

STORIES OF CONTEMPORARY MÉTIS IDENTITY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:
'TROUBLING' DISCOURSES OF RACE, CULTURE, AND NATIONHOOD

by

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ABSTRACT

Politicians, the Canadian judiciary, Métis citizens, and scholars have attempted to develop definitions for the term ‘Métis,’ arguing that until there is agreement on the definition of ‘Métis’ and requirements for citizenship and homeland boundaries are agreed upon, the Métis will not be able to capitalize on self-government opportunities (Belcourt, 2013; Chartrand, 2001). However, the ongoing inter and intra-community conflicts regarding Métis identity suggest that there remains a lack of consensus over the appropriate use of the term ‘Métis’. This study argues for a re-thinking of current understandings of Métis identity as inherent and singular. Instead, Métis identity can be understood as a socially constructed phenomenon, whereby collective and individual Métis senses of selves have developed throughout history by drawing on contemporaneous dominant discourses and are thus, performative in nature. Employing an indigenist research methodology that centres relational accountability, this study involved interviewing 20 Métis people residing in British Columbia’s Southern Interior Region to understand the ways in which people identify as Métis in BC. Employing methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis, participant narratives as well as the scholarly, legal, and political texts that inform contemporary constructions of ‘Métis’ were explored, with three dominant discourses centred on racialized, ethno-cultural, and nation-based definitions of Métis emerging. Participants’ stories illustrate not only the ways in which dominant discourses of ‘Métisness’ are reproduced, cited, and reified, but also suggest that some Métis people attempt to subvert dominant discourses through a refusal to identify with particular discourses. The diversity of experiences identifying as Métis demonstrate that there are distinct differences between the rigid identities that are constructed and expected by decision-makers and the fluid realities of Métis identities, thereby undermining assumptions of Métis identities as fixed, instrumental, passive, and power-neutral in lieu of poststructuralist notions of identity as constructed, fluid, incomplete, and thus, continuously evolving.

PREFACE

This dissertation is original, unpublished work by the author Gabrielle Legault. The fieldwork described in this study (research interviews) was covered by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board (H13-00050).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
PREFACE	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
GLOSSARY	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	15
2.1 My Place, My Relations	19
2.2 The Rituals of Research Ceremony	24
2.2.1 Participant Recruitment.....	24
2.2.2 The Interview	25
2.2.3 Member-checking	27
2.2.4 Coding.....	27
2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis	28
2.4 Narrative Analysis	31
2.5 Summary	33
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION	34
3.1 Enlightenment and Social Subjects	34
3.2 Indigenous Perspectives of the Subject	36
3.3 Place-Identity	38
3.4 Poststructural Subjectivity	40
3.5 Discourse	41
3.6 Agency	43
3.7 Language and Social Practices	45
3.8 Foucault’s ‘Power/Knowledge’	46
3.8.1 Apparatus, Technologies, Tactics, and Norms.....	49
3.8.2 Naturalizing Binaries and Difference.....	51
3.9 Cultural Identities	53
3.10 Resistance, Subversion, and Performativity	53
3.11 Narrative Identity	59
3.12 Summary	61
CHAPTER 4: DISCOURSES OF MÉTIS IDENTITY	63
4.1 Racialized Definitions of Métis	63
4.1.1 International Application of Blood Quantum	65
4.1.2 “Indian Act Blood”: Blood Quantum in Canada.....	67
4.1.3 Arguments Against Blood Quantum.....	68
4.1.4 Arguments for Blood Quantum.....	70
4.1.5 Mixed-Blood Narratives.....	73
4.1.6 Appearing Indigenous: The Racialized Body	73
4.1.7 Métis as Hybrids	78
4.1.8 Summary	79
4.2 Ethno-Cultural Definitions of Métis	80
4.2.1 Indigenous Identity.....	81
4.2.2 Shared ‘Ways of Being’	87
4.2.3 Indigenous in Canada: A Matter of Difference.....	90

4.2.4 Legal Implications of the Cultural Rights Approach	91
4.2.5 The Powley Decision	95
4.2.6 The Daniels Decision	98
4.2.7 Self-identification, Cultural Appropriation, and Ethnic Fraud	102
4.2.8 Summary	109
4.3 Political Definitions of Métis.....	110
4.3.1 Nationalism as a Discourse	111
4.3.2 Indigenous Nationhood	115
4.3.3 Métis Nationhood.....	119
4.3.4 The Métis National Historical Narrative.....	121
4.3.4.1 The Context of Métis Emergence: Fur Trade Economics	123
4.3.4.2 Métis Spirituality as a Response to Religious Expansion	125
4.3.4.3 Métis Nationhood as a Response to Colonial Policies	128
4.3.4.4 Historical Experiences of Discrimination	139
4.3.5 Tracing the Boundaries of the Métis Homeland	142
4.3.6 Métis in British Columbia.....	145
4.3.6.1 Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) Citizenship.....	147
4.3.7 The Nationhood Debate	149
4.3.8 Summary	152
CHAPTER 5: NARRATIVES OF MÉTIS IN BC.....	154
5.1 “when there’s something missing, you can feel it”	157
5.2 “I felt like a fraud for a long time”	158
5.3 “I’m not sure where I fit”	160
5.4 “They get their card and you never see them again”	161
5.5 “it’s hard for me to identify with Louis Riel, Red River...”	163
5.6 “I grew up in a Métis family and it was just kind of what you did”	166
5.7 “It’s a part of the game”	174
5.8 “my mom is where I get my Native blood”	176
5.9 “Whatever gave you the idea I wanted to be an Indian?”	179
5.10 “Métis is of Mixed blood”	183
5.11 “we’re all different kinds of cultures put together”	184
5.12 “We are not just a leftover”	189
5.13 “I don’t feel like I have a hole in me anymore. I know where I belong.”	194
5.14 “I didn’t know I was Métis until 1982, but I always knew I was a half-breed”	202
5.15 “Oh, you’re one of those green-eyed Indians”	207
5.16 “What if you do have an Indian grandma in the closet though, right?”	214
5.17 “my grandmother lived in the fast lane”	219
5.18 Summary	226
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION	228
6.1 Place-Identity: Being Métis in BC.....	228
6.2 Constructing Métis Identity through Dominant Discourses	232
6.2.1 Reproducing and Resisting Racialized Discourses	234
6.2.2 Reproducing and Resisting Ethno-Cultural Discourses	236
6.2.2.1 An Emerging Sub-discourse of Relationality (<i>Wahkootowin</i>)	238
6.2.3 Reproducing and Resisting Discourses of Métis Nationalism	243
6.3 Métis Identity as Performative.....	249
6.4 A Proposal for Métis Peoplehood.....	255
6.5 Summary	260
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	263
BIBLIOGRAPHY	267

GLOSSARY

AGM- Annual General Meeting

BCMF- British Columbia Métis Federation

BFISS- Boundary Family and Individual Service Society

CDA- Critical Discourse Analysis

HBC- Hudson's Bay Company

IR- Indigenist Research

KMA- Kelowna Métis Association

MCSSBC- Métis Community Services Society of British Columbia

MFC- Métis Federation of Canada

MNBC- Métis Nation British Columbia

MNC- Métis National Council

MNGA- Métis Nation Governing Assembly

MNO- Métis Nation Ontario

MPCBC- Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia

NA- Narrative Analysis

NWC- North West Company

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The topic of Métis identity has become a pressing issue within Canada, as the population has demonstrated unprecedented growth, which is often attributed to demographic factors such as high fertility rates (relative to non-Aboriginal peoples) as well as an increasing trend for people to self-identify as Métis. Increased online access to genealogical records and an emerging sense of pride in Indigenous heritage have allowed for particular representations of indigeneity to become increasingly acceptable. In particular, this has resulted in a significant increase in Métis identification amongst families who may have not identified openly as ‘Métis’ for generations (or ever). Consequentially, Métis communities have experienced growth, increased demands for programs and services, and diverse forms of cultural revival. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there are approximately 418,380 self-identifying Métis people in Canada, making up almost 30% of the total Aboriginal population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). The population continues to grow at rates that exceed the theoretical maximum natural increase (5.5% per year).¹ Statistics Canada predicts that “by 2031, it would reach just over 500,000 if ethnic mobility was to cease in 2006, but would rise to more than 850,000 if ethnic mobility were to continue at the level observed between 1996 and 2006,” thus rendering the Métis the fastest growing Aboriginal population (2011).

Despite the large population of self-identifying Métis in Canada, there is currently minimal federal or provincial funding allocated towards Métis people. This is particularly problematic as Métis populations exhibit similar health and socio-economic challenges as First Nations populations who have funding in place to address such discrepancies. While generally speaking, Métis peoples demonstrate health concerns similar to those of First Nations populations, there are some differences in terms of social determinants of health, actual condition rates, and access to healthcare services. In 2006, 54% of Métis aged 15 and over reported having been diagnosed with at least one chronic condition, with some disease rates almost doubling other Canadians (Martens, Bartlett, Prior, Sanguins, Burchill, Burland, & Carter, 2011). Furthermore, life expectancy for Métis people has been reported as

¹ According to the 2001 Canadian census, Métis have experienced a 43% increase from 1996 to 2001 compared to a 3.4% increase for all Canadians.

being 5 to 6 years lower than that of the general population (Foulds, Mamdouh, Shubair, & Warburton, 2013), and within Manitoba, “Métis are 21% more likely to die before the age of 75 than all other Manitobans” (Carter, Kosowan, Garner, & Sanguins, 2013). In another study of Manitoba Métis, it was clear that the overall health status of Métis people was much poorer than other Manitobans, and that measures of mortality such as total mortality rate, premature mortality rate (PMR), injury mortality rate, and potential years of life lost (PYLL) were between 14% and 23% higher for the Métis (Martens et al., 2011). Such health disparities have been further enhanced by the longtime abandonment of the Métis to a jurisdictional void, which has resulted in minimal or even no funding for Métis populations.

The authors of the above studies argue that such low life expectancy and the prevalence of chronic health problems for Métis people are a direct result of social determinants of health such as the lower levels of education and the relatively lower income that Métis people experience. Income levels are much lower for Métis populations in comparison to those of the non-Aboriginal population as “nearly 50% of Métis individuals earn less than \$10,000 per year, compared with only 34% of the non-Aboriginal population” (Foulds et al., 2013).² Unemployment rates are particularly high among Métis people as they are between 18%-22%, which is more than double that of the general population (6%-10%). Moreover, high school educational attainments are low among Métis populations in comparison with the non-Aboriginal population (76% vs. 88%). In addition, compared to the non-Aboriginal population in Canada Métis are disproportionately incarcerated and have a long history of being overrepresented in the child welfare system (Barkwell, Longclaws, & Chartrand, 1989; OCI Report, 2013). Furthermore, Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall has argued that a secure sense of identity amongst Métis peoples is itself a social determinant of health that has long been ignored and requires addressing (2016; also see 2015a).

As a result of the lack of ‘Indian status’ and access to government programs and services, differing groups have claimed Métis status and are now in conflict with one another, resulting in low-level conflict amongst national, provincial, and regional métis organizations (Kennedy, 1997). Problematically, fluid definitions of ‘Métis’ coupled with a dispersed and politically fragmented population have resulted in continued financial

² Note that income is even lower for Métis women, who earn on average \$11,000 less than Métis men (Foulds et al., 2013).

insecurity, a lack of control over resources, and an ongoing political struggle for sufficient recognition.

Furthermore, despite the Canadian public's general interest in learning about Métis people, "[B]asic knowledge about Métis issues is remarkably low" (Gaudry, 2015, p. 97). Because Métis as a category does not fit easily into taxonomic notions of ethnic groups as discrete entities, Métis have been largely defined in terms of their relationship to both First Nation groups and Euro-Canadians (Andersen, 2003; Jones, 1997). It is evident that there is a need within community and academic spheres for pragmatic research regarding the contemporary identities of Métis people in Canada, as both understanding Métis identity and defining the term 'Métis' have become contentious issues since the Métis cultural revival that took place in Canada in the 1960s (Peterson & Brown, 1985). Métis scholars, politicians, and community members would agree that the questions of "Who is Métis?" "Who are the Métis?" and "What does 'Métis' mean?" are at the centre of contemporary Métis identity politics, however these are not easy questions to answer.³ These questions, and their answers are embedded in a historical context marked by shifting colonial policies aimed at the conversion, assimilation, and erasure of Indigenous bodies.⁴

A divide has emerged within Métis scholarship whereby Métis have become representative of either a) a bounded community descended from a distinct historical nation that emerged from the Canadian fur trade or b) people whose ancestry includes both European and Indigenous heritage and may or may not be descended from historical 'mixed-blood' communities. However, upon closer inspection, such divides are amorphous and continue to be transformed by court rulings and government policies regarding Métis identity and community membership. This includes, but is not limited to, the inclusion of Métis as an Aboriginal people in the 1982 Canadian Constitution, amendments to the Indian Act (such as Bill C-31), and an emerging patchwork of legal decisions (including both the 2003 Powley Decision and the 2016 Daniels Decisions) brought forth through the

³ For the purpose of this study, the term 'Métis' (capital M) is used to refer specifically to a singular group who would generally considered 'Métis' according to the MNC (descended from the historic Métis Nation which was centred at the Red River Settlement), whereas 'métis' (lower case m) denotes a general use of the term which can, but not always, includes those who may self-identify as 'Métis' or 'métis,' with no ties to the historic Métis Nation. Generally, 'métis' is used throughout when referring to the many groups that claim to be métis, including those belonging to the historic or contemporary Métis Nation. This emerging terminology, though confusing at times will hopefully be made clear through the reading of this study.

⁴ On another terminological note, throughout this study, terms such as Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, and Native American have been capitalized following the convention of many other indigenous scholars as an effort to acknowledge their agency, rights, and sovereignty as sociopolitical entities (see Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

Canadian judiciary that continue to overturn earlier definitions of 'Métis,' further complicating understandings of Métis identities.

The 1982 redrafting of the Canadian Constitution Act, Section 35, affirmed existing Aboriginal rights (without defining them) by stating the following:

- (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
- (2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
- (3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.
- (4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons. (Constitution Act, 1982, s35)

The inclusion of the Métis as one of the three groups of "aboriginal peoples of Canada" in Section 35 was a significant milestone for the recognition of Métis, opening the door to court cases that sought to define Métis identity (Sawchuk, 1992). The acknowledgement of Métis Aboriginal rights on a national scale was unique during this period and could only be compared to the attempted extinguishment of Métis Aboriginal rights with the scrip process that occurred during the turn of the 20th century (further described in Chapter 4). The 1982 inclusion of the Métis as being among Canada's Aboriginal peoples in Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act "did little to spur the federal government into action," as they preferred "to continue to limit their activity to status Indians as defined in the Indian Act" (Barman, 2006, p. 19). However, this 'victory' led to the development of a Métis-specific national representative body, the Métis National Council (MNC) in 1983. While some argue that the Section 35(1) usage of Métis should be synonymous with citizenship to the Métis Nation (meaning that only registered MNC citizens have access to Aboriginal rights), the use of the term in this context currently remains open to interpretation (Chartrand, 2001).

The recognition of Métis Aboriginal rights in 1982 marks a significant shift that began to occur amongst Métis peoples, which was further complicated by the 1985 amendment to the Indian Act known as Bill C-31. Bill C-31 was passed into law to modify the Indian Act so as to be consistent with gender equality as stipulated under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As previous to the amendment, women with Indian status lost their status when they married a man without Indian status (whereas men with Indian status did not, but passed their

status to any woman without status). While there is significant disagreement that the amendment resolved gender inequality (Hurley & Wherrett, 1996), Bill C-31 restored Indian status to many people who had been forcibly disenfranchised due to discriminatory policies, including many people who previously identified as Métis (see Section 6 of Chapter 5 for example).⁵

The transforming categories of indigenous identification have been further affected by judicial rulings such as the 2003 Powley Decision and the 2016 Daniels Decision. Such Canadian Supreme Court decisions have profoundly affected the ways in which citizenship registries are constructed and consequently what it takes to be recognized by government bodies as a legitimate Métis person. While Métis case law relies on the foundation of First Nations case law, Métis-specific cases such as *R. v. Powley* have significantly affected the criteria used for defining Métis identity for the purpose of claiming a right under Section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982. The case was initiated when in 1993, a father and son (Steve and Roddy Powley) shot and killed a moose near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario without holding a hunting license, but handwrote a tag claiming that they were harvesting the meat for winter. They were subsequently charged for unlawfully hunting moose in violation of the Game and Fish Act and pled not guilty, asserting that they had harvesting rights as Métis under Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution. As Métis Aboriginal rights had been recognized under Section 35, yet not established within the courts, the Powley Case provided the opportunity for a test of Métis harvesting rights and so was financially supported by Métis Nation Ontario (MNO). In 1998, the Powleys were acquitted by the trial judge, which was then appealed by the Crown and subsequently overruled in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, the Ontario Court of Appeal, and finally the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC), thus reaffirming that the Powleys' right to hunt was protected under Section 35 of the 1982 Canadian Constitution. Considered to be a victory by many Métis peoples, the Powley Decision has since affected a number of Métis Aboriginal rights cases as it defined 'Métis' as "distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears" (*R. v. Powley* 2003,

⁵ Also note that the simultaneous revision of Section 6 of the Indian Act terminated the status of those who had acquired it only through marriage (rather than descent), resulting in approximately 106,000 people losing Indian status (many of whom began to identify as non-status Indians or even métis), while also creating further categories for those with Indian status, most notably "those who are automatically entitled to be band members, and those who are conditional members" (Holmes, 2002, p. 12). For further explanation, see Native Women's Association of Canada, 1986.

para.10). Furthermore, according to the Powley Decision, legal identification of ‘Métis’ (also known as ‘The Powley Test’) requires: 1) self-identification as Métis, 2) having “an ancestral connection to a historical Métis community” and 3) community acceptance (Barman, 2006, p. 20). However, in the Powley Case, the right to hunt was only upheld within the Powleys’ community of Sault Ste. Marie, meaning that the Powley Case merely set a precedent for other Métis communities that seek Métis harvesting rights under Section 35.

Although the federal government has attempted to transfer their responsibilities to Aboriginal peoples to reluctant provincial governments (Dubois & Saunders, 2013; Teillet, 2013), the Daniels Case (Daniels v. Canada, 2013) that was in process of unfolding during the writing of this thesis sought to resolve the jurisdictional vacuum in which Métis people find themselves, while potentially affecting a broader legal definition of ‘Métis’. The original plaintiffs in the case included the late Métis politician Harry Daniels (who was replaced by his son Gabriel when he died), non-status Indians Leah Gardner and Terry Joudrey (from Ontario and Nova Scotia respectively), and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. The plaintiffs requested from the Federal Court the following three declarations in regards to Métis and non-status Indians:

1. Recognition and inclusion as “Indians” in s 91 (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867.
2. That the Queen (in right of Canada) owes a fiduciary duty to Métis and non-status Indians as Aboriginal people.
3. The Métis and non-status Indian people of Canada have a right to be consulted and negotiated with, by the federal government on a collective basis through representatives of their own choice. (Daniels v. Canada, 2013)

The federal court upheld the first of the three declarations, which concerned Section 91, the federal list of powers (legislative jurisdiction) and (24) which stipulates federal jurisdiction over “Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians” (2013, p. 1). According to legal expert and Métis lawyer Jean Teillet, “[T]he Court also held that the term ‘Indian’ in s. 91(24) is broader than the term ‘Indian’ in the Indian Act” (5). Thus, “the result of the Daniels decision is that all Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including Métis and non-status Indians, are included in federal jurisdiction under s. 91(24)” (2013, p. 5). Following an appeal on behalf of the Government of Canada on October 29, 2014, the federal court upheld the decision, which according to MNBC means that “Métis Citizens are recognized as Indians under the Constitution Act, 1867 although this does not mean at this point Métis Citizens have the right to be registered as Status Indian under the Indian Act” (2015c). Furthermore, the federal

decision did not order the federal government to provide “benefits” to Métis citizens, as the Court did not make a decision regarding the specific fiduciary duties of Canada.

The Government of Canada has since appealed the decision at the lower court levels to the Supreme Court of Canada, for which the hearing was held beginning on October 8, 2015, with the final judgment rendered on April 14, 2016. The most significant aspect of the 2016 declaration was that “Métis and non-status Indians are “Indians” under s. 91(24)”, meaning that Métis and non-Status Indians are no longer relegated to a “jurisdictional wasteland” whereby provincial and federal governments refused to address these populations (Daniels v. Canada, 2016). Interestingly, though the judge didn’t seek to define ‘Métis’, the following statement clearly articulates the conflict that exists in defining Métis in singular terms:

There is no consensus on who is considered Métis or a non-status Indian, nor need there be. Cultural and ethnic labels do not lend themselves to neat boundaries. ‘Métis’ can refer to the historic Métis community in Manitoba’s Red River Settlement or it can be used as a general term for anyone with mixed European and Aboriginal heritage. Some mixed-ancestry communities identify as Métis, others as Indian... (Para. 16)

The practical ramifications of the judgment remain to be seen, as the judgment did not clarify who is considered to be Métis, but rather resolved a long-standing jurisdictional dispute. The Daniels decision promises to be merely the beginning of what will surely be a series of legal cases, as the judgment stated that “determining whether particular individuals or communities are non-status Indians or Métis and, therefore “Indians” under s. 91(24), is a fact-driven question to be decided on a case-by-case basis in the future” (para. 47).

As the definition of Métis becomes increasingly addressed within the juridical arena, Métis political organizations have simultaneously been working to address the crucial question of ‘Who is Métis?’ amongst their own constituents. For instance, according to Peters, in 2002 (near the time of the Powley Decision), the Métis National Council adopted the following definition of Métis:

Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation. The definition described the “historic Métis Nation” as the Aboriginal people “then known as Métis or Half-Breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland,” and it defined “Historic Métis Nation Homeland” as the area of land in “west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known. (as cited in Peters 2005, p. 55)

Contemporary claims of ownership of the term Métis rely on historic usage of the term to support their interests, however this is refuted by not only inconsistent historical usage, but also a diversity of historical naming practices in reference to what may be considered the same group of ‘Métis people’ (Chartrand, 1991). Though Métis were historically referred to by colonial authorities using terms that are inherently racialized such as ‘halfbreed’ (Peterson & Brown, 1985), according to Fiola (2015), Métis people were also identified by their Indigenous relatives using a diversity of naming practices. She explains as follows:

Among the Nêhiyawak (Cree), names include *âpihtawikosisân*, meaning ‘half sons’ or ‘half people’; *O-tee-paym-soo-wuk*, meaning “their own boss” or ‘the independent ones’; *Ēka ē-akimiht*, meaning “not counted” in the treaties; and, even a specific sign made with the hands that means “half wagon, half man.” Names given to us by the Anishinaabeg (Saulteaux/Ojibwe/Chippewa) are *aay-aabtawzid* or *aya:pittawisit*, meaning ‘one who is half’ and *Wiisaakodewikwe(g)* and *Wiisaakodewinini(wag)*, meaning ‘half-burnt woodswoman (women), woodsman (men)’ respectively and referring to their lighter complexion in comparison to full-blooded Native people. French European settlers adopted this translation and also referred to us as Chicot, or Bois brûlés, meaning ‘burnt-wood’ people’. (p. 15-6)

In contrast to MNC’s claims that Métis was a term used primarily in reference to the Métis of the Historic Métis Nation, this was not always the case (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016). Many people who now claim Métis identities historically referred to themselves ‘half-breeds’, despite the negative connotations associated with the term. For instance, Janet (whose narrative appears in section 5.14), states the following:

When did I first know that I was Métis? I didn’t know I was Métis until 1982, but I always knew I was a half-breed. And that’s where it gets a little tricky because you didn’t want to be a half-breed either, you wanted to be an Indian or you wanted to be a white person, but you didn’t want to be a half-breed.

In areas such as northern Alberta, many Métis people were not always called Métis, but sometimes called themselves *Nehiyaw Apihtawkosanak*, which translates to ‘Cree half-cousins’ in the Cree language (Berry, 1999). So while references to the complexions of Métis people existed, Métis people were historically recognized beyond racialized understandings, as independent, mobile, left out of the treaty process, and in terms of their relations. Furthermore, continued “terminological shifts” have impacted the ways in which Métis peoples have been labeled and defined by others (Gaudry, 2015). As a participant of Fiola’s (2015) study explained, “[T]he term Halfbreed is an Other-imposed term. Métis, to some degree, is Other-imposed because it wasn’t one that arose out of my family history” (p. 146). The focus on terminological usage on behalf of political organizations

and ethnohistorians has further muddied contemporary understandings of the sociological variances that may have differentiated various historical communities.

Dominant discourses concerning Métis Nationhood have centred on the historic Red River settlement (or “west central North America” according to MNC), with more recent shifts that seek to include historic Métis peoples from the Upper Great Lakes region. As such, ‘Métis’ communities predate events that are considered to mark the beginning of the historic Métis Nation (such as the Battle of Seven Oaks), scholars have tended to designate Upper Great Lakes métis communities as “other métis” or lower case ‘m’ métis, despite adamant disagreement from ethno-historians. Métis scholar Chris Andersen (2014) contends that such arguments are based on historic distinctions from European and other First Nations communities, mixed ancestry, and the contemporary self-identification as Métis of descendants, which he suggests is a racialized understanding of historic Métis identity that is ultimately detrimental to the Métis as a whole (p. 49).^{6,7} Furthermore, he argues that rather than debating over whether self-identifying Métis communities outside of the geographic and temporal core of Red River Métis are in fact (big ‘M’) Métis, we should be exploring how such communities are Métis (beyond understandings based on miscegenation).⁸ The same holds true for other Métis communities that occupy the geographical, temporal, and sociological edges of the archetypal Métis community based in the Canadian prairies (or the historic Northwest).

Despite significant historical evidence of fur trade activities occurring west of the Rockies (Barman, 2014; Perry, 2001; Watson, 2010), Métis scholarship continues to either ignore historic and contemporary Métis populations in British Columbia or argue that an historical Métis presence in British Columbia has never existed (for example see Dickason, 1985, p. 31). This rather restricted view of historic and contemporary Métis geography can be attributed to the widespread perception that Métis fur traders did not settle collectively in British Columbia as well as the absence of legal rulings in support of Métis in BC that would substantiate claims

⁶ While scholars such as Ens & Sawchuk (2016) acknowledge Chris Andersen’s argument, they stipulate that their approach to Métis ethnogenesis in the Great Lakes “does not focus solely on ‘mixedness,’ nor does it naturalize the Métis; rather it tries to contextualize a ‘process’ of ethnogenesis through a fur trade instrumentality” (p. 48).

⁷ Note that Chris Andersen’s (2014) book *Métis: Race, recognition, and the struggle for Indigenous peoplehood* was released partway through the writing of this dissertation and has profoundly shaped the direction of this work as it represents a shift within Métis scholarship towards better understanding contemporary Métis identity politics.

⁸ Miscegenation refers to racial mixing (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016).

of a Métis presence in BC. In 2006, the British Columbia Provincial Court applied the Powley Test within British Columbia in *R. v. Willison*, to determine whether there was a distinctive Métis community in a specific region prior to ‘effective colonial control’ (1850) and whether hunting was a traditional practice of such a community. While the Provincial Court judge concluded that the accused Mr. Willison had a proven Aboriginal right to hunt, the BC Supreme Court appeal overturned the judgment on the basis that within the trial evidence “there was no historical or contemporary Métis community in the relevant region” (Peach, 2013, p. 289).

Unlike much of Canada where treaties exist, a contentious environment of multiple overlapping First Nations’ claims to territory complicates Métis claims in British Columbia. While some Métis families may have migrated west during the early fur trade, several other waves of Métis peoples moved westward following the federal scrip program to British Columbia, seeking employment, opportunity, and following earlier family members. For instance, Joanie, (whose narrative appears in Section 5.9) describes how her family arrived to live at Crescent Beach, BC:

My mother and father moved out from Alberta in 1939. I was born in 1944. We had a fairly good-sized family. There were five of us and that’s not enormous compared to a lot of Métis families, but it was a big family even at that. And my mother’s parents lived nearby and several of her siblings, my aunts and uncles. And we lived at Crescent Beach, which was a really nice place.

Of the 20 participants interviewed, only one participant identified as Métis on the basis of having an ancestral connection to someone indigenous to British Columbia (versus being descended from the historic Métis nation and its homeland). However, multiple participants demonstrated the ways in which their identities as contemporary Métis people were distinctly connected to British Columbia. For instance, despite having ancestors from Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, Brittany (whose narrative appears in Section 5.5), explains how her identification as Métis has been distinctly connected to the contemporary community that she engages with in British Columbia:

It’s hard for me to identify with Louis Riel, Red River and all that homelands and stuff because I’ve never been there. I’ve been here and I like to identify with my community and other métis people. Just like the things we do. So we try to still follow the culture and we’ll try the bannock, do the jigging and we’ll having drumming sessions...I think it’s being around the Métis community that makes me feel most Métis. Just being around other Métis and at events and gatherings and everything.

Yet, the issue of a lack of legal support for historic Métis communities in BC remains a challenge, as it has

limited the ability of contemporary communities to make particular legal claims. Some scholars continue to argue that historical experiences within British Columbia are similar to those of other regions outside of the Red River settlement, in that “ethnic differentiation was not a matter of blood but a social process reinforced by government policy,” and even in cases where there was an absence of external intervention, it appears that “social forces [determined] patterns of association and identification” (Coates & Morrison, 1986, p. 270; see Barman & Evans, 2009 and Evans, Barman, Legault, Dolmage, & Appleby, 2012). For instance, Barman & Evans (2009) argue for broader understandings of the historical process of métissage within British Columbia, whereby ancestry is traced through ‘kinscapes’- networks and nodes of familial and community relationships tied to both local Indigenous communities and the Historic Métis Nation (Barman & Evans, 2009; Evans et al., 2012).⁹ The process of the ethnogenesis of the Métis living west of the Rocky Mountains can thus be understood as a continuation of the social processes of ethnic formation that once flourished at the confluence of the Assinaboine and Red Rivers. Despite having no successful harvesting rights claims and/or legally validated evidence of a historical community in BC, there is a sizeable amount of people that claim a Métis identity living in British Columbia (upwards of 70,000).¹⁰ Significantly, this work explores the discourses that have shaped constructions (for individuals, groups, and administrative bodies) of what it means to be Métis within Canada and specifically, within the space that has been designated by colonial governing bodies to be the province of British Columbia.

Although the term ‘identity’ is used throughout this thesis, I recognize the importance of specificity, as the spectrum between self-understanding and official classification can be wide (Andersen, 2014). While external forces have had significant impacts on the development of the meanings of ‘Métis,’ so too have internal language and social practices. This study contends that people who claim Métis identities draw on particular racialized, ethno-cultural, and political discourses that have historically constituted the category of ‘Métis,’ but are simultaneously contributing to the formation of the meaning of ‘Métis,’ thus creating a ‘Métis subject.’ As such, identity construction is viewed as an active process, whereby context (such as place) largely determines the

⁹ According to Atkinson et al. (2013), “kinscape refers to the constellation of relations and relatedness that are recognised practically” (1). This term has been recently come into use among Métis scholars to express a particular notion of kin networks (see Macdougall, 2015b and 2016).

¹⁰ According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there are 69,475 self-identifying Métis live in British Columbia, which has likely since grown. MNBC claims to have over 12,000 registered Métis citizens (Métis Nation British Columbia, 2016).

representations and interpretations of identities. Cultural identities can be considered to be representative of unstable points of identification that are selected from particular cultural and historical discourses (or interpretive repertoires). I am particularly interested in the ways in which discourses of mixed-bloodedness, cultural tradition, and nationhood are evoked and resisted and what effect this has on our understandings of what it means to be Métis. Such notions resonate in the comments that Métis people hear from each other and from non-Métis regarding Métis identity.

Employing a critical indigenist research methodology that understands the relationship between the researcher, the participants, the broader Métis community, and the research itself to be of central importance, this study involved interviewing 20 Métis people to give voice to their experiences identifying as Métis residing in the southern interior region of British Columbia. Deploying theoretical lenses that include notions of ‘place-identity’, Foucault’s poststructural subjectivity, and Butler’s concept of ‘performativity’ enables an understanding of contemporary Métis identity as developing through discursive practices including the repetition and citation of conventions and norms (Barker & Galasiński 2001). Participant interviews demonstrate many of the conventions and norms that are repeated by those who identify as Métis, such as references to the Métis Nation Historical Narrative, introducing their ancestry by referencing well-known Métis patronyms, or telling common stories of cultural ambiguity. In this study, I argue that Métis identity is performative in that it is a construction that is tenuously constituted by repeated stylized acts that draw on particular discourses, which are then performed for a real or imagined audience. Drawing on the work of Chris Andersen (2014), I seek to illustrate how individual and group reproduction of certain rhetoric can potentially harm broader struggles for political and economic justice. Furthermore, by understanding the subject as constructed through structural processes, rather than innate beings with universal attributes, groups such as the Métis people can undermine the taken-for-granted authority of external definitions (including those determined through Canadian judiciary). An agentic approach such as performativity means that those occupying particular subject positions can have powerful effects on discourses. Although one may not be able to stand outside of the power relations involved, by having knowledge about the

damaging qualities of certain discourses subjects can intentionally avoid drawing from them and instead choose to reproduce and reify more productive discourses when articulating their identities.

