

**New Light on an Old Scandal?  
Sex and Corporate Politics at the Norway House  
Methodist Mission of 1846**

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Did he do it? The question has hung like a dense fog over the history of the Methodist Mission at Rossville, near Norway House, Manitoba since the events of 1846. Reverend James Evans, the first superintendent of the western missions, the inventor of the Cree syllabic and the pioneer of the Rossville Press, was accused of sexual misconduct by three young Native women. Since then, several generations of church historians have come to varied conclusions about the truthfulness of these charges. A document recently recovered from files at the Pratt Library, Victoria University Archives, University of Toronto, mentioning a “deathbed confession” made by a Native woman to a subsequent Methodist minister posted at Norway House may shed new light on this cold case of sexual misconduct.

***The Norway House Scandal***

Rumours about Reverend Evans's “immorality” had circulated in the community for some time. When the allegations were formally presented in 1846, a local committee was struck, a trial was held, and a verdict was rendered: Evans was proclaimed to be “not guilty.” Reverend William

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Mason, Evans's assistant minister, sent the trial documents and related papers out from the territory to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) secretary in London. Later this same year, once the trial documents had arrived, a hearing was held at the headquarters of the WMMS in London, England, and James Evans was able to attend. Months earlier, before the scandal broke, George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, had made behind-the-scenes arrangements for Evans to be sent home. The HBC alleged that Evans had been interfering with trade, and convinced the Missionary Society to bring him back to England. The WMMS complied with the request, but decided to withhold the reasons for the visit. So it happened that James Evans was able to answer questions about the allegations of sexual misconduct to his London superiors.

A third and final assessment of the allegations was made at "a private investigation" held at Norway House on two separate occasions, and was hosted by HBC Governor Sir George Simpson. Evans had returned to London by this time, so the inquiry consisted of Simpson, his secretary Mr. Hopkins, Mr. C.F. Harriott (who acted as a translator) and a group of native women. After the first part of the investigation, a condensed statement of the testimonies provided by three of these young women was sent on to London.<sup>1</sup> In the second instalment of these investigations, another young woman was examined by Simpson in the presence of Major Crofton, Mr. Chief Factor Harriott and Simpson's secretary. An unabridged copy of notes from this meeting was also sent on to London, along with George Simpson's clear opinion on the matter: This evidence, said Simpson, bears "every mark of truth on the face of it" and it implicates "a minister of the Gospel in the highest crimes respectively known to divine and human laws."<sup>2</sup> In Simpson's estimation the verdict was clear: Evans was guilty.

Mail travelled slowly between the Hudson's Bay Company territories in Rupert's Land to London, England. The mail's progress on land, and then by sea often took several months and was delayed for long intervals by winter ice. When Simpson's letter of 13 August 1846 reached London, it was December, and much had transpired. James Evans had died, only weeks before, of a massive heart attack. He was 46 years old.

***The Legacy: How Church Historians have Understood the Scandal***

In the years since Evans's death the question of his guilt has been assessed by several generations of church historians. Two of his immediate successors in the mission field, Reverends John MacLean and Egerton Ryerson Young, both wrote near hagiographic accounts of Evans wherein they discounted what they deemed to be baseless accusations made against their former superintendent.<sup>3</sup> MacLean and Young followed in the sentiments expressed by the WMMS secretary Robert Alder to George Simpson when he wrote to announce Evans's death in December of 1846. Alder was pointed and sharp in his dismissal of Simpson's evidence (an earlier version of which had already been made available to him by the missionary trial). Alder argued that these testimonies had already been deemed self-contradictory, that Evans's long established reputation for upright behaviour in his earlier missionary assignments in Ontario also needed to be considered, and that both Alder and his associate had had the benefit of direct conversation with Evans about the charges made against him, and had been satisfied with the answers they had received. Alder politely acknowledged that Simpson had not had this same opportunity, and ventured that Simpson's views might have been altered if he had been privy to the conversations.<sup>4</sup> Amid the civilities of Alder's exchange, however, was an equally apparent tacit disapproval of Simpson's involvement and conclusions. When MacLean and Young addressed the same topic 40 years later, they dispensed with the civilities: The HBC, and George Simpson in particular, was held accountable for what they deemed to have been a deliberate effort to discredit Evans.

