the characteristics occurred more frequently in their life profiles, depending upon the woman involved. Therefore, it is concluded that none of the ten servant-leadership characteristics was demonstrated by only one woman. Indeed, all ten characteristics were demonstrated by all three women. But some characteristics were exemplified more frequently than others by each woman. (i.e., Scott- listening; Benedictsson- conceptualization; and McDermott- stewardship). As well, it is concluded that areas of weakness were evident in two of the women. The three characteristics of healing, awareness, and foresight appeared weak in the story of Benedictsson. Also, McDermott’s characteristics of conceptualization and foresight were questionable.

*Research Question Four.* Was there evidence in the lives of the three women of a particular theme(s) (i.e., a subject or topic on which the women wrote, spoke or thought)? The life stories of all three women demonstrated the importance of at least four themes among Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott: (1) learning, (2) religious foundation, (3) enabling of others, and (4) altruism. It may be concluded that the three women pioneers

in the study thought, spoke, or wrote, or were involved in learning; they all practiced their faith throughout their long lives. They encouraged others through their actions and example (Scott and McDermott). They enabled others through lectures and publications (Benedictsson). The strongest theme, altruism or caring for others, is evident in the ongoing service performed by these women to their communities, in various social organizations and their churches.

*Research Question Five.* How was the call to servant-leadership initiated in each of their lives? Scott remembered stories, as a child that were told by her mother about the Muller Orphanage and the fact that financial support was always forthcoming without solicitation. Later in her life she vowed to maintain that practice when she was invited by her minister, C.C. Owens, to help the needy. As well, Scott wrote of hearing the voice of God calling her to service, as noted in Chapter 7. Benedictsson read stories as a young girl about the oppressed in society and wanted to do something to change things for the better; and McDermott witnessed many crisis as a child on the farm (a prairie fire, the death of three siblings, and the death of Winifred at 18 years of age) and always found comfort in the Bible and her Christian beliefs. It may be concluded from the vivid examples cited in the previous chapters that each experienced her calling in a different, yet profound way.

*Research Question Six.* What were the most common demographic characteristics e.g., marital status, age, ethnic origin, residence, education, religion, and community life, that were shared by the three women? The information revealed in their life stories provides the following evidence: (1) They had all been immigrants. (2) They were all members of a recognized church. (3) They all furthered themselves through additional

education and training. (4) They had all been married. (5) At one time or another, they had all resided in the City of Winnipeg. (6) They all lived a long life (between 75 and 90 years of age). It may be concluded, that Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott shared six demographic characteristics, among them.

### Implications

The typical model for leadership during the lifetimes of Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott as discussed in Chapter 2 was hierarchical (top down power) and male dominated. Also, one was often born into leadership as a result of being born into a wealthy family that owned a business. The cultural expectation for middle-class women was one of maintaining the home, bearing children, and supporting a spouse as he earned a living. A woman could serve outside the home, in the church as missionary, as a nurse to the sick, as a volunteer with the poor and needy, or as a classroom teacher. Some women worked in stores as clerks and offices as secretaries. Each of the three Manitoba women pioneers followed unique paths to service.

Scott followed a path that included secretary, church and outreach volunteer worker, healthcare worker, manager, and leader of the Margaret Scott Mission. Scott's mission was to serve the sick, poor, and needy, even though she did not have formal training as a nurse. Scott used her office and secretarial skills to manage the business affairs of the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission and carried out the life of her church through her outreach to the Winnipeg community.

Benedictsson utilized used her office and secretarial skills while running the publishing business with her husband in Selkirk and Winnipeg. She helped create, with Sigfus, the suffrage publication, *Freyja*. She served and led Icelandic committees in her

church and community; spoke/wrote on human rights issues; including opportunities for women, and became leader of the suffrage movement in the Manitoba Icelandic community.

McDermott started as a classroom teacher who used her educational training to organize opportunities for children and youth in the Portage la Prairie community and surrounding areas. She was active as a church member and leader on committees and boards and as a child welfare and community activist.

Through their service and commitment to a better society, Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott demonstrated all or many of the 10 common characteristics of servant-leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualizations, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community.

Although these women lived in the latter part of the 1800s, Robert K. Greenleaf wrote about these characteristics in the 1960s, and finally formulated them into a model of leadership, which he termed servant-leadership. The research results imply that it was possible for pioneer women to demonstrate leadership in their society, but they did so by fulfilling a different and unrecognized model, one that is now called servant-leadership. Women do lead despite their circumstances, and they probably always have, except we did not have the language of servant-leadership to put their acts into this particular framework. Present day women, who read the stories of Benedictsson, McDermott, and Scott may find a connection or identify with this form of leadership. The concept of service to others is found within Judeo-Christian doctrines and the incentive to serve and to lead utilizing a servant-leadership model may be viable for those interested in leadership. An important realization is identified by Greenleaf (2002). He tells of the