The following chapter details each stage of the research process, while describing the research methodologies employed throughout this study, which include an Indigenist Research (IR) approach, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Narrative Analysis (NA). Furthermore, to be reflexive of my personal influence on the research, I situate the research within my personal experience as a Métis person. Chapter 3 provides a theoretical background regarding identity as it relates to place, narrative, discourse, cultural and social groups, individual and collective agency, Foucault's notion of 'Power/Knowledge,' as well as both Indigenous and postcolonial notions of subjectivity. Furthermore, this chapter details Butler's theory of performativity as it relates to collective and individual resistance and subversion. Chapter 4 examines three of the identified dominant discourses that Métis people engage with (or are externally associated with), both collectively and individually. The first section of this chapter focuses on the racialized discourse of mixed-bloodedness, examining the ways in which rhetoric regarding blood quantum, biology, and hybridity have permeated Métis identification and the demonstrable problems with the propagation of this discourse. The second section of Chapter 4 focuses on the discourse of cultural tradition, examining the ways in which the indigeneity of Métis people is constructed through a lens of uninterrupted ethno-cultural practices, values, and ways of being, which are complicated by the systematic dispossession of Métis people from their traditional land base. This section includes a critical evaluation of the deployment of a discourse of cultural tradition based on difference, the legal application of a cultural rights approach, as well as the challenges of self-identification, cultural appropriation, and ethnic fraud. The third section of Chapter 4 focuses on the discourse of nationhood, whereby Indigenous peoples including the Métis have reinforced the notion of a singular historic and contemporary Nation. Within the context of Métis identity politics, this discourse is exhibited by the citation and repetition of a Métis National Historical Narrative as well as the development of provincial political organizations and citizenship registries. Particular attention is paid to the geographic component of nationhood (as territory is central to both hegemonic state-based and Indigenous notions of nationhood), the arguments against nationhood, the ways in which colonial bodies have

measured (and continue to measure) Métis people through particular state apparatuses, the ways in which Métis organizations have “officially” defined Métis people, and the ways in which the unique geographical and sociological position of British Columbia Métis has impacted Métis identification including the MNBC citizenship application process. Chapter 5 presents and describes the narratives of interview participants, highlighting the ways in which participants draw upon, reproduce, reify, and resist particular dominant discourses. Furthermore, these narratives detail the ways in which issues pertaining to Métis nationhood such as citizenship, access to rights and benefits, and political geography are understood, reproduced, and contested. Chapter 6 summarizes salient aspects of participant narratives including their experiences identifying as Métis in British Columbia, their understandings of ‘Métis,’ their perceptions of formal citizenship and community membership, and the emergence of an underlying ethic of relational accountability. Similar to historic Métis, who, despite being defined by outsiders according to homogenizing and racialized categories, defined their own identity according to their position within particular ‘kinscapes’, participants predominantly located their Métis identity within their family or community, describing values based on obligations to their immediate and extended biological families, fictive kin, and broader community. Furthermore, this chapter examines the ways in which particular racialized, ethno-cultural, and nationalist discourses are drawn upon by participants, while also explaining how a theoretical orientation that understands Métis identity as performative can allow for particular tactics of subversion. Moving forward, a tactical strategy of moving away from Métis nationalism towards Métis peoplehood in order to ensure a collectively-defined Métis futurity is suggested. Chapter 7 concludes by summarizing research results, evaluating restrictions, while making suggestions for future directions of study.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Throughout this research study, an indigenist methodology was employed as the basis for the research design including methods of data collection and analysis. While the notion of a singular Indigenous research paradigm itself is based on problematic discourses regarding epistemological and moral superiority, the decolonial features of an indigenist methodology render an Indigenist Research (IR) approach most appropriate when researching Indigenous peoples with Indigenous people (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). The overarching feature of the methods and theory employed is that of relationality, also referred to as relational accountability. Wilson (2008) explains that an indigenist paradigm is grounded in an inherent obligation to relationships with participants and community that is known as relational accountability.¹¹ One of the central challenges for academics that practice Indigenist Research is that Indigenous methodologies are not defined in the same ways that more conventional methodologies are (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). The researcher's paradigm intrinsically informs the values and theories that permeate the research. Indigenist Research (IR) is not grounded in a need to gain knowledge that can be applied universally through sweeping generalizations, but is understood as relational and contextual (Hermes, 1998; Wilson, 2001, 2008). Thus, an IR process cannot be replicated as it is situated within particular relationships. Indigenist researchers do not consider research to be an objective process, but insist that it should be subjective and that to understand their relational context, researchers must situate themselves and their work. It is for this reason that the following section details my own story, which illustrates my family relations (including ancestors), the land and communities that I connect to, as well as my personal identity journey, all of which informed my unique perspectives throughout this study. Significantly, this ontological perspective has some familiar features with poststructural/postmodern understandings of positionality. If we are to accept the situated nature of the researcher, then contrary to Western science's goal of detached objectivity, political engagement is somewhat inevitable as our analysis is "always interpretative, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint"

¹¹ Note that while Wilson's seminal book 'Research is Ceremony' identified an Indigenous research practice, he has since admitted to revising this term to be 'indigenist' and thus applicable by even non-Indigenous people (Wilson, 2015, personal communication).

(Wetherell, 2001c, p. 385). Poststructural notions of positionality arose as a response to the ‘god-like’ vantage point that was free of bias being claimed by Western scientists and scholars (Haraway, 1988).

Indigenist Research has developed as a response to the colonial legacy of research and the documentation and dissemination of Indigenous knowledges as a “colonial project” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Being critical of conventional Western understandings of knowledge and science, an Indigenous epistemology understands knowledge to be experiential and so inseparable from the knowledge-keeper. Contrary to hegemonic Western definitions of knowledge, Indigenous knowledge is not a compilation of facts or “thing-like bits of information that can be separated not only from their social context but also from the people who ‘know’ them” (Nadasdy, 2003, p. 95). Indigenous knowledge is not necessarily all encompassing or universal, but is contextual and culturally viable for particular localities and lifestyles (Dergousoff, 2008; Kearns, 2013). As Wilson explains, from an Indigenous paradigm, “[K]nowledge is seen as belonging to the cosmos of which we are a part and where researchers are only the interpreters of this knowledge. This distinction in the ownership of knowledge is one major difference between the dominant and Indigenous paradigms” (2008, p. 38). An important characteristic of Indigenous knowledge is that it isn’t legitimated through the validation process of the scientific method, but rather is legitimated by the community that it comes from.

IR involves processes that include reciprocity, accountability, and personal responsibility (Hermes, 1998; Weber-Pillwax, 2004). Research is not thought of as something that is “out there” but is “something that you are building for yourself and for your community” (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 73). The commitment to community is inherent, but the researcher is still required to state their own motivation for entering into research relationships and to continuously reflect on who is benefitting from the research (Estrada, 2005). The goals of IR are meant to be pragmatic, causing the concept of “research for research sake” to be understood as problematic, as the purpose of research is to meet a community need and ultimately to benefit the community (Hermes, 1998). Furthermore, the inclusion of community members at all levels of research is emphasized, while the researcher is viewed as a facilitator of the research process (Weber-Pillwax, 2004). The research process is dependent on enhanced co-operation and collaboration, mutual thinking and reflection, and the sharing of visions for the future.

Consequently, the research process is considered to be of more importance than the research end product (Tuiwai-Smith, 1999). Wilson describes this process as being a sacred ceremony itself, as ceremonies involve bringing together people to bridge space through relationship building (2015, personal communication).

A holistic approach is emphasized and, consequently, interdisciplinary methods are valued (Weber-Pillwax, 2004). The actual methods employed in Indigenous research vary according to the needs of the research, but methods that are compatible with an Indigenous paradigm predominate (McIvor, 2010; Wilson, 2001). Methods are determined by the parameters set by the principles of the culture and are often viewed as a situated response (Hermes, 1998). Storytelling, narrative, and talking circles are often privileged methods within Indigenous research as they are traditionally associated with teaching and learning within Indigenous communities (McIvor, 2010; Weber-Pillwax, 2004). Wilson (2008) argues,

As long as the methods fit the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the Indigenous paradigm, they can be borrowed from other suitable research paradigms. Some methods and strategies have inherent in them more relationship building and relational accountability than others and therefore may be more attractive in an Indigenous paradigm. (p. 39)

Though the methods employed should be as compatible with an Indigenous axiology as possible, due to the enlightenment basis of Western knowledge acquisition, this is not easily achieved. Andersen & Hokowhitu (2007) explain this dynamic as it applies to Indigenous theorists use of poststructuralism:

The alignment of decolonial thinkers with post-structuralism is not surprising given the skepticism of post-structuralists regarding the enlightenment view that reason provides the foundation for deciding between truth and falsehood and, consequently, that through reason the world is intrinsically knowable. Post-structuralism suggests that such a premise is inherently “cultural” and, instead, dwells on dissimilarity, difference and unpredictability. While described as politically impotent, this critique must be taken seriously by Indigenous decolonial theorists whose project is to “decolonise” and, hence, is inherently political. The allure of post-structuralism to some Indigenous theorists is its inherent acceptance of alternative epistemologies and difference and its ridicule of the enlightenment’s universalism. To other Indigenous academics, however, it may be just another western theory, and is, thus, deserving of skepticism. But not inherently so, for let us not fall into the traditional colonial binaries - us and them - for who is us and who is them? (p. 48)

As a result of the issues described above, Indigenous scholars have at times avoided citing Western poststructural critical theorists, despite often including critical concepts that could be easily attributed to critical scholars such as Michel Foucault within their analysis (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). However, collaborative conference symposiums

such as the University of Alberta's 2015 Indigenous Foucault Symposium (and the significant responses to it) suggest that there is space for poststructural theory within Indigenous scholarship.

Employing Western theories remains problematic, as they are often incompatible in terms of the underlying assumptions that are inherently present, such as varying definitions of truth, personhood, reality, and time. Considering the incommensurability of traditional academic methods of research investigation and analysis, the ideals of indigenist research seems difficult if not impossible to achieve in its pure and desirable form. As a result, indigenist researchers often integrate Western methods into a research process that is guided by an Indigenous axiology (see Fiola, 2015). While the goals of IR are certainly admirable and it is not my intent to discredit Indigenous research, the basis upon which the entire notion of IR has been constructed is that of a discourse of indigeneity that understands all Indigenous people to be homogenous in terms of their values and perspectives. Nonetheless, I find Wilson's approach of relational accountability, based on his own observations of Indigenous peoples from around the world and his personal understandings of Cree philosophy to be useful as it is directly related to my own approach of an underlying Métis philosophy of relationality. Thus many of the qualities identified within an IR methodology remain central to my own research aspirations.

I self-consciously acknowledge that there are multiple experiences and discourses that have come to form my understanding of what it means to act 'in a good way,' whether it be growing up in a rural community, a big family, as Fransaskois Catholics, or as Métis. Undoubtedly influenced by other work on Indigenous methodologies, I understand that research done 'in a good way' should be conducted in a specific and ideal fashion that includes being ethical, respectful, critical, reflexive, and humble. Community protocols and codes of conduct should be observed, meaning that researchers should seek approval and appropriate permissions from governing organizations. While the Métis Community Services Society of British Columbia (MCSSBC) and Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) indicated that they were in support this research (in its early stages), I felt that since the research extended beyond these organizations' political borders, there was no one community organization with which a community agreement could have been made. Therefore, consent was made on an

individual basis and permissions were sought repeatedly to ensure the words of participants were respectfully reproduced within this study.

Following the notion that I am accountable to my relationships within the Métis community (acknowledging that the term ‘community’ requires further attention), I asked Maria LaBoucan, a local Métis elder and employee at MCSSBC to advise me and provide me with feedback throughout the research process. Her input had a profound effect on the direction and form of my work. As an individual, she is informed by her own experiences and subject position(s) and I acknowledge that there is no single individual who can entirely represent such a diverse group of people as those who identify as Métis. Furthermore, following the research phase, I presented a brief summary of the preliminary results of my study to MCSSBC. My analysis has been influenced by their feedback as they asked that I emphasize the underlying values of being Métis as opposed to other aspects of the research that may be considered internally divisive.

2.1 My Place, My Relations

It only seems appropriate to situate my family relations and the place(s) that I come from, as my personal experiences identifying as Métis have impacted the research process, including my motivation for conducting this research. I have and continue to struggle with calling myself Métis, as it is based on my ancestral relations, the ways in which I was raised, and my current involvement with local Métis community.¹² I was not raised in a “traditional Métis community,” as the Métis families of Lac Pelletier, Saskatchewan moved apart and only reconvened in the 1960s in the form of Métis Associations that my grandpa Connie was involved in, but I was unaware of as a child. The town of Ponteix that I grew up in and returned to every summer was a typical, small, predominantly white, catholic Fransaskois farming town. Nearby Lac Pelletier was not known to me as a child as the former road allowance where my great grandmother lived as well as other Métis families (including Allarys, Fayants, Guns, LaRocques, Lemeres, Pritchards, Sinclairs, Trottiers, and Whitefords).¹³ Here they lived, trapped, hunted, fished, gathered medicine, made homemade chokecherry wine, gathered for celebrations, spoke Michif,

¹² Note that I use the term ‘local community’ throughout this study in the same capacity as RCAP, “to refer to a relatively small group of Aboriginal people residing in a single locality and forming part of a larger Aboriginal nation or people” (RCAP, 1996, p. 2:ii).

¹³ See more on Métis as “road allowance” people in section 4.3.4.3.

attended church (where they were forced to sit away from the white parishioners), and told bedtime stories about *Wiisakaychak*.^{14,15} I have only learnt these stories as an adult.¹⁶ As a child, Lac Pelletier was recreational; the place where we attended Catholic summer camp, and where our family gathered to go fishing and relax.

I was born in Ponteix, Saskatchewan and I come from two families. My father's family was comprised of French-speaking 'Canadians,' but since the passing of my Pépère, there have been rumblings about long lost Native ancestors, that my Mémère, a Landry and Levasseur, intentionally hid her Cree background. I recognize some truth in such claims as I recall Cree words sneaking into her French. Some aunties have hopes of gaining 'Métis status' for potential benefits for their grandchildren.

My mother's mom, Tova, is second generation Canadian from Denmark. I am told that we look alike and share many personality traits. And my mother's father, Constantine Lamotte was Métis. Connie, a longtime chain-smoker and drinker had a reputation for his sense of humour, love of fishing, work guiding hunters, and ability to quickly break horses. Everyone knew Connie. To this day, I will meet people from across the country who when I mention my home area will ask if I knew him, then proceed to tell a story about him. My mom often states that her grandmother Julia Fayant raised her to a large extent. Stories of Grandma Julia figured prominently throughout my childhood and adolescence. Grandma Julia's mother was Marie-Angelique Fayant who was born in Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan and her parents were Jean-Louis Fagnant and Elise Laplante, who lived between Cypress Hills, Fort Qu'Appelle, Lac Pelletier and Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Jean Louis Fagnant was the son of Antoine Fagnant and Brigitte Desjarlais (both Métis from the Red River Settlement), while Elise Laplante was the daughter of Antoine Plante and Josephte Gagnon (also Métis from the Red River Settlement). Growing up, I was told that my Grandma Julia was a strong Métis woman, who ran the family ranch, was a devout Catholic who

¹⁴ Michif is one of several names to describe the Métis language, which consists of a combination of French nouns and Cree verbs.

¹⁵ *Wiisakaychak* is a trickster or hero represented throughout many Cree stories.

¹⁶ Métis families from Lac Pelletier were forced to move out of the area as it was transformed into a regional park and made into a recreational site for predominantly white settler families. In 2009, Cecil Blanke, a Métis elder born and raised at Lac Pelletier (also a family friend or more likely, extended relative), attempted to fight resort development in the area on behalf of Métis, stating that the proposed development was in the traditional territory of the Ponteix Métis Local (*Kane vs. Lac Pelletier*). She lost on the basis that there had been no previous attempt to assert Aboriginal rights in the area in accordance with the *Powley* decision, that she was not qualified to represent Métis Nation Saskatchewan and thus there was no duty to consult Métis people in the area prior to development. So, when Métis scholars and politicians speak about ties to 'your home community,' I can only think that my home community ceases to exist. That said, there are still Métis people who live around the area of Lac Pelletier and Ponteix.

read tea-leaves, and could do anything that she tried. Despite never meeting her, I've come to know her through the stories that my mom, grandma, and great aunts have told me about her.

As a part of my research project, I wanted to learn more about the perspectives that I have inherited and learned from my family on what it means to be Métis and about my own Métis ancestors, so I began by interviewing a few family members. For example, my aunty Marge describes her acceptance of her Métis identity as implicit. She explains:

It [being Métis] was just accepted. We never thought about it. We weren't ashamed of it; we didn't try to hide it or anything. Well, we accepted it because we saw our grandmother. My mother was raised by her grandmother who was Métis. So, we were able to see that she looked Indian. My great-grandmother was raised in Manitoba in a convent. We met a lot of Métis friends and relatives of my mothers. My mother was raised in Lac Pelletier. Like, my great-grandmother's married name was Fayant. She married the second time after her husband died, her name became Adams. He was Métis also. We did have contact with the relatives. My mother wasn't raised by her mother. Her grandmother (Elise Laplante) raised her because she was born out of wedlock. In those days that was a big taboo. My Mother's mother married a Sinclair. Her mom was in-, they lived in-, not in Lac Pelletier-. It's, you know when you travel between Saskatchewan and Alberta, that town is right there. It's Maple Creek. They lived on the road allowance. In those days they squatted. If you squatted long enough on the land, then you could start paying taxes and it was yours. You didn't buy it. It was because the government wanted the country to be-, people to immigrate and to have farms. I think they had the scrip, but it was never honoured. I don't know, it was the scrip for the old-, the Métis or for the Indians on the reservation that left the reservation. Or they couldn't stay there if they married outside of the Indian tribe. So they were put out and then those Indian people would live on the road allowance. They had no place else to go.

And my mom used to clean fish when she was a girl, for people that were selling fish. You know that was at Lac Pelletier where she lived. And sometimes she didn't even have shoes and she used to have to herd cattle with no shoes on. She did lead a rough life, but she lived a good life. See, and they didn't teach her any religion. She was fifteen years old, she went to the priest in Lac Pelletier and she asked him to baptize her. So, there they confirmed her and baptized her. Yeah, at fifteen she went and asked to be baptized. Probably because she was illegitimate you know? And everything was so taboo in those days. She had so many strikes against her, you know, of prejudice. Both her eyes were crossed. People would stop in the street and just stare, stop and look at her eyes like that, look at her to see her crossed eyes, you know?

See, and her sisters, she had half sisters. She would not bring her children to meet her mother or her half-sisters, certain ones because they were drinking and carousing. And she didn't want her kids to do a lot of drinking. -And probably bootlegging and making their own. That's why Métis don't have such a good name. But my great aunt, which was my mother's mother's sister, her name was Aunty Julia. She had something wrong with one of her legs. She used to come every summer, come and pick me up and bring me to where they lived, where there was no power. She even had a pet gopher she would feed everyday. Every spring when school was out they would come and get me. I would go and stay with her. She just lived on the prairies with her husband, I don't think they were married, I think they were just together. She also looked very Métis. They lived on the road. They were the people that lived on the road allowance. They were kicked out of the reserve because they married out of the Indians.

I also spoke with my mother, who sees herself as Métis largely because of her grandmother's role in her life, but she is adamant that there are no tangible benefits to being Métis. Furthermore, she does not see herself as fitting 'the stereotype' of a Métis person:

I lived with my grandparents. My parents and my grandparents lived in the same house. I don't know if it was not normal to be raised by your grandparents either. My grandmother, who I lived with until I was eleven, she had told me stories about being a Métis. She was an illegitimate child, so she was raised by her grandparents. She wasn't full-blooded Indian and because she wasn't white, I don't think she felt like she fit in. Her eyes were a hazel colour, but she was also cross-eyed. As she was older, she did say, you know, there were people who, from Ponteix, would not sit beside her on a train, because she was Métis. I mean I don't think that they spoke it as Métis. They would treat her like a second-class citizen. She was never ashamed of who she was and she always said to be proud of who you are.

It was pretty common knowledge that our family was Métis. I didn't go about saying "Yoohoo!" you know "I'm Métis." But I didn't-, I didn't hide it either. I didn't say one way or another. There's no benefit to saying you are Métis. It's not like somebody's going to hand you over a cheque or going to pay for your education or whatever. Maybe people think that "[Y]eah, oh there's lots of money for this. Yeah sure, why not? Sign up and you get to go to school for free!" Well, it doesn't work that way.

I mean, people don't think about me as Métis, because I don't look Métis. They probably just think that there's some white person here. I guess in some ways you feel like you need to explain, but other ways, you know, I don't. Yeah, you know, it's not my problem. I accept them for who they are, they can accept me for who I am. I don't have to go that road of judgment. And maybe they don't judge me. I live my life, they live theirs. Do I do a jig? Do I have an infinity tattooed on me somewhere? No.

I was raised with knowledge of my Métis heritage. My mother identified me in school once we moved from Ponteix to Saskatoon, though it didn't feel consequential at the time. It wasn't until we moved from Saskatchewan to Sidney, British Columbia in high school that I noticed the consequence of identifying as Métis. I recall being asked by a classmate if being Métis meant that I was a 'good Indian.' This implied that Indians were bad, and by association, I was also bad. In that instance, I stopped saying that I was Métis. At home, despite our cross-country move, my mom continued to engage with the local Métis association, volunteering to do the local society's bookkeeping.

It wasn't until I moved back to Saskatchewan to attend university that I started to identify outwardly as Métis again. I would be lying if I didn't say that like many others, I felt a sort of 'imposter complex' overcome me at first, as in my own mind I had a stereotyped understanding of what it meant to be 'authentically' Métis. The feeling of being 'inauthentic' faded as I became more knowledgeable about my own relations. My cousin, who openly identified as Métis and was a youth representative for Métis Nation Saskatchewan, encouraged me to reconnect. So, I moved back to Ponteix to live with my Grandma Tova. She told me stories about my mother,

Grandpa Connie, Grandma Julia, and her family and passed down skills that she had learned from Julia, such as how to properly fillet a fish. She told me about my grandpa establishing Métis associations in the 1960s in Southwest Saskatchewan and being met with racism from the very French Canadian families that now seek to claim Métis identities.

A year later, I moved to Kelowna and applied for a position at the university related to Métis research. During my interview I identified as Métis and the interviewer asked me, “What makes you Métis?” I struggled to answer his question. “I know I don’t look Métis,” I thought. I pass as white and acknowledge the privilege of being able to do so, a privilege not extended to all of my relations. “I don’t do anything traditional,” I thought. I don’t have a sash, I don’t speak Michif, I can’t fiddle, and I can’t bead well despite my best efforts. “My grandpa hunted,” I stammered. That was the closest aspect of growing up that I could relate to being Métis. I knew we were Métis, but I didn’t know how to *prove* it. After the interview, I went to my car and cried. I felt like a fraud. I wasn’t an authentic traditional Métis. It has only been through my conversations with other Métis people that I have come to understand that my appearance, language abilities, dress, and MNBC citizenship card do not determine my Métis identity.

I do, however, feel that I was raised with what I consider to be a Métis ‘philosophy,’ though I recognize that this philosophy likely looks different for different people. For me, this philosophy included supporting relations whenever they were on hard times. For instance, during my teenage years, cousins and family friends would come and live with us for extended periods of time (at one point, there were twelve people living in our house, only four of whom were immediate family). Furthermore, we spent extended periods of time with our relatives, which included summers with our grandparents in Ponteix and at Lac Pelletier. My mother was adamant about passing on values such as strength, resilience, independence, and a deep respect for all of our relations including animals and plants. I now recognize that a history of alcoholism and abuse has disrupted the positive aspects of Métis values on both sides of my family, but that those are not my stories to tell. For some family members this destruction originated in religious educational institutions, whereas for others, such as my Auntie Marge, being schooled at a convent was a positive experience.

Since moving to Kelowna, I have been a board member and volunteer at the Kelowna Métis Association (KMA) and it is here that I connect with other Métis people. I also have volunteered and made friends with people from MCSSBC where I introduce my daughter to Métis people and culture at their weekly family night. Through the ceremony of research involved in writing this thesis, I have been strengthened by relationships with Métis people from throughout BC's southern interior. I feel a deep sense of gratitude towards them for welcoming me into their homes and community centres with open minds and hearts.

2.2 The Rituals of Research Ceremony

According to Wilson, research methods act as rituals in the ceremony that is research, as they are practiced and repeated (2008). The following sections include research strategies that have a history of being located within Western educational institutions, however, the ways in which they were deployed throughout the research process reflect an Indigenous approach that held respectful relationships in the highest regard.

2.2.1 Participant Recruitment

20 participants were recruited to take part in this research through various channels, including my own personal and professional relationships. Participation was explicitly voluntary and in several cases, participants contacted me as they had heard about the research through word of mouth, explaining that they would like to take part in the research. Participants were regarded as experts on their own stories, knowledge, and experience. They were interviewed with the central goal of understanding the ways in which Métis identity has been constructed, developed, maintained, represented, and expressed. Participants came from diverse age groups, genders, political orientation, socio-economic backgrounds, and area of residence.¹⁷ Interestingly, out of the 20 participants, the majority were women. The cause for this gender imbalance is unclear, but a gendered analysis of responses could be a fruitful endeavour, though it is beyond the scope of this study. Considering the spatial focus of the study, it is important to note that most participants identified as being from the southern interior of British Columbia, with over half of the participants residing in the Okanagan region, and the others residing throughout other regions of

¹⁷ Note, however, that most participants admitted to having relatively humble upbringings.

BC including seven participants in the Boundary region, and one participant who currently resides in Vancouver, but was born and raised in the Southern Okanagan. With the exception of one interview, each interview was conducted individually and in a private location. Participants were interviewed in places of their choosing (including via Skype), but the interviews occurred primarily in participants' homes, at Métis community centres, and on the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus.

Participants had a variety of educational and employment backgrounds, although there were several community service workers, artists and crafters, as well as students and academics. The degree of community involvement among nearly all participants was fairly significant, however not all participants were particularly engaged with what they considered to be 'Métis politics' at local, provincial, or national levels. While it is evident that these interviews do not represent all perspectives or all areas of the province, a diversity of Métis voices were expressed throughout the interview process, many of which included experiences from living in British Columbia. Overall, this selection process reveals that the intent of this research was not to reveal a single truth, but rather to represent a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives regarding Métis identity.

2.2.2 The Interview

During the initial face-to-face meeting the project and consent forms were verbally explained and written consent was obtained. Interviews were digitally (audio and sometimes video) recorded, while participant observations were documented in a research journal afterwards. At the beginning of the interview, I re-introduced the project and re-explained that the resulting data would be used to inform public documents and presentations, that they could choose not to respond to any questions if they were uncomfortable and that they would have an opportunity to review their words once the transcripts were typed up. To initiate the conversation, I asked participants to tell me about their family and where they were born and raised. This usually provided participants with the opportunity to provide a basis from which I could ask further questions. Such questions depended on the expertise and experiences of participants. Some examples included: 'Have you applied for membership to any Métis organization? What were your reasons for doing this?' and 'Do you think that where you were living affected your identification as Métis? Why do you think this is?' These questions were to only act as initial

guiding questions, as the interviews were to be conversational, providing Métis participants with the opportunity to contribute their unique perspective and voice concerning the issue of Métis identity and identification. As interviews progressed, it became clear that such questions often didn't need to be asked as they were already on the minds of many participants.

Furthermore, certain themes emerged from the interviews that I had not anticipated. For instance, many participants brought up historical family experiences with alcohol abuse, violence within residential schools, positive and negative experiences of formal and informal adoption, as well as contemporary experiences with Indigenous spirituality. Viewing the interview as a shared process and not simply a process of "taking" information (Tuhivai-Smith, 1999), I was conscious of making reciprocal contributions to the exchange. As we progressed through the interview, a foundation of trust was built upon, with participants revealing more information than they had perhaps initially intended. The same was true for me, as I often revealed my own painful experiences so as to give equally to the conversation, meanwhile comforting participants to know that they are not alone in their suffering. In cases where my own opinions differed with participants regarding a certain topic, I reserved judgment throughout the interview so as to allow participants to speak their own truth.¹⁸

Following the interviews, participants were thanked for their participation and asked if they had any questions or concerns about the research project. Consent for the use of the interview data was obtained, at which time participants could choose to consent and be identified, consent and not be identified, or choose to withdraw from the project and have their interview materials returned to them. Interestingly, all participants chose to be identified. Similar to Fiola's (2015) study where all participants also chose to be identified:

[T]he use of real names encourages accountability between the researcher and the participant because the motives and consequences of actions are not cloaked in anonymity. This also gives participants an opportunity to demonstrate where they obtained their teachings and to honour those teachings. (p. 88)

The choice of recognition and the use of real names are supported by an Indigenous research paradigm, despite opposition from many post-secondary institutions' ethical research policies (Evans, 2004; Wilson, 2008).

¹⁸ Although this work refers to discourses and the "truths" that emerge from them, this is not to discount particular "truths" of Métis identity that Métis people see as true to themselves. As this work is grounded in an Indigenous paradigm that understands multiple truths to have the potential to be parallel and even equally true, it is crucial that participants' perspectives are respected and thus considered equally valid.

2.2.3 Member-checking

Following the interview, the transcript was typed up and returned to participants for review, omissions, and corrections. This process, known as member-checking, is a method for ensuring that participants are aware of the contributions they made to the conversation and are in control of the information that they share. It is a common approach within qualitative research to address internal validity and data dependability (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Potential ethical risks were mitigated as participants were offered the opportunity to review interviews and thus could retract or make anonymous any information that they provided throughout the research process. In some cases, sensitive topics were discussed and participants were comfortable sharing with me, but uncomfortable sharing their words publicly. While it is obvious why participants would not want to reveal sensitive information that could affect their own or their relative's reputation or employment, the desire to restrict publicly disclosing their opinions regarding internal politics speaks directly to the challenge of working within a relatively small and close-knit community, where despite the promise of anonymity, participants feared that they would be easily identified and ostracized for being critical of particular individuals or organizations.

Another challenge of member-checking that I encountered through this process was the loss of original voice, as when participants reviewed their transcripts some were critical of their own speech patterns and fearful of being represented as ineloquent or unclear in their speech. For instance, some participants asked that I entirely omit certain speech interrupters, such as the word "like" and phrases such as "you know?" or change the use of the word "yeah" to yes. This dramatically affected the way that the transcripts read and alters the voice of participants. Although this seems to be one of the inherent pitfalls of using member-checking as a method to allow participants control of their data, it could potentially be remedied through the complementary use of video to highlight an individual's unique way of speaking.

2.2.4 Coding

Once participants indicated that the transcripts were acceptable, the interviews were coded, categorized, and analyzed using the NVivo^{qsr} computer software program. Written transcriptions were first topic coded, assigned references and labels within data to the topics, categories, and concepts that they relate to in order to

facilitate further analysis. Meanwhile, the meaning of data was reflected upon so as to arrive at new ideas and categories. My analysis also involved examining the relationships between ideas and categories to see if the content subscribes to or is resistant to particular cultural repertoires (or discourses). Although my initial focus was not on unearthing dominant discourses surrounding Métis identity, it became clear through the initial coding and analysis process that there were several specific discourses that were being repeatedly engaged with, reproduced, resisted, and drawn upon by participants. Furthermore, following my reading of Judith Butler's work on performativity (described in the following chapter), I became interested in understanding the ways in which Métisness is enacted in everyday life (and narratives) through linguistic repetition, citation and referencing, as well as repeated stylization of the body. Thus, following the determination and critical analysis of the main dominant discourses, participant narratives were re-reviewed and re-analyzed individually.

2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to the careful analysis of texts with the aim of unveiling that which is most often taken-for-granted, namely relations of power including “societal power asymmetries, hierarchies, and the oppression of particular groups” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 9). Furthermore, CDA involves identifying discourses associated with specific social practices that sustain such power imbalances. An inherently political approach, CDA involves locating marginalized or silenced voices and understanding the ways in which subjects are positioned, represented, and constructed through discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Wetherell, 2001). Not only are Critical Discourse analysts interested in how individual and group identities are constituted in power relations, but also in how particular social groups benefit from power (Berg, 2009). Power is not analyzed as centred (which means the state and accompanying ideologies) and having peripheral effects, but according to Foucault, one should conduct “an *ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been- and continue to be- invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination” (2003, p. 129). CDA differs from other qualitative approaches in that rather than

seeking to interpret social reality, CDA attempts to uncover the ways in which social reality is effectively produced. According to Phillips & Hardy (2002), “[T]his is the most important contribution of discourse analysis: It examines how language constructs phenomena, not how it reflects and reveals it” (p. 8). Understanding how language practices are shaped by and in turn shape power relations is crucial to discourse analysis, with specific focus on understanding how everyday knowledge is bound up in power dynamics (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Wodak, 2001). Of course, just because a Critical Discourse analyst seeks to tease out power dynamics, does not mean that the researcher stands outside of such power relations and most Critical Discourse analysts are conscious of the need for reflexivity.¹⁹ Wetherell describes the interpretive quality of CDA as follows:

The analyst presents not the facts or an objective summary of what is there to be found, rather, she or he more playfully, and certainly self-consciously, constructs a reading or interpretation. The notion of the analyst’s findings as simply a further version is more in tune with postmodern sensibilities. Here the analysts are not making any claims for the special epistemological status of their conclusions. Indeed, findings is the wrong word. The results are not found they are narrated into being. The analyst’s account is another story to be added to the participants’ account and stories. The kinds of reflexive tactics in feminist and other critical work are often linked to an exploration of power and authority. The act of interpreting the words of another can be an appropriation of their voice. A reflexive exploration can be a means of commenting upon the power relations involved in the construction of authoritative texts. (Wetherell, 2001c, p. 396)

Nonetheless, as a part of the process of engaging in reflexivity, Critical Discourse analysts attempt to step outside hegemonic discourses so that they can identify them in action (Berg, 2009). Hegemonic discourses are understood as historically produced, temporally and spatially situated and stabilized by dominant structures (and groups) so that “the effects of power and ideology in the production of meaning are obscured and acquire stable and natural forms: they are taken as ‘given’” (Wodak, 2001, p. 3). For Foucault, analyzing discourse involved asking the question ‘who does discourse serve?’ (Foucault, 2003). Access and control of discourse is perhaps a common question for Critical Discourse analysts, however it is a controversial topic as discourse cannot necessarily be owned or controlled by one group, but is co-constructed.

¹⁹ Reflexivity is based on the postmodern argument that there are no universal truths or absolutely objective positions. Wetherell describes this argument as follows: “[I]f the process of analysis is always interpretative, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint, if that is the way things are, then why not be as explicit as possible about one’s background values? Why not highlight these, bring them into consideration, actively choose the guiding principles, display them to readers of the work and make them the subject of debate? Postmodern skepticism encourages critique and the subversion of authority through reflexivity and deconstruction” (2001c, p. 385).