This same line of argument is pursued again in 1966 in Nan Shipley's fictional account of the Norway House Scandal.<sup>5</sup> In her imaginative recreation of events, Shipley makes Evans's assistant minister, William Mason, the villain of the piece, and she too points a clear finger toward the HBC. Shipley also includes an episode wherein a later minister to the Norway House mission, one Reverend John Semmens, is called to the deathbed of a native woman to hear her confess that she had accused James Evans, but what she had said previously was not true. Shipley claims in the introduction to her work that the story she is about to tell is true. She does not, however, supply any scholarly documentation to support her claim.

Since the 1960s scholarly assessments have tried to redress some of

the overt bias apparent in Evans's nineteenth-century biographers, and to correct some of the misunderstandings about these events which were recorded in many of these earlier books. Attempts have also been made to recover materials alluded to in Shipley's book, and some successes have been made, most notably the rediscovery of copies of the original trial papers, which were found by Reverend Gerald Hutchinson in the London WMMS archives in 1973.<sup>6</sup> The original record of Reverend Semmens's deathbed confession, which he says he sent to the Wesleyan Conference in England by way of the Canadian church office has, however, eluded discovery in both England and Canada. Since Reverend Hutchinson recovered the trial documents, there have been several reappraisals of the scandal, and these have been less sanguine on the issue of Evans's guilt. Among the most recent investigators is Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont whose research begins with the intent to understand more about the women who made the allegations against Evans in 1846. After his careful and balanced assessment of the data, Shirritt-Beaumont concludes that "the circumstances of Evans's trial may never be fully understood, nor his guilt or innocence proven with any finality."<sup>7</sup>

### ***The Pratt Files***

Among files collected in the archives at the Pratt Library, University of Victoria College, University of Toronto, is a four page excerpt of a manuscript by Reverend John Semmens, the same Methodist minister who worked at the Norway House mission and who is mentioned by Nan Shipley. The excerpt is contained within a collection of documents in the library's James Evans Fonds. Semmens says the following:

While I was a missionary at Oxford House (1884-1888) a message came to me in great haste from a dying Indian woman, urging me to come quickly. I went and the dying woman said, 'Oh Praying Master, I am so glad that you came. My heart is very heavy because of something I did many years ago and I must confess it before I go into the presence of God.' Then she told me she had been the woman who swore against James Evans in the trial at Norway House. She said, 'I was told to say that but it is not true.'<sup>8</sup>

Semmens goes on to provide a context for this confession. He avers that

James Evans had aroused the ire of the senior HBC officials shortly after he had arrived at Norway House and discovered that the HBC chief factors regularly accepted as concubines the native wives of the local chiefs, as a sort of seal to trade negotiations. Evans had protested against what he believed to have been a sexually immoral practice that was inconsistent with these HBC men's Christian beliefs. Semmens tells the tale this way:

Mr. Evans's opposition was strenuously resisted and steps taken to get rid of him. On his return from a visit to a near band of Indians Mr. Evans was hailed before a Court of Justice, presided over by the Chief Factor as Justice of the Peace under authority of the British Government. He was charged with immoral conduct with Indian women. One young woman was brought in and swore that she was the one with whom Mr. Evans had transgressed.<sup>9</sup>

There are many obvious errors in Semmens's understanding of the context of the Norway House Scandal. Whether or not there were concubines is still an open question, but if there were, there is no known record of Evans ever having complained about this practice. Even if the concubine story is true, and Evans had complained when he first arrived, the direct line Semmens draws between Evans's complaint and the accusations made against him can not be substantiated: it was several years after he arrived at Norway House that the allegations of Evans's sexual indiscretions surfaced. Finally, as we have seen, extant documents prove that Evans was not hailed before a court of justice, presided over by the chief factor as justice of the peace under authority of the British Government. The trial before his peers at Rossville mission was overseen by Evans's assistant, Rev. William Mason. The "private investigation" held by HBC Governor George Simpson had absolutely no authority as a "court of justice" and Simpson himself makes no claims to be operating as a justice of the peace or any other agent of the British Crown.

