

## **Ron Bourgeault. (b. 1947)**

Metis sociologist Ron Bourgeault was born at North Battleford, Saskatchewan, the son of Jules Bourgeault and Marjorie Brintal. He currently teaches sociology at the University of Regina and previously taught Indian Studies at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina. He completed his M.A. at the University of Regina in 1986 and is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology.

He is best known for his analysis of how British colonialism impacted the Metis. This appeared as a series of articles in *New Breed*:

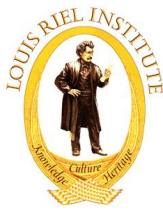
- “Metis History.” *New Breed Journal*, (Series) 1982: Vol. 13 (8): 20-22; Vol. 13 (9): 26-28; Vol. 13 (10): 32-34; Vol. 13 (12): 14-16, 18-20; 1983: Vol. 14 (2): 17-19; 21, Vol. 14 (5): 18-19; Vol. 14 (8), 1983: 18-19; and,
- “The Struggle Against British Colonialism and Imperialism: 1821-1870.” *New Breed* (Series), Vol. 15 (10-12) and Vol. 16, (1-7), 1984-85.

These two series examine the beginnings of the class and national liberation struggle at Red River. Bourgeault reviews how racial oppression, and racism as an ideology, is integral to capitalist development. Using the Metis as an example he focuses on how historically created race divisions supported capitalism. The nature of British colonialism and the fur trade began to create both class-consciousness and nationalism in the early 1800s. This first emerged with the reaction of the working class Metis and Indian trappers, buffalo hunters and wage workers and the middle class petty traders to the rules set up in Rupert’s Land around the production and exportation of fur. In the 1840s, calls for economic reform started to take a political direction and became a political struggle for self-governance and democracy. Bourgeault gives a particularly good description and analysis of lower, middle and upper class alignments and motivations during the late 1860s. He describes the political position of Metis leader James Ross and how this differed from the approach taken by Louis Riel. He also relates the little known story of the relationship of the International Financial Society activities to what was happening economically in Western Canada.

A second theme that Bourgeault has examined extensively is the impact the European social structures and attitudes had on Aboriginal women. The interested reader should also see:

- "The Development of Capitalism and the Subjugation of Native Women in Northern Canada," *Alternate Routes: A Critical Review*, Vol. 6, no. 15 1979: 111-140.
- “The Indians, the Métis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism.” *Studies in Political Economy*, 12, 1983: 45-80.
- “Women in Egalitarian Society,” *New Breed Journal*, Jan/April, 1983: 3-8.

- “Race, Class and Gender: Colonial Domination of Indian Women.” In Jesse Vorst et al. (Editors): *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers*. Toronto: Garamond, 1989.
- “Race, Class and Gender: Colonial Domination of Indian Women.” In O. McKague (Editor): *Racism in Canada*. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1991: 129-150.
- “The Struggle for Class and Nation: The Origin of the Metis in Canada and the National Question.” In *America; 1492-1992—Five Centuries of Imperialism and Resistance*, Ed. Ron Bourgeault et al., *Socialist Studies, Volume 8*. Winnipeg: Society for Socialist Studies, Fernwood Publishing, 1992: 153-188.
- *America; 1492-1992—Five Centuries of Imperialism and Resistance, Socialist Studies, Volume 9*. Winnipeg: Society for Socialist Studies, 1993.
- “The Killing of Leo Lachance.” *Canadian Dimension*, March/April, 1994, Vol. 28 Issue 2, p. 21.
- “Louis Riel: Hero of His People?” In *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies*, Ed. Ron F. Laliberty et al., Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 2000: 222-226.



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