Discourse is often examined at both micro and macro levels (Wetherell, 2001b), not focusing only on texts and social practices, but also including a substantial analysis of the context in which discursive activity takes place (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). That said, it is problematic to define the line between discourse and social practice (Wetherell, 2001c). Generally, CDA has a reputation for being difficult and perhaps slightly unclear, as “the methodology is often left implicit rather than made explicit” (Berg, 2009, p. 219). This is perhaps a response to the inherent critique of Critical Discourse Analysis of hegemonic discourses of research methods that claim objectivity. However, CDA might be considered a sort of “difficult ‘craft skill,’ one that takes some time to learn and one that is always fraught with the very problems it seeks to define” (p. 221). Paradoxes aside, CDA provides the opportunity for researchers to customize their analysis with careful explanation. This study, for instance, though along the lines of CDA involves content analysis (as opposed mechanistic counting of specific speech instances), whereby textual content is connected to broader discursive contexts (see Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Similar to the tradition of grounded theory, data collection is not a phase of research, but continues as discourses can alter during the research period, as a result of new texts contributing to their iterative formation (Wodak, 2001). Of course, this means that discourses can never be completely studied or described, but small subsets of texts can be analyzed to provide clues to their formation at certain points in time (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Like Hollway (2001), my choice to centre my analysis of Métis identity on the three key discourses of racialized, ethno-cultural, and political constructions of ‘Métis’ was based on a combination of what was suggested by my initial attempt at coding as well as my own knowledge on the subject. Prior to my second attempt to code the interview data, I examined these three discourses in detail as they related to Métis identity specifically, but also as they related to broader socio-cultural contexts. CDA was my primary method for tracing the historical construction of these discourses as they related to Métis identity, while Narrative Analysis (NA) (described below) was also employed to connect the words of interview participants to the dominant discourses. I acknowledge that the ways in which I selected and described these discourses have been co-constructed by the academics with whom I have discussed my work, the participants who I interviewed, and the Métis community members who have advised me throughout the research process (including my family). The saliency of these

discourses became evident through such conversations, but as I am aware of the critique of CDA as being overtly biased and ignoring contrary data (Jacobs, 2006), I should be explicit in stating that there are multiple other possible discourses which I could have chosen to focus on. Problematically, this critique is based on the notion of objectivity and good scientific practice, one that is implicitly contested through my employment of postmodern theories.

Most importantly, I selected a CDA approach because it sees identity as “a fluid, dynamic and shifting process, capable of both reproducing and destabilizing the discursive order” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 34). Furthermore, CDA provides a theoretically grounded method for answering the question of how subjectivities are constituted relationally, how certain subject positions might be more oppressive than others, while also providing an avenue for subversion (through the application of Butler’s theory of performativity). Through studying the discourses that inform Métis identity, we can assess their positive and negative effects, while locating opportunities to forge new opportunities for defining what it means to be Métis.

2.4 Narrative Analysis

Narrative Analysis (NA) was used in combination with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to study participant interviews. The combination of these methods for studying identity is not a novel approach, as studying the kinds of stories that people tell can assist in exploring everyday linguistic practices that contribute to identity claims (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Defina, 2006). Similar to discourse analysts, narrative analysts understand identity to be constructed through the narratives that we tell about ourselves and others (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Riessman describes NA as “a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (2008, p. 11). Moreover, “[N]arrative analysts interrogate intention and language- how and why incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers” (p.11). NA is a useful method for examining the ways in which group representations are reproduced and managed by individuals, while also providing the opportunity to locate mechanisms for resistance and subversion (Defina, 2006). In the context of this study, NA assists in understanding how and why self-identifying Métis people repeat certain language practices and rhetorical statements. This includes determining what kinds of statements are permissible, what

kinds of statements are considered taboo or silenced altogether, and how certain narratives might subvert or resist dominant discourses associated with being Métis.

NA considers the context in which language practices occur to be fundamental to their meaning and the relation of such practices to broader contexts to be significant (Riessman, 2008). As a method that is complementary to CDA, NA focuses on the details of extended narrative accounts, as opposed to other conventional approaches that distil and fragment interview responses into strictly defined codes and categories. While it may be unusual to maintain such significant bodies of participants' words, in this study it was often necessary in order to maintain the context of conversations. For this reason, interview transcripts were re-arranged into story-like form for continuity and flow and are presented in this study in as detailed manner as possible (see Evans, Gareau, Krebs, Neilson, & Standeven, 1999 for an example of a similar strategy). Though the selective extraction of participant text within academic writing has been subject to critique within Indigenist Research spheres for being yet another colonizing mechanism that decontextualizes Indigenous knowledge (Nadasdy, 2003), due to the restrictive nature of a dissertation, certain portions of our conversations and a few selected interviews that were repetitive were omitted with the permission of participants.

Narrative Analysis typically involves a case study approach, rather than making universal generalizations. Riessman argues, “[M]aking conceptual inferences about a social process (the construction of an identity group, for example, from close observation of one community) is an equally ‘valid’ kind of inquiry with a long history in anthropology and sociology” (2008, p. 13). Taking a case study approach to study participant narratives involved close interpretation of texts, with attention paid to the ways in which cultural stories, representations, ideas, and images were drawn from to construct meanings pertaining to Métis identity and consequently, produce various collective beliefs regarding Métisness. Importantly, NA also allows researchers to determine the implicit stances of narrators towards social definitions. In the case of this study, this includes what constitutes being Métis. As Defina (2006) illustrates, “[S]tories provide models of the world in which actions and reactions are related to identities and therefore represent and conceptualize social relationships. The analysis of the relationships between actions and identities leads us to implicit (or explicit) self and other representations”

(Defina, 2006, p. 353). This kind of close textual reading is significant in understanding group identification while avoiding the temptation to overgeneralize.

2.5 Summary

Restrictions are inherent in ethical Indigenous research, as obligations to community members necessitate study limitations. Simpson explains (2014):

It is in robustly acknowledging these complicated histories of agency, imposition, pushback, acquiescence, aspiration, and sovereignty that anthropological limits are produced. These are complicated things; not everything can be conveyed; this is so not a kinship pattern. Rather than stops, or impediments to knowing, those limits may be expansive in their ethnographic non-rendering and in what they do not tell us. (p. 113)

Taking the stance that relational accountability is key to conducting respectful research; I also see critique to be “essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 747). I echo Byrd’s (2009) sentiment that there is a multitude of possible strategies that indigenist scholars can employ including, but not limited to, those defined under the umbrella of an Indigenous paradigm. The following chapter illustrates the various theoretical lenses regarding identity that were applied throughout the study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Identity is a complex concept that breaches nearly all aspects of social science inquiry. The term was first introduced by Aristotle and later employed by Locke and Hume; identity stems from the Latin *idem-identitas*, which translates to ‘the same’ (Christou, 2006). While identity has become one of the primary subjects of analysis within the field of cultural studies, its prominence can be largely attributed to psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson, who situated the concept within a social and historical context (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Poole, 1999).

Understanding the complexity of contemporary Indigenous identity politics requires a deep knowledge of the various influencing factors and theoretical ideas that have historically produced current circumstances. The term ‘identity’ has been critiqued for meaning “too much, too little, or nothing at all, depending on how it is used,” while also “[conflating] various and even conflicting social relations, resulting in comparatively less nuanced accounts of power and politics” (Andersen, 2014, p. 174). Andersen (2014) prefers to differentiate between self-understanding and external categorization, however, the notion of self-understanding can rely heavily on essentialist theories that “locate identity ‘inside’ persons, as a product of minds, cognition, the psyche, or socialization practices,” thus suggesting that “identity is a taken-for-granted category and a feature of a person that is absolute and knowable” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 9). Indigenous perspectives of personhood differ according to varying Indigenous contexts that differ from place to place. The following sections trace the historical production of the theoretical spectrum of identity including enlightenment and social subjects, and concepts that inform poststructural theories of subjectivity.

3.1 Enlightenment and Social Subjects

The concept of the enlightenment subject is that which is most commonly employed within the Western world. It is the idea that as individuals we possess a true-self or essential core that is unified, rational, centred, and coherent (Barker & Galasiński, 2001). Stemming from Kantian-Cartesian, Lockean, and Humean notions of the self, the enlightenment subject is formed through a series of experiences, which results in a narrative of biographical continuity (Pile & Thrift, 1995). Such notions of the personal subject have become explicitly political. As Bondi explains, identity politics are inherently based on the popular Western concept of the self, as

they result from the idea of rediscovering existing coherent (essential) identities, which then must succumb to dominant positions regarding individuality and authenticity (1993). Cultural identity, similarly, is often defined as a fixed collective ‘true-self,’ with a shared history and cultural frame of reference, despite the fragmented realities of all cultures (Hall, 1993).

While the enlightenment subject largely concerns the individual self, the notion of the social subject has a tendency to understand the subject as divided between the individual self and the social self. The field of psychology has influenced theories of identity, especially in terms of understanding the relationship between the individual self and that of the social self. For instance, psychoanalysis does not subscribe to the belief that there is a coherent unified self, but instead understands individuals to be deeply conflicted (Burr, 1995). Tajfel’s concept of Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been previously employed within the context of understanding Indigenous identities on a social-psychological level (see Berry, 1999 and Halldorson, 2009). Influenced by Hegel’s understanding of “identity as a social location” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 24), Tajfel theorized identity as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [sic] knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (1981, p. 255). While the social identity of an individual can only describe limited aspects of the self at very specific points in time, Social Identity Theory is a valuable tool for examining the socially shared patterns of individual behaviour that occur within a group.

As a theory of dynamic social construction, SIT relies on the psychological process of self-categorization, or how one comes to identify with a social group.²⁰ According to Halldorson (2009), “[I]ndividuals internalize these categories as the social aspects of their own self-concepts and the social cognitive processes relating to these forms of self-conception produce group behaviour...It is the process of self-categorization that makes the individual's group identity salient” (p. 18). The social categories that individuals subscribe to do not necessarily require face-to-face interaction, but instead, function as psychological groups that influence individual behaviour. These categories are historical in the sense that they occur within a specific context. Consequently, it is the “sum

²⁰ Group is defined as “a cognitive entity that is meaningful to an individual at a particular point in time” (Halldorson, 2009, p. 13).

total of social group identifications used by an individual to define him or herself [that] creates their social identity” (Halldorson, 2009, p. 12). Perceptions of how one should behave as a group member and the saliency of their membership has a direct impact on an individual’s social behaviour, as according to Tajfel (1974), behaviour is an expression of identity. Changing historical and local circumstances affect membership loyalties as meanings given to social categories are subject to continuous shifts (Defina, 2006). Within this conception of identity, it is crucial that membership is not taken to be consciously selected or an “entirely creative and locally managed process,” as “the identities that people display, perform, control, or discuss in interaction are based on ideologies and beliefs about the characteristics of social groups and categories and about the implications of belonging to them” (p. 351-2).

Tajfel’s theory of Social Identity Theory can be considered derivative of the structuration school of thought whereby “through socialization, rules of behaviour are absorbed and become taken for granted, and the skills appropriate to given social contexts are acquired and reinforced” (Pred, 1984, p. 280). Furthermore, socialization and social reproduction are seen as society’s mechanisms for shaping the individual, while the individual simultaneously forms society. Postmodern, poststructuralist, and constructionist (or discursive psychologist) scholars argue that the theoretical dichotomy between social and individual identities remains problematic, as the individual and the social self should instead be conceived of as being complexly intertwined.

3.2 Indigenous Perspectives of the Subject

Theorist Michel Foucault’s characterization of selves and truth as culturally and temporally situated is significant in that it means that ‘other’ cultural and temporal spaces may produce differing characterizations of truth. Furthermore, selves can be understood as historically and culturally produced. His concept of ‘regimes of truth’ refers to historically specific social mechanisms that produce discourses which function as true in particular times and places (Foucault, 1972). This can have a significant impact on the ways in which personhood might be expressed and held to be true from an Indigenous perspective. Geertz argued the following:

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organized into a

distinctive whole and set contrastively against a social and natural background is, however, incorrigible as it may seem to us, a rather particular idea within the context of the world's cultures. (1984, p. 126)

If we are to understand truth and 'regimes of truth' as culturally defined, then it is possible to conceive of a non-Western subject differently. For different Indigenous peoples, identity development does not emphasize the self as an individual, but involves establishing connections and understanding oneself in relation to all of creation. As a result, communal structures shape personal and group identity in ways that differ from Western culture. This is often termed self-in-relation, as it is understood as "the expression of individual experience grounded in a particular community" (Kohl, cited in Delpit, 1995, p. 15). For example, relational or ecological conceptions of personhood (such as the Syilx notion of *Tmix*²¹) can be considered to be equally valid as the Enlightenment Subject, the Social Subject, and even the Foucauldian 'subject' in that each notion of subjectivity is held to be true by its own internal standards (regime of truth).^{21,22} The possibility of the co-existence of parallel knowledges (and truths) has been previously expressed within an Indigenous context by Wilson, who explains what he considers to be the theory of "a circular way of looking at knowledge":

In this worldview, no one theory or idea is better or more right than another. Cultures that are based upon this view of knowledge are much more likely to evolve into egalitarian societies. Since facts or ideas (and people) are held to be equally important, it is not possible or necessary to prove your point of view by devaluing other views. With this view comes the recognition that any idea is possible, depending upon your standpoint. Because I am an [sic] unique individual, the way that I view an idea is going to be different from the way that anyone else views it. That won't make me any more right or wrong than [sic] anyone else, and means that I also have to respect that their view will be different than mine. This leads to the possibility or reality of multiple truths existing at the same time (rather than one theory ruling over all others). (1999, p. 3)

Wilson's conceptions of multiple truths and selves-in-relation are in clear contrast to Enlightenment era notions of knowledge, truth, and personal identity that continue into the present. Though it would be ideal to apply indigenous notions of identity throughout this study, it is clear that "the nature of a person is a conception so bound up with Western presuppositions that became embedded in the colonial project that it may be irreversibly tainted" (Pile & Thrift, 1995, p. 9). For the purpose of this study, Western social constructionist as well as

²¹ See section 3.4 for more explanation of poststructural approaches to subjectivity.

²² My understandings of *Tmix*²¹ have grown through learning from Syilx scholar Dr. Jeanette Armstrong as a student in her Enowkinwixw class. In her writing she describes her identity as embedded in the land as follows: "I know the mountains, and, by birth, the river is my responsibility: They are part of me. I cannot be separated from my place or my land" (Armstrong, 1996, p. 461).

complementary poststructural theories of the subject (such as those described by Foucault and Butler) will be discussed in this theoretical chapter, with Métis notions of relationality (or *wahkootowin*) addressed in Chapter 6's discussion.

3.3 Place-Identity

The notion of place-identity is particularly relevant in discussions of Indigenous peoples as relationships to land are integral in understandings of indigeneity (further described in the following chapter). Scholars from a variety of fields of social analysis have been engaging in research concerning the relationship between people and places. Terms like spatiality have been created and used to “capture the ways in which the social and spatial are inextricably realized one in the other” (Keith & Pile, 1993, p. 6). Cultural anthropologists, ecologists, and geographers have been at the forefront of examining the ways in which environments and identities are mutually constituted (Escobar, 2001). Within the field of human geography, the distinction between space and place has been integral to broader understandings of identity as it relates to place. Relph (1976) was instrumental in articulating the common understanding that “space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places” (p. 2). Building on such ideas, Massey described space as “a set of social relations that are stretched out,” with places being “locations of particular sets of intersecting social relations” (quoted in Paasi, 2002, p. 807). For many human geographers, recognizing place as constructed has been critical to opposing essentialist notions of identity (Entrikin, 1997). Challenging earlier notions of place as fixed and mapped out territories, places are increasingly accepted as being “necessarily multiple, dynamic, fragmented, and changing” (Broto, Burningham, Carter & Elghali, 2010, p. 954). According to Oakes (1997), “[P]lace becomes the geographical expression of the interactions between individual action and abstract historical process” (p. 511). Places, then, are not restricted to being a matter of location or scale, but instead, are accepted as socially constructed, represented, and narrated, and emerging out of historically contingent processes and practices as well as the structural features that support them (Paasi, 2002; Pred, 1984; Tuan, 1975).

Emerging from such studies of place and space is a discussion concerning the role of place in identity formation (Entrikin, 1996). Known as place-identity or place-based identity, this concept refers to “aspects of

identity defined in relation to the physical environment” (Broto et al., 2010, p. 954). Moving beyond Cartesian notions of space-as-container, place-identity stems from postmodernist notions that “identity is constituted by the interactions between the extra-local forces of political economy and the historical layers of local social relations” (Oakes, 1997, p. 510). As a constitutive feature in the politics of identity, place is crucial to narratives of the self, with particular expressive factors of identities being represented in relation to places (Broto et al., 2010; Christou, 2006; Paasi, 2002). Not to be misunderstood as simply a setting or stage that pre-exists performances of identity, place is recognized as the contextual basis that forms identity (Entrikin, 1997; Gregson & Rose, 2000). Therefore, identity is not only an individual or social category, but is also inherently spatial.

Much of the focus within human geography has been on the ways in which territorial place-based identity combined with ethnicity, gender, religion, race, and class can result in particular power relations and, consequently, political mobilizations (Christou, 2006b; Entrikin, 1996). Such power relations are closely related to the identity politics that have been at the forefront of the political landscape since the 1960s. These conversations have been marked with topics such as collective memories, placelessness, diaspora, and mobility. For instance, the role of place as a repository of collective memories and as a trigger for self-reflection has been instrumental in discussions of diaspora and belonging (Basso, 1996; Entrikin, 1997; Goeman, 2008).

Metaphors of mobility including migration, diaspora, and displacement have resulted from expanding globalization as placelessness “has become the essential feature of the modern condition, and a very acute and painful one in many cases, such as those of exiles and refugees” (Escobar, 2001, p. 140). Some geographers have argued that mobility has resulted in a profound loss of distinct cultural identity, including the erosion of traditional knowledge as related to place (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). However, recent work within mobility research suggests that the binary of home and movement have been disturbed, as being mobile no longer necessarily equates to being rootless, while being rooted is no longer synonymous with a sense of cultural belonging (Taylor, 2010). Mapping territorial cultures and their homelands has become increasingly problematic for researchers, as a result of what Edward Said (1979) termed, “a generalized condition of homelessness” (p. 18). Based on “a non-essentialist identity that emerges out of identifications rather than an essence” (Pratt, 1999, p.

153), mobility studies have had a significant impact on place and identity theory. Mobility studies are of particular relevance to Indigenous identities in Canada, as relationships to traditional homeland territories have been so dramatically disrupted through processes of colonial expansion, attempts at assimilation, and, most recently, urbanization. Place-identity as a theoretical lens for understanding identity in relation to land is a valuable approach when combined with poststructural notions of the subject. Many geographers have taken up poststructural theories, such as those put forth by Michel Foucault in their own discussions of the function of space and place in subject formation (Berg, 2009).

3.4 Poststructural Subjectivity

Identity theory transformed during the cultural turn within social analysis, surpassing the “older positional view of identity (which argued that social location determines subjective identity) in favour of more ‘discursive’ treatments, focusing on representations categorizations considered relatively independent of social position” (Bottero, 2010, p. 4). Taking an anti-essentialist stance, individual identity has come to be understood by theorists who employ poststructuralist, constructionist, and postmodern ideas as a process that is continually reconstructed through an “internal-external dialectic” that involves both self-definition and representation and external definition and interpretation (Christou, 2006). Therefore, “identities are socially produced” and “there is no aspect of identity that lies outside social relations” (Taylor, 2010, p. 3). Theorists employing poststructural ideas often (they might not always) refer to the concepts of ‘subject positions’ and ‘subjectivity’ “to understand what it is to ‘be’ a sentient being and engage in relations with other subjects and objects” (Berg, 2009, p. 216). Subject positions personify particular forms of knowledge that are produced through discourse (Hall, 2001a). In turn, discourse is considered to be regulated ways of speaking/practice that offer individuals subject positions “from which to make sense of the world while ‘subjecting’ speakers to the regulatory power of those discourses” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 31).

The production of identities is understood to occur within a matrix of similarity and difference, causing identities to be incomplete, shifting, internally fractured and fragmented, and unstable (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Bondi, 1993; Hall, 1993). Temporarily stabilized by regular behaviour (social practice), identities are

discursive-performative: “[I]dentity is best understood as discursive practice which enacts or produces that which it names” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 61). The self is not coherent, but is simply a description that is co-constructed through transient identification with multiple and often diverging texts (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Accordingly, “our subjective experience of ourselves, of being the person we take ourselves to be, is given by the totality of subject positions, some permanent, some temporary and some fleeting, that we take up in discourse” (Burr, 1995, p. 145). Individuals often incorporate contradictory subject positions within differing self-narratives, but are required to resolve such contradictions in order to perpetuate a coherent and rational self (Hollway, 2001).

3.5 Discourse

The term discourse is often understood to represent “taken-for-granted, and most often, hidden, frameworks of ideas that structure both knowledge and social practice. Discourses are thus sets of ideas *and* practices that give statements, texts, rhetorics, and narratives particular kinds of meanings” (Berg, 2009, p. 216). Poststructural approaches to discourse, such as those theorized by Michel Foucault, differ from social constructionist approaches in that for Foucault, discourses are a multifaceted set of conflicting positions and principles that are actualized in everyday practices. They produce “forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge, which [differ] radically from period to period, with no necessary continuity between them” (p. 74). Thus, discourses produce the possible subjectivities that can be “taken up” that then comprise the unstable, temporal, shifting content of our subjectivities. Consequently, social interactions are given meaning through discourse and social reality is a product of discourse (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

The perspective that identity is a product of prevailing discourses taken up by particular subject positions is often attributed to Michel Foucault’s (1972) genealogy of the subject, whereby the subject was described as discursively constructed within a historical context (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Burr, 1995).²³ Related to Foucault’s early work, social constructionist approaches to subjectivity and discourse differ slightly from later post

²³ Though Foucault did not necessarily subscribe to the label of being a poststructural theorist, his later work was particularly influential within poststructural spheres (see Section 3.6).

structural understandings. For instance, approaching subjectivity from a social constructionism perspective,

Burr (1995) describes the significance of taking up subject positions within particular discourses in the following:

Once we take up a subject position in discourse, we have available to us a particular, limited set of concepts, images, metaphors, ways of speaking, self-narratives and so on that we take on as our own. This entails both an emotional commitment on our part to the categories of person to which we are allocated and see ourselves as belonging and the development of an appropriate system of morals (rules of right and wrong). Our sense of who we are and what is therefore possible and not possible for us to do, what is right and appropriate for us to do, and what is wrong and inappropriate for us to do thus all derive from our occupation of subject positions within discourse. (p. 145)

The idea of the subject position is based on the idea that humans to inherit the social world into which we are born. To make ourselves intelligible as individuals, we draw on the available ‘resource material’ from particular conceptual repertoires, including cultural practices and language (Barker & Galasiński, 2001; Burr, 1995).

According to social constructionists, conceptual repertoires can be drawn upon strategically to aid in institutionalizing particular patterns (and practices) of resource distribution, while simultaneously influencing specific constructions of identities (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). ‘Resource material’ and, more importantly, subject positions are not equally available to every individual and may be limited by specific restrictions. For instance, as Hollway (2001) explains, since “traditional discourses concerning sexuality are gender-differentiated, taking up subject or object positions is not equally available to men and women” (p. 277). Furthermore, only so many subject positions are available within every discourse, each of which is accommodated by specific possibilities and limitations, what Davies and Harré termed as a ‘structure of rights’ (Burr, 1995). According to Burr (1995), “[D]iscourses address us as particular kinds of person, and furthermore we cannot avoid these subject positions, the representations of ourselves and others that discourses invite” (p. 142). This is not a passive process, however, as the subject’s recognition is reflexive and there can be a level of investment in particular positions. The emotional investment that subjects have in particular discourses was not an understanding that was explained by Foucault, but has since been taken up by other scholars (Barker & Galasiński, 2001). Hollway explains her use of the term ‘investment’ as follows: “there will be some satisfaction or pay-off or reward for that person [who is invested in a particular position]...the satisfaction may well be in contradiction with other resultant feelings. It is

not necessarily conscious or rational. But there is a reason” (2001, p. 279). This argument for ‘investment’ is a perhaps a reaction to what has been termed the ‘death of the subject’ (Burr, 1995).

3.6 Agency

The ‘post’ in poststructuralism requires further elaboration. Earlier structural conceptualizations of human beings suggested that they were little more than “puppets operated by structures they cannot see” (Burr, 1995, p. 145). This extreme position was termed ‘the death of the subject,’ as it didn’t account for human agency (a crime that Foucault’s early work was also accused of). Many theorists whose works are informed by poststructural ideas, including Foucault (1985), argue that agency is a discourse in itself related to freedom and individual determination. Though many social constructionists are influenced by poststructuralism and even Foucault’s work, the notion of human agency is a critical point of differentiation between poststructuralism and social constructionism. Constructionists and discursive psychologists such as Horace Harré agree that agency is “a product of particular grammatical and linguistic conventions,” but emphasize the individual’s ability to make choices within specific interpretive repertoires (Burr, 1995, p. 133).²⁴ Yet, such choices are understood as limited, as each subject position has a restricted set of concepts and narratives to draw from to represent themselves. According to Burr, social constructionists who are influenced by poststructural thinking “quite clearly hold the human subject to be simultaneously produced by discourse and manipulators of it, and see this as a strength of poststructuralist thinking” (1995, p. 141). Opportunities to strategically manoeuvre within discursive practices and negotiate identities hinges upon the positions available to subjects within the flow of social interaction (Burr, 1995; Philips & Hardy, 2002).

Judith Butler’s work, though informed by queer and poststructural theories also differs slightly in her discussion of agency. To address “the political toothlessness of a Foucauldian account of identity” in regards to agency, Butler (1997) theorizes that agency “exceeds the power by which it is enabled,” so that “the subject is never fully determined by power, but neither is it fully determining” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 32). She

²⁴ Potter & Wetherell (1987) define interpretive repertoire as “a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events,” stating that it is “more specific and analytically focused concept than the Foucauldian notion of discourse” (quoted in Taylor, 2010, p. 51).

embraces the concept of ‘performativity,’ which understands identities to be “constructed through discursive practice which enacts or produces that which it names through citation and reiteration of norms or conventions” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 28).²⁵ So, while following Foucault’s later work and understanding discourse to discipline its subjects, for Butler (1990), discourse also produces the subject (Gregson & Rose, 2000; Pile & Thrift, 1995). Butler differentiates between the social constructivist idea that “language is a tool for understanding”, whereas for poststructuralists “reality is constructed by language” (2005, p. 4). Furthermore, she emphasizes the importance of norms in “prepa[ring] a place within the ontological field for a subject” versus the social constructionist notion of a subject appropriating norms (p. 9).

Drawing on Foucault, she makes a distinction between his earlier work where he treated the subject as an effect of discourse and his later position, whereby the subject is understood as forming according to “historically established prescriptive codes” or norms, that both “preceded and exceed the subject” (p. 17, p. 18).²⁶ Thus, Butler’s stance on the notion of agency or self-making is that “there is not making of oneself outside of a mode of subjectivation and, hence, no self-making outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take” (18). Furthermore, she explains the tensions between self-making, agency, and the norm as follows:

[T]he norm does not produce the subject as its necessary effect, nor is the subject fully free to disregard the norm that inaugurates its reflexivity; one invariably struggles with conditions of one’s own life that one could not have chosen. If there is an operation of agency or, indeed, freedom in this struggle, it takes place in the context of an enabling a limiting field of constraint. (p. 19)

So, following Foucault’s later work that understood regimes of truth to offer the framework in which self-recognition can occur, Butler sees norms not as being necessarily deterministic of the subject, but as acting in relation, as “the point of reference for any set of decisions that we make” (p. 22). Butler thus takes an anti-essentialist stance that is not limited to understanding the subject as only structured by historically produced discourses, but also as capable of ‘troubling’ dominant discourses through discursive practices. Although individuals are somewhat restricted to the discourses that their subject position can access, it is possible to, in a sense, ‘rewrite their scripts’; however, the validity of such attempts are tested through social relationships.

²⁵ See section 3.10 for a more thorough explanation of Butler’s ‘performativity’.

²⁶ See section 3.8.1 for a more thorough explanation of norms.

3.7 Language and Social Practices

Much of the emphasis following the discursive turn has focused on the role of language within discourse, however it is important to note that the binary opposition between language and practice is the product of discourse itself and that language is a practice in itself. Language and practices define and produce knowledge, governing the ways in which ideas and topics can be meaningfully talked about and put into practice (Hall, 2001a). While language has long been a focus of structuralism, poststructuralism shifted away from examining the relationship between utterances and their meaning towards the value-producing practices in language and the accumulated social use of words within a structure (Shapiro, 2001; Wetherell, 2001b).

As a result of the focus on language in producing meaning, 'texts' are often the objects of discourse analysis. For many theorists who employ poststructuralist ideas (but not all), texts are understood in the broadest sense as the products of social and cultural knowledge (Berg, 2009). Operating within the restrictive limits of the discourses in which they are situated, subjects may produce texts through utterances and social practices (Hall, 2001a). According to Jacobs (2006), texts represent "a body of statements that perform a number of functions, for example, rhetorical, legitimising and synthesising activities..."(p. 45). While texts may have instrumental functions, readers/hearers of texts do not have a passive relationship to texts (Wodak, 2001). Texts are read/heard relationally, in that their meaning accumulates from their interconnection with the discourses that they draw from and other texts that exist alongside them. Additionally, texts are made meaningful through processes of construction, distribution, and consumption (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The contextual nature of texts is termed 'intertextuality' (Hall, 2001b). Texts can be recontextualized as dominating discourses shift, making texts typical sites of power struggles (Wodak, 2001).

Meaning is constantly being added to, extended, transformed, and instantiated by multiple interwoven discourses. Following Derrida, Stuart Hall has argued that, "there is no one, true meaning. Meaning 'floats.' It cannot be finally fixed" (Hall, 2001b, p. 325). Furthermore, meaning cannot be owned and is always susceptible to slippage. Wetherell explains, "[W]e have the illusion of control over meaning as we speak but this is an illusion since the meaning of utterances and statements is again determined by the place they hold in a discursive

system” (2001b, p. 290). Since meaning is never stable, it is subject to multiple iterations and so is a joint production produced within culture (Wetherell, 2001b). This claim has definitive socio-political consequences, as individuals, groups, and institutions can strategically mobilize particular meanings. This has been termed a ‘politics of representation’ and points to the central role of power in the production of meanings and knowledge (Wetherell, 2001b).

3.8 Foucault’s ‘Power/Knowledge’

While Foucault was influenced by the linguistic turn, his understanding of discourse extended beyond language to include social practice and more specifically, institutional regulation. While his analysis was similar to semioticians in terms of his focus on specific representations and texts, Foucault’s analysis included the entire discursive formation to which the object of study (text, practice, representation, etc.) belonged. According to Hall (2001b), in comparison to linguistic-focused approaches, “Foucault is always much more historically specific, seeing forms of power/knowledge as always rooted in particular contexts and histories. Above all, for Foucault, the production of knowledge is always crossed with questions of power and the body; and this greatly expands the scope of what is involved in representation” (p. 78). As Foucault considers discourses to produce “forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge,” the role of discourse analysis is to uncover how certain knowledges are privileged to the point that they are understood to be ‘the truth’ (p. 74). Foucault understood discourse to be intimately tied to power, and ultimately the producer of knowledge (and subjects), a stark contrast to the prevalent idea that subjects produce knowledge. His approach to understanding power also differed from dominant liberal theories of power (including Marx) in that he viewed power as a productive force and not simply a negative (repressive) mechanism of control (Barker & Galasiński, 2001).

Foucault’s approach to theorizing power remains a controversial concept, as it requires a re-examination of some of the most basic Western conceptions of social reality. For instance, Foucault theorizes that power “is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual’s consolidated and homogeneous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others. What, by contrast, should always be kept in mind is that power, if we do not take too distant a view of it, is not that which makes the difference between those who exclusively possess

and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it” (1980, p. 98). Instead of theorizing an agent of power, Foucault understands power to be anonymous and operating everywhere (Berg, 2009). This contrasts critical theories that are based on Marxism, which conceptualize power as operating from one unified subject (or group) to another in a top-down fashion where one subject (or group) has monopoly over (possession of) power (Hall, 2001b). To Foucault, this perspective is overly simplistic in terms of its emphasis on the repressive qualities of power.

Rather than conceptualizing of power exclusively in terms of coercion and force, Foucault imagines power as productive of knowledge, representations, authority, practices, institutions, and ideas (Hall, 2001b). Foucault argues that “what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 2003, p. 307). In addition, “[P]ower also seduces, solicits, induces, wins consent” (Hall, 2001b, p. 340). This approach is helpful in terms of understanding the effectuality of power, when it is anonymous, yet exercised by everyone (Berg, 2009). From this perspective, power is not contained and deployed downward from a single source, but circulates in a “net-like organization” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). This has a substantial effect on his conceptualization of the individual:

...not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert and consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (Foucault, 1980, p. 98)

Thus, all subjects are subject to and constituted by power relations, including both the oppressors and oppressed. Therefore, power operates at every space in the social world, and no subject can stand outside of it (Hall, 2001b). Foucault attempts to turn away from theorizing absolute strategies of power towards investigating what he terms ‘capillary movements’ or the ‘micro-physics’ of power (2001a). This includes the ways in which

power circulates among localized circuits, the various tactics and mechanisms through which power is deployed, the apparatuses that circulate power in particular ways, and the ways in which power is rooted in bodies, local relations, behaviour, and language.

Knowledge is the content of meanings used by subjects to interpret and shape their reality (Wodak, 2001). In the Foucauldian sense, it is understood to be produced, governed, and controlled by discourse and not by a unified, knowing subject (Berg, 2009). Some poststructuralists such as Deleuze & Guattari (1988) conceptualize of knowledge as rhizomatic, in that patterns of knowledge do not occur in unidirectional forms, but are “a collection of root-like tentacles with no pattern to their growth, a set of tentacles which grow in unpredictable ways, even growing back into each other” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 7). The rhizomatic form of knowledge is contextual and according to Foucault, implicated with power relations. When linked with power, knowledge is given authority and rendered to be true. Foucault used the term ‘power/knowledge’ to illustrate that “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations” (1977, p. 27).

Certain strategies and technologies function to strengthen the relationship between knowledge and power and thus make knowledge ‘true.’ However, according to Foucault, ‘truth’ is never absolute, but only ‘true’ within a specific historical context (Hall, 2001a). He coined the term ‘regime of truth’ to represent the ways in which truth was linked to the circulation of power and specifically,

the types of discourse which accepts and makes it function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (1980, p. 131)

Furthermore, he theorizes that the myth of truth existing outside of power can be attributed to a particular discourse that characterizes of truth as objective reality. This discourse would be considered hegemonic in the sense that it dominates and is considered true itself.²⁷

²⁷ Influenced by Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony, researchers influenced by Foucault, such as Hall understand hegemony to operate within discourse as ‘a way of representing the order of things which endowed its limiting perspectives with that natural or divine inevitability which makes them appear universal, natural and coterminous with “reality” itself (1982, p. 65). This is not to say that contradicting discourses do not exist or that hegemonic discourses are in any way fixed as such.