While Semmens's explanations for the animosity that developed between Rev. James Evans and the HBC men are inadequate, there is no doubt that animosity did exist despite the fact that things had begun well. Evans made the move to Rupert's Land from Ontario, where he had been ordained in his early twenties, shortly after he had arrived in Canada from England. When he travelled out west in 1840 to take up ministry in Norway House, he was already a missionary of some experience and note

among the Ojibway. Evans was encouraged to take the post by HBC Governor Sir George Simpson who felt a little Protestant competition in the ecclesial marketplace might be good for business.<sup>10</sup> In a letter from the Governor and Committee of the HBC giving orders for free transportation and lodging to be provided for the Methodist missionaries, the Methodists are praised for their “zeal in the causes of morality and religion.” The governor and the committee also suggest that the churchmen may be able to help rehabilitate the company’s reputation in the wake of unspecified complaints by “contradict[ing] many of the statements, that have gone forth to the public, highly injurious to the character of the service.”<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Evans was welcomed at Norway House by both Simpson and his chief factor at that location, Mr. Donald Ross, but it was not long before tensions between the Methodist Mission and the HBC became apparent.

Evans was first and foremost a minister to the local Cree. While Evans acknowledged the company’s right to set the terms of employment and trade, and expressed gratitude for the support that the company provided to his missionary projects, he was also anxious to help the local people establish basic independence by growing their own food and attaining the basics of a white man’s education. Soon after he arrived at Norway House he set about devising a ready means by which the natives could read scripture, and in the process he developed the first Cree syllabic characters which permitted the hither-to exclusively oral language to be rendered in print. He and his assistants began teaching and translating the Bible, hymns and other devotional works to supplement their ministry. Before long, there was a thriving church community anxious to learn and live by the Methodist doctrines. Key among these Methodist doctrines was the sanctity of the sabbath—a Sunday of rest for all workers.

It is hard to say which of many issues first served as a wedge between Evans and the HBC, but certainly the falling out over Sunday travel appears to have had decisive effects on Evans’s future. Three years into the relationship Chief Factor Donald Ross was writing disparaging comments about Evans and his family to George Simpson.<sup>12</sup> Evans was moved out of the HBC fort into the native village, which they named Rossville. As Evans commented to Simpson, he certainly had no objections to the move: he had desired to live among the Natives from the outset. But he smarted against the public perception that he had been moved because of a falling out with Ross and the HBC personnel at the

Fort.<sup>13</sup> Despite Simpson's assurance that ill feelings toward Evans were not the reason for the move, letters exchanged over the period indicate Ross's developing frustrations with Evans, and his personal dislike of the man were indeed at the root of this change in accommodation. Gossip indicated that Mrs. Evans did not get along well with Mrs. Ross.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Ross grew increasingly intolerant of Evans's demands on the company purse.

Most problematic for Ross was Evans's intervention on behalf of the local natives. Ross took Evans's interventions as a personal insult, a challenge to the primacy he had enjoyed in the Natives' affections and the control that he was able to exert for the purposes of trade. The Natives' desire to rest on Sundays while the boats were travelling across Lake Winnipeg and among the complex river systems that connected the various fur-trading centers was not in itself an insurmountable problem. At the outset their appeared to have been a measure of good will between Evans and Ross to make things work, but when a direct challenge was placed to Ross's plans to travel to Red River in May 1845, Ross balked. This offence was soon compounded by Evans's suggestion that the natives be able to make gifts of one or two of the furs they had trapped, rather than turning them all over to the company. Evans, in a letter to Simpson, first used the word "immoral" in a direct request he made to Simpson to have Simpson spell out the legalities implied in the practice of Natives giving furs they have trapped as gifts, rather than presenting them for sale to the HBC. Evans begged Simpson to "afford [him] the information" he would need in order to guide the "missionaries when called upon to correct immoralities."<sup>15</sup> Simpson was polite in his official return correspondence with Evans, stating that "in this higher department of moral duty we confidently rely on your cordial cooperation," but he stated unequivocally that "considering how deeply the inhabitants of Rossville are indebted to us both on spiritual & on temporal grounds, they ought to feel an obligation superior to any standing rule having the authority of human law against squandering their furs among themselves or transferring them to others."<sup>16</sup> It is clear from the private correspondence exchanged between Simpson and Ross at this time that they had very little confidence in Evans's moral compass when it came to matters of trade. In the context of trade disruptions in Oregon and the tensions that were rising among the Red River free traders, Evans's interference with trade was a threat that the HBC would not forbear. Within a matter of months Ross and George Simpson managed to arrange with the WMMS in London to have Evans

removed. Ross was apprised of this good news in December of that same year, but he was cautioned not to share the information with Evans who would hear of his removal directly from his missionary superiors when the letters from London, England would arrive on the spring ships.