subtleness of the servant-leader in action and how they are viewed by others (the public), “They do not see the servant-leadership in action as you saw it. And that may be the fundamental key. Effective servant-leaders can be so subtle about it that all anybody is likely to see is the result. They don’t see the cause” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 151). This particular fact has implications for students of leadership. Analysis of school leadership may reveal the existence of servant-leadership within faculties and with student “servant-leaders” in the classroom. Owens (1995/2001) states, “The transformational leader is well aware that leadership involves not command and coercion, but encouraging the constant growth and development of followers. It is a teaching-learning process” (p. 257). This idea is in harmony with Greenleaf and I am comfortable with stating that Servant-Leadership is transformational. Each of the three pioneer women in this study were true educators and involved in the teaching-learning process. Scott educated herself through reading and talking with those in the medical field. Then, she educated the City of Winnipeg in healthcare practices and these ideas were shared in other cities and provinces. Benedictsson educated herself about human rights and women’s issues and suffrage through reading, through establishing ongoing correspondence with other suffrage leaders in Canada and the United States. She transferred the information into the pages of *Freyja* to educate her readers and into the lectures she delivered to the Icelandic community, and women in particular. McDermott also utilized her formal teaching to educate children in school and Sunday school, Mission Band.

Feminist theorists including Gilligan (1982); Helgesen (1990); Shakeshaft (1987); and Rosener (1990), suggest women may have a different way of leading than the “traditional command and control leadership style” (Owens, 1995/2001, p. 256).

Rosener's research suggested participative, empowering, caring, transformational, leadership was related to many females but, not exclusively. Thus, the examination of successful organizational structures may reveal a model, although not formalized, that is reflective of servant-leadership and promises an ongoing process of growth and development- a transformation- that was encouraged by Greenleaf. This approach may become the leadership paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Recommendations

Through their life stories, women can tell us much of value about our society, our culture, and the role that women play in defining our world. Because relatively little has been recorded about the history and identity of women, there is a need to know more about their lives. Heilbrun (2002) writes to encourage women to continue to tell their stories so that we may hear their voices and give them recognition in their own right.

Women must turn to one another for their stories; they must share the stories of their lives and their hopes . . . . I suspect that female narratives will be found where women exchange stories, where they read and talk collectively of ambitions, and possibilities, and accomplishments . . . . Women have long been nameless. They have not been persons. Handed by a father to another man, the husband, they have been objects of circulation, exchanging one name for another. (p. 44-46, 121)

The following recommendations for further research and study are suggested:

1. Women must continue to tell and share their stories with each other, both formally and informally so that their history, significance, and contributions may be recorded.
2. A study of aboriginal women should be undertaken as a comparison for evidence of servant-leadership during the same time period.

3. Additional primary source archival material should be analyzed for evidence of female servant-leadership in the general population.

4. Research the lives of 3 men during approximately the same time period in this study for evidence of servant-leadership and how it was manifested. Were there similar themes as to those of the three Manitoba women?

5. Research into servant-leadership as a viable model for leadership in present day institutions and organizations warrants further investigation.

6. Lastly, in response to the observations made by Manitoba historian, Gerald Friesen (1996, p. 204), it is time for a comprehensive history of women in Manitoba to be written.

The following recommendations are made to programs of educational leadership:

1. Servant-leadership requires further investigation as a viable model for leaders of schools and institutions of higher education.

2. Research should be directed into educational institutions for evidence of existing servant-leadership practices.

3. Faculties of Educational Leadership need to include the model of servant-leadership in their courses of study.

4. Research into the perceptions of undergraduate and graduate students of Educational Leadership toward the concept of servant-leadership needs further study.

5. The final recommendation is for collaborative research between and among other faculties with those in Educational Leadership. This recommendation responds to Young and Levin (2002), who state, "It is also important to keep in mind that as education is increasingly interconnected with other policy fields, research in such areas as

economics, child development, community health, and families may have important implications for schooling and teaching” (p. xvii).

### Servant-Leadership

These three women are reflective of the pioneer spirit of Manitoba and their commitment to serve, as well as lead. A servant-leader begins with a feeling that one wants to serve and then with deliberate choice, the desire to lead evolves. Greenleaf (1970/1991b, p. 7) poses the ultimate question: “Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous? And what of the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?” I believe these women could respond positively to Greenleaf’s question. Despite the many constraints of the pioneer life, immigrant and Victorian cultures, the religious pressures and expectations of the time, Scott, Benedictsson, and McDermott demonstrated the ten servant-leader characteristics identified by Greenleaf (Spears, 1998, p.5-8). Each of the women listened to their inner voice first, and then they chose to reach out to others; they served their gender (founding a mission for wayward girls, demanding suffrage, and encouraging educational opportunities); they also invested in the moral and spiritual leadership of children with health care, Mission Band, community clubs and cultural organizations. I believe that simply by being willing to serve and respond to the needs of society these women continued to grow personally. As they aged, they appear to have maintained the pace of service. Obviously, they enjoyed what they were doing and kept doing it.

Their vision for individual growth and the relentless contribution of their time to volunteer with the poor, the destitute, the least privileged in society, while encouraging

equality of the sexes, the right to vote, better health care, and the development of their communities through their vision and stewardship provide evidence of their call to serve society. They were servants first, then leaders, and with strength and endurance survived, despite a range of problems. It was through their service to Manitoba communities that these three women servant-leaders acted as catalysts for change. Indeed, their stories support Healy's (1923, p. 260) opinion, that if told, they would provide interest and inspiration for future generations.

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