For Foucault, as a human meaning-making process, discourse was considered to be ‘super-individual’ in that no single group or individual can determine the content or trajectory of a certain discourse. According to Jäger, “[A]s a rule discourses have evolved and become independent as the result of historical processes” (2001, p. 37). Foucault was explicit in his determination that discourses and meanings were constructed over time, but were specific to particular periods and discursive contexts. His approach was to trace the discursive history of particular discourses (i.e.: those that produced ‘madness’ and ‘the madman’), through conducting what he termed an ‘archaeology of knowledge’ with the end product being ‘a genealogy’ (Jäger, 2001). However, Foucault’s historical account of the modern subject “was not a romantic or humanist wish to write the history of who we are. Instead, it was an attempt to develop an analytic that could make visible the vectors that shape our relation to ourselves” (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xx). By seeking to understand the conditions that made present practices possible, Foucault attempts to disturb that which is taken-for-granted as ‘truths.’ To render the invisible visible, Foucault advocates for researchers to engage in a process of suspending judgements “other than those you happen to recognise as your own: what we call second-order judgements” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 13). However, if we are to follow poststructural reasoning, of course this objective can never be fully realized. Yet, it is this process of attempting to be aware of that which is taken-for-granted that allows for researchers to discern the mutually constitutive relation between power and knowledge.

3.8.1 Apparatus, Technologies, Tactics, and Norms

Foucault was interested in the forms and mechanisms that facilitate the circulation of power/knowledge. He used the term *dispositif* to refer to the various knowledge structures including physical, administrative, and institutional mechanisms that strategically function to sustain power within society (Jäger, 2001). According to Rabinow & Rose (2003), Foucault used the term ‘apparatus’ to denote “a machinic contraption whose purpose in this case is control and management of certain characteristics of population” (p. xvi). The apparatus is not solely an administrative body or a law or a scientific statement, but is the network that connects these and other elements. It is “the said and not-said” (p. xvi). Within this study, the term apparatus is used along the same lines

of Hall (2001a) as “strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge” (p. 75).²⁸

Foucault was particularly interested in how power operated within institutional apparatuses and how knowledge was employed through discursive practices to regulate behaviour.²⁹

Foucault termed the mechanisms through which institutional apparatus put power/knowledge to work ‘technologies’ (or ‘techniques’) (Hall, 2001a). In his 1975 work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he traced the history of discipline as a technique of control. Within this work, Foucault uses the term ‘normalization’ to describe an assemblage of tactics used for exerting disciplinary power. Specifically, normalization involves constructing an idealized behavioural norm (a proper way of conducting oneself) and punishing those who do not conform it, while rewarding those who do. The exertion of disciplinary power occurs at the level of the individual body and in terms of regulating populations (Taylor, 2009).³⁰ Taylor contends, “[F]rom a Foucauldian perspective, social norms act as ‘nodal points’ within a broad power matrix. Power passes through and along norms, and these points of intersection can either facilitate or inhibit the further circulation of power” (p. 52). The use of the term ‘social norms’ as well as notions of normal (and abnormal) have become widespread, often without questioning their function. In essence, even the term ‘normal’ has become naturalized. Naturalization is the process whereby over time certain ideas or phenomena are unquestionably accepted and become taken-for-granted to the point where they are no longer thought about at all. This is significant in the case of normalization as “naturalization effectively promotes acceptance and conformity with prevailing norms on both an individual and societal level” (p. 53). Naturalization and norms are both significant as they render social constructions to be natural facts. A relevant example may be the ubiquitous propensity for formulating the world

²⁸ The term ‘dispositif’ has been translated into English as ‘apparatus’ interchangeably with ‘dispositive,’ despite claims that “these [are] distinct, even if partly overlapping, concepts” (Bussolini, 2010, p. 85).

²⁹ While it is tempting to read Foucault’s approach as focusing on the apparatuses of the state (in a Marxist sense) he was explicit that analyses of power must extend beyond the repressive characteristics of power and beyond the state. He explains, “[F]irst of all, because the state, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations; and, further, because the state can only operate on the basis of other, already-existing power relations. The state is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks...” (Foucault, 2003, p. 309).

³⁰ Here ‘the body’ is meant in a Foucauldian sense. Hall explains Foucault’s understanding of the body as follows: “[B]ody’ is not simply the natural body which all human beings possess at all times. This body is produced within discourse, according to the different discursive formations... the specific apparatus and technologies of punishment prevailing at the time. This is radically historicized conception of the body- a sort of surface on which different regimes of power/knowledge write their meanings and effects. It thinks of the body as ‘totally imprinted by history and the processes of history’s deconstruction of the body’” (quoted in Hall, 2001A, p. 78).

through binaries. This naturalized ‘fact’ has significant implications on the social world in terms of the production of power/knowledge.

3.8.2 Naturalizing Binaries and Difference

Foucault understood binary thinking within the context of objectivizing the subject through what he termed ‘dividing practices.’ He explained, “[T]he subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the ‘good boys’ ” (Foucault, 2003, p. 126). When reading Foucault’s examples of dividing practices, it is clear that there are particular values attached to either pole of the binary. Hall contends that there is typically a dominant pole as the relation of power between binaries suggests that the non-dominant pole exists within the dominant pole’s field of operations (2001b). According to Hall, binary forms of representation have substantial effects on the populations upon which they are imposed:

[P]eople who are in any way significantly different from the majority- ‘them’ rather than ‘us’- are frequently exposed to this binary form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes- good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/ compelling because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to *be both things at the same time!* (2001b, p. 326, emphasis in original)

Furthermore, Hall argues this ‘racialized regime of representation’ is inherently structured by sets of binary oppositions, where those deemed white represent civilization and those who are black represent savagery (Hall, 2001b). The same racialized discourse with its inherent binary oppositions has been applied on Indigenous people throughout the (colonized) world. Hall contends that racism functions by fabricating symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories and through binary representation naturalizing the difference between belongingness and otherness, producing various discourses of the Other (2001b). As a result, a racialized knowledge of the other is produced by this discourse, which is intimately implicated with power (Said, 1979).

Psychoanalysts (amongst other theorists) have argued that the naturalization of difference, though held to be problematic in the ways that it escapes critique, is the basis with which subjects create their identity. Such arguments are closely tied to the notion of ‘identity policing,’ which acts as a means for individuals/groups to trace the boundaries of particular groups of people. ‘Identity policing’ can be described as a social phenomenon

whereby normative expressions of a particular identity are enforced through the devaluing of deviating expressions. The theory of identity policing emerges out of feminist theories regarding the policing of gender and notions of normativity (Halberstam, 1998).

The argument that “we only know who we are because we know who we are not” (Wetherell, 2001b, p. 291) has permeated theories on identity and meaning. Hall (2001b) explains these arguments as follows:

Bakhtin argues that “we need ‘difference’ because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the ‘Other’” and with Volosinov argued that meaning “is established through dialogue- it is fundamentally dialogic. Everything we say and mean is modified by the interaction and interplay with another person. Meaning arises through the ‘difference’ between the participants in any dialogue. The ‘Other’ in short, is essential to meaning...therefore meaning cannot be fixed and that one group can never be completely in charge of meaning. (p. 329)

Hall agrees that difference is crucial in the production of meaning, language, culture, and social identities but problematizes the ways in which the naturalization of difference works as a representational strategy to fix difference and halt the slippage to which meaning is susceptible (2001b). He explains how fixing difference results in damaging stereotypes, whereby certain groups are essentialized:

For blacks, ‘primitivism’ (Culture) and ‘blackness’ (Nature) became interchangeable. This was their ‘true nature’ and they could not escape it. As has so often happened in the representation of women, their biology was their ‘destiny.’ Not only were blacks represented in terms of their essential characteristics. They were *reduced to their essence*. (p. 336)

There are multiple mechanisms for naturalizing difference including categorization and naming. As discourse is a classifying practice, it can be considered to also be a ‘value-producing’ practice. As Wetherell (2001b) explains, “[A]s the world is described it is evaluated. Good/bad binaries are constructed, some activities are institutionalized, others are marginalized” (p. 290). Power, knowledge, social practices, and language are each involved in the production of value. Language is always evaluative, as it exists within an interpretative framework. Rhetoric, for example, is designed to be persuasive. Public representations through creating ‘official versions’ of named groups, accompanied by individual and collective narratives often further essentialize subjects ascribing to particular categories. Repetition is one of the key mechanisms through which naturalization occurs and that which may have once been visible becomes invisible and taken-for-granted.

3.9 Cultural Identities

Stuart Hall has been integral to the debate of cultural identities, arguing that cultural identity is a matter of being and becoming, as such identities are constantly subject to transformation and change. For Hall, cultural identity formation occurs not only as a result of discourses and discursive practices, but also through the multiple strategic and situated narratives that subjects express (Luke & Luke, 1999). In this study, cultural identities are accepted as representative of unstable points of identification formed within cultural and historical discourses that are intimately connected to place. The topic of cultural identity has been increasingly popular as ‘identity politics’ gain traction. The notion of identity politics postulates that the politics of individuals are related to the interests of the social groups to which they identify. Identity politics have been subjected to critique in terms of the reproduction of hierarchies of oppression and emphasis on authentic identities, but more importantly because identity continues to be theorized in terms of a subject that is essential, knowing, and unified (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Hall rejects the constructionist consciousness of identity politics that sees the self-representation of groups as a site of struggle, as cultural groups attempt to recover a lost, essence of their collective identity (Gergen, 1999). He argues the following:

Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall, 1993, p. 4)

I contend that within the context of identity politics, the positioning as ‘other’ or ‘minority’ can be resisted through alternative constructions of identity.

3.10 Resistance, Subversion, and Performativity

Individuals and groups have historically struggled against domination, exploitation, and subjection. Despite acknowledging that an individual’s ability to act is limited by discourses that construct the subject positions which the individual occupies, most poststructural theorists advocate for some degree of personal agency and see individuals as having the ability to negotiate, resist, and claim particular subject positions (Burr, 1995; Philips & Hardy, 2002). However, there remains a theoretical gap in terms of a group’s or individual’s

ability to produce substantial social change. Contestation over meaning, however, has been a topic of focus for many poststructural theorists, including Judith Butler and Stuart Hall. For Hall, this includes a struggle over representational practices that can often act as exercises of symbolic violence (such as stereotyping) (2001b). Furthermore, ‘cultural politics’ has become shorthand for the ways in which power operates to define the world, including the “power to name, the power to represent common sense, the power to create official versions, and the power to represent the legitimate social world” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 56). Understanding that meaning cannot ever be finally fixed, theorists have focused on this site of struggle as having the potential to facilitate some degree of social change.

These theorists argue that once individuals reflexively understand their own subject positions, they can then skilfully “rewrite [their] own scripts” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 36; Burr, 1995). Furthermore, through transcoding, discourses can be transformed, added to, and even ignored. Consciously claiming positions in alternative, less damaging discourses is one way that individuals can actively resist positions of oppression (Burr, 1995). Transcoding is a discursive technique for resistance that involves “recover[ing] one chain of signification and re-embedd[ing it] in another which changes radically its meaning” (Wetherell, 2001b, p. 291). Such rethinking of the self can bring new subjectivities and social practices into being (Barker & Galasiński, 2001). Re-appropriating existing meanings to create new meanings is a strategy that has been historically used to reverse stereotypes (Hall, 2001b).³¹ Hall advocates for a strategy that “accepts and works with the shifting, unstable character of meaning, and enters, as it were, into a struggle over representation, while acknowledging that, since meaning can never be finally fixed, there can never be any final victories” (p. 342). Along a similar line, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity provides an entry point into resisting damaging subject positions and locating opportunities for subversion.

Judith Butler’s work has had a profound effect on theories of identification and subjectivity. Subjecting poststructuralist theories (especially those elaborated upon by Foucault) to “a specifically feminist reformulation” (1999, p. ix), Butler approaches gender as a construction that is tenuously constituted and instituted through a

³¹ Within the context of reversing black stereotypes, Hall cites 1970s films such as Gordon Park’s *Shaft*, in which the protagonist was represented as positively valuing attributes, which were previously considered negative stereotypes (2001b).

stylized repetition of acts. For Butler, gender is a continuous formative practice that is performed for a real or imagined audience, but has no single author as it is regulated by social norms. Subjects are regulated by social structures, but “by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures” (Butler, 1990, p. 3). Butler’s approach to the subject has had a substantial effect on feminist politics, as its focus on the category of women (and what constitutes it) is called into question. Furthermore, she understands the cohesiveness of the category of women to be dependent on hegemonic heterosexuality. Butler critiques the feminist subject as the basis of feminism as follows:

What sense does it make to extend representation to subjects who are constructed through the exclusion of those who fail to conform to unspoken normative requirements of the subject? What relations of domination and exclusion are inadvertently sustained when representation becomes the sole focus of politics? The identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics, if the formation of the subject takes place within a field of power regularly buried through the assertion of that foundation. (Butler, 1990, p. 8)

Butler’s critique has made an enormous contribution beyond feminist politics, as she suggests that representational politics that seek to extend the visibility and legitimacy of political subjects simultaneously establish the norms by which the members of the political group is measured. She is careful to point out that norms rarely exist independently but are interconnected, iterative, clustered, and historical. Butler explains as follows:

Norms form us, but only because there is already some proximate and involuntary relation to their impress; they require and intensify our impressionability. Norms act on us from all sides, that is, in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways; they act upon a sensibility at the same time that they form it; they lead us to feel in certain ways, and those feelings can enter into our thinking even, as we might well end up thinking about them. (1990, p. 5)

However, norms and discourse are not to be confused with rules or laws, as they are not usually explicit, but are often difficult to read and implicit, being “discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effect that they produce” (Butler, 2004, p. 41). Butler’s description of norms appears repressive at first glance, but she clarifies that norms have two functions: not only do they “signal the regulatory or normalizing function of power,” but norms are also “precisely what binds individuals together, forming the basis of their ethical and political claims” (p. 219).

Butler's notion of performativity has been equally controversial as her approach to representational politics, as it has often been incorrectly equated to dramaturgical performance. However, according to Riessman (2008), "[T]o emphasize the performative is not to suggest that identities are inauthentic (although this reading is suggested by the dramaturgical perspective), but only that identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind" (p. 106). Butler (1999) suggests that gender attributes are not expressive of an essential internal gender but rather performative of features that we anticipate and produce. She argues that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 45). Thus making the notion of a "true" gender identity a "regulatory fiction." However, Butler is careful to note that although the construction of gender might be "fictive phenomena" (1990, p. 162), it accumulates power through discourse and has very real effects. Gender is not a noun, nor is it "a set of free-floating attributes, as it is most often employed, but is 'a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed'" (p. 34). The 'doing' of gender involves "repetitious, citational and mostly unselfconscious" signalling through linguistic and bodily acts (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 36). These acts are considered performative when their artificiality is concealed through naturalization.

Repetition and referencing naturalizes and legitimizes, but also offers the possibility for resistance and subversion through a variation in repetition. Butler argues that "if the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (Butler, 1990, p. 198-99). This argument works to address the critique of Foucault's theorizing of the subject as lacking in agency, as Butler locates performative agency in the ability to introduce new elements into repetitive iterations including "intertextual borrowings, resignification, reflexivity and disruptive tropes such as irony" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 33). Butler critiques previous theories of agency for only understanding agency to be established by a pre-discursive (i.e.: enlightenment) subject and simultaneously only understanding subject constitution through discourse as determined by discourse.

Butler insists that the cause-and-effect approach is limiting and that “the task is to think of being acted on and acting as simultaneous, and not only as a sequence” (Butler, 2015, p. 6). If we theorize the subject as never fully determining or determined by power, and agency as “exceed[ing] the power by which it is enabled,” the paradox can be resolved (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 32). She argues, “[T]hat my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means that paradox is the condition of its possibility” (Butler, 2004, p. 3). Despite her argument for an alternate conception of agency, critics have charged Butler’s theoretical perspective as leading to ‘anti-political paralysis’ (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 45). However, if simplified, her argument suggests a radicalized form of liberation, in that she is suggesting that “‘you are what you do,’ rather than ‘you can only do what your identity allows you to do’” (p. 45).

Although she may be opposed to the prospect of identity categories mobilized for politicization to “become an instrument of the power one opposes,” Butler insists that “that is no reason not to use, and be used, by identity. There is no political position purified of power, and perhaps that impurity is what produces agency as the potential interruption and reversal of regulatory regimes” (Butler, 1999, p. xxviii). Although it is impossible to transcend the relations that form the subject, through subversive repetition, it is possible to “call into question the regulatory practice of identity” (1990, p. 44). By understanding such categories of identity as fictional and, thus, contested sites of meaning and unnatural and not uncritically replicating them, there is the potential to displace relations of dominations. For Butler, in the context of gender, this means making “gender trouble;” “not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity” (Butler, 1990, p. 46). One of the ways in which Butler troubles gender is by tracing how the terms of gender are established and naturalized, but also by locating challenges to the binary system that has historically structured gender, “where the very social life of gender turns out to be malleable and transformable” (Butler, 2004, p. 216).³²

³² For Butler, the act of drag is an example of a weak location within the binary system from which subversion can occur. She explains, “[D]rag is an example that is meant to establish that “reality” is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be. The purpose of the example is to expose the tenuousness of gender “reality” in order to counter the violence performed by gender norms” (Butler, 1999, p. xxv). The

Disrupting gender binaries is one of the key aims of Butler's work, as she is clear in her argument that "binaries are what humans want them to be, because they are constructed in and through language. They are not reflections of what is already and necessarily there, and their referential claims are power's primary ruse already built into language itself in its commonplace locutions and commonsensical understandings" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 35). Although she opens up the field of possibility for gender, Butler is explicit in her refusal to dictate what these possibilities might be, with the exception of one that is made less violently. Butler advocates for strategically reformulating the binary that structures gender through fragmentation, but is careful to anticipate the following critique:

The limitless proliferation of sexes, however, logically entails the negation of sex as such. If the number of sexes corresponds to the number of existing individuals, sex would no longer have any general application as a term: one's sex would be a radically singular property and would no longer be able to operate as a useful or descriptive generalization. (Butler, 1990, p. 161)

This apparent dissolution has indeed been subject to critique from groups that employ traditional models of identity politics and insist on drawing distinct boundaries between binaries. Butler does not dispute the existence of boundaries, but suggests that the line of boundaries "works as a regulatory ideal" (p. 18). She argues that the conventions that govern the drawing of boundaries changes through time, as do the form that identities take. Such boundaries are dependent on difference and many scholars have theorized that the category of women exists only in its relationship to men (see Butler's discussion of Irigaray, 1990, p. 25). This line of theorization, if applied outside of the context of gender can potentially have a substantial effect on racial, ethnic, and Indigenous identity politics.

In her discussion of boundaries, Butler uses the example of Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa to illustrate the capacity to blur or cross social lines. She writes:

Anzaldúa asks us to consider that the source of our capacity for social transformation is to be found precisely in our capacity to mediate between worlds, to engage in cultural translation, and to undergo,

act of drag exposes the parody that is performativity, as gender is the imitative performance of what we expect specific genders to be. The power of parody lies in its ability to denaturalize hegemonic identity claims. Through recontextualization, the original meaning becomes displaced, causing occasion for laughter, "in the realization that all along the original was derived" (1990, p. 189). Not all parodies are subversive, however. As such repetitions can become instruments of cultural hegemony and replicate the norms that they may have intended to disrupt. Drag is only subversive when it highlights the everyday gestures that signify gender identity in a hyperbolic manner (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 42-43). Furthermore, troubling gender reveals that the naturalized binary of gender identity is contingent on relations of heterosexuality.

through the experience of language and community, the diverse set of cultural connections that make us who we are. One could say that for her, the subject is “multiple” rather than unitary, and that would be to get the point in a way. But I think her point is more radical. She is asking us to stay at the edge of what we know, to put our own epistemological certainties into question, and through that risk and openness to another way of knowing and of living in the world to expand our capacity to imagine the human. She is asking us to be able to work in coalitions across differences that will make a more inclusive movement. (2004, p. 228)

Such statements hint at why Butler’s work has had such a profound impact on queer theory. However, Butler is not naïve in her discussion of sexual ambiguity and is careful to avoid the rhetoric that such hybrid or third spaces are somehow utopian. This is of interest to me, as like the Chicana writer noted above, Métis people have a tendency to be ascribed and/or claim the hybrid position of mediator between the worlds of colonizer and colonized. Some Métis scholars, such as Fiola have employed Anzaldúa’s notions of ‘the new mestizo’ that “incorporates all aspects of one’s identity (including contradictory aspects) into a well-adjusted whole” as applicable to the context of Red River Métis; however, she notes that “some may find the term ‘hybrid’ offensive with its animal husbandry connotations” (2015, p. 35). The application of Butler’s theories of representation and performativity to matters of cultural identity including race, ethnicity, and indigeneity are explored in this study, however, even Butler notes that these categories of identity are not simply analogous. She suggests that “the question to ask is not whether the theory of performativity is transposable onto race, but what happens to the theory when it tries to come to grips with race” (Butler 1999, p. xvi-xvii). I am interested in what happens to the theory of performativity when it tries to come to grips with indigeneity and more specifically, Métisness.

3.11 Narrative Identity

An expansion of the notion of identity as performative through drawing on discourse is known as ‘narrative identity.’ This postmodern approach to identity assumes that we are “storied selves” and that we construct our individual identities through the stories that we tell about ourselves to ourselves and to others (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 9). According to Hole (2007), this view is based on social constructionism, “emphasiz[ing] the social, relational and situated nature of meanings, and identity, and introduces an additional focus on poststructural understandings of language and discourse(s)” (p. 260). Broadly speaking, theorists that advocate for a focus on narrative argue that it is a universal act to make meaningful sense of our lives, specific

events, and reality through storytelling. For instance, it is a typical occurrence for individuals to be asked to “tell their story,” recounting past experiences that have informed their lives (Gergen, 1999). The act of ‘storying’ events sometimes happens intentionally but is so pervasive in our everyday lives that it is often a subconscious process to which the storyteller is unaware. According to Reissman (2008), “[I]n everyday oral storytelling, a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story. Events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (p. 3). Through storytelling, narrators are able to strategically claim and perform particular identities, meanwhile producing “‘edited’ descriptions and evaluations of themselves and other, making identity aspects more salient at certain points” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 42). According to Barker & Galasiński (2001), “[O]ur stories are performative in the sense that they enact and constitute that which they purport to describe” (p. 36). The selection of narrative forms over non-narrative ways of speaking suggests an underlying purpose and implicit attempt at persuasiveness.

While identities can be assembled and performed to audiences through narratives, they are not limitless, as narrative forms include restrictions in terms of the ways in which individuals are able to identify (Gergen, 1999). Furthermore, “the validity or pragmatic usefulness of stories is tested through performance in the context of social relationships” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 36). Gergen takes this idea further, arguing that our actual relationships with each other are performed through narrative form (1999). Narration itself relies on a dialogue between the storyteller and the audience, but also an interwoven dialogue with the cultural context in which the story is situated. This co-construction has been described by Gergen as follows: “[E]ach of us is ‘knitted into’ the historical constructions of others just as they are into ours. As this delicate interdependence of constructed narratives suggests, a fundamental aspect of social life is the network of reciprocating identities” (p. 258). This is complicated by our need to maintain a coherent set of compatible identities over time that is consistent with the identities that we construct and represent in differing relationship scenarios (Defina, 2006).

Rather than being a window into an essential self, narratives are understood as drawing on particular discourses (also termed master narratives, cultural story lines, and/or interpretive repertoires) circulating within a

society during a particular time and place (Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysts argue that it is not only the content of the discourses that are drawn from that define people's identities, but the ways in which they draw upon such cultural resources (Defina, 2006). Not only are narrators able to represent and evaluate the social world through the act of storytelling, but they are also able to claim specific identities, "establish[ing] themselves as members of particular groups through interactional, linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic choices" (p. 352). Narrators draw on shared representations in stories to give situated meanings to social categories. Implicit stances become apparent as narrators negotiate their own sense of belonging or opposition to such social categories and through the saliency of particular descriptions. This suggests that narratives serve different purposes for groups than they do for individuals. Riessman (2008) suggests, "[I]ndividuals use the narrative form to remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead an audience," whereas "groups use stories to mobilize others, and to foster a sense of belonging. Narratives do political work" (p. 8). This speaks to the role of power in stories and the ability of groups to construct preferred narratives to achieve specific desired results. Accordingly, narratives function to convince audiences of the truth (Gergen, 1999; Reissman, 2008). Binary oppositions are situated strategically within narratives, especially in terms of morality (good vs. bad). As stories move through evaluative space, audiences are guided to accept taken-for-granted 'truths.'

3.12 Summary

When understood in relation to place-identity and Indigenous notions of the subject, a complimentary approach that includes both social constructionist and poststructural perspectives provides a unique lens for understanding Métis identity in British Columbia. The previous section provided a cursory explanation of multiple (and often intersecting) theories of identity, with a central focus on poststructural notions of subjectivity. Relevant aspects of poststructural theories were detailed including explanations of place-identity, discourse, agency, language, and social practices, 'power/knowledge', norms and naturalization, cultural identity, resistance, subversion, performativity, and narrative identity. Such theories contribute to my understanding of Métis identity as socially constructed through performative linguistic and social acts that involve individual subjects and groups drawing on particular discourses that through historical processes have come to dominate understandings of what

it means to be Métis. These discourses, though pervasive throughout many parts of Canada, operate uniquely within British Columbia due to the socio-historical context of Métis identity politics in this province (discussed in the following chapter). Theoretical approaches such as those developed by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler have the potential to illuminate avenues through which Métis people can resist damaging aspects of dominant discourses, while simultaneously transforming those discourses so that they are reflective of Métis values, worldviews, and lifeways.

CHAPTER 4: DISCOURSES OF MÉTIS IDENTITY

Similar to Foucault's approach to conducting a genealogy, this chapter aims to dissect the multiple and overlapping sub-discourses and narratives that construct a hegemonic discourse of Métisness- what makes a Métis. It is apparent that there have been, and continue to be, multiple forces at play in the construction of Métis identities including factors that are colonial, gendered, institutional, governmental, economic, and cultural (Kearns, 2013). Some scholars have attempted to describe the play of such forces within the context of the dialogic relationships between the inner world (self-understanding) and the external world (external categorical identification) (Andersen, 2014; Richardson, 2005). Such binary differentiation is limited within a social constructionist paradigm, as it is unclear where self-understandings end and discourses (external knowledges) begin. Acknowledging that genealogies are inherently incomplete anti-sciences, this chapter can only begin to describe discourses and narratives that inform Métis identity as well as the power relations that produce particular texts, rhetoric, and representations. The focus on dominant racialized, ethno-historical, and political discourses result from their prevalence in my conversations with Métis people, in literary, popular, and academic texts, as well as organizational and governmental descriptions of Métis people. The first section of this chapter details the ways in which racialized descriptions of Indianess have fostered the discourse of mixed-bloodedness that pervades Métis identification. The second section describes ethno-cultural approaches to Métis identification that on one hand are based on shared cultural experiences and on the other hand, are restricted by the legal requirement of uninterrupted cultural continuity, while being plagued with the continued external challenge of cultural appropriation and ethnic fraud. The third section describes the ways in which Indigenous notions of nationhood have become a cornerstone of Métis identification and the implications of a nationhood approach on a diasporic population.

4.1 Racialized Definitions of Métis

As a result of dominant racialized scientific and ethnographic discourses during the nineteenth century, historically the Métis were often viewed as an unstable racial group as opposed to a national or political collective (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016). Furthermore, dominant rhetoric suggested that "like the Indian, the mixed-blood was

viewed as headed for extinction” (p. 22). It is from this concept that the notion of the Métis as a transitory race emerged.³³ The racialization of the category of ‘Métis’ continues into contemporary times, as the word ‘Métis’ has become the term of choice for many mixed-heritage Aboriginal peoples across Canada partly due to its explicit inclusion in section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982 (as described in Chapter 1) and partly due to judicial findings over the last decade and a half in which ‘Métis’ is always the term used for the people seeking to have their rights recognized” (Dahl, 2013, p. 118). The confusion over the term ‘Métis’ persists among those who have ancestral roots that trace to the historic Métis Nation, those whose families were called ‘half-breeds’ by outsiders (and at times by themselves), and those of mixed Aboriginal ancestry with no ties to historic (or even contemporary) Métis communities. The term half-breed and Métis tend to be used interchangeably, despite arguments against conflating the two, due to their distinct historic usage (Dahl, 2013, p. 127-8).

Bell (2013) suggests that the conscious translation of terms such as mixed-blood and half-breed in documentary records into the politicized ‘Métis’ results in the implantation of Métis identities, political consciousness and communities into temporal and geographical contexts where they were previously non-existent. Partly due to the interchangeable use of half-breed, mixed-blood and Métis, many people who self-identify as Métis, both with and without ties to the Historic Métis Nation, identify on the basis of their mixed heritage (Andersen, 2014). Such references to blood quantum result from racialized understandings of Indianness, as opposed to political or cultural notions of indigeneity.

The racial narrative of the ‘Indian’ has dominated the discourse of Indigenous identity for centuries. Racialized language of blood quantum, skin colour, and physical appearance pervade historical and contemporary policy, law, and common speech. One of the prevailing ideas historically used when locating so-called ‘authentic’ indigeneity is blood quantum. As a biological definition of identity that is inextricably entangled with the notion of race, blood quantum follows the out-dated mode of thinking that viewed race as genetically based divergences between groups of people. This assumption is still accepted by many people, despite running contrary to current

³³ Ens & Sawchuk explain how Daniel Wilson’s study of the Canadian Metis *Hybridity and Absorption in Relation to the Red Indian Race* published in 1875 argued that, “the Metis were a transitory and intermediate race portending progress and the eventual absorption of the Indian races within the Anglo-Canadian nation” (p. 24).

scientific knowledge that sees racial distinctions as having social, but not biological significance (Garrouette, 2003). The roots of such biological notions of race lie in attempts to determine differences between so-called ‘superior’ (European) races from ‘inferior’ ones. Often used interchangeably with ethnicity, racialized language and related concepts have been commonly accepted when describing and positioning Indigenous peoples. According to Robertson (2013), “[T]he category of Indian became a concept of racial identity, one which distorts the autonomy of independent Indigenous tribes and redefines them as a homogenized, uniform, oversimplified group” (p. 17). Robertson’s research sought to answer what such an institutional measure of belonging such as legal Indian identity meant to self-identified Indigenous peoples from Oklahoma. Despite admitting to recognizing the inherent racism of blood quanta, many Indigenous people consent to the use of blood quantum as a tool for measuring authenticity as it established their right to belong (2013b).

4.1.1 International Application of Blood Quantum

Blood quantum as a tool for measuring indigeneity has been implemented throughout Indigenous spaces including Australia, the United States, and Canada. In 1994, Dodson wrote that in Australia:

[If] the obsession with distinctions between the offensively named ‘full bloods’ and ‘hybrids,’ or ‘real’ and ‘inauthentic’ Aborigines, continues to be imposed on us...there would be few urban Aboriginal people who have not been labeled as culturally bereft, ‘fake’ or ‘part-Aborigines,’ and then expected to authenticate their Aboriginality in terms of percentages of blood or clichéd ‘traditional’ experiences. (p. 3)

Similar to other Indigenous lands, since settlement, Australia governments have used multiple descriptions and systems for classifying what qualifies as an Aboriginal person (Pritchard, 2004). Legal definitions have had a tendency to take a circular self-referencing form, such as that an “Aboriginal person means a person who is an Indigenous person of Australia” (2004, p. 52). While technically, American Indians in the United States are considered political entities and not racial groups (Grammond, 2008), it is clear that the hegemonic discourse of the essence of ‘Indian’ identity is one of blood quantum. Here, the arithmetic of blood mixture has become naturalized, institutionalized, and bureaucratized as it is the basis upon which Indigenous people are considered Native American and able to claim land or special status (Strong & Van Winkle, 1996). Garrouette describes the

origin of the use of blood quantum within the United States as follows:

The original, stated intention of blood quantum distinctions was to determine the point at which the various responsibilities of the dominant society to Indian peoples ended. The ultimate and explicit federal intention was to use the blood quantum standard as a means to liquidate tribal lands and to eliminate government trust responsibility to tribes, along with entitlement programs, treaty rights, and reservations. Through intermarriage and application of a biological definition of identity Indians would eventually become citizens indistinguishable from all other citizens. (2003, p. 42)

According to Robertson (2013), Native American identity in the United States is defined according to 1) ethnic identification, which includes relational ties, social connections, historical belonging, the attendance of ceremonial events, commitment, and tribal connections; 2) racial identification, which includes phenotypical appearance, genetic inheritance, designation as Indian, and historical experiences of discrimination; and, 3) legal identification, which includes recognition as a tribal citizen, lineal descent, blood quantum, parental descent, and geographic residence. Such identities are not mutually exclusive and Native American people may demonstrate all or only some of these forms of identification. The current standard set by the US federal government for “official” Indianness is having 25% Indian blood quantum (Lawrence, 2004). The consequence of achieving legal standing is significant, creating social and political distinctions: “[P]ossessing, or not possessing, an American Indian legal identity results in clear gains and costs. On economic and political levels, ‘legally recognized’ Natives receive rights, services, and protections Indians without legal status do not enjoy” (Robertson, 2013, p. 116). Like Canada, for many Indigenous people in the United States acquiring legal proof and recognition of Indianness is difficult to achieve, due to complex socio-historical factors that have altered Indigenous lives and communities. Yet, with few exceptions, for Native American tribes throughout the United States, 25% blood quantum is the most common criterion for tribal membership, making blood quantum “a hegemonic discourse within and against which Indigenous identity is defined” (Strong & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 555).³⁴ The narrative of Native blood is deeply embedded in legal, popular, and now tribal understandings of Indigenous identity, not only within the United States, but also throughout much of the Indigenous world.

³⁴ Note that Strong & Van Winkle (1996) describe two cases where tribes did not consider blood quantum to be the primary criterion for tribal identity, but rather having a shared history, attachment to place, and social ties.