So, with or without concubines, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Evans did run afoul of the HBC, and that this transgression was framed by Evans and Simpson in terms that included the word “immorality.” It is also clear that these disagreements were sufficient to motivate Simpson to secure Evans’s removal from the territory. These facts seemingly scuttle both the occasion and the motivation for Semmens’s implication that the HBC men maligned Evans’s character by “arranging” for the young women to come forward with their allegations of sexual abuse. Why would Simpson and Ross need to connive against Evans when his departure was already secured? Why would Simpson and Ross go out of their way to fabricate an unrelated account of sexual transgression when they had already succeeded in having Evans removed by arguing that he was impeding trade?

Although they have nothing to do with concubines, there may have been both motive and a reasonable occasion for both of these moves. Robert Alder, Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary society, made it clear that “our committee will deem it necessary to keep up the present number of missionaries, & to send a very efficient one to Norway House.”<sup>17</sup> Neither Ross nor Simpson had any intention of allowing this to happen. In a letter dated 26 December 1845 Simpson responded to Alder, arguing that “I do not at all consider a resident Superintendent necessary.”<sup>18</sup> He hoped to convince the London office that the territory could be left under the distant supervision of the Methodist official in Ontario. By late December it may have occurred to both men that their arrangements for Evans’s removal might have been inadequate: Evans might be replaced with someone as troublesome; worse yet, Evans himself might very well return after a stay overseas.

If between December 1845, when they got word of Evans’s removal, and February 1846 when the scandal broke, Ross and Simpson had decided to make their case for the permanent removal of a local superintendent more compelling, they would have been hard pressed to find an official channel in which to do so. Their complaint about Evans’s interference with trade had already been taken to the highest authority within the HBC, and the WMMS had already compiled with the com-



pany's request to send Evans to London where the issue would be discussed in full. On the other hand, the rumour of "immorality" appears to have been ready made for exploitation. The use of this word which we have already traced through several key pieces of correspondence between Evans and Simpson, takes an important shift when it is used by a well-placed member of the extended HBC community. The letter containing the volatile word "immoralities" is first sent to Simpson by Evans in June 1845, a full three months before Letitia Hargrave, the wife of James Hargrave, chief factor at York Factory, uses the same word in an entirely different context. Letitia Hargrave's newsy letters to her family provide a back-stage look at events recorded in official company letters. HBC personnel travelled regularly between Norway House and York Factory, bringing with them sought after accounts of the social events as well as business news. In September, 1885, Mrs. Hargrave expressed concern over Rev. Evans's conduct in a gossip-filled letter to her mother. Mrs. Hargrave noted that the Norway House people called Reverend Evans "immoral." The passage is worth quoting at length:

Mr. Evans is in bad health, a chronic affection of the kidneys. I see now change in him but Hargrave [her husband] says he seems quite broken down – the Norway House people are aspersing his character & say since that accident he has become deranged & that his conduct is immoral &c. I am sure it is not true & so is Hargrave.

The accident to which Letitia Hargrave refers is the accidental death of Thomas Hassell, Evans's interpreter, which occurred when the gun Evans was holding misfired and hit Hassell. The tragic event, acknowledged by all to have been an accident, grieved Evans greatly. Later in the same letter, Letitia Hargrave returns to her earlier subject and repeats herself:

People, that is the Norway House people say that Evans has gone daft – we saw no symptoms of it. What is worse they asperse his character & say that his conduct is immoral. I am sure it is not true. The man's mind may have got a shake by that fearful accident, but he appears perfectly collected – I may just as well say that it is asserted that the whole village of Rossville had been converted into a seraglio by him.<sup>19</sup>

Although Mrs. Hargrave passed along the gossip to her mother, it is clear by the context in which it is presented that the news is perplexing and not quite believable, either for Mrs. Hargrave or for her husband. She repeated herself, as though she was attempting to make sense in writing of a situation that made little sense otherwise.