4.1.2 “Indian Act Blood”: Blood Quantum in Canada

Within Canada, much of the rhetoric concerning indigeneity has also followed notions of biological determinism and unilineal cultural evolution (Gehl, 2005). Blood quantum has a significant effect on the socially constructed phenomenon, termed by Fiola as “the hierarchy of Nativeness” (2015, p. 84). Referencing Julian (2011), Fiola explains that the hierarchy, in decreasing order includes:

‘Full-blooded Indians’ (FBIs), who have not gone to residential school, speak their language, have ties to the land, know their traditional teachings, and have not been indoctrinated by Christianity; ‘Indians,’ who are not fluent but not Christian; ‘Full-Bloods’ adopted into White families; ‘Born Agains’ who were ‘originally ignorant of their own Indian-ness’; ‘Born on the Rez Indians’; ‘Born in the Hood/Inner-city Indians’; and ‘Wannabe Indians’ without Indian blood. (p. 85)

Canada’s early definition of Indianness (in the 1850 Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of Indians in Lower Canada) was not only centered on possession of Indian blood, but also extended to “anyone who was married to an Indian, anyone who lived on Indian lands or anyone who was accepted by an Indian community” (p. 52). By such a definition, many mixed-blood peoples, such as those who were termed by others or self-identified as half-breeds or Métis, would have been considered Indians. This definition became more restrictive with the 1869 Lands and Enfranchisement Act, which required registered Indians to have a minimum of 1/4th blood quantum (Lawrence 2004). The 1876 Indian Act simply replaced blood quantum with the principle of patrilineal descent, effectively discriminating against Indigenous women and their descendants. This was only somewhat remedied by the 1985 Indian Act amendment (Bill C-31). However, gender discrimination continued, as due to the reinstatement of previously enfranchised Aboriginal women under subsection 6(1)(c), as these women can only pass their status to their children and not grandchildren, whereas Indian men and their descendants who were already registered as Indians can pass their status are not affected by this second-generation cut-off rule (Gehl, 2005).

This 1985 amendment meant that many people who once identified as non-status Indians, half-breeds or Métis were thus eligible for Indian status. Unfortunately, due to inconsistent record keeping, the extensive removal of Indigenous children from their families during the residential school period and the Sixties Scoop, proving parentage and familial descent continues to be a struggle for Indigenous peoples throughout Canada.

While the Indian Act is technically based on parentage and descent, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people throughout Canada still describe and verify the authenticity of Indigenous people using the language of blood quantum. Interestingly, Lawrence notes a difference within Canada between blood quantum in terms of “Indian blood” (as in the US) and “Indian Act blood,” whereby full-bloodedness is equated to full Indian status. Métis for instance, are often understood as less authentic on account of their “diluted” blood quantum, or lack of “Indian Act Blood” (Green, 2009).

Based on out-dated theories that viewed biology as definitive and indistinguishable from culture, blood is often seen as the vehicle for transmitting cultural characteristics. According to Garrouette (2003), “[H]alf-breeds’ by this logic could be expected to behave in ‘half-civilized,’ i.e., partially assimilated, ways while retaining one half of their traditional culture, accounting for their marginal status in both societies” (42). By the logic of biological definitions, full-bloods are viewed as being the “quintessential Indians,” while mixed-bloods have long been considered “degenerate representatives of a once-pure category” (Garrouette, 2003, p. 56, p. 42). Roosens describes the common conception regarding mixed blood peoples as follows:

There is ... [a] principle about which the whites and the Indians are in agreement... People with more Indian blood ... also have more rights to inherit what their ancestors, the former Indians, have left behind. In addition, full blood Indians are more authentic than half-breeds. By *being* pure, they have more right to respect. They *are*, in all aspects of their being, more *integral*.
(cited in Garrouette 2003, emphasis in original, p. 41)

Thus, mixed-blooded peoples are considered to have had their pure Indian blood watered down through their interactions with European peoples. While these concepts are clearly reliant on colonial, racist, and out-dated pseudo-science (Blaut, 1993), they are nonetheless present throughout legal, political, and community perspectives regarding mixed Indigenous peoples.

4.1.3 Arguments Against Blood Quantum

There have been various arguments against the deployment of concepts related to blood quantum when defining and describing Indigenous people including 1) that determining blood quantum requires verification through records that have a history of not existing or being poorly recorded; 2) that the use of blood quantum equates to “arithmetical genocide” of Indigenous people (quoted in Lawrence 2004, p. 77); and, 3) that blood

quantum is a concept proposed by non-Indigenous perspectives that are inconsistent with the beliefs of many Indigenous communities.

Many Indigenous people throughout the world struggle to prove their descent and blood quantum due to the difficulties they face in locating documentary evidence. This results from many factors including the continued discrimination against Indigenous peoples as well as policies of removal, dispossession, and persecution that caused so many people to conceal their identity or even flee colonial authorities (Pritchard, 2004). Furthermore, the logistical inadequacies of colonial record keeping combined with undocumented Indigenous oral traditions have resulted in substantial gaps in historical material records. Even records that can be located prove to be unreliable, as demonstrated by cases in the United States, where siblings are listed with different Indian blood percentages, but share the same parents (Lawrence, 2004).

More serious than the lack of reliable blood quantum records is the intent behind the use of blood quantum to assimilate Indigenous populations into settler populations, a function which has been termed “arithmetical genocide or statistical extermination” (Churchill, quoted in Lawrence, 2004, p. 5). It is predicted that due to the use of racial definitions reliant on 25% blood quantum in the US, legally identifying Native Americans will cease to exist by 2080 (2004). Lawrence argues that “blood quantum discourse critically controls and shapes the directions American Indians take toward empowerment,” noting the following:

When you take into account the members of the two-hundred-odd Indigenous Nations whose existence continues to be denied by the American government, the Native peoples who were terminated from the 1950s to the 1970s, and those individuals who now fall below blood quantum levels, the numbers of individuals with a legitimate claim to being American Indians by descent, by culture, or both, rises from the official number of 1.6 million to upward of 7 million. (p. 5)

It is clear that blood quantum acts to exclude legitimate claims to Indigenous identity, thereby decreasing the financial responsibilities of federal governments to Indigenous groups and individuals (Robertson, 2013b).

A clearly identified problem with the application of blood quantum rhetoric both legally in the US and Australia and more indirectly within Canada is that the entire notion of biological conditions of identification have been naturalized to represent a kind of objective scientific truth. As Pritchard contends, “[T]his form of naturalisation derives its authority from its assumption of objectivity, so that the genetic construction of cultural

or racial identity is taken to be a description of certain ‘real’ characteristics and not a conceptualisation or representation” (2004, p. 53). The use of blood quantum terminology and logic is justified as being somehow universal or a standard convention, despite no actual consensus on its relevance and effectiveness in determining indigeneity. Many Indigenous people find talk of ‘blood pedigree’ to be offensive and demeaning; for example, Garrouette’s research participant Anishinaabe and Cree grandmother Kathleen W. remarked, “I don’t like being talked about in a vocabulary usually reserved for dogs and horses” (cited in 2003, p. 55). Moreover, the notion of blood quantum depends on individual possession of a certain combination of blood, a type of possessive individualism that has been perpetuated by dominant colonial societies that contradicts the social and situational understandings of identity that many Indigenous people hold to be true (Strong & Van Winkle, 1996). Robertson (2013b) acknowledges that blood quantum originated from colonial discourse and expresses her own Indigenous resistance through instead emphasizing the importance of cultural participation, stating the following: “[E]ven though blood quantum may symbolize culture on a superficial level or even external level, cultural understanding is presented as more precious and harder to attain than blood. Culture is something to achieve, attain, and believe in...blood is the circumstance of birth” (p. 151). Furthermore, blood quantum rules for determining Indigenous authenticity have been subject to significant critique for heightening tension and lateral violence amongst Indigenous people (Nagel, 2000).³⁵ Yet, despite all of the above arguments against blood quantum, it remains to be the basis of official ‘Indian’ identity in the US and in Canada (via the 1876 Indian Act) and, as such, provides the grounds upon which many Indigenous people can make claims.

4.1.4 Arguments for Blood Quantum

Indigenous nations throughout Canada and the United States have institutionalized blood quantum rules within their own membership policies, perpetuating the notion of biological inheritance. According to Robertson (2013), within the US, “to gain legitimate tribal ethnicity, Indians must first meet specific racial standards of ancestral lineage or blood quantum, which then results in an institutionalized legal identity” (p. 129). Lawrence

³⁵ Lateral violence in the context of this thesis refers to experiences within Aboriginal communities. As the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) explains, “unlike workplace bullying, lateral violence differs in that Aboriginal people are now abusing their own people in similar ways that they have been abused. It is a cycle of abuse and its roots lie in factors such as: colonisation, oppression, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination” (2011, p. 1).

cautions against Indigenous people in Canada from following the lead of Native American people in the US, given the history of blood quantum standards as a process for enabling land theft and forcing intermarriage upon Native people in order to keep their legal status (2004). Yet, in the wake of Bill C-31 (described in Chapter 1), some Indigenous groups in Canada have begun to emphasize blood quantum as a defining characteristic for band membership. Lawrence describes the case of Kahnawake in Quebec as “one of the earliest communities in Canada to adopt a blood quantum standard and has been the boldest in its membership restrictions” (p. 6), as their membership codes restrict intermarriage with non-Native people and require a blood quantum of 50% Native blood. Canadian government representatives such as Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, condemned Kahnawake membership policy as “racist and unacceptable” (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015, May 18), despite similar positions being taken by the Canadian government in land claims contexts (Lawrence 2004).³⁶ While membership laws that enforce blood quantum rules have excluded some members and most recently resulted in an investigation into the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (Fennario, 2015), it has been defended as being a matter of the rights of Indigenous groups to self-determination, nationhood and their ability to determine their own membership rules (Gehl, 2005; Simpson, 2014). Lawrence argues, however, that “while it is undeniable that Native communities should have the right to control their own membership, if they choose to do so without reference to a history of colonization and the government’s role in selectively externalizing some members but not others, it is inevitable that the children of those former band members who the government arbitrarily chose to exclude will continue to see the process as unjust” (p. 7). Similarly, Gehl (2005) argues that “Indigenous communities that employ the practice of blood-quantum essentialism have the power to rob individuals of their subjective identity formation and production. As a result, many Indigenous people continue to be vulnerable to disenfranchised spirit” (p. 63).

Similar to the US, where two-thirds of Native American tribes require a specific blood quantum for membership, Indigenous groups in Canada have expressed concern about further assimilation and the increasing demand for resources (Robertson, 2013; Simpson, 2014). For many Indigenous people throughout the world,

³⁶ Note that Valcourt also stated, “we urge community leaders to enact a more inclusive membership and residency approach, one that is in line with the spirit of Canadians’ values of equality and freedom” (CBC, 2015 May 18).

blood, parentage, and ancestry act as important symbols of indigeneity, especially for urban Aboriginal people, who are often displaced from their home territories (Pritchard, 2004; Robertson, 2013b). The argument has been made that if blood is considered to be an important part of indigeneity, it is done so from the specific cultural perspective of Indigenous people and not on the basis of antiquated biological pseudo-science. Thus, within Indigenous spaces such as Australia, scholars argue, “[I]f the element of descent is to remain in Australian law as a test of Aboriginality, it should be interpreted in accordance with Indigenous cultural protocols” (Pritchard, 2004, p. 59).

Métis scholar Laura-Lee Kearns illustrates the significance of blood symbolism in her description of ‘blood memories’:

Similar to being connected to all of our relations, parents, grandparents, great grandparents, human family, and to the whole living planet, blood memories are part of who we are. It is the way- either genetically or through spirit or heart or mind or body- we are interwoven with our ancestors. It is the happiness we feel when we listen to a traditional song that fills us with joy; it is not only our happiness, but the memories of our ancestors imprinted within us that also fill us with joy. It is also the burden we carry for the harm, the silencing and injustice our ancestors experienced. To carry this teaching is a great responsibility that cannot be fully articulated or expressed on paper; I simply signal here that my mother and I have learned that- much like she and I are connected- we share connections to and with our ancestors. (2013, p. 62)

For Kearns, it is clear that blood acts as more than a biological phenomenon, but also has qualities that extend beyond the biophysical world into the spiritual realm. The naturalizing discourse of blood quantum shapes and is shaped by Indigenous people, yet it remains a complicated task to dismantle racist practices of essentialism without discounting concerns over land loss and undermining Indigenous rights. As Strong & Van Winkle argue, “‘Indian blood,’ dangerous and essentialist as it may be, is at present a tragically necessary condition for the continued survival and vitality of many individuals and communities” (1996, p. 565). Yet, the official discourse of blood quantum as rigid, essentialized and fixed, is in stark contrast to the unofficial discourse, which sees Indigenous identity to be demonstrated by acting, thinking, speaking, and feeling Indigenous (Strong & Van Winkle, 1996).

4.1.5 Mixed-Blood Narratives

Despite disagreements over the official definition of Métis, the Métis were historically identified by colonial authorities on the basis of their dual ancestry or mixedness, which has in turn, been used by Métis peoples for the purpose of making claims (Andersen, 2011a). During the Métis revival of the 1960s, mixedness (and consequently historical exclusion from the Indian Act) was often the only identifier that qualified a person as Métis. While the racial categories used to describe people of mixed heritage are fictive and fluid, they have had a profound impact on understandings of Métis identity. Terms that have been used to describe the Métis, such as *half-castes*, *half-breeds*, *half-bloods*, and *half-whites*, emphasize their identity as a derivative of two cultures, as “the sum of their diverse parts rather than an original creation” (Brown, 1993, p. 24). Despite being recognized as a distinct socio-cultural/political entity, their origin as the offspring of their European fathers and Indigenous mothers remains a crucial component of discourses of Métis identity (p. 20). Dominant scholarship suggests that the term *métis*, as in the French word meaning mixed, when used historically by French speakers “applied broadly to the offspring of Indian and white parentage, but more specifically to the French- and Cree-speaking descendants of the Red River métis” and, as such, “was rarely used by English speakers before the 1960s” (Peterson and Brown, 1985, p. 5). Since the 1960s, its usage has been enlarged to signify “any person of mixed Indian-white ancestry who identified him- or herself and was identified by others as neither Indian nor white, even though he or she might have no provable link to the historic Red River métis” (p. 5). Such an extension of the use of the word Métis has been central to the debate concerning ownership and use of the term. A dominant discourse of hybridity permeates everyday talk about (and amongst) Métis peoples in legal, scholarly, and governance realms. Métis are understood by themselves and others as racially hybrid on the basis of their diluted ‘Indian Blood’ (or more accurately, ‘Indian Act Blood’) and mixed biological ancestry. By an extension of this logic, Métis are considered to be ‘less authentic’ than ‘pure’ Indians.

4.1.6 Appearing Indigenous: The Racialized Body

Biological definitions of Indigenous identity such as blood quantum are closely related to the physical characteristics that are associated with Indigenous people who are deemed to have high blood quanta. Quoting

Cherokee Nation principal tribal chief Chad Smith, Garroutte notes “[S]ome people are easily recognizable as Indians because they pass ‘a brown paper bag test,’ meaning that their skin is ‘darker than a #10 paper sack.’ It is these individuals who are often most closely associated with negative racial stereotypes in the larger society” (2003, p. 48). While Smith’s comment might be disturbing, racism works through signifying practices that produce categories and establish problematic social hierarchies (Gehl, 2005).

Drawing on poststructural theories, Hall (2001b) contends, “[T]he body itself and its differences [are] visible for all to see, and thus provid[e] ‘the incontrovertible evidence’ for a naturalization of racial difference. The representation of ‘difference’ through the body [is] the discursive site through which much of this ‘racialized knowledge’ [is] produced and circulated” (p. 335). Here the body is not understood as the physical human body per se, but rather the body that is produced through discourses, as “a sort of surface on which different regimes of power/knowledge write their meanings and effects” (2001, p. 78). Therefore, making the body as “the site of disciplinary practices which bring subjects into being, these practices being the consequences of specific historical discourses” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 31). As such, the racialized Indigenous body can be viewed a product of colonial power/knowledge and practice.

The power of racial discourse is demonstrated by the naturalized beliefs whose origin are rarely questioned, but instead are accepted and maintained. Western theories such as Social Darwinism, Manifest Destiny, and theories associated with the Doctrine of Discovery supported the racial discourse that negatively stereotyped Indigenous peoples. For instance, enlightenment-era scholar Locke argued, “God gave the world to the industrious English, not the idle Indians. Therefore, the Indians had no claim to the land because they did not work to cultivate it” (cited in Robertson 2013, p. 39). Similarly, as Robertson explains, “Kant ascribed to a moral racial order of skin colour with whites positioned above all others, followed by yellow people, then black people, and lastly, red people Indians, being so wretched and hopeless, were incapable of being educated or civilized” (p. 39). Racialization as a process of racial designation, though assuming biological attributes, changes over time and is thus a socio-historical and not a biological phenomenon. As a result of this dialectical process in which the voices of Indigenous peoples are absent, Indigenous people and the stereotypical representation of the ‘Indian’ is

equated to ‘other,’ ‘heathen,’ and ‘savage,’ while colonizers are equated to ‘benevolent providers,’ ‘civilized,’ and ‘justice-seekers’ (2013). Such overt racism has been legitimated through centuries of colonial discourse, which has been institutionalized, resulting in systemic racism.

Although some argue that society is becoming post-racial and contend that racial oppression is declining, others posit that racial oppression is being reinforced and systemic racism is being reproduced (although increasingly covertly) among social groups and institutions in service to white power and privilege (Robertson, 2013). Blatantly racist archetypes of Indigenous people persist into the present as ‘Indian caricatures’ continue to be sports mascots, non-Indigenous people ‘play Indian’ at sports events, Thanksgiving re-enactments, on Columbus Day (in the US), at Halloween, and more recently, with appropriative acts such as wearing headdresses at music festivals.³⁷ Such acts extend beyond the realm of white privilege, as “playing Indian is deemed socially acceptable (e.g., normal, legitimate), any other racial or ethnic group may now participate without recognizing the inherent racism in doing so” (Robertson, 2013, p. 35). Those who oppose such acts of racism are often accused of being overtly sensitive or told to ‘get over it.’ For people who are visibly Indigenous, ‘getting over it’ is not a realistic possibility. As Garoutte (2003) explains, “[E]very day, identifiably Indian people are turned away from restaurants, refused the use of public rest rooms, ranked as unintelligent by the education system, and categorized by the personnel of medical, social service, and other vital public agencies as ‘problems’—all strictly on the basis of their appearance” (p. 48). Ignoring the ways in which Indigenous people have been and continue to be racialized means ignoring an integral aspect of their everyday historical and current life experiences.

Canada has a long history of ascribing meaning (Indianness) to specific racialized characteristics, including removing Indigenous-looking children from their families to attend residential schools throughout the 20th century. Furthermore, government officials designated individuals with darker skin as full-bloods, and those with lighter skin as mixed bloods, despite being offspring of the same set of parents (Garrouette, 2003), and later, forcibly removing children from their families who appeared “too White to be Indian” (Gehl, 2005, p. 64). The racial ambiguity of half-breeds/Métis acted as an obstacle in securing white supremacy, meaning “protecting the

³⁷ See Cherokee scholar Dr. Adrienne Keene’s blog *Native Appropriations* (Keene, 2016).

boundaries between ‘Indians’ and mixed-race people was essential to asserting white superiority” (Mawani, 2005, cited in Fiola 2015, p. 32). The lack of a stereotypical ‘Indian’ appearance has been a determining factor for the disruption of kinship and community ties, feelings of alienation, and the loss of cultural identity for generations of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Lawrence, 2000). According to Fiola (2015), “the extent to which one can choose to self-identify as Indigenous is limited by various factors, including phenotypical appearance” (p. 26). Indigenous people in Canada who lack a stereotypical ‘Indian’ appearance are subject to significant critique.

Lawrence explains as follows:

The mixed-race people who can pass as white who decided that they do not want to participate in the obliteration of their Native heritage are thus forced to declare themselves as Native, regardless of their appearance... This can be extremely difficult, especially if they have been brought up to consider themselves white- either because of silence around Indianness in their family, because of extremely white appearance, or because they were adopted. (1999, p. 267-8)

Skin colour and phenotypical appearance holds weight in designating Indigenous identity that have profound effects for those who may be Indigenous, but do not ‘look the part’. Paradies explains this predicament as follows:

Despite assertions to the contrary, it is clear that skin colour and physicality are “exceptionally important in the recognition and validation of Aboriginal identity,” as they are in similar international contexts. Fair-skinned Indigenous people experience “racism, scorn and disbelief” from other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, whose perennial interrogation of their identity leads to acute anxiety as well as “ambivalence, and doubts about themselves as ‘real’ [Indigenous] people”. (Boladeras, 2002, cited in 2006, p. 361)

According to Lawrence (1999), “light-skinned Natives also face denials of their Nativeness by other Natives who think their light-skin privilege renders their Nativeness meaningless” (p. 273). Participant narratives demonstrate that Métis people who do not exhibit a stereotypically ‘Indian’ appearance are subjected to significant critique for ‘passing.’ The phenomenon known as ‘passing’ is linked to the act of silence as a self-identification strategy for people who have lighter skin and can thus ‘pass’ as White. Daniels (1992) describes passing as “a radical form of integration whereby individuals of a more European phenotype and cultural orientation make a clandestine break with the African American [or other visibly minority] community, temporarily or permanently, in order to enjoy the privileges of the dominant White community” (p. 91-92). Passing, though problematic for a number of reasons, is generated by racist pressure that denigrates those that are not- White. Yet, it is often considered to be

an expression of individual agency and resistance, as by passing, one can shift their racial reference group to a group that is higher on the existing racial hierarchy. According to Fiola (2015), “[P]assing as White can sometimes be forced upon mixed-race people despite our wishes, and some people are engaged in a constant struggle to assert and maintain their Indigeneity” (p. 32-3). While instances of passing may be considered a tactic for avoiding racism, the long term effects of the continued denial of one’s identity have substantial effects on individuals and groups such as identity crises, psychological distress, strained relationships, spiritual imbalance, cultural disconnection, and intergenerational disruption (2015).

Certain critiques of passing should not be disvalued, as they point to significant challenges regarding ethnic switching and cultural appropriation within Métis communities, whereby white people, whose ancestors were able to “hide in plain sight” claim a Métis identity and thus “say, think, feel that they are Indigenous” (Andersen, 2015). Andersen argues that this occurs as a “colonial technique of the self,” a process whereby white people “non-relationally possess indigeneity, which they then attach to communities of their own construction” (2015). Andersen argues that such “possessive white technologies of the self is premised on the liberal idea that we always know who we are and thus always are who we say we are and are always in process of becoming, can become who we want to be” (2015). This, he argues, is closely linked to the dispossession of land, culture, and sovereignties. He argues that for those whose identity as Métis has been “plucked from archives and likeminded individuals” their individual self-understanding is most important, whereas in contrast, “indigeneity is not about self-possession, not about who you claim to be, but who claims you” (2015). However, Andersen is careful to not ignore those who are recovering their identities following the colonial violence that disrupted them. He argues, like many of the participants that I interviewed, that indeed, these people “can form attachments to new communities (urban communities) that are not necessarily those of our birth as long as those communities are willing to have a conversation about their relationship to the pre-colonial peoples whose territories they reside on” (2015). He is critical of those who are making claims to a localized Métis indigeneity without recognizing the Indigenous people whose land they reside on, an act of self-righteous whiteness and entitlement, which “requires

no accountability to Indigenous place” (2015). Claiming Métis identities in this way disregards the contemporary indigeneity of Métis people in favour of an understanding of Métis as possessing a mixed ‘Native’ ancestry.

4.1.7 Métis as Hybrids

The focus on hybridity as a central component of Métis identity is supported by historical research that argues that Métis as distinct people came from being go-betweens, not from political or military conflicts (Peressini, 2001). The worldviews, social values, and communities of Métis people have only recently become a focus within studies of Métis people, as early work focused on either fur trade or mission histories, defaulting to descriptions of Métis as “torn between the worlds of their non-Native fathers and Indian mothers, with little opportunity to create a separate, self-generating cultural identity or any lasting style of life” (Macdougall, 2006, p. 437). The historic focus on hybridity as a central aspect of Métis identity assumes that hybridity is naturalized as the expected outcome of colonization. Dominant discourses of historical and contemporary hybridity are discussed in positive terms (see Bhabha, 1994; Paradies, 2006), disregarding the power imbalances within which racial hybridity actually emerged and the ways in which it is reproduced in everyday talk of racial purity (and lack thereof). Drawing on Andersen’s (2014) work, the theoretical notion that hybrid space is equated to a positive ‘third space’ is inconsistent with historical experiences of marginalization: “[I]nstead it represents the space into which we have been shoehorned as part of the Canadian state’s growing racial imaginary. Métis are classified as hybrid- with all the denigrating connotations of the term- in ways that deny that which we seek most, an acknowledgement of our political legitimacy and authenticity as an Indigenous *people*” (emphasis in original, p. 37-8).

The irony of the notion of historical and contemporary Métis identity as ‘essentially mixed’ is that it is dependent on the assumption that First Nations and Inuit people are not hybrid. Andersen explains in the following:

[I]f all Indigenous peoples were hybrid, the term would lose its analytical power. It is thus puzzling that the hybridity of Métis in particular is seen as noteworthy, given that all contemporary Indigenous cultures, communities, and nations in Canada are the consequence of a blending of Indigenous and non-

Indigenous cultures and societies and even a blending among different Indigenous cultures. Certainly, those “First Nations” living adjacent to Métis communities were no less susceptible to the intermixing that resulted from, for example, the political economy of the fur trade. All indigeneity is- or more precisely, “analytically can be” – hybrid. Discussions using the Métis-as-mixed discourse seem to position First Nation indigeneity as somehow “purer” than Métis indigeneity, where Métis are “part” Indigenous or Aboriginal and “part” something else. (2014, p. 38)

According to Lawrence (2004), in some historical cases, “mixed-bloodedness and full-bloodedness were virtually indistinguishable (and entirely irrelevant) among a local Indigenous population” (p. 93). While this was not always the case, it is clear that many of the differences that developed between those that the government officials determined to be mixed or full-blood resulted from their categorization as such (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016).

Macdougall (2010) argues that the common practice of applying racial algorithms in the genealogical analysis of individuals not only decontextualizes people from their social and familial context, but also diverts attention from the more meaningful study of the communal cultural identities. This focus on ancestry within Métis scholarship has resulted in what Macdougall terms ‘categories of Métisness’ (such as NWC Métis, HBC Country-born, and Protestant Half-breeds), which are contextualized by a dominant English Canadian vs. French Canadian discourse. Such categories “have done little to explore Métisness as either an Aboriginal phenomenon or a dynamic process of métissage, a cultural force that has continued to grow and evolve with the people since the eighteenth century” (2010, p. 56).³⁸ So while the marginalization of historical ‘mixed-blood’ people may have contributed to the formation of the historic Métis Nation, the question remains: ‘if they aren’t Métis because they are mixed, what makes them Métis?’

4.1.8 Summary

The dominant discourse of mixedness that permeates Métis identity results from Euro-Canadian society attempts to impose binary truths such as “Indian” or “Canadian” onto traditional Indigenous social systems. Métis people, including citizens of the Métis Nation internalize such racialized practices and come to think of their mixedness as a central factor in their identification as Métis (Andersen, 2014). It is no surprise that Métis people

³⁸ The use of the term métissage varies within Métis Studies literature, as it is at times used as a synonym for miscegenation (racial mixing) (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016). Here, it appears that Macdougall uses ‘métissage’ to refer to cultural transformation within the context of Métis ethnogenesis.

feel as if they are never Indigenous enough or that being Métis means that they are ‘not pure,’ as they are often asked about which First Nation group their indigeneity comes from (as in ‘what kind of Métis are you?’). The language of hybridity permeates everyday speech acts as Métis often talk about ‘being caught in between the white and Native world,’ ‘having one foot in both worlds,’ or being ‘neither white, nor Indian.’ Consequently, other Indigenous people come to recognize the Métis as Indigenous because of their mixedness, not because of their history as a pre-colonial nation with a distinct culture. Not only does a Métis-as-mixed approach “undermin[e] the authenticity of their identity as Aboriginal people who established a culture intrinsically linked to their homeland” (Macdougall, 2010, p. 14), but it also “ignores the role of power and community in identity formation and shifts” (Robertson, 2013b, p. 148). The scholarly, legal, and widespread pre-occupation with race and cultural essentialism at the expense of Aboriginality acts to further debilitate Métis rights, political struggles, and people. Macdougall argues that scholars should be more interested in how the Métis emerged “as an expression of Aboriginality” and “what it is to be a new people” than on “the process of becoming” (2010, p. 56). She suggests that focusing on Métis notions of family or relatedness can transcend the preoccupation with individual racial ancestry. Such an approach, though more complex, would be less divisive and could make relevant contributions to our understandings of contemporary Métis identity.

4.2 Ethno-Cultural Definitions of Métis

One of the defining attributes of being Métis is being Indigenous. While racial markers such as blood quantum and appearance are significant aspects of the dominant discourse of indigeneity, so are ethno-cultural markers such as shared spiritual practices, values, social norms, historical experience, forms of cultural production, language, as well as social and familial ties. For Garrouette, maintaining definitions of Indigenous people grounded in cultural philosophy (culture) are a preferred approach:

Definitions based on culture seem, one might conclude, to accord better with a commonsense notion of peoplehood than the alternatives— with the idea that identity becomes genuinely meaningful when it is lived out in daily life, rather than merely professed or “certified” through one’s documentary or genetic “credentials.” Rather than grounding identity in what may be mere legal actions, in distant and vaguely recalled genetic connections, or in simple assertion, cultural definitions hold out the promise of something observable and enduring, which might underlie claims to identity. (2003, p. 74)

Many historians and anthropologists have found political shelter in discussing Indigenous communities in terms of their ethnic or cultural forms, with some scholars arguing that viewing indigeneity through the lens of ethnicity can transcend the ancestry or blood quantum discourse that is reliant on antiquated biological concepts of race. Yet, many Indigenous people have opposed ethnicity as a theoretical approach, as it does not acknowledge that they are the First Peoples of a territory and tends to conflate their political interests with other placeless minorities living within the state (Corntassel, 2003; Grammond, 2008). Furthermore, despite the theoretical argument that indigeneity is more ethnic than racial, in pragmatic terms, attaining legal recognition of Indigenous identities (especially in the US and Canada), requires proof of biological ancestry, rather than ethnic or cultural ties (Robertson, 2013). As Robertson explains in the following, for North American Indigenous people, race cannot be simply untangled from ethnicity: “[T]he racial designation of Indian carries both historical and economic boundaries for Natives, having served to separate and strip them of their cultures and resources. To reduce race to ethnicity is to deny the sociopolitical formation of a racial identity and the subsequent distinctiveness of racial oppression” (p. 82). Indigenous scholars have been at the forefront of critiquing ethnicity theory as an approach that is defined by outsiders and not by Indigenous people themselves (Corntassel, 2003). Nonetheless, the argument persists that despite the essentialist origins of ethnicity theory that once relied on static cultural markers, a constructivist approach to ethnicity can be valuable in understanding Indigenous people as it focuses on more fluid understandings of cultural formation processes (Grammond, 2008; Nagel, 2000).

4.2.1 Indigenous Identity

Following the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People’s (1996) statement that identity is “a state of being,” Indigenous identity can be considered to be creative and reactive, as since the point of contact, it has existed in response to the culture and politics of colonialism and its inherent racism. While individual meaning is derived from collective identity, Indigenous identity is both personal and contextualized by community. It involves the stability of continuity over time and the evolution that occurs from continuous differentiation from others (Green, 2009). Generally, identity can involve personal agency in terms of who one identifies with, but Indigenous identity is an act of political agency that is in turn, politicized. It has become a location of resistance

for Indigenous people, while simultaneously providing the grounds on which Indigenous people coalesce and resist colonization.

In Canada, Aboriginal identity has been largely homogenized by the settler state, conflating macro-categories such as ‘Indian’ with particular communities that have significant differences in terms of values, governance structures, language, culture, and practices (Green, 2009). A clear example of such homogenization occurred with the 1982 constitutional recognition of Canada’s Aboriginal people as ‘Indians,’ ‘Métis,’ and ‘Inuit’; whereby hundreds of Indigenous groups throughout Canada were classified as simply ‘First Nations’. Chris Andersen (2014) explains, the legacy of colonialism in the form of particular racialized discourses such as the Indian Act “have today congealed into a hardened foundation of ‘truths’ that continue to play a powerful role in forming the worldview for most Canadians, who generally have only cursory knowledge of Aboriginal histories and communities in general and the Métis in particular” (p. 30). Furthermore, Andersen follows that the continued use of such imposed (but increasingly naturalized) official classifications do not reflect local Indigenous peoples’ self-understandings but have been imbued with an “increasingly powerful symbolic legitimacy” (p. 32). He explains:

[T]he symbolic power of official classifications is dominant, in this sense, because we cease to think about these classifications as a form of power at all but rather as “just the way things are,” an apparent solidity produced through our investments in a series of authorized yet nonetheless historically rooted and thus ultimately arbitrary material and conceptual schemata. (p. 32)

Constructs of the ‘Indian’ as ‘Other’ were created by the colonizers to suit their social, political, and economic influences and needs (Said, 1978). Within the context of Australia, Pritchard describes the ways in which such racialized definitions of indigeneity have come into being in the following:

[T]he definitions have served to meet the various and changing interests and aspirations of those who constructed them, the colonizing or ‘modern’ state. Where there was a need to create a boundary between ‘primitive’ and ‘modern man,’ to legitimise ‘progress,’ to justify particular economic and political developments, to promote a national identity for a colonial nation, or more specifically to control, manage or assimilate Indigenous cultures, Aboriginality has been made to fit the bill. (p. 54)

The knowing and representing of Indigenous people was conducted through specific technologies and methods including categorization, racialization, linguistic translation, ethnological comparison, and ethnography (Simpson, 2014). While the stereotypical identity of ‘Indians’ was essentially an invention of colonialism in

North America, in some ways it has been consciously or unconsciously appropriated by Indigenous people for political gains (Restoule, 2000).

If identity is constructed in opposition to others, then Indigenous identity in Canada has been historically constructed in direct opposition to white Euro-Canadian identities (Andersen, 2003). Aboriginal authenticity has been measured based on antiquated racist ideas that had a tendency to exoticize those considered to be The Other (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). In the case of the Métis, racialization acts as a form of hidden persuasion “through which assumptions about, for example, the antecedent ‘purity’ of ‘Indians’ and ‘whites’ is naturalized at the expense of Métis peoplehood in particular and Indigenous peoplehood more broadly” (Andersen, 2014, p. 32). Indigenous scholars argue that the perpetuation of racialized images of what constitutes authentic Indigenous identity only contributes to the arsenal of the colonizer (Tallbear, 2001). Because Indigenous people have no choice but to adapt to the contemporary globalized world that we live in, they are set up to fail the authenticity test and aid in the conviction that they have assimilated and thus deserve no special treatment or land. As a result, Indigenous people around the world are forced to play out particular images of authenticity in order to maintain any special status.

Indigenous identities have been and continue to be controlled and regulated through imposed definitions, group self-definition, as well as membership measures. With the exception of the international requirement of self-identification, such controls over Indigenous identity occur over all levels (Corntassel & Primeau, 1998). The issue of who establishes, enforces, and decides upon definitions of Indigenous identity is contentious and debated. In North America, Indigenous communities have begun to define themselves through various means of establishing membership. The process of gaining Indigenous status has been critiqued for being bureaucratically rigorous and countering Indigenous belief systems that emphasize inclusiveness. Externally imposed definitions of indigeneity have been cause for concern for many Indigenous people as they have a tendency to be based on essentialist notions of a fixed Indigenous authentic culture and not the political nature of Indigenous rights (Andersen, 2003).

Indigenous scholars argue that the question of who is Indigenous is best answered by communities themselves (Corntassel & Primeau, 1998), yet defining identity is a process that inevitably involves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as it is “a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation” (Langton, 1993, cited in Paradies, 2006, p. 357). Furthermore, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states the following:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. This does not impair the right of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the States in which they live.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures. (2008, art. 33)

Regardless of how boundaries are being defined, it is imperative that we move away from essentialized understandings of Indigenous authenticity that imprison indigeneity into a static category. Understanding the fragmented nature of Indigenous identity is crucial in order to transcend racialized approaches that were historically employed in an effort to homogenize Indigenous people in Canada (Chartrand, 2001). Romanticized colonial discourses of primitivism and the strategic recognition of prior sovereignty for Indigenous people who can prove that they have “been relatively untouched by history” has been a means for state denial of the existence of “actual Indigenous people who, by adapting and changing, have survived colonialism while unavoidably shedding their pristine primeval identity” (Paradies, 2006, p. 363). Essentialized notions of indigeneity that include “specific fantasies of exclusivity, cultural alterity, marginality, physicality and morality” render most modern Indigenous people vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity, and thus incapable of making claims to rights or land (p. 356).

While self-identification is preferred by agencies such as the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples (UNWGIP), arguments are being made for limiting membership through the identification of standards so that ‘free-riders’ who are not Indigenous do not seek to benefit from such organizations (Corntassel & Primeau, 1998). According to Corntassel & Primeau (1998),

[T]o justify their denial of some or all Indigenous identities, host states may try to argue that they are simply trying to deny Indigenous identity fearing that these groups will make proprietary claims on their homelands or demand special greater autonomy, which could potentially lead other groups within the host state or elsewhere in the world system to make similar claims. (p. 149)

Following a similar line of thought, while the statistical increase in Indigenous populations in North America may be partially attributed to decreasing prejudice towards Indigenous people and as a result, a revival of cultural pride, government agencies and scholars alike emphasize the renegotiation of identities is solely for the purpose of material benefit (1998). While such instrumentalist arguments may have sufficient grounds, they further reinforce state denial of Indigenous identity.

According to Green (2009), it is critical to look carefully at membership standards, as imposing definitional requirements for the benefit of external authorities can cause psychological wounds for those who are excluded from the groups with which they self-identify. She argues that the three categories of Aboriginality as recognized by the Canadian constitution (Indians, Métis, and Inuit) have largely been imposed by colonial bureaucracies and have very little to do with how Aboriginal peoples understand themselves. As a result, such “categories of recognition are also liabilities” (2009, p. 41). It is imperative that the external application of terminology is not understood as being equal to the internal identity of a people (Restoule, 2000). For instance, many Indigenous people in Canada who are deemed to belong to the category of ‘First Nations’ do not see themselves as such, as they do not identify with being a political term (Retzlaff, 2005).

More recently, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, NGOs, and other international agencies have attempted to define indigeneity in a number of ways, which run the gamut from being strict, positivist definitions to more open constructivist approaches. Although never formally adopted as a membership standard for the UNWGIP, the most commonly used definition is that established in 1986 that defined Indigenous people as follows:

The existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic, and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant. (Cobo, 1986, para. 34)

While this definition is not without its problems, its popular usage may be attributed to the emphasis on the relationship between Indigenous populations and the colonial state. Another commonly used international

definition of indigeneity is that developed by the World Bank, which suggests that Indigeneity can be identified upon recognition of the presence of the following characteristics:

- A. A close attachment to ancestral territories and the natural resources in these areas;
- B. Self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group;
- C. An Indigenous language, often different from the national language;
- D. Presence of customary social and political institutions;
- E. Primarily subsistence-oriented production. (Corntassel, 2003, p. 86)

Such characteristic-based definitions are commonly used to identify Indigenous people and may further enforce unsuitable Indigenous archetypes. The World Bank's emphasis on ancestral territories, resources, and subsistence production are clearly indicative of the types of activities that Indigenous populations may engage in that would concern such an institution. Furthermore, a more recent update to the World Bank definition de-emphasizes cultural ties to ancestral homelands, meanwhile "[confining] any natural resource use to clearly defined territorial holdings, rather than natural resource claims on or near Indigenous homelands" (Corntassel, 2003, p. 87). Most significantly, the updated definition attempts to define indigeneity according to where one resides, so that "one's very identity as Indigenous is lost upon entering an urban area" as indigeneity is not applicable to groups who have "left their communities of origin" and "[moved] to urban areas and/or migrated to obtain wage labour" (p. 87). This is a particularly salient issue for Métis people as according to the 2011 National Household Survey, the majority (44%) of Métis people live in Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA), while 27% live in non-CMA population centres and only 29% live in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2013).

The emphasis on ancestral territory and the 'tie to the land' is a dominant narrative for Indigenous people, informing Aboriginal culture and identity in Canada (Andersen & Denis, 2003; Boock, 2009; Green, 2009). It is considered to be integral to Aboriginal identities in a way that does not necessarily equate to Western concepts of property or ownership. For Indigenous people, the concept of land moves beyond geographic notions of physical landscape or mapped locations, but instead can signify place, landscape, home, and/or territory (Goeman, 2008). In many ways Indigenous 'land' can be equated to Tuan's (1975) description of place: "place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning"

(p. 236). Land has a history and meaning that is generated through narrative practices. To many Indigenous people, land acts as a profound mnemonic device to elicit stories, self-reflection, as well as individual and collective memories (Basso, 1996; Goeman, 2008). Consequently, land is connected to Indigenous identity in a variety of ways.

4.2.2 Shared ‘Ways of Being’

Shared experiences, lifeways, values, norms, and general patterns of thought make up Indigenous cultures and are often considered key determinants of identity (Garrouette, 2003). The widespread acceptance of adoption as a method for transferring culture in the absence of biological inheritance among many Indigenous peoples throughout the world points to the significance of learned cultural behaviours, norms, and values. Significantly, language acts a vehicle for transmitting Indigenous knowledge, values, and norms. The effects of colonial policies of assimilation had substantial negative effects on the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous values, especially among Métis populations (see section 4.3 in this chapter).

The emphasis on European domination persists amongst analyses of Métis populations, often to the detriment and exclusion of their Indigenous cultures that in many cases tended to extend along maternal lines. Yet, according to Crawford, the development of the Michif language required “some sort of sympathetic co-existence or a balance of prestige between Cree and French groups” (1985, p. 49), which directly contradicts popular historic depictions of Métis that centered predominantly French men. Such descriptions have tended to focus on male-centric activities such as hunting, working in the fur trade, and voyageurs, resulting in the exclusion of women in historical descriptions and analyses (Macdougall, 2010). Furthermore, the more easily traceable paternity of Métis families versus maternal lineages has caused ethno-historians to “[default] to the notion that Métis socio-cultural structure is patriarchal because they have a tradition of carrying on the use of surnames brought by European and Euro-North American progenitors” (p. 438). Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall thus argues that “without an actual analysis of full familial lineages, it is premature to conclude that Métis culture is indeed patriarchal in structure” (p. 438). Her solution to such a gender-biased historical

description of Métis is to give due attention to the role of Aboriginal women and their worldviews in the metamorphosis of the social world and way of life of their offspring.

Macdougall contends that a specific set of Aboriginal-based beliefs and attitudes towards social and family life contributed to the creation of a Métis socio-cultural identity. In her study of nineteenth-century Métis in Île à la Crosse, Saskatchewan, Macdougall reconstructed genealogies through the cross-referencing of scrip, fur trade, and census records to reveal the ways in which *wahkootowin* informed the social structure of family networks.³⁹ She argues that “the women Indigenous to the region became the centrifugal force incorporating successive waves of outsider males who carried with them the surnames that came to mark northwestern Saskatchewan communities and identified the families locally and patronymically. Aboriginal women - Cree, Dene, and then Métis - grounded their families in their homelands, creating for them a sense of belonging to the territory through a regionally defined matrilineal residency pattern and, therefore, female-centred family networks” (p. 445). Consequently, the relationship that Métis people had to the land was defined by that of the women born of that land (2010).

Macdougall describes the ways in which such Aboriginal worldviews of Indigenous women trickled down into the lives of their Métis descendants to produce “a system of social obligation and mutual responsibility between related individuals - between members of a family - as the foundational relationship within communities” (2006, p. 434). *Wahkootowin* represents a shared ontology and axiology that historically informed and continues to inform the perspectives of some Cree and Métis people who have been raised in this way. Relatedness or relationality was a primary concern in structuring social relationships, however, it was an *ideal* that may not have been achievable on a daily basis (2010, p. 10). Macdougall explains how Métis definitions of

³⁹ She employs the concept of *wahkootowin*, a Cree cultural and theoretical concept (or “style of life”) that she describes in the following:

Wahkootowin has been translated by scholars of the Cree language as “relationship” or “relation,” but such a translation misses much of the meaning and sentiment that the term and its various derivatives actually express. As much as it is a worldview based on familial- especially interfamilial- connectedness, *wahkootowin* also conveys an idea about the virtues that an individual should personify as a family member. The values critical to family relationships- such as reciprocity, mutual support, decency, and order- in turn influenced the behaviours, actions, and decision-making processes that shaped all a community’s economic and political interactions. *Wahkootowin* contextualizes how relationships were intended to work within Métis society by defining and classifying relationships, prescribing patterns of behaviour between relatives and non-relatives, and linking people and communities in a large, complex web of relationships. Just as *wahkootowin* mediated interactions between people, it also extended to the natural and spiritual worlds, regulating relationships between humans and non-humans, the living and the dead, and humans and the natural environment. [2010, p. 8]

family and relatedness moved beyond the scope of Western understandings, stating that “wahkootowin is predicated upon a specific Aboriginal notion and definition of family as a broadly conceived sense of relatedness with all beings, human and non-human, living and dead, physical and spiritual” (2010, p. 3). Due to the compatibility of Métis worldviews such as *wahkootowin* with catholic ceremonial rituals, the two seemingly divergent systems were easily integrated, contradicting widespread beliefs that First Nations people abandoned their spiritual beliefs to become Christianized (see section 4.3). Instead, Christian ideas were adapted to the existing spiritual framework that valued kin relationships. Among historic Métis families, the spirit world was integrated into everyday life, as churches and clergy were in some ways regarded as relations themselves (2010). For Métis people with non-Cree/Dene ancestors and relations, the spirit world might be understood and described in different ways, however the Roman Catholic Church had clear effects on the spiritual beliefs of Métis.

Another aspect of such ‘shared ways of being’ are those that were publicly exhibited through cultural production. Material culture can act as a clear indicator and expression of identity. In much of central and western Canada, beadwork styles communicated tribal association. For instance, the Métis were referred to by Sioux peoples as the ‘flower beadwork people,’ as the particular floral beadwork style emerged in congruence with the historic Métis Nation that was centred at the Red River Settlement (Bell, 2013). While outward expressions of culture are valuable in understanding underlying cultural philosophies, it is the combination of both tangible and intangible qualities that guide everyday interactions and behaviours. Macdougall argues,

[O]ne must look to [a culture’s] relationships to the land and its inhabitants, from which ideas, values, laws and taboos, manners of independence and hospitality, and virtues emanate...the intangible aspects of a culture... are what require examination and explanation if we are to truly understand, and be able to engage with, a people on their own terms. (2010, p. 6)

There are many types of material and performance-based productions that can exhibit ethno-cultural traditions, however the reliance on such ethno-cultural products in defining a group’s indigeneity remains legally and politically problematic.

4.2.3 Indigenous in Canada: A Matter of Difference

Modern nation states and their legal authorities have a longstanding tendency to position issues related to Indigenous peoples in terms of cultural difference, rather than political rights. Using a model of cultural difference inherently relies on a fundamental assumption that “real indigeneity was rather than is- the more modern we appear, the manifestly less Indigenous we must be” (Andersen, 2014, p. 105). Undermining not only Indigenous assertions of nationhood, but also modern indigeneity, a model of cultural difference is particularly problematic for dispersed, landless, and urban Aboriginal populations such as the Métis.

In Canada, Aboriginal difference has been located through the lens of multiculturalism, which has resulted in a popular understanding of Aboriginal people as receiving ‘special treatment’ from the government. While multiculturalism can be used to describe a culturally diverse society, it is often touted as a positive value, as a multicultural society is considered to be more desirable than a culturally homogeneous society (Poole, 1999). For Indigenous people in Canada, the concept of multiculturalism has operated strategically as “an attempt to subsume this plurality of cultures within the framework of a national identity” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 8). According to Andersen, this also allows for a representation of Canada’s Indigenous peoples as “quaint and vaguely non-threatening,” thus supporting a positive vision of Canada as a multi-cultural mosaic (2014, p. 101). Such an approach denies Indigenous groups any form of political equal footing with the state, instead placing Indigenous ‘cultures’ neatly alongside other ethnic minorities under the umbrella of the Canadian nation-state. Furthermore, having any special status has been constructed as largely ‘un-Canadian’ as “it is in opposition to the stated goal of equality among individuals above the law” (Restoule, 2000, p. 110). While some identity theorists argue that people define themselves in relation to others (Chretien, 2005), the Métis have been and remain defined in terms of their relationship to both First Nation groups and Euro-Canadians (Andersen, 2003). Andersen critiques the use of difference as the basis for Métis identity definition, as Métis *distinctiveness* is drawn from collectivity rather than cultural boundaries. Yet distinctiveness does not necessarily mean that there is no commonality with other groups, as Métis historical (and contemporary) cultural practices and characteristics overlap with those of various Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.

4.2.4 Legal Implications of the Cultural Rights Approach

While cultural practices change over time, definitions of indigeneity that are based on cultural traditions are strongly tied to the past. Garrouette (2003) explains how cultural definitions of indigeneity can negatively affect Indigenous peoples in the following:

Even when cultural definitions have more grounding in fact, they sometimes impose a misleading and timeless homogeneity onto tribes. They do so by imagining a time in which all the ancestors of a particular tribe practiced a more or less identical set of traditions. This assumption tends to lead to the conclusion that only one group—the “real Indians” of that tribe—possesses the “true” tradition, and that distinct traditions are nothing but degenerate and inauthentic forms. (p. 67)

Within legal contexts in the US and Canada, Indigenous groups have struggled against judicial processes that consider unbroken continuity to be at the heart of cultural integrity. Indigeneity has been restricted in terms of the ways in which it has been defined within the courts as it has been considered historically based and unchanging, thus limiting Indigenous modernity and the subject positions of contemporary Indigenous peoples living in Canada. Forcing contemporary Indigenous people into fixed cultural practices freezes Indigenous identities in a mythic historical past. For instance, as Green (2009) points out, the Supreme Court of Canada continues to “locate authentic identity in historic tradition, as though there was an historic moment at which tradition was absolutely authoritative of cultural practices both then and now” (p. 37). Locating the ‘essence’ of Indigenous identity has remained a focus of the Canadian court system.

Internationally, such essentialized conceptions of Indigeneity have been used by non-Indigenous actors to question the legitimacy of Indigenous rights and claims (Bolaños, 2011). In particular, state constructions of indigeneity have influenced public opinion of what is deemed Indigenous enough to warrant access to rights and resources (Beckett, 1998). For instance, Bolaños’ (2011) work in Brazil indicates that the public perception is that Indigenous people have changed too much to be considered ‘authentic Indians,’ as “true Indians go naked and live deep in the forest” (p. 61). Authenticity is a cultural construct of the modern Western world that is rooted in romanticized visions of rural folk, untouched by urban society (Linnekin, 1991; Morrison, 2003). Yet, despite the reality that Indigenous people were changing even prior to European contact, prevailing notions of authenticity as equating to fixedness has constructed Aboriginal people in Canada as “too primitive to be sovereign, or too

contemporary to legitimately claim Aboriginal and treaty rights against the colonial state” (Green, 2009, p. 39).

The assumption that Aboriginal people have assimilated into Canada’s mainstream population can hinder Aboriginal rights from being recognized. For instance, Restoule (2000) explains that lawyers for the Crown argued in a Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en Aboriginal title case that “because the contemporary Gitksan eat pizza from microwaves and drive cars, they have essentially given up their Aboriginality” (p. 111). Furthermore, Patzer (2013) argues that Canadian Aboriginal rights claims are based on a ‘cultural rights approach’ that both draws on and simultaneously acts to construct Aboriginal subjectivity: “[I]t is a romantic, idealized vision of Aboriginality, to be sure, one that mobilizes a cunning politics of difference in which claimants are apt to be cast as too distant from their own Aboriginality to merit the recognition of their rights” (p. 208-9).

Employing essentialized cultural and territorial notions of ‘Indianness,’ the cultural right approach continues to be deployed in the Canadian judiciary, despite being delegitimized by the United Nations in as early as 1972.⁴⁰ For instance, according to Simpson (2014),

[I]n order to exercise territorial rights, they [Aboriginal people] must be in possession of this territory prior to Canadian settlement and they must then pass the legal culture test of Van der Peet, in which they demonstrate that the territory they claim is tied to their cultural practice as defined in the moment of settlement (what has been called ‘frozen rights’). These practices must be in accord with their (colonial) moment of beginning, when they were first seen, or recorded, or made use of their land in ways legible to outsiders. (p. 155)

This kind of ‘test’ is particularly problematic for Métis people who have experienced diaspora as a result of their systematic dispossession from previous territories.

According to Patzer (2013), not only the Canadian Supreme Court of Canada, but also other commonwealth governments and judiciaries have “assumed unquestioningly that Aboriginal claims must be founded on cultural difference” (p. 317). Such notions of cultural difference have roots in out-dated racialized and stereotyped assumptions about ‘Indian’ primitivism. According to Garrouette, “unbroken continuity forms the *sine qua non* of Indian cultural integrity is fundamental to cultural definitions of Indianness,” rendering the

⁴⁰ The 1972 study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations conducted by the United Nations Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities demonstrated that while cultural considerations are important, they are not absolute, stating: “[I]t [is] inappropriate to define Indigenous peoples entirely in terms of an imagined culture, free from the influence of non-Indigenous societies. The reality was that, in virtually every region of the world, the colonizing culture has pervaded Indigenous cultures, and so cultural borrowings and transformations are always present” (Dodson, 1994, p. 5).

phenomenon of cultural revival as inauthentic (2003, p. 68). Through the cultural rights approach, a mechanism based on a cultural historical test, Aboriginal Canadians are forced to shape their identity as authentic according to settler colonial standards. Patzer argues that such questioning of authenticity is “one of the most insidious forms of subjectification of Aboriginal peoples” which “represents a further infiltration of legal-bureaucratic categorization into the lives and self-perceptions of Aboriginal Canadians” (2013, p. 321). This discursive framework of authenticity renders contemporary Indigenous people as “culturally contaminated, corrupted descendants of their putatively spiritual ancestors rather than their spiritual heirs” (p. 322).

Similarly, Logan (2008) reiterates the problems that arise for Métis people as a result of the limited definitions that are available for Métis people as follows:

Métis are not defined by biology or blood quantum. However, defining Métis by their relations to First Nations communities fragments Métis identity and contributes to lateral violence and infighting. Government actions have placed limits on Métis identity by forcing definitions for this identity. Métis are forced to find their place under government limitations. In doing so, Métis do not always fight cause of the limitations, but instead they fight each other... Government tactics, such as using blood quantum or ties to one specific cultural trait as a measurement of "Métis-ness," further work to fragment Métis communities. (p. 92)

Rather than approaching the question of ‘Who are the Métis?’ in terms of a distinct people, Métis rights decisions to date demonstrate that the courts have “turned to the conceptually simpler exercise of drawing on what they claimed to know about ‘Indians’ to make Métis cognizable” (Peach 2013, p. 281). Furthermore, “because Métis were perceived by the settler state as less ‘pure’ than First Nations, their Aboriginal rights were assumed to be less” (p. 281). Ian Peach (2013) argues that the approach whereby Métis Aboriginal claims were responded to as a derivative of the Aboriginal rights claims of First Nations, as they were recognized only to the extent in which they were like Indians, “did a serious disservice to the distinct cultural identity of Métis, their legal status as a distinct Aboriginal community on par with those of First Nations and Inuit peoples, and their distinct relationship with the crown” (p. 299). Following First Nations Aboriginal rights precedence, legitimate Métis rights claims are validated based on the degree to which they conform to what the courts term an ‘Indian mode of life.’ Peach gives examples such as Alberta’s (1996) *R. v. Desjarlais*, a hunting right case which focused on determinations of whether the accused had “sufficient identified Indian blood” and lived an “Indian mode of life” (which the court

determined on the basis of reliance on wage employment) to demonstrate that Métis Aboriginal rights were treated early on as derivatives of First Nations rights. This legal logic is based on the notion that Aboriginality is located in its historical difference from white settlers.

Through the cultural rights approach the Canadian judiciary has relied on and assisted in creating an Aboriginal subjectivity, which Patzer describes as “rooted in a quaint, ‘authentic’ past tethered to discrete and tightly delimited practices” (2013, p. 208). Patzer explains, “[T]he cultural rights approach makes use of a historico-cultural test that inevitably shapes the Aboriginal rights trial into an evaluation of the ‘authenticity’ of contemporary Aboriginal rights claims, and thus represents a further incursion of colonial power and legal-bureaucratic categorization into the lives, perceptions and self-perceptions of Aboriginal Canadians” (p. 208-9). As a result, ‘authentic Aboriginality’ is conceived of as existing prior to specific time thresholds, equating cultural adaptation to cultural erosion, and thus construing contemporary Aboriginal Canadians as Europeanized. According to Patzer, “the result in contemporary settler states seems to be an overriding desire for Aboriginal claimants to demonstrate a collective sense of identity that is singular, undisputed, authentic and essential” (2013, p. 323). The choice of the Supreme Court of Canada to determine Aboriginal rights on the basis of historical-cultural tests, rather than as a matter of autonomy, is rarely questioned, however this should be a topic of much concern for Métis peoples. Patzer explains as follows:

While Canadians can hold disparate and conflicting views about their nation and what it means to be Canadian, Aboriginal nations are not granted such license. The judiciary’s cultural essentialism can be particularly inauspicious for Métis peoples. Lost in the “neither white, nor Indian” hinterland, their civilizational qualities were under the disdainful scrutiny of colonial elites for years. Now Métis peoples find themselves in an era in which Aboriginality has been romanticized into an idealized standard against which contemporary communities are apt to be found wanting, and in which, as the Crown’s arguments in the Powley case indicate, variability and fluidity in self-identity are potential obstacles to ensuring rights are recognized. (2013, p. 326)

The Supreme Court of Canada’s Powley Case made significant changes to the ways in which Métis were understood within Canada’s legal system.⁴¹ According to Peach (2013), “[T]he court noted that Métis were treated as a different group than ‘Indians’ for the purposes of identifying their rights and the protections afforded

⁴¹ Note that *R. v. Morin* and *Daigneault* provided an exception to the logic that Métis rights derived from First Nations rights, as Métis were not actually compared to First Nations people, but determined to have been established in the area by 1870 (see Peach, 2013).

them, in particular because governments didn't treat Métis as wards of the crown" (p. 285). Furthermore, the court stated, "[A] Métis community can be defined as a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographic area and sharing a common way of life" (R. v. Powley 2003), shifting legal understandings of Métis from being "watered-down version of rights-bearing First Nations communities" (Peach, 2013, p. 288), to distinct rights-bearing communities.

4.2.5 The Powley Decision

Much of the focus of specific Métis rights-based court cases have focused on harvesting rights, none of which have been successfully argued in favour of the Métis in British Columbia. With the exception of the Métis Settlements in Alberta, Métis peoples have not successfully claimed land rights in Canada. The principles established in *Delgamuukw vs. BC* (1997) such as sufficiency of use and occupation, exclusive occupation, and continuity are particularly problematic for Métis, as they are contradictory to the Métis historical mobility as well as a tendency to share land and jointly occupy territory.⁴² According to Teillet (2013), "based on this history, it seems that the Métis must make out a claim, not to exclusive occupation, but rather Aboriginal title based on joint occupancy" (p. 104). However, a claim based on joint occupancy has never been made in a Canadian court.

Andersen explains that "Powley and its logics have, by and large, become the 'law of the land' literally and metaphorically, with echoes and reverberations far beyond the narrow issues decided at trial" (p. 68). As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the Powley decision criteria continue to be the most widely used official definition of 'Métis', as it described three attributes that were necessary for Métis peoples to gain access to Aboriginal rights. These included 1) self-identification as Métis, 2) having "an ancestral connection to a historical Métis community," and 3) community acceptance (Barman, 2006, p. 20). Furthermore, the term Métis was defined as "distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears" (R. v. Powley 2003, para. 10). Not only did the Powley Decision create the opportunity for a more fluid definition of métissage

⁴² *Delgamuukw vs. BC* (1997) is a leading case in Aboriginal law that held that proof of occupation and use can establish Aboriginal title (Teillet, 2013).

that was not limited to the fur trade, but it also disturbed the previous “Red River myopia” (Nicks & Morgan, 1985, p. 173), as it extended the definition potentially to include communities tracing their ancestry beyond the historic Métis centre of the historic Northwest. As Dahl argues, “after Powley, according to the judicial description in that decision, Métis people can potentially be found anywhere in Canada” (2013, p. 118).

Although the Powley Decision has had significant influence on legal, government, political, and scholarly definitions of ‘Métis,’ it has received considerable scholarly criticism (see Andersen, 2014). The Powley Decision’s extension of the definition of Métis directly contradicted earlier statements by the Métis National Council, demonstrating that the Métis, as a socio-political category remain subject to evolution and thus re-definition (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 6). Currently, the MNC governed provincial organizations rely on the Powley definition for their own citizenship processes and provincial citizenship registry systems (Métis National Council, 2011), yet many questions remain unanswered.⁴³ The Powley definition emphasizes ancestral family connection (although not necessarily blood quantum or genetics), self-identification as Métis, and community acceptance.

‘Community’ is defined as locally organized community branch, a chapter or council of a recognized Métis association or other organization (Supra note 3, para. 64), but the issue of local organizations determining Métis Nation membership remains a point of debate (Chartrand, 2001). Andersen’s interpretation of the term ‘community’ within the Powley Decision suggests that it restricts the ways in which the Métis can be understood in terms of their expansive historic networks as it was based on geographical proximity as well as distinctiveness, stability, and continuity. Having such a site-specific requirement is “to fundamentally *misrecognize* the historical character of Métis society” (2014, p. 146, emphasis in original). Therefore, Andersen argues that the Sault Ste. Marie community was misrecognized as Métis because their recognition was based on mixedness and historical

⁴³ Note that MNBC’s citizenship application process as of 2015 involves submitting the following documents: 1) a copy of a family information birth or baptismal certificate for the following individuals going back to 1901: the applicant, a Métis parent, grandparent and great grandparent; 2) A completed pedigree chart detailing five generations; 3) a passport quality photograph; 4) a copy of BC issued photo identification; 5) a completed, signed, dated, and witnessed “Consent to Release” form; 6) a completed, signed, and dated “Indian Registry Screening Consent” form (to indicate that the applicant is not a registered Indian); and 7) Proof of BC residence (MNBC, 2015d)

separateness from other Indigenous groups, rather than their connections to the historic Métis networks that once resided at the Red River Settlement.

The site-specific and temporal quality of current Métis rights limits the abilities of communities to move beyond the geographical areas of their ancestors. In the Powley decision, judicial reasoning in favour of Aboriginal rights for Métis emphasizes pre-contact practices and includes a narrow historical narrative that emphasizes a close connection to the land. Throughout the case, it remained unclear if Métis historical practices are considered Indigenous or if it is the practices of their Indigenous ancestors that determine their Aboriginality. In many cases, Aboriginality for Métis people has been defined by relationship to the land and occupation prior to ‘effective control’, which for Sault Ste Marie was considered to be pre-1850 (Andersen, 2003).

Furthermore, the definition of ‘Métis’ found in the Powley decision has not been considered by all parties to be a positive move forward for Métis people. Andersen’s (2014) deconstruction of the Powley Decision explains why the reliance of the Powley definition on the mixedness of Métis is particularly problematic:

the Powley’s court definition required on the part of the individual no historical self-identification as Métis in order to launch a contemporary claim as such. Instead, confident in its knowledge about the essential mixedness underscoring the meaning of “Métis,” the Supreme Court of Canada required only that claimants prove their ancestral Indigenous community’s separateness from adjacent tribal communities. (p. 65)

There was little discussion within the Powley decision of whether a broad-based national Métis identity even exists, which only served to further diminish any argument for Métis Aboriginal rights based on political dominion rather than the current dominant argument of difference based on historic cultural tradition. Despite the arguments against it, advocates for a singular Métis Nation suggest that Powley’s overly inclusive use of the term Métis, based on notions of mixedness, could be particularly damaging to Métis political endeavours. According to Andersen, claiming the term ‘Métis’ to be a “catch-all term for anyone who is Indigenous-but-not-First-Nation-or-Inuit” effectively reproduces and re-entrenches racist Indian Act policies (2014, p. 24). Furthermore, the attempts of self-identified Métis groups “to fit historical documentation and taxonomies into contemporary juridical taxonomies, rather than into more ethnohistorically reflexive categories that emphasize contemporaneous self-ascription, is analytically unreflexive, to say the least” (2014, p. 72; see 2003). Andersen’s

argument against accepting self-identified Métis groups with no connection to the historic Red River Settlement is highlighted in his description of the former Labrador Métis Nation's (LMN) involvement in the Powley Case and subsequent claims as NunatuKavut Community Council. He argues that LMN's intervener status in the Powley Case used self-identification as Métis in its racialized form (via external categorizations due to perceived mixedness) to forward claims that were actually based on geographical location and a collective self-understanding as Inuit. Fitting their claims within the existing categories of state recognition, LMN did not collectively identify with the cultural traditions of Métis living across Western Canada, but saw themselves as inseparable from other Inuit, thus prompting the name change from Labrador Métis Nation to NunatuKavut Community Council. This points to ways in which 'mixed-ancestry' communities that identify as Métis without a historical connection to the Métis people contribute to the misrecognition of the meaning of the term 'Métis.'

4.2.6 The Daniels Decision

During the course of this study, the Daniels case has been playing out in the legal arena, culminating with a Supreme Court of Canada decision on April 14, 2016 that declared that "Métis and non-status Indians are 'Indians' under s. 91(24)" (Daniels v. Canada 2016). As mentioned earlier, the Daniels case was initiated by plaintiffs Harry Daniels, Leah Gardner and Terry Joudrey, and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, although several interveners have since become involved including: the Native Council of Nova Scotia, the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, the Te'mexw Treaty Association, the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada, the Chiefs of Ontario, the Native Alliance of Quebec, the Assembly of First Nations, the Métis Federation of Canada, the Metis Settlements General Council, the Gift Lake Métis Settlement, and the Métis National Council. The plaintiffs requested from the Federal Court the following three declarations in regards to Métis and non-status Indians:

1. Recognition and inclusion as "Indians" in s 91 (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867.
2. That the Queen (in right of Canada) owes a fiduciary duty to Métis and non-status Indians as Aboriginal people.
3. The Métis and non-status Indian people of Canada have a right to be consulted and negotiated with, by the federal government on a collective basis through representatives of their own choice. (Daniels v. Canada 2013)

To decide whether Métis and non-status Indians were in s.91(24), the Daniels Case trial judge reviewed 200 years of historic evidence to determine that the federal government has always accepted jurisdiction for Métis and non-status Indians and has used this power in many ways. The court noted that historically:

[W]herever non-status Indians and Métis were discriminated against or subjected to different treatment, such as in schooling, liquor laws, land grants and payments, it was because non-status Indians and Métis were considered to be of ‘Indian heredity.’ The Court decided that the single most distinguishing feature of either non-status Indians or Métis is that of ‘Indianness’ not language, religion, or connection to European heritage, which brought them within s. 91(24). (Teillet, 2013, p. 120)

As a result, the trial judge and later following multiple appeals on behalf of the Federal Government, the Supreme Court of Canada granted the first, but not the second and third declarations. The judgment argued that the second and third declarations were “vague and redundant”, as “it was already well established in Canadian law that the federal government was in a fiduciary relationship with Canada’s Aboriginal peoples and that the federal government had a duty to consult and negotiate with them when their rights were engaged. Restating this in declarations would be of no practical utility” (Daniels v. Canada 2016, para. 8).

Political bodies that represent Métis and Non-status peoples have been hopeful that a Supreme Court ruling in their favour would resolve the problem of jurisdictional responsibility and that a decision would be made regarding specific fiduciary duties. Prior to the Supreme Court of Canada decision, there was considerable speculation as to what the Daniels Decision could potentially mean for Métis and non-status Indians. For instance, according to lawyer Eberle, if the Supreme Court of Canada upholds the Federal Court’s decision and the Federal Government is unwilling to address the current situation, then “the *Daniels* decision paves the way for organizations and individuals to launch court cases. For example, non-status Indians and Métis could potentially argue that the Federal Government’s refusal to extend the benefits listed in the *Indian Act* to include non-status Indians and Métis violates their right to equality guaranteed in section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*” (2013). Since the April 14, 2016 judgment, there has been limited analysis as to what effect the Supreme Court of Canada decision will have on programs, services, and policies regarding Métis and non-status Indians, as it appears that its consequence will become clearer as future claims emerge.