From this distance, there is no way to know if there is any connection between these two contexts for the word “immoral” as it was used by Evans and Simpson, and later by Letitia Hargrave. If, however, we take seriously the possibility that the allegations against Evans were fabricated rather than real, it may not be too large a stretch to imagine that the all important word “immoral” might have been initially used in connection with Evans to describe his interference with trade, and that, as it passed around in an HBC version of the game “telephone,” it picked up an entirely different interpretation. Were Simpson and Ross unscrupulous enough to exploit this situation? Further research will be required before a judgement can be rendered, but the raw hostility toward Evans apparent in both Ross and Simpson’s private correspondence makes the idea plausible. For example, in a letter dated 7 July 1846, a week after Evans left for England, George Simpson writes to Donald Ross to request an official investigation into the death of Thomas Hassell. Simpson states that “various circumstances have come to my knowledge, which seem [sic] to demand a thorough investigation with respect to the death, supposed at the time to have been accidental, of the late Thomas Hassell.”<sup>20</sup> He then devises a list of ten questions that Donald Ross is charged to investigate. In a private correspondence to Donald Ross written that very same day, Simpson is more overt about why he is raising doubts about Hassell’s death so shortly after Evans has left the territory for England. Simpson’s professional demeanour, so apparent in the first letter, is now exchanged for complete candour:

With reference to another letter under this date respecting Mr. Evans, you must all have been very much delighted when that worthy took his departure; but in case he may keep his promise of visiting you at the expiration of two years, I think it is well we should be prepared to speak to him seriously on the subject of Hassell’s death.<sup>21</sup>

Simpson mentioned a rumour he once heard to suggest that Hassell’s death was a deliberate murder, not an accident. At the time, Simpson says he

dismissed it as “some idle Indian rumour,” but now he intends to take the idea seriously. In the official letter Simpson is careful to instruct Ross to be “careful to put as few leading questions as possible” into his investigations, but in the private correspondence he is less scrupulous: he told Ross that “it is very desirable we should know whether any intimacy existed between Evans & Hassell’s wife,” and he asked Ross to dig for whatever details he was able to uncover. At the conclusion of the letter Simpson is clear about his intentions for the mission at Norway House:

Now that Evans is off, we must not allow his successor, whoever he may be, to play the Bishop at Norway House, where you alone must be prophet, priest & king –Mason merely acting under your advice. By having him in your hands, he may be useful to the trade & may, unquestionably, better carry out the views of the Society than by acting on his own judgement and discretion, in which I have little confidence.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Issues for Future Research***

Semmens’s understanding of the background events surrounding the Evans case are incorrect. How ought we to judge the authority of what he purports to have heard directly, the dying Native woman’s “confession”? As I have mused about the significance of this new evidence two issues have come to mind: the first is Semmens’s credibility, and the second is the motivation of the penitent woman.

Semmens states that he sent copies of this confession to “the Wesleyan Conference in England through the Canadian Methodist Church”<sup>23</sup> but the original copies Semmens sent have not been found either in Canada or in London. This does not necessarily mean that they were never sent or received. It appears that much of the information surrounding this trial was buried after Evans’s sudden death, and only parts of it have been recovered. The documents in the Pratt Library file suggest, however, that Semmens’s report continued to circulate and was eventually evaluated in 1956 by at least one Canadian church official. In the file with Semmens’s excerpt is a letter by J.A. Lousley, formerly a missionary at Norway House and a principal of the Residential Indian School (circa 1902-36). A note appended to the bottom of this letter explains that rumours circulated within the Methodist community that Mr. Lousley had “definite evidence

that exonerated James Evans.” The author of this note, identified only by the initials G.B.K., goes on to say that Mr. Lousley was “in Ontario, in retirement.” G.B.K. requested that President W.T. Brown of Victoria University visit Mr. Lousley to collect the story. Apparently the president complied with this request and the story of Semmens’s encounter is retold in Lousley’s words in a letter contained in the same file as own Semmens’s account.