Part of the confusion over the long term effect(s) of the decision lies in the lack of a definition that was rendered regarding who is considered to be Métis and non-status Indians, as the judge stipulated that “determining whether particular individuals or communities are non-status Indians or Métis and therefore ‘Indians’ under s. 91(24), is a fact-driven question to be decided on a case-by-case basis in the future” (Daniels v. Canada, para. 47). Furthermore, the judgment included a quote from Gaffney, Gould, & Semple’s 1984 book to express that there is no universally accepted definition of Métis:

There is no one exclusive Metis People in Canada, anymore than there is no one exclusive Indian people in Canada. The Metis of eastern Canada and northern Canada are as distinct from Red River Metis as any two peoples can be. . . . As early as 1650, a distinct Metis community developed in LeHeve [sic], Nova Scotia, separate from Acadians and Micmac Indians. All Metis are aboriginal people. All have Indian ancestry. (p. 62)

As a result of this statement, a widespread misunderstanding has emerged (that can be witnessed throughout métis websites online) that the SCC decision acts as a legal ruling that supports the notion that self-identification as Métis based only on mixed ancestry sufficiently qualifies one for ‘Métis status.’ However, as Métis scholar Chelsea Vowel (2016) explains, such comments are “merely what is referred to as *obiter dictum*, a thing ‘said in passing’ that is not legally binding.” Furthermore, she explains that “the court did not just acknowledge the existence of Métis communities in Nova Scotia or anywhere else. In fact the court stated it would do no such thing in its judgment...there has been no blanket acceptance, and the burden of proof is still on the individual or community to prove they are Métis or non-status” (2016).

Despite Vowel’s argument, there remains concern that the Daniels decision might be interpreted as accepting the notion of ‘Métis’ as equal to racial mixedness. In a news article commentary, Andersen stated, “I’ve joked that the logic contained in this court decision amounted to a coming of the zombie apocalypse since it raised from the dead the racialized logic of ‘Métis-as-mixed’ that an earlier 2003 SCC case, R. v. Powley, had already attempted to put a stake in” (2016). He further stated, “[M]oreover, in reinterring a deeply racist logic partially laid to rest in the earlier Powley decision (a decision about rights rather than jurisdiction), this decision has created a patchwork of contradictions that will beguile Aboriginal policy dynamics pertaining to Métis and non-status Indians long into the future” (2016). Similarly, Macdougall argues that the focus on mixed-ancestry

within the Daniels case is misrepresentative of the historical and contemporary experiences of both Métis and non-status people, stating, “[O]f course there were mixed-blood people in eastern Canada as early as the seventeenth century, but equating them with the Métis, known historically as la nouvelle nation, is not borne out by historical evidence” (2016, p. 2). She points to the error of such a misjudgment as being the presumption that the term Métis remains unchanged in its usage today from its usage since the seventeenth century, contending, “[I]t is one thing for the average Canadian to believe this, but egregious for any government responsible for colonial policies and legal principles to accept such historical inaccuracy as fact” (p. 4). The conflation of cultural and national identities as well as the contradictions within the decision have led to confusion over the effects of the SCC decision on Métis identity and citizenship, which has only been further amplified by its mention of the Powley decision. The judgment stated concern over the third criterion for who qualifies as Métis for the purposes of s. 35(1)- “Acceptance by the modern Métis community”. It stated:

The criteria in Powley were developed specifically for purposes of applying s. 35, which is about protecting historic community-held rights: para. 13. That is why acceptance by the community was found to be, for purposes of who is included as Métis under s. 35, a prerequisite to holding those rights. Section 91(24) serves a very different constitutional purpose. It is about the federal government’s relationship with Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. This includes people who may no longer be accepted by their communities because they were separated from them as a result, for example, of government policies such as Indian Residential Schools. There is no principled reason for presumptively and arbitrarily excluding them from Parliament’s protective authority on the basis of a “community acceptance” test. (Daniels v. Canada 2016: para. 49)

So, while the judgment is not overturning Powley in any way, it appears to be simply stating that for the purpose of individual Métis access to policy/programs, ‘community acceptance’ is not a chief concern. This specific decision results from the judge’s discretion to consider the intergenerational effects of colonization on Métis peoples in terms of disconnecting people from Métis communities. Vowel explains that though reducing the importance of ‘community acceptance’ when determining federal responsibilities to those who may be considered Métis, individuals or communities who identify as Métis without a connection to a historic Métis community (criteria #2 of the Powley decision) will still likely remain illegible. She explains:

It is going to be hard for some people to even satisfy these two points in order to say that the federal government has legislative authority over them. There have been many cases brought before the courts which have attempted to prove the presence of an historic Métis community east of Ontario, but in every single instance the courts have found that the evidence was lacking. **Judicially, there are**

no Métis communities in Quebec, or further east. That has not changed with this decision. Further, the three point *Powley* test remains intact for the purposes of the Aboriginal rights protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act of 1982*. (emphasis in original, 2016)

Although, the Daniels decision provides little clarity in terms of a definition of what constitutes Métis identity, it is instrumental in resolving a century long jurisdictional dispute regarding government responsibility over Métis and Non-status peoples. As Andersen states, “the important thing to understand about court decisions – especially those written by the Supreme Court of Canada – is that they are beginnings as much as they are endings. That is to say, court decisions must be understood as imparting important – if sometimes necessarily vague and often maddeningly contradictory – policy principles that have the power to enormously impact the dynamics of future policy relationships” (2016). Clearly both the *Powley* and *Daniels* Decisions have significant impact on policies that affect Métis people, however, they merely act as preludes to a series of Métis court cases.

4.2.7 Self-identification, Cultural Appropriation, and Ethnic Fraud

As a means for measuring populations, Canadian censuses have played a significant role in official constructions of Métis identities. Métis people have long been “administratively invisible,” as ‘Métis’ as a census category only emerged in the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples survey (Andersen, 2014, p. 81). If we are to view the census as a reflection of collective self-understandings than the increasing number of self-identifying Métis marks a shift in dominant discourses of Métisness. Andersen argues that “individuals are beginning to self-identify as Métis at numbers far beyond what natural demographic factors such as fertility and mortality would allow” (p. 151). His explanation for such a sharp rise in Métis identification is that there is a lack of clarity within censuses in terms of what exactly ‘Métis’ means. So even those with no relationship to any Métis Nation (or even those without any Indigenous ancestry whatsoever) self-identify as Métis in the census.⁴⁴ Andersen argues that the resulting data regarding self-identifying métis populations is of little use to policy makers. His solution is an additional question to be added to the census to determine who exactly it is that self-identifying métis are affiliating themselves with. Andersen suggests that this be broken down between provincial Métis organizations (such as MNBC, MNO, etc.), while acknowledging the critique that “this effectively re-entrenches the power of

⁴⁴ Some people self-identified as Métis on the basis of being married to someone of Métis descent.

the provinces to cut across the Métis homeland and, in doing so, further legitimize the contexts within which Métis politics take place” (p. 152-3). Although census results have not necessarily provided much value in terms of understanding Métis populations, there is something to be learned about the permeability of Métis identity boundaries as well as general perceptions about the benefits of identifying as Métis. The dramatic increase in self-identifying métis has been noted by Canadian demographers as “reflecting individuals’ expectations of various kinds of benefits attached to self-identifying as Métis” (p. 86). The role of statistics in building the current Métis Nation cannot be understated. Although inaccurate and maybe even irresponsible, it is difficult to fault Métis politicians for emphasizing their utility as there are few other tools for measuring Métis populations at their disposal.

This points to the ways in which state sanctioned activities such as censuses legitimize populations through authoritative classification. Resulting statistics act to make groups visible, articulate differences and can assist groups to make claims for state services. It is important that statistics accurately reflect the social situations of population groups, as they shape successive fiscal relationships between groups and governing bodies. By excluding a definition of Métis within the census, demographers are indirectly stating that “self-identification is the most important source of authenticity for determining ‘identification’” (Andersen, 2014, p. 161). The privileging of self-identification has to some degree, permeated legal and judicial definitions of what it means to be Métis. Furthermore, the claims of self-identifying Métis who have no connection to the historic Métis nation are continuously validated by Federal government reports such as the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Report’s discussion of ‘Other Métis’ and the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples’ (2013) Report titled, *‘The People who Own Themselves’: Recognition of Métis Identity in Canada,* which also included a substantial discussion of self identified mixed-ancestry people. According to Andersen, “by choosing a racialized understanding of ‘métis’- and make no mistake, recognizing the Canada-wide ‘diversity’ of self-identifications as Métis is to ordain a racialized construction of ‘Métis’- the committee reinforced its legitimacy” (p. 197-8).

Self-identification has been the subject of considerable controversy within Indigenous scholarship.

According to Fiola (2015), “self-identification strategies for survival- including silence, passing, and internalized colonization as well as traditional definitions of identity- are important for understanding Métis identities. While many of these theories affect First Nations and Métis people alike, some ignore Métis realities” (Fiola, 2015, p. 24-5). For instance, Indigenous scholars have argued that basing Indigenous identity solely on self-identification intentionally redirects attention away from issues of culture, blood, and law towards individual pronouncements of identity. The absence of verifiable documentation of legal status or biological ancestry that self-identification requires has been particularly troubling, with groups such as the U.S. based, ‘Deer Clan,’ an organization based solely on self-identification, who admit to having limited connections to any legal Indian community (Garrouette, 2003). Garrouette describes Standing Bear’s account of ‘becoming Indian’ and his decision to form the Deer Clan:

One day, he says, at age forty, he simply put on his moccasins and walked into the office of his dissertation advisor—Standing Bear is a sociologist by professional training—announcing that he had changed his name and his racial identity along with it. From thenceforward, he intended to live as an American Indian, claiming an ancestry about which he had previously kept silent. Standing Bear followed up his promise by helping to form the Deer Clan, an organization that would meet the needs and interests of others like himself—people who thought (or were beginning to think) of themselves as Indian, who were willing to proclaim themselves as such, but who might not satisfy the usual definitions of racial identity. A main purpose of the group is to explore and even create a new community: “to practice and promote traditional Native American customs, culture, and values for its members and the wider community.” The group has established its own version of Indian cultural practice from what members have been able to learn from their own research and discussion, and from observing various tribes. (Hence, for instance, the new names they have chosen for themselves). (p. 83)

The above experience demonstrates the fine line between self-identification as a form of cultural appropriation and the attempts of many Indigenous people to reconnect to a culture from which colonization has separated them. For many people who lack legal recognition, self-identification provides a sense of personal validation and satisfaction. Furthermore, self-identification is often extended to be understood as a form of self-determination, which has been described as a fundamental human right for groups and individuals (UNDRIP 2008, Art. 3, 4).

Nonetheless, it should not be ignored that there are often tangible financial benefits provided through self-identification as Métis such as access to post-secondary education scholarships, organizational awards, artistic residencies and commissions, as well as employment declarations. These benefits can even be attained through self-identification, as legal documentation is not always (but increasingly) required. Many scholars argue against

the uncritical acceptance of self-identification as the standard for claiming an Indigenous identity. As Garrouette explains, for some Indigenous people, “self-identification raises another threat to sovereignty: the cavalcade of self-identified people and groups who improperly present themselves as representing the views, values, commitments, or authority of entire Indian tribes” (p. 48). For instance, Audra Simpson (2014) explains that for Mohawk people, a collectivist stance trumps individualist desires for membership:

Today many believe that no matter what the personal circumstances of each person may be (and whether that person is your mother, brother, or cousin), the collective will of Kahnawa'kehró:non will decide which people in the future will have a right to live on the land and partake of the history that flows from it. This collectivist stance is clear in the abstracted text from the revised Kahnawà:ke Membership Law” (p. 26).

Dakota Sioux scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn goes as far as to argue that since Native American tradition has a history of placing group rights over individual rights, that it is irresponsible for individuals to request personal exemptions (Garrouette, 2003).

While the notion of authentic Indianness is considered another means for dividing and conquering Indigenous people, due to recent increases in self-identifying Native people in North America, there is a rising concern about ethnic fraud and cultural appropriation (Robertson, 2013). Proof of authenticity is one means for protecting Indigenous cultures from such abuses. Increasing Indigenous identification began in the second half of the twentieth century as Indigenous communities across North America engaged in cultural renewal programs focused on linguistic, cultural, and religious preservation. With the rise of civil rights movements in the 1960s, coupled with the Red Power movement of the 1970s, Indigenous communities experienced dramatic transformations, especially in terms of membership and self-identification (Nagel, 2000). A renewed pride in ‘Indian’ heritage led to increased self-identification, which put increased pressure on Indigenous communities to accept new members and share limited resources. The question of who is simply opportunistic and who is authentically ‘Indian’ came to the forefront of debates over resources and rights. The issue of ‘ethnic switching’ is present among many Indigenous communities, including Canada’s Métis. Garrouette describes ‘ethnic switching’ as follows:

Perhaps the most effective way for others to delegitimize an individual’s self-identification as Indian is to accuse him of “ethnic switching.” This term conveys the suspicion that individuals who are now

calling themselves Indian have not continuously sustained that identification, but have instead jumped between racial identities. “Ethnic switchers” have kept quiet about their Indianness for a long time, perhaps for generations, assimilating into the dominant culture and consistently “passing” as non-Indian. Perhaps for a time they were even unaware of their American Indian ancestry. Now, however, they have reclaimed this once-discarded or concealed identity. People who are accused of ethnic switching will at least come in for a great deal of ribbing. They will be labeled “new Indians” or—more irreverently—“born-again Indians.” (p. 46)

Furthermore, in Robertson’s study of American Indian Legal Identity (AILI), for most participants, self-identification was often considered insufficient, as “‘only being Indian when it is convenient’ or beneficial exposes inauthentic Indigeneity” (2013a, p. 127). Many of the participants in Robertson’s study echoed the following sentiment: “[B]orn-again Indians break the social norm of expected performance of reciprocity within Indian communities. There is also an expectation of accountability to identity affiliation. If you claim Indianness, there should be some evidence of struggling for survival. At the very least, you should have experienced discrimination, at the very least” (p. 128). The issue of ethnic fraud is a precarious one, where the lines between acceptable self-identification and acts of opportunistic cultural appropriation are not always clear.

Claims of Indian blood are common, even amongst those who do not seek formal recognition of an Indigenous identity. As Garrouette, explains, the implications of such statements are often complex:

Perhaps it is a compliment to the liberal attitudes of the speaker and her family: that her forebears did not shudder to conjoin themselves with others of a presumably ‘lesser’ race. Or perhaps it is an effort to garner the prestige of exoticism without crossing over into disreputability. After all, ‘having Indian blood in you’ is rather different than ‘being Indian.’ (2003, p. 55)

According to Strong (1996), the act of non-Indigenous settlers making appropriative claims of ‘Indian blood’ is a way for ‘the victors’ of colonialism to “naturalize themselves and legitimize their occupation of the land” (p. 552). Tallbear (2015) has demonstrated the ways in which racialized understandings of Native Americans has rendered Indigenous blood (and people) absorbable into the white national body. Though Native American identity is defined according to ethnic, racial, and legal identification (Robertson, 2003), racial and more recently genetic understandings of Indigenous people have become prominent within the whitestream American imaginary. Tallbear explains as follows:

Red as a race category has come to be viewed as absorbable in the white body, the national body. This made the appropriation of Native American biological and cultural patrimony ethically possible within the US exceptionalist national imaginary. We were not supposed to survive. Our death was a foregone

conclusion. The Indian was to be outright eliminated through massacres and disease. Intellectual and policy projects attempted to hurry that process along, all aimed toward the cultural and genealogical absorption of Red into the national body. It is this contradiction- our simultaneous erasure in the dominant US racial imaginary alongside our actual survival as peoples that refuse to be fully absorbed into the physical and political bodies of others- that enable and make so tolerable the absurdity of playing Indian. Or as I call it Native American race-play....it is seen as a form of becoming or self-actualization. (2015)

Tallbear's critique, whereby "Indians become ancestors and all the multicultural citizens their rightful inheritors" (2015), rings true among Métis communities, as demonstrated by the exponential increase of self-identification as Métis solely on the basis of ancestry (see Andersen, 2015).

Similarly, Barker (2012) argues that settler societies co-opt and assimilate indigeneity through incorporating Indigenous aesthetic and expression as a means to legitimize settler colonialism. Disputing Saul's argument that Canada is itself an Indigenous nation, Barker states the following:

It is indigeneity perceived across the colonial difference, reliant on misunderstandings of roles and relationships in and to place. This is precisely why John Ralston Saul is wrong in his popular assertion that, to some extent, all of Canada is now a "métis civilization" combining European and Indigenous cultures, in effect collapsing difference into a single naturalized identity (Saul, 2008 p.3). As Alfred pointedly objects (2010), such a claim smacks of claiming legitimacy for occupation of land- a settler colonial objective- but perhaps more importantly, Saul's contention does not correspond to the facts. Hybridity implies multiple subjects sharing and mixing. Settler colonialism picks and chooses markers of meaning from indigeneity and attempts to destroy the rest. (2012, p. 166-7)

Furthermore, Barker is wary of such claims to hybridity originating from settler positionality, which he warns can be attempted 'moves to innocence,' whereby settlers deny their role and benefit in colonization. Furthermore, Vowel argues the mythology of Métissage, as something that can be self-ascribed is precisely a settler "move to innocence." Quoting Tuck & Yang's (2012), *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, she states:

In this move to innocence, settlers locate or invent a long-lost ancestor who is rumored to have had "Indian blood," and they use this claim to mark themselves as blameless in the attempted eradications of Indigenous people...[it] is a settler move to innocence because it is an attempt to deflect a settler identity, while continuing to enjoy settler privilege and occupying stolen land. (2015)

Vowel argues that the self-fashioning of Native identities, especially through the lens of Métissage is an act of ongoing colonialism that seeks to erase Indigenous peoples and undermine Indigenous rights (including those of Métis people). She explains the consequence of settler claims as Métis in the following:

The stakes are high. If enough people attain "Métishood," it is not inconceivable that the population of "Métis" could outnumber First Nations and Inuit combined, and make us a driving political force when it

comes to Indigenous issues. Of course, *the agenda would be driven by Settler, not Indigenous needs* as we too would become a minority within our own nation. Further, the claiming of Indigeneity by Settler populations means circumventing any need to engage in decolonization. (2015, emphasis added)

Vowel points to a significant concern that is shared among various Indigenous groups, which is that those without a relational obligation to a living Indigenous community will increasingly be in positions of leadership and thus dictate the direction of the entire community. Her concern is confirmed by similar expressions by Métis participants in a subsequent chapter of this study.

With the Indigenous renewal that began in the 1960s, so did the cultural appropriation of Indigenous spirituality. Romanticized and racial ideals that understood ‘Indian’ authenticity as dependent on a vague spiritual connection to nature that were once perpetuated by hobbyists and anthropologists extend into the present (Tallbear, 2001). This has led to a recent increase of self-identified individuals who are a part of the New Age Movement. As Garrouette (2003) explains, in the U.S., “[S]elf-identification as Indian, moreover, is sometimes used as a sort of access card to American Indian spiritual and cultural practices, many of which have become objects of interest to a substantial proportion of the American population” (p. 44). Furthermore, she explains, “New Age adherents have a prodigious interest in the cultures and spiritualities of other peoples, and American Indian peoples are high on the menu of favourites. A number of New Age believers go so far, in their enthusiasm for American Indian ways, as to identify themselves as connected with one tribe or another” (p. 90). Problematically, such New Age self-identifiers attempt to engage in sacred spiritual ceremonies (such as sweat-lodge and vision quest ceremonies) with little to no training or knowledge of appropriate protocol. Even more troubling, is the ways in which Indigenous cultures are conceptualized as extractable from their place and the network of relations in which they exist. As Garrouette explains, “[S]uch activities suggest a conceptualization of Native cultures as a collection of consumable commodities that can be individually extracted from a larger complex of beliefs, practices, and daily life activities and put to use to serve whatever agenda the buyer conceives, much like a lucky rabbit’s foot” (p. 91). The commodification and appropriation of Indigenous spiritual practices, ceremonies, and ceremonial items by non-Indigenous people is particularly problematic in the ways in which such acts perpetuate the notion that anyone can practice Indigenous spirituality anywhere (Fiola,

2015). The dire consequence of disconnecting Indigenous spiritual practices from the land that acts as the basis of spirituality results in the undermining of Indigenous claims to land protection and sovereignty. Clearly, a distinction must be made between what is considered cultural appropriation and legitimate attempts to claim indigeneity, however the continued policing of Indigenous identities has created significant divides among Indigenous individuals and communities.

4.2.8 Summary

Historically, racialized definitions imposed by colonizers led to the creation of the concept of the ‘Indian,’ a homogenized, uniform, over-simplified group of people. Motivated by the desire to end their financial responsibility to Indigenous peoples, governments became “the first authenticity police” (Robertson, 2013a, p. 117). Legal definitions and government recognition have acted in exclusionary ways to transform community membership. As Robertson states, “Indian identity is complicated especially for the Indians who inhabit it” (2013a, p. 76). Claims to authentic indigeneity remain contested and linked to resource and community access as well as personal wellbeing. Indigeneity can be illusive. Depending on whether Indigenous people are being defined by themselves, their community, or others, they may possess some, all, or none of the characteristics that are used to measure their authenticity. Ethnic definitions, though not free from complications, provide useful ways for understanding the socio-cultural qualities of indigeneity including shared language, spiritual beliefs and practices, social norms, and relationships. While race and ethnicity may exist as socio-cultural constructions, they bear very real consequences for the people who inhabit racial and ethnic identities (Nagel, 2000).

Although early definitions of Indianness resulted from various forms of imperialism, colonialism, and racism, understandings of indigeneity are dynamically transformed within local contexts as they are continuously challenged and resisted. The discourse of indigeneity is in process of undergoing dramatic shifts due to increasing urbanization and as coalitional youth-led activist movements such as Idle No More seek to redefine what it means to be Indigenous in Canada. Previous attempts to fix the meaning of ‘Indian’ are failing, as the politics that determine who can speak for and represent Indigenous people has changed with the increased empowerment of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada, supported by international Indigenous movements (such as the 2007

United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). Re-imagining and redefining indigeneity has significant consequences for Indigenous groups, including Canada's Métis.

4.3 Political Definitions of Métis

Métis nationhood has been a highly political and politicized issue for Métis, resulting in significant divisions among communities and political representatives.⁴⁵ The Métis National Council (MNC) has been accused of claiming to own the term Métis, based on its historic connection to the historic Métis Nation of the prairies (Chartrand, 2001). In 2002, the MNC adopted the following definition of Métis: “‘Métis’ means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation” (MNC, 2011). According to MNC, the people of the Métis Nation referred to themselves as Métis, in contrast to the term ‘Indian,’ which was used by outsiders (Chartrand, 2001). The claim to Métis nationhood is often justified on the basis of military conflicts in the 1800s, certain laws that were established by Métis provisional government under the leadership of Louis Riel, and Red River ancestry.

Chretien (2005) argues that such a grounds for nationhood is largely rooted in nineteenth century concepts of nation-states, which were defined by warfare and geography. Others, however, suggests that Métis nationhood was simply the result of a historical political consciousness of Aboriginal rights by virtue of being of mixed ancestry, which in turn, provided group cohesion (Logan, 2008; Peressini, 2001). O’Toole argues that “from a sociological perspective, Métis lifestyle and culture was a fertile ground in which the seeds of nationalist discourse, regardless of its ultimate source, could easily take root, while concrete conflict was the catalyst that made it sprout” (2013, p. 166). Andersen (2014) posits that the question of whether the Métis people continue to exist as a cohesive nation today should not be the focus of Métis nationhood, but rather “whether (for example) the MNC’s contemporary political (re)imagining of a national collective ‘self’ fits with the historical evidence or whether it instead demonstrates the kind of revisionism that historians say they live in fear of” (p. 119).

⁴⁵ In this study ‘nationhood’ is used within the context of Indigenous nations to be distinguished from ‘nationalism’, which is used in reference to (non-Indigenous) nation-states.

Several Métis politicians, citizens, and scholars argue that until there is agreement on the definition of Métis, requirements for citizenship and homeland boundaries, the Métis will not be able to capitalize on self-government opportunities (Belcourt, 2013; Chartrand, 2001). Chartrand (2001) argues that an exclusive definition of Métis could mean that according to international law, the Métis of the prairies could qualify for rights as ‘a people’ and that Métis rights to self-determination would therefore be protected under the Canadian constitution. Moreover, he argues that citizenship codes and processes should be agreed upon by the provincial and federal governments once the Métis Nation has determined citizenship criteria, thus avoiding the courts altogether. He suggests that the Métis themselves, via the Métis National Council, should make decisions regarding citizenship criteria as any local-level decision-making could potentially fragment the Métis Nation. Thus, Chartrand argues that the Red River Métis or ‘Riel/Real Métis’ be recognized as the ‘core group’ of citizens, whereas others (i.e.: non-status Indians) who may not qualify for citizenship through ancestral connections to the historic Métis Nation could potentially be “naturalized” as Métis citizens. Chartrand goes so far as to suggest that it is in the interest of the government to assist the Métis National Council in developing a national registry and citizenship code as “the federal government will also benefit financially from a Métis registry system” (2001, p. 52). However, provincial and federal governments have yet to accept the MNC definition of Métis as official.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the nationhood of the Métis Nation, as defined by the Métis National Council, has been legitimated through the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (1996), whereas RCAP has had no opinion of the nationhood of other Métis communities (Chretien, 2005).

4.3.1 Nationalism as a Discourse

From a poststructural perspective, nationalism can be viewed as “a quintessentially homogenizing, differentiating, or classifying discourse” (Verdery, 1993, cited in Reynolds, 1994, p. 244). According to Scholte (1996), the emergence of identity politics in the 1960s has since challenged, bypassed, and disrupted the authority of the nationality principle through various alternative forms of collective identification. Yet, discourses of

⁴⁶ The MNC came close to having their definition of Métis accepted by the federal government in the Charlottetown Accord, which was defeated during a referendum in 1992 (Sawchuk, 2001).

nationalism have been recognized as one of the defining factors of modernity (Helbling, 2007). Nationality could be considered the primary form of identification, as it seems to underlie, take priority over, and inform all other identities (Poole, 1999). The inescapability of nationalism has made it a topic of much discussion within the social sciences. Like identity, nationality too has been essentialized, largely as a result of the strict boundaries that police an individual's belonging to a nation and territory. For these reasons, nationalism has been naturalized and can operate in mindless and banal ways (Bottero, 2010). The reproduction of naturalized stereotypes maintains the boundaries of a nation which can produce a "fanatical hatred of Others," as strong bonds within the group unifies national citizens (Matsoaka & Sorenson, 2001, p. 15). The Western notion of national identity involves some kind of political community and thus, common institutions, culture, and ideology. According to Corntassel (2003), a nation consists of the following five features:

1. A collective proper name;
2. Myths and memories of communal history;
3. A common public culture;
4. Common laws and customs;
5. A historic territory or homeland. (p. 83)

Also naturalized, is the relationship between the state, including its citizens and its territory (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). For nationalism scholar, Smith (1991), national identity "suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong" (p. 9). While acknowledging that this is distinct to the Western model of national identity, Smith argues that the people of a nation must be tied to a historic land, known as the 'homeland,' which then acts as a repository of collective memories and resources (also see Ingold, 2010). For Poole, the homeland is a crucial piece of the nationalism puzzle for all nations. He states the following:

The homeland is not the mute object defined by physical geography; it is endowed with a personality and a moral character, which complements and sustains those who inhabit it (or, in some familiar cases, ought to inhabit it). The homeland is the ground in a near literal sense of national identity. It is significant that the *land is conceived as a common possession*, something all members of the nation share. However, the concept of possession is a symbolic one, and though it can be given a socialist meaning, it is compatible with *a regime of private property*. (1999, p. 16-17, emphasis added)

Within its Western conception, land is not only conceived of as a mnemonic device, but also through the lens of possession and property. Associated with the homeland is the collective history of a nation. Narratives of nations

tend to involve stories of struggle to maintain land that rightfully belongs to its people and the victorious achievement of political sovereignty (Poole, 1999).

Many scholars would argue that it is crucial that social scientists distance themselves from perceptions of the world as deeply partitioned by national boundaries, instead treating nations not as entities, but as institutionalized forms or contingent events (Helbling, 2007). Benedict Anderson, who has been instrumental in the dialogue concerning nationalism, supports this understanding as he states the following:

[N]ationality...or nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meaning have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. (1983, p. 4)

The formation of national identities can be understood as a historical occurrence that results from the “consequence of the unprecedented compression of social space that occurred for many people across the world from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards” (Scholte, 1996, p. 569). Related to Edward Said’s comment that “nations themselves are narrations” (1993, p. xiii), Anderson’s assertion that a nation is an ‘imagined community’ opened up a dialogue within nationalism studies that has provided useful ways for thinking about national identity (Hamilton, 2006). Anderson’s explanation of the use of the term ‘imagined’ is as follows: “[I]t is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1983, p. 6). He argues that nations are not based on territorial delineations, but are mental constructions based on an image of a shared identity and sense of comradeship. Anderson’s work is in line with Said’s concept of ‘imagined geography’ in that imagined nations and space affect the ways in which identity constructions of self and Other are formed (Valentine, 1999). Anderson’s general argument follows constructivist notions of identity, as he implies that national identity is formed through mutually constitutive subjects and structures (Hamilton, 2006).

Elaborating on Anderson’s work, some scholars have argued that national imaginings have been intentionally employed by various kinds of agents as a political tool (Hamilton, 2006), but this discourse has caused ‘imagined communities’ to be misinterpreted by Anderson’s critics as ‘fabricated’ or ‘inauthentic’

communities.⁴⁷ However, Anderson suggests that communities should not be marked by their authenticity or inauthenticity, but “by the style in which they are imagined” (1983, p. 6). Helbling suggests that overcoming this misunderstanding of ‘imagined communities’ is possible if we see nations as developing out of temporary processes of agreement over cultural boundaries rather than simple social constructions (2007).

Similarly, British historian Eric Hobsbawm understood the invention of tradition to be a political tool and practice. He described it as follows:

Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values or norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 3)

So, as invented traditions are a calculated expression made by particular groups or individuals, they cannot be understood as being natural expressions of group identity. Regardless of who expresses them and how, it is evident that invented traditions occur within a historically and culturally constituted field (Helbling, 2007). Within this field, history and repetition are used to legitimate group cohesion. Hobsbawm understands collective memory to be used strategically by authorities in connecting large groups of people to one another. This follows Said’s statement that “collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning” (2000, p. 185). This is particularly applicable to discussions of nationality and nationhood, as Hobsbawm notes that modern nations are the most likely entities to subscribe to the use of ‘invented traditions’ so that they can naturalize their history in the “remotest antiquity” and thus “require no definition other than self-assertion” (1983, p. 16). The concept of using the past as a symbolic resource is consistent with Anderson’s understanding of nations as cultural constructions, but Hobsbawm differentiates between genuine traditions “where old ways are alive,” and traditions that are invented “because they are deliberately not used or adapted” (p. 10).

Many scholars as well as those outside the academy have interpreted Hobsbawm’s argument as meaning that ethnicity or nationality can be invented and only become resurgent when invoked by political leaders for the

⁴⁷ Anderson dispels this interpretation early on in *Imagined Communities* during his critique of Gellner for “being too anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretenses that he assimilates ‘invention’ to ‘fabrication’ and ‘falsity,’ rather than to ‘imagining’ and ‘creation’” (1983, p. 6).

pursuit of material benefits (Corntassel, 2003). In particular, Hobsbawm's argument of 'invented tradition' has been used against Indigenous political mobilizations and assertions regarding cultural identity. Problematically, the public reads 'invented traditions' to equate to 'made-up,' rather than culturally and symbolically constructed within a particular historical context (Linnekin, 1991). As continuity with the past has been central to understandings of Indigenous authenticity, many Indigenous scholars have disputed theories of 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities,' interpreting such ideas to mean that cultural identities are mythical concoctions (Sawchuk, 2001). In addition, Anderson and Hobsbawm have also been critiqued by nationalism scholars for omitting non-Western nations that develop primarily out of ethnic or ancestral ties. For instance, Anderson is critiqued for failing "to offer sufficient insight on how national imagining takes place in contemporary fractured and failed multi-ethnic states" (Hamilton, 2006, p. 80), while Hobsbawm's work has been cited for underestimating the importance of cultural rediscovery, as such 'hidden histories' have "played a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of our time - feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist" (Hall, 1993, p. 3). Despite their critics, Anderson and Hobsbawm's work has been instrumental in moving forward dialogues of identity, nationhood, and place. Their emphasis on the social importance of attachment to particular places and historical narratives is particularly valuable in understanding Indigenous nationhood.

4.3.2 Indigenous Nationhood

A more recent discourse of Indigenous nationhood has emerged among Indigenous people throughout the globe. The assimilationist policies of the 1969 White Paper was a catalyst for prompting Indigenous groups in Canada to assert their sovereign rights through the lens of nationhood (Andersen & Denis, 2003). To promote identities in comparability to nation-states, nationhood is an effort to change the status quo (Green, 2009; Retzlaff, 2005). Although 'nation' is largely considered to be a Western concept (Smith, 1991), 'nationhood' as employed by Indigenous groups, is not representative of nation-state processes, but rather represents a process of group identity formation in the service of a united (though exclusive) political and cultural community. Problematically, the distinction between Indigenous notions of nationhood and scholarly and State

understandings of nationalism remain muddy and are often conflated. As Chris Andersen explains, not all nations are imagined equally:

Like most nation-state building (see Marx 2003), colonial nation-state building was and remains overtly anchored in imaginings that require(d) and thus precipitate(d) the attempted dispossession of Indigenous nations and our pre-existing forms of collective association and citizenship. Insofar as Indigenous nations live- are forced to live- inside the boundaries of their “captor nations” (Chartrand 1991b), such national articulations are always implicated in memories of invasion, attempted conquest, and (re)settlement. (2014, p. 17)

Co-opting the term ‘nation’ allows Indigenous groups to “rescue the ‘use value’ of ‘nation’ from the territorial and categorical conceits of its European contexts” (p. 96). Drawing on sociologists Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, Chris Andersen (2014) argues that the strength of nation-states lie in their power to exact and legitimize both physical and symbolic violence, but Indigenous scholars have argued that the form that Indigenous nationhood should take should not be conflated with ‘nation-state’ tactics that include hierarchical power structures, colonial methods of displacing or assimilating other nations, meanwhile valuing patriotism over kinship obligations.⁴⁸ Asserting Indigenous nationhood is not only a way to put “captor nations” on equal footing with nation-states, but it is also a means to re-imagine indigeneity beyond simple demonstrations of historical (and contemporary) difference. Andersen explains this perspective on Indigenous nationhood as follows:

It encourages a proliferation of the “positions,” “dispositions,” and tensions through which Aboriginality is produced and practiced, but it doesn’t demand a demonstration of how our lived experiences differed/differ from those of non-Aboriginal communities we live/d alongside. This is not to say, however, that “anything goes” when re-envisioning Indigenous nationhood- as with all forms of collective self-imagining, Indigenous nations will be gripped by the tendrils of history, culture, political consciousness, and the many colonial ironies within which we find ourselves situated as contemporary (modern) Indigenous peoples. (2014, p. 102)

Using the political language of nationhood, Indigenous groups in Canada locate themselves within the larger nation-state as a means for making claims to rights, recognition, autonomy, and territory (Retzlaff, 2005). However, while the political use of the word nation suggests a group committed to collective action, in Indigenous communities, the word “usually implies a specific combination of kinship, government, world view, and cosmic community” (Champagne, 2007, p. 358).