The church appears to have declined to make public the evidence presented by Lousley. In a letter to one Dr. Arnup, a former moderator of the United Church, Mr. Lousley avers that “Rev. Mr. Evans’s reputation is, I think, on the ascendant and needs no defence at present.”<sup>24</sup> Lousley does, however, request that Arnup keep the evidence close at hand since “a time might come when this deathbed confession of the Indian woman might be needed.” These records suggest that Semmens, at least, believed what he had heard and made every possible attempt to have this event recorded for posterity. Evidently Semmens also managed to convince Lousley that what he had heard from the Native woman was true, and Lousley was then similarly anxious to have the information on file for future reference. The major point that counts against Semmens’s reliability is his allegation about the concubines and about the specific timing and details concerning how the scandal had been addressed. If Semmens is unreliable in these details, how much weight can be assigned to his statements about the deathbed confession? He was dependant upon local gossip and his memory of it when he inferred the motivation for the testimony against Evans, and Semmens exhibits an unattractive habit of quoting hearsay as fact on other occasions in his other writings.<sup>25</sup> When it came to the woman’s testimony, however, he was directly reporting a conversation in which he had been a participant. The fact that this testimony seemed to arise out of the clear blue, decades after the original events, also adds credibility to this account.

If we assume that Semmens can be believed, the next question concerns the woman herself. What might have motivated this testimony, so many years later? Immediately following the local trial, there is evidence to suggest that one or more of the young women either threatened to recant, or actually did recant, but no printed record exists to substantiate the claim.<sup>26</sup> The archives do record, however, a fragment of a letter written from H.B. Steinhauer, the man who interpreted at the Rossville trial, to William Mason, Evans’s assistant. The letter was written shortly after news of Evans’s death had reached the Norway House community. In this letter

Steinhauer asks Mason why he was not called to interpret “the wretched women’s confessions” when he had interpreted everything else. The letter implies that Steinhauer had been made aware that the confessions had taken place.

In the aftermath of the trial and of Evans’s untimely death, one might suspect community pressure to play an important role in influencing public professions about Evans. Almost forty years later, however, it is reasonable to assume that public pressure would have abated and been supplanted by other motivations. In the case of Semmens’s parishioner, the desire to clear her conscience appears to be her primary concern. Accordingly, this confession ought, I believe, to be judged worthy of interpretative weight.

But who might this woman have been? Once again, further research will be required before an answer will be available. In his assessment of the Norway House scandal, Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont considered the possibility that the deathbed confession reported by Nan Shipley might have occurred and made preliminary assessments about who the penitent might have been. Shirritt-Beaumont’s research in the Oxford House post journals suggests that there is no readily identifiable candidate.<sup>27</sup>

And so, this new evidence in the cold case of Evans’s sexual immorality adds yet another layer to an already complex and contradictory set of facts. The Native woman’s testimony, as it is recorded by Semmens, comes with as many questions as it purports to answer. The testimony is most suggestive because it states overtly what has long been alleged but never proven: that the accusations against Evans had been encouraged by the HBC who hoped to benefit from the damage they would cause.

Let’s hope that this small discovery will spur a new round of searches for primary evidence. Apparently, there is still more out there to be found. In the meantime it will be the task of both present and future church historians to decide if Semmens’s story sheds new light on an old scandal.

### ***Endnotes***

1. The term “private investigation” is used by George Simpson to describe the proceedings to the WMMS secretary, Robert Alder. See George Simpson to Robert Alder, York Factory 13 August 1846, HBCA/AMD.4/68, Hudson Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, MB (HBCA).

2. See George Simpson to Robert Alder, Red River Settlement 14 September 1846 HBCA/AM D.4/68, Hudson Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg.
3. See John McLean, *James Evans, Inventor of the Syllabic System of the Cree Language* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1890) and Egerton, Ryerson Young, *The Apostle of the North, Rev. James Evans* (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1899).
4. See Alder to Simpson, London 1 December 1846 HBCA/AM D.5/18, HBCA, Winnipeg.
5. See Nan Shipley, *The James Evans Story* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966).
6. I would like to thank Reverend Hutchinson for several conversations we have shared while I worked on this story. He has been generous in sharing his scholarly instincts and his time.
7. Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont, "The Rossville Scandal, 1846: James Evans, the Cree, and a Mission on Trial," M.A. Thesis (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2001), student abstract. I am grateful to Mr. Shirritt-Beaumont for his help in thinking through various aspects of this project, for sharing his research notes with me, and for reading a final draft of this paper.
8. John Semmens, 'Manuscript account of the mission at Norway House,' James Evans Fonds, Box 6, file 1, United Church of Canada/ Victoria University Archives, Toronto, ON [hereafter UCC/UVA]. A duplicate copy of these same pages is also included in the John Semmens Fonds (see John Semmens Fonds, 3204, box 1, file 4, UCC/UVA). I would like to thank to Gabbi Zaldin, Reader Services Librarian, Victoria University Library, for her help and hospitality during my several visits to the UVC Archives and for making documents and good advice available to me from afar. I am also grateful to Robert C. Brandeis, Chief Librarian, for his help in sorting through various questions I posed about the collection.
9. James Evans Fonds, Box 6, file1, UCC/UVA.
10. Apparently Simpson felt that the existent Roman Catholic clergy were in a position to "gain an ascendancy" throughout the fur-trading country and exercise an unfavourable influence over the indigenous labourers upon whom the HBC depended for trade. See Donald Ross Private Papers, PACB AE R73 La5; quoted in Paul Hengstler, "A Winter's Research and Invention: Reverend James Evans's Exploration of Indigenous Language and the Development of Syllabics, 1838-1839," M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta, 2003), 63.

11. Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company to Duncan Findlayson. London, 4 March 1840 HBCA B.235, James Evans Fonds, Box 3 file 34a, UCC/UVA.
12. Donald Ross to Sir George Simpson. Norway House, 17 August 1843. HBCA D.5/8, James Evans Fonds, Box 3, file 34a, UCC/UVA.
13. See James Evans to Sir George Simpson, 28 July 1843. HBCA D.5/8, James Evans Fonds, Box 3, file 34a, UCC/UVA.
14. See Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret McLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947).
15. James Evans to George Simpson 10 June 1845 HBCA/ AM.D.5/14, Hudson Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg.
16. George Simpson to James Evans 11 June 1845 HBCA/AM. D.4/32, Hudson Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg.
17. Robert Alder to George Simpson, London 3 December 1845 HBCA D.5/15, James Evans Fonds, Box 3 file 34a, UCC/UVA.
18. George Simpson to Robert Alder, Lachine, 26 December 1845 HBCA D.4/67, James Evans Fonds, Box 3 file 34a, UCC/UVA, Toronto.
19. See Hargrave, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 208.
20. See George Simpson to Donald Ross. Red River Settlement, 7 July 1846 HBCA D.4/68, James Evans Fonds, Box 3 file 34a, UCC/UVA, Toronto.
21. George Simpson to Donald Ross, Private 7 July 1846 HBCA D.4/68, James Evans Fonds, Box 3 file 34a, UCC/UVA, Toronto.
22. George Simpson to Donald Ross, Private 7 July 1846.
23. Semmens, Manuscript account of the mission at Norway House.
24. JA Lousley, a minister who followed Semmens into the Norway House territory (Semmens had by this time left the church and was working for the Dominion Government as an Indian agent) tells the story to Dr. Arnup in 1956. The story also exists in John Semmens's private memoirs and personal papers. Arnup in James Evans Fonds, Box 6, file 1, UCC/UVA, Toronto. Semmens private papers in John Semmens Fonds 3204, box 1, file 4, UCC/UVA, Toronto.

25. One such occasion occurs in Semmens's account of John C. Sinclair, a translator who worked with James Evans at Norway House. In his earlier work describing life on the western missions field, Semmens reports that John C. Sinclair is "indolent and morally lax" (see *The Field and the Work: Sketches of Missionary life In the Far North* [Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1884], 104). When Semmens writes his own account of the Norway House Mission, he has since had the opportunity to work with John C. Sinclair, and he now has nothing but glowing words for him (see Semmens, "Manuscript Account of the Mission at Norway House"). One way to account for this discrepancy is to conclude that Semmens was reporting gossip in the first instance, but recording his own experience in the second.
26. See H.B. Steinhauer to William Mason. Rossville 10<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1846 (arrived June 1847), WMMS outgoing mail MG 597 Reel 28, The Rooms, St. John's, NF. The primary WMMS archives are held at The School of Oriental and African Studies Library at the University of London, England. Once again I would like to thank librarian Lance Martin for his untiring help in securing documents both during my visit to the library and since then by mail.
27. This assessment is recorded in Raymond Shirritt-Beaumont's unpublished research notes, and his conclusions were shared with me in various email correspondences.