⁴⁸ Andersen describes this symbolic violence as, “a singular ability to legitimize, as obvious or natural, what are in fact historical and thus ultimately arbitrary visions of the world” (2014, p. 95).

According to Retzlaff, “the construction of a shared national identity is [part] of the resistance politics of Aboriginal people in Canada and a means in the context of socio-political unification” (p. 618). Not only does such a construction foster solidarity, but it is also a means for Indigenous groups (including the Métis) to negotiate their way into the Canadian political consciousness. Nationhood leads to citizenship, which for Métis people in Canada can provide a much-needed sense of belonging that is not achieved through the Indian Act, though is not free from critique (Andersen & Denis, 2003). As nations are inherently bounded, exclusive, and geographically defined (Anderson, 1983), moving towards nationhood means that the question of Indigenous belonging is at the forefront of both internal politics and externally devised definitions. Responding to a rising “free-rider problem” (Corntassel & Primeau, 1998, p. 144), Indigenous groups are increasingly self-policing the boundaries of group membership.⁴⁹ Yet, some argue that adopting strict citizenship standards runs counter to Indigenous belief systems that emphasize inclusiveness, ultimately “conform[ing] to state-centric bureaucratic decision-making practices” (Corntassel, 2003, p. 76). Defining membership or citizenship in a nation exacerbates similar current challenges for Indigenous communities, which could lead to Indigenous nations having “to walk the fine line between positive affirmation and xenophobia, between cultural maintenance, revitalization and oppressive fundamentalism” (Green, 2009, p. 43). Also problematic for Indigenous people in Canada is the reality that processes of nation development involve the inclusion of certain practices, symbols, and historical narratives, while others are marginalized and ignored.

Furthermore, particular territory-based understandings of Indigenous nationhood can be problematic for Indigenous peoples who have been dispossessed and/or removed from their traditional territories. Many Indigenous scholars have offered up definitions of indigeneity that include references to ancestral territories. For instance, Alfred & Wilmer’s (1997) definition identifies Indigenous people as follows:

- A. They are descended from the original inhabitants of the geographic areas that they continue to occupy, hence, they are Aboriginal;
- B. They wish to live in conformity with their continuously evolving cultural traditions;

⁴⁹ Corntassel & Primeau (1998) explain that although the ideal situation within Indigenous nations would be self-identification, the continued challenge of non-Indigenous individuals (and groups) claiming indigenous status forces indigenous groups to “deal with the question of official membership” (p. 144).

- C. They do not now control their political destiny, and consequently, are frequently subjected to policies arising from the cultural hegemony originally imposed by an 'outside' force. (1997, p. 27)

Alfred & Wilmer's definition certainly follows the nationalistic trends of Indigenous scholarship in Canada, but the first point is somewhat problematic for the large percentage of Aboriginal people who are displaced from their original territory or have dispersed across the Canadian landscape and are now concentrated in urban areas (Environics Institute, 2010). Under Alfred & Wilmer's definition of indigeneity, urban Aboriginal populations may be considered illegitimately Indigenous. Even the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996) will only recognize urban Aboriginal people as legitimate based on where they are from (their home territory or nation of origin) and not where they reside (the current Aboriginal community with which they engage and may ultimately find their sense of community). RCAP's statement suggests that urban Aboriginal communities lack authentic cultural identities because they are disconnected from their Indigenous land-base or their development is incomplete, when cultural identity is thought by RCAP to rely on completeness (Andersen & Denis, 2003). It is no wonder that RCAP's researchers also found that a large amount of urban Aboriginal people live in impoverished conditions, are excluded from self-government, and have little visibility and power.

Andersen and Denis (2003) argue for a rethinking of urban Aboriginal people and communities that understands displaced or dispersed people to still have some connection to land and territory, but that such a relationship occurs in a different way than for Aboriginal people living in rural areas. Urban Aboriginal people are redefining indigeneity for themselves individually and collectively, transforming cultural practices and meanings so that they "[adhere] to the geography of urban spaces" (p. 385). Such a rethinking of urban Aboriginal people can only be understood through a lens that sees authentic Indigenous cultures as dynamic and not "static ruminations with locales far removed from urban life" (Peters, 2011, p. 96). Peters argues that cultural revitalization is a part of city life for Indigenous people and that "urban Aboriginal people with no culturally specific identity relations must use whatever resources are at their disposal to create and claim Aboriginal identities, thereby filling the holes in their hearts" (p. 95). Urban Aboriginal people will continue to struggle for representation and recognition as authentically Indigenous as long as the nation-based model is the preferred discourse within Canada.

The diasporic plurality of contemporary Indigenous identity politics complicates nationalistic narratives that attempt to naturalize histories of ethnic singularity and territorial integrity (Barker & Galasiński, 2001). Furthermore, most interpretations of nationhood include a distinct bounded territory, which is problematic for many contemporary Indigenous peoples living in Canada, especially those living off-reserve such as Métis peoples. As Appadurai (1996) suggests, within the context of nationalism, there needs to be a clear distinction between “soil” and territory, as soil is “a matter of a spatialized and originary discourse of belonging” and territory is more closely related to state-level concerns such as taxation, order, stability, policing, surveyability, and subsistence (p. 46). While many Indigenous people in Canada may not be able to claim territory, claiming soil or a region of origin could potentially validate the use of a nation-based model, since basing national identities on restricted property-based notions of territory makes explaining the complexity of pre-state Indigenous politics so problematic. Assuming that all (legitimate) Aboriginal people have a land base effectively permits provincial and federal governments to avoid and ignore the realities of large groups of Aboriginal people in Canada and especially urban-dwelling Métis.

4.3.3 Métis Nationhood

Up until 1983, Métis people were represented by the Native Council of Canada (now known as the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples or CAP), who represented non-status Indians as well as Métis people with or without Red River ancestry. Since the MNC was established in 1983, the Congress for Aboriginal Peoples have been in debate with MNC over which organization legitimately represents the Métis people (Chartrand, 2001). In 1984, the difference between the Red River Métis and those who are termed as ‘Other Métis’ according to the Royal Commission of Aboriginal People (RCAP) was articulated by the Métis National Council in their opening statement to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva. According to the MNC, when “written with a small ‘m,’ métis is a racial term for anyone of mixed Indian and European ancestry,” but when “written with a capital ‘M,’ Métis is a socio-cultural or political term for those of mixed ancestry who evolved into a distinct Indigenous people during a certain historical period in a certain region in Canada” (Métis National Council, 1984). While it may appear to be a matter of semantics, the MNC has been outspoken about

supporting exclusive definitions of Métis that are based on having connections to the historical Red River settlement and having proof that Métis ancestors received scrip as a result of the 1870 Manitoba Act (Berry, 1999). Such a definition is largely restricted to Canada's prairie provinces (with small parts of British Columbia and Ontario), which has come to be known as the Métis Nation Homeland. In contrast, other political organizations, such as the Native Council of Canada, intentionally used the term 'Métis' more inclusively, as they felt that those "who base their claims on national rights rather than Aboriginal rights...undermine the Aboriginal rights of Métis people" (Gaffney et al., 1984; Lussier, 1984). Currently, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples represents all people excluded from Indian Act definitions and the MNC's Red River centric definition, as a conscious attempt to support those who are excluded from government policies and programs (Sawchuk, 2001).

There have been several opponents to the attempts at defining the Métis as a nation. Lawrence (2004) argues that increasing the recognition of the Métis Nation has been a tactical approach on behalf of the Métis people, but one that they have been forced to pursue, on account of their legal exclusion from Indianness (via the Indian Act). Divisions between Métis and Indian, though originating in the Indian Act and Halfbreed scrip, continued through the recognition of Métis as coherent and distinct from First Nations people in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, "as if there had always been, forever, hard and fast physical and cultural distinctions between all Indians and all Métis" (p. 95). She contends that "focusing solely on contemporary differences between treaty Indians and the Métis, without any exploration of what both groups have in common (as well as the diversity within each group masked by such colonial terms as Indian and Métis), at this point seems to conform too closely to the logic of the Indian Act" (p. 96). Furthermore, she argues that contemporary Métis identity should be less about being a product of 'Red River heritage' and miscegenation and more a result of historical exclusion from access to land and legal rights. Lawrence acknowledges that many of the artificial divisions that were historically created through colonial policies result in significant differences between Métis and 'Indian' communities:

[O]rganizational differences, then, take on a life of their own and force communities that once saw themselves as one unit (or at least as closely related) into different paths of development... These divisions can truly be said to have been naturalized, to the extent that contemporary struggles to renegotiate Native identity still rigidly maintain these distinctions. (p. 96-7)

Lawrence further argues that as a result of the legal need “to reference specific intervals when the Métis were recognized in historical documents, Métis empowerment has deliberately been linked to specific nation-building moments” (p. 98). She argues that the narrow focus on a brief interval of history “overlooks the broad range of experiences of mixed-bloodedness that existed across Canada during the fur trade” (p. 99).

The struggle for recognition has forced Indigenous communities who are not accepted under the Indian Act to accept colonial definitions of their identities in order to be eligible to access funding and programs. Andersen’s explanation of Métis engagement with a nationhood model speaks to the strategic nature of Indigenous nationhood: “[B]eing recognized in terms of our nationhood demands political and policy conversations that position us as political partners to be engaged with rather than as social problems to be ameliorated” (2014, p. 19). However, scholars continue to critique how the nation-model misrepresents the innate complexity of historical Métis sociology. For instance, St-Onge & Podruchny (2012) argue that it is problematic to reduce historic Métis communities that were reliant on extended kin linkages, reciprocal social relationships, and common resource use within the context of a considerable level of mobility to a singular Métis Nation (based strongly in concepts of territoriality). Thus, applying a European influenced notion of nationalism erases the situational and geographical nature of historical individual and group identification.

4.3.4 The Métis National Historical Narrative

Pro-national Métis argue that a sense of collective Métis identity was established prior to 1850 (the most widely used date of effective colonial control) throughout the prairies and the historic Northwest, which was repeatedly acknowledged by outsiders. These moments of self and outsider acknowledgement have coalesced into a widely cited and repeated national story. Ens & Sawchuk (2016) argue that a distinct shift occurred in the 1930s in Canada, whereby descriptions of Métis shifted from being racial to national. They attribute this shift particularly to historical writing about Métis, “which served to naturalize and essentialize the Métis Nation as an unproblematic idea of national progress providing the Métis with a story of national origins and the myth of a founding father” (p. 35). Works such as A.H. Trémaudan’s (1935), *Histoire de la nation métisse dans L’Ouest*

canadien, which was commissioned by L'Union national métisse Saint-Joseph in an attempt to rehabilitate the reputation of Riel and promote the notion of a Métis Nation, was and continues to be widely read. Furthermore, later historical writings on the Métis, such as those by A.S. Morton, Marcel Giraud, W.L. Morton, and Gerald Friesen stated Métis nationhood as fact, contributing to an ongoing discourse of minority rights, with “Métis being another ethnic group fighting for their place in the ethnocultural mosaic of Canada” (p. 40). Ens & Sawchuk explain how Morton’s (1939), *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, describes the origins and events that shaped the Métis Nation, which endure today:

Without providing the evidence, but stating the argument in bold relief, Morton’s framing of the origins and development of the Metis Nation have endured until today: “Nationalism born of racial feeling, nurtured by common language and community interests, is an undying flame.” Though quiescent in times of calm, this national feeling would always resurface in times of conflict. The dates and events that Morton identified as crucial- the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816 and the initiation of national feeling, the fight over free trade in the period 1844-49 and the flexing of the Nation’s muscles, and the Riel Resistance of 1869 as the apex of Metis Nationalism- have over the years become almost a catechism of Metis nationalism. (p. 37)

Locating Métis nationalism firmly within the nation-state of Canada, 20th century historians conceived of nationhood in a way that differed from that promoted by Louis Riel during the 19th century, who sought separation from the nation state that was rooted in a form of French-Catholic Métis nationalism. Furthermore, such historically described nationalism precedes the recent emergence of notions of Indigenous nationhood.

Yet, the ritually repeated discourse of the Métis as the *nouvelle nation* suggests that the Métis capacity for a collectively formed political nationhood was not merely a creation of historical revisionists, but based on the solid foundation of an already existing ethnic identity (O’Toole, 2013). Arguing that shared values and history created a union in terms of Métis nationhood, political actions of the Métis Nation formed a common historical narrative that has been integral in the construction of Métis identity (Logan, 2008; Peterson & Brown, 1985). Such actions included interactions with not only the Canadian nation-state, but also diplomatic relationships with unrelated Indigenous people (see Andersen, 2014). The historical narrative that is associated with Métis nationalism has come to be central to the construction of Métis identities.

The recollection of social memories is an active way for groups to define a cohesive identity using specific historical narratives (Said, 2000). According to Andersen (2014), the ability to “narrate nation”

represents a crucial stake in the movement of nations from political processes to taken-for-granted legitimate “things” and particular national historical narratives offer “a conceptual ‘handle’ - that citizens may grab hold of while becoming embodied in/embodying particular forms of collectivity” (p. 108). The crafting of such stories is pervasive among various groups of people and act to serve varying interests. Smith (2003) contends that such narratives “work essentially as persuasive historical stories that prompt people to embrace the valorized identities, play the stirring roles, and have the fulfilling experiences that political leaders strive to evoke for them, whether through arguments, rhetoric, symbols, or ‘stories’ of a more obvious and familial sort” (p. 44-5).

The repetition of stories about contact, the early stages of the ethnogenesis of the Métis, as well as stories of historical military conflicts have been an important part of the Métis cultural tradition, persisting within the collective memory of Métis peoples and reinforced by Métis governing bodies. Like any historical narrative, the story of the Métis Nation has been accused of belonging to a revisionist agenda due to a lack of written historical evidence and inconsistencies, however, this is no different than any nation’s narrative (including Canada’s), and such critiques are especially unfair “given its endurance in the face of officially sanctioned attempts, first, to destroy it, and then to narrowly shape it, for nearly a century and a half” (Andersen, 2014, p. 130). The Métis National historical narrative has also been critiqued for portraying Métis people as (passive) victims of an advancing white society and reflecting a Eurocentric outcome that excludes community-level voices (Logan, 2008; Peressini, 2001). Richardson offers a less passive formulation of Indigenous identity through employing Wade’s (1997) understanding of responding agents.⁵⁰ Through the repetition of stories of injustice, oppression, resistance, and conflict, a sense of solidarity has developed amongst Métis peoples. Described below, the Métis National Historical Narrative tells a story not just of the imposition of various colonial systems and policies, but of the adaption of Métis peoples to changing social, political, environmental, and economic conditions.

4.3.4.1 The Context of Métis Emergence: Fur Trade Economics

⁵⁰ According to Richardson (2005), Wade’s theory reformulates previously used ‘victim-blaming’ psychological theories and “offers dignity to oppressed peoples who have been pathologized and blamed for their suffering” (2005, p. 58).

The typical and most commonly expressed understanding of the historic Métis society with which the Métis Nation identifies is that which Peterson presents in her 1985 work, as follows:

[a] sudden florescence of a distinctive métis population and culture radiating outwards from the junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, present-day Winnipeg...the “new people” of Red River- not merely biracial, multilingual and bicultural, but the proud owners of a new language; of syncretic cosmology and religious repertoire; or distinctive modes of dress, cuisine, architecture, vehicles of transport, music and dance; and after 1815 of a quasi-military political organization, a flag, a bardic tradition, a rich folklore and a national history. (Peterson, 1985, p. 64)

This ‘golden era’ description exemplifies the ways in which the historical Métis Nation is most frequently described.

According to Ens & Sawchuk (2016), Métis identities were forged in the “interstitial spaces” that allowed bicultural communities to function as intermediaries between hunting and trapping Indigenous peoples and European fur traders (p. 44). The historic people that make up the Métis Nation originated during the height of North American fur trade era, however locating historical accounts that position the Métis as central has been difficult. Macdougall illustrates the challenge as follows:

Métis history is generally posited in relation to fur trade or mission histories that conclude that these institutions had a significant impact on the Métis. As a result, within studies of the fur trade and missions, the Métis are often relegated to the margins of a larger narrative. It could be argued that neither form of historical inquiry is capable of truly addressing the role that the Métis had in their own creation. (2010, p. 15)

Nonetheless, the significance of the fur trade as the primary context for an initial Métis ethnogenesis cannot be understated.

The fur trade required a large-scale management of its own employees, as well as the local Indigenous peoples amongst whom the traders lived, interacted, and exchanged goods. This occurred within a territory that was not their own, was unstructured by the state, and was peopled by Indigenous peoples that were often characterized through a European lens as being uncivilized and savage (Harris, 1997). A European system of power operated within fur trade forts and along trade routes, introducing a new geography into the area. Unlike later forms of colonial power, traders were not interested in ‘civilizing’ local Indigenous peoples, but rather, were seeking a means to their own security through the establishment of profitable trade relationships (1997). Traders moved within the narrow corridors that they established and Indigenous peoples responded to their presence and

the goods they brought with them. According to Macdougall (2010), trading companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company were "integral to the development of a Métis cultural identity ... because it provided a place where families coalesced and shaped a communal self-determination grounded in intergenerational family labour" (p. 182). From an instrumentalist perspective, European-Indigenous sexual relationships operated as tools to further the fur trade. The uneven ratio of European men to women resulted in a considerable number of relationships that crossed cultural divides. The children of these relationships were often known as Métis (or half-breeds). While the fur trade occurred across much of North America, the Métis Nation as a group of people with shared cultural practices and political aspirations became centralized in Canada's prairie provinces. Métis people were suited to engage in fur trade economics, as their economics relied on sharing: "[A]dapted from Indigenous systems of reciprocity, co-operation, and mutual obligation, it mediated human interaction with the natural environment and provided the flexibility necessary to adapt to regional, seasonal, and annual fluctuations in resource availability" (Haggarty, 2013, p. 233). Ens & Sawchuk (2016) describe the Métis as being recognized as a distinct social and political entity by fur traders and to a lesser extent, colonial officials. Furthermore, the Métis "argued that their Native-born status and their Native ancestry gave them special rights above other British subjects," but that they "saw themselves as distinct from Indians" (p. 16). Yet, any official recognition of such rights required time and turmoil to first appear in the form of their extinguishment through the distribution of Half-breed Scrip. In the meantime, church missionaries took note of the Métis population as providing a unique opportunity to expand their conversion endeavours.

4.3.4.2 Métis Spirituality as a Response to Religious Expansion

According to Préfontaine et al.'s (2003) chapter written for students of the Gabriel Dumont Institute titled, '*Métis Spiritualism*,' historically, the Métis participated in a *mélange* of 'Aboriginal Spiritualism,' Catholicism, Methodism, Anglicanism, or Presbyterianism, demonstrating a considerable engagement with Western religious institutions. For the Métis, motivations for conversion to Christianity differed from that intended by missionaries and were often "rooted in the 'elemental fact of ethnic survival...include[ing] disease, anxiety brought about by social change, and/or the generosity of the missionary with indispensable articles" (Huel cited in Fiola, 2015, p.

20). However, it appears that even those who identified themselves as Roman Catholic did not necessarily follow Catholic principles, but continued to engage in Indigenous spiritual practices that missionaries considered as ‘savage’ and ‘pagan’ (p. 21). Fiola (2015) explains that Michif-speaking Roman Catholics engaged in Aboriginal spiritualism “because of the many parallels between the folk Catholicism or their French voyageur fathers and the Anishinabe (Ojibwa) and Nehiy(n)awuk (Cree) traditions of their mothers; these parallels included a penchant for frequent prayers, ceremonial liturgy, frequent religious feasts, one God (Kitche Manitou), angels and saints (spirits), evil spirits (Satan or Windigo), and a life of charity (communalism)” (p. 15). Scholars describe the syncretic value system that resulted from incorporating elements of both Indigenous and Western spiritual practices (Fiola, 2015; Payment, 2009; Widder, 1999). Fiola details emerging values such as “consensus, interconnectedness, sharing and communalism, time, respect for elders, symbolism, and death, and treatment of the dead” (Fiola 2015:15); while Payment states, “[T]he Métis believed in God and the Great Spirit and in miracles or divine intervention, as well as in spirit helpers and foretelling” (2009, p. 93). Early on, Jesuit missionaries attempted to learn the customs and languages of Indigenous peoples so that converts could maintain traditional culture, while expressing a new form of Christianity. Similarly, Oblates accommodated Métis seasonal movements by accompanying them on bison hunting camps (Fiola, 2015). Church officials and missionaries became a part of Métis social networks through practices such as god-parentage; as a result, Christianity came to dominate traditional Anishinabe spirituality, especially among the Red River Métis (Fiola, 2015, p. 21; Haggarty, 2013).

In other regions, Christianity had differing effects on Métis spirituality. In Macdougall’s study of Île-à-la-Crosse, a Métis community in Northern Saskatchewan, she describes the worldview of *wahkootowin* as not only an organizing feature of relationships, but representative of Cree-Métis spiritual values. Briefly introduced in the previous section of this chapter, *wahkootowin* can be further understood as follows:

The Métis family structure that emerged in the northwest... was rooted in the history and culture of Cree and Dene progenitors, and therefore in a worldview that privileged relatedness to land, people (living, ancestral, and those to come), the spirit world, and creatures inhabiting the space. In short, this worldview, *wahkootowin*, is predicated upon a specific Aboriginal notion and definition of family as a broadly conceived sense of relatedness with all beings, human and non-human, living and dead, physical and spiritual. (2010, p. 3)

For Métis people with non-Cree/Dene ancestors and relations, the spirit world might be understood in different ways, however the Catholic Church had demonstrable affects on the spiritual beliefs of Métis peoples. Macdougall argues that due to the compatibility of Métis worldviews, such as *wahkootowin*, with catholic ceremonial rituals, the two seemingly divergent systems were easily integrated. In opposition to popular beliefs that First Nations people abandoned their spiritual beliefs to become Christianized, Macdougall argues that among Métis communities, this was not the case. Instead, Christian ideas were adapted to an existing spiritual framework that valued kin relationships. Macdougall describes this synthesis of spiritual beliefs as follows:

Wahkootowin's values promoted the creation of extended family structures and were, in turn, supported by Catholic ideals of familial relations, responsibilities, and obligations. In turn, Roman Catholicism became another vehicle transmitting the traditional cultural attributes that encouraged interfamilial connections and contributed to an individual's sense of identity. As a part of the community, the Church served as an instrument of accountability, setting and enforcing standards for behaviour and interpersonal interaction, as well as helping maintain the wholeness of the group through the blessings of the sacraments. (2010, p. 157)

Here and elsewhere, the Church is viewed as one of the most important institutions in the formation and crystallization of a distinct Métis identity, as it acted to reinforce kinship, collective memories, and even set social parameters for community membership (O'Toole, 2013).

Despite the important role that Western religion played within Métis societies, it is crucial that the colonial intent of early missionaries is not forgotten. Increasing pressures of assimilation and the active denial of the spiritual traditions of their maternal families forced conversion on many Métis people (Fiola, 2015). Fiola explains that though there are similarities in terms of spiritual practices among Métis people, differences arose among different regions. She explains, “[T]he Roman Catholic Church became a definitive presence in the lives of the Red River Métis, while the métis of northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota remained closer to Anishinaabe influences for longer (Fiola, 2015, p. 17). While the Church may have been successfully integrated into existing spiritual beliefs for many Métis people, this was not necessarily the intent. Métis activist Howard Adams, in his book *Tortured Peoples* contended that Catholic missionaries “believed that God had commanded the clergy to save the souls of the heathen savages” (1995, p. 29), while Flášarová (2005) argues that Catholic conversion was a colonial tool used to “paralyze the Métis independent thinking” and ensure obedience through

instilling a fear of God (p. 48). Moreover, Flášarová contends that through convincing Métis people that any opposition to authority was a punishable sin, “the Métis were encouraged by their priests to passively endure their poverty caused by the oppressive colonial system instead of mobilizing themselves and trying to resist the oppressive system” (p. 50). It is well documented that religious expansion into Indigenous territories via the Christian Doctrine of Discovery resulted in centuries of atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples (TRC Report Summary, 2015), yet historical expressions of resistance to conversion exist. For instance, Siggins (1995), in her description of Louis Riel’s religious practices explains that while his spirituality indicated syncretism between two worldviews, he was unafraid to stand up to religious officials: “[H]e was a devout Catholic, yet his heart-felt religion was laced with Indian spiritualism, and he didn’t hesitate to thumb his nose at meddling clergy, who promptly labeled him a heretic” (cited in Fiola, 2015, p. 13). Due to the nature of oral histories, many such stories of resisting Western religion in favour of Indigenous spirituality are shared privately among Métis families and are unavailable in written documents (Fiola, 2015). Yet, Métis elders strive to pass on traditional Métis practices (for an example, see Elmer Ghostkeeper’s (1995) book titled, *Spirit Gifting: The Concept of Spiritual Exchange*). The continuation of Métis spiritual practices, despite their suppression through colonial tactics supports the notion that “Métis culture has survived as an ‘inner experience’” (Richardson, 2005, p. 68). While relations of unequal power clearly had an influence on the Métis sense of self, the process of social interaction and the dialogic relationship between inner and outer experiences have been crucial in the development of a Métis identity.

4.3.4.3 Métis Nationhood as a Response to Colonial Policies

The Battle of Seven Oaks

Although Macdougall states that “the origin of a people is a process, not an event” (2010, p. 60), the 1816 Battle of Seven Oaks is frequently cited as the first instance of Métis Nationhood as it is portrayed as the moment when Métis people first became politically organized in order to defend their interests. It is also cited as the point of distinction from First Nations *engagés* (Foster, 1985), as French-speaking Métis free traders associated with

the Northwest Company contested Hudson Bay Company policies and increasing colonial expansion.⁵¹

Andersen describes the ordeal and its significance as follows:

Indeed, the Métis Nation is often narrated to have been born in battle during a crisp spring day on 19 June 1816, on the expanses of what is now southern Manitoba. The agricultural policies of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in Red River- and in particular the formation of the Selkirk settlement and the subsequent confiscation by the HBC of thousands of pounds of dried meat- were perceived to threaten the fur trade interests of their main rival, the Métis-backed Northwest Company (NWC), such that a list of demands was drawn up by a group of Métis, demanding the removal of Selkirk's colony. Only a year later, in the now infamous Battle of Seven Oaks, Cuthbert Grant (a local Métis leader) and his party engaged in battle with Robert Semple, governor of the HBC territories, killing him and nineteen of his men. Gerald Friesen (1984, 80) suggests that the "importance of the campaign to the French-speaking Métis of Nor'Wester origin cannot be overestimated. Seven Oaks was their ordeal by fire. It gave them a sense of nationhood that was to be reinforced by Riel and Dumont later in the century." (2014, p. 111-112)

The invocation of key Métis nationalist figures such as Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont acts to naturalize the continuity between the political struggles of the Métis Nation against the Canadian nation-state. Perhaps more compelling than the actual historical event of the Battle of Seven Oaks are the ways in which this event have been narrated to be representative of 'the Birth of a New Nation.' Gerhard Ens explains:

Narration of the Battle of Seven Oaks as both the time and place of the political emergence of the Métis has, since the 1930s, served to naturalize and essentialize the Métis Nation as an unproblematic idea of national progress, providing the Métis with a story of national origins and a myth of a founding father. This story, once established as unproblematic and natural, becomes the story of martyrdom at the hands of the Canadian state after the annexation of Rupert's Land. (2012, p. 94)

The narration of the Battle of Seven Oaks marks the beginning of the "ethically constitutive story" that is the Métis National historical Narrative (Smith, 2003). Ens & Sawchuk (2016) argue that the discourses that describe the Métis in either racial terms or national terms "arose in the aftermath of the killings and violence at Seven Oaks," as "the HBC saw the Metis largely in racial terms- the hybrid offspring of fur traders and Native women", while the North West Company (NWC) "portrayed the Metis primarily in political terms as a 'new nation,' with a sovereign claim to the soil, a political consciousness, and a flag" (p. 83).⁵² Since the Battle of Seven Oaks, the national flag and even a song, Pierre Falcon's *Chanson de la Grenouillere*, which was written to commemorate

⁵¹ *Engagés* refers to fur trade 'servants' (Foster, 1985).

⁵² Note that the flag that was used during the Battle of Seven Oaks is the same one that is used today by Métis organizations (an infinity symbol), and that Louis Riel chose a different flag that featured a shamrock and fleur-de-lis to symbolize his association with Quebec and Irish Catholicism (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016, p. 83-4)

the Métis victory at Seven Oaks have become instrumental in building national pride.⁵³

Yet, the question remains: were Red River Métis ‘actually’ nationalized prior to ‘effective colonial control?’ Ens (2012) concludes as follows:

Thus, by the 1850s the Métis in the Red River District had developed a view of themselves as holding both the rights of British subjects and Aboriginal claims to the soil. They seldom if ever used the term “Métis Nation” in this period to articulate their rights, but it was a position that might easily be construed as “national.” This was not a position or a sentiment, however, that was present in 1816 when Cuthbert Grant and the Métis destroyed the Red River Settlement. This sense of nationalism was spurred by the events of 1815-16, but it only emerged in any conscious way in the thirty years afterward. (112)

The issue of historical peoples self-referencing as ‘Métis’ remains contentious, due to the varied naming practices deployed by and towards people of mixed ancestry throughout the 19th century. As Fiola (2015) explains, categories such as ‘Métis,’ ‘Half-breed,’ and ‘Indian’ were irregularly applied and based on the racialized dichotomy of civility/savagery, as opposed to cultural or biological differences: “[T]o the European gaze, anybody who did not live a life of ‘pure’ savagery was considered a ‘Half-breed,’ so that, to some eyes in some regions, the same group of people was alternately considered ‘Indian’ or ‘Halfbreed’ by different viewers” (p. 16). Due to the mutability of such naming practices, she argues that emphasis on the use of such labels risks projecting (and naturalizing) identities onto past Indigenous people who may have self-identified differently. Nonetheless, Métis and half-breed identities appear to be conflated by colonial governing bodies and were thus similarly affected by colonial policies of expansion, assimilation, and land dispossession.

The Manitoba Act

Following the 1869 sale of Rupert’s Land by the Hudson’s Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada, the desire to secure their place in Canada both geographically and politically prompted the Métis to formally establish a provisional government. The massive transaction of Rupert’s Land was conducted with no provisions made for the Métis majority that were living in the Red River settlement, as it was expected that they would be governed directly by Ottawa (Weinstein, 2008). In response, the provisional government petitioned the Canadian

⁵³ Ens & Sawchuk (2016) note that Falcon’s song “defines the Metis by name (Bois Brûlés), makes a claim to territory that needs defending from incursion by Orcadians and Englishmen, and celebrates the military feats of the group”...“the song struck a nerve with the Métis, capturing a quality they recognized in themselves” (p. 87). Further noting, that when sung during the Riel Resistance, “the song generated the most fire and fervor among the Metis”.

government for land deeds for the territories that they already occupied, as well as political representation in Ottawa (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992). Receiving no response from the Federal government, the provisional government's leader, Louis Riel, prevented a party of surveyors from mapping land at St. Norbert in October 1869. In response, Lieutenant-Governor William McDougall attempted to enter Fort Pembina and was forced by the Métis to retreat to the American side of the border. By November, the provisional government seized Fort Garry and in January 1870, Riel was elected president of the Métis Council. The provisional government drafted a list of rights, which were sent with delegates to Ottawa with the hopes of settling Métis land claims.

Sawchuk & Ens (2016) explain that, “although the Conservative Macdonald government agreed that the Metis were not Indians unless they chose a tribal identity, they felt it expedient to justify the 1.4 million acre grant by stipulating that the Metis had claims in addition to their settler claims by virtue of their Native ‘extraction’” (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016, p. 33). As a result, the Canadian government rationalized that drafting the Manitoba Act would extinguish Indian title to the land (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992). As per the request of the provisional government, this admitted the territory that was predominantly occupied by Métis peoples into confederation as the Province of Manitoba. In addition, the Métis won several other rights such as the right to vote, bilingual courts and government, additional transportation access, provincial control of public land, representation at Canadian parliament, a legislature of elected Métis peoples, as well as confirmation of Métis traditions and privileges (1992). Sections 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act conferred land rights not only to all settlers within the province who already had interests in land (the majority of which were Métis), but explicitly granted 1.4 million acres of land to the “children of the half-breed heads of families” (cited in Weinstein, 2008, p. 11). Most importantly, the Manitoba Act “opened the door to Métis special status” (Ens & Sawchuk, 2016, p. 34).

Sections 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act were given constitutional force and were believed to be immune from alteration, but nevertheless, over the following decade, “parliament enacted a number of statutes, which... either repealed portions of Section 31 and 32 or set up qualifications and procedures which were so stringent or complicated that they robbed both sections of their original meaning” (Weinstein, 2008, p. 12-13). The failure to acknowledge Métis land claims resulted in the dispossession and dispersal of Métis peoples out of Manitoba.

Between 1870 and 1886, the Métis population in Manitoba dropped from 83% to 7%, with roughly two thirds of Métis peoples moving westwards (Weinstein, 2008). Not only did the Manitoba Act fail to settle Métis grievances, but also events led to over 1200 troops being dispatched in May 1870 to the Red River settlement. It was during this time that leader Louis Riel was expelled from Canada for five years for leading the initial resistance. Despite being exiled to the United States and not allowed to enter Ottawa, Riel was shown support from Métis peoples as he was elected to Canadian parliament (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992). The Manitoba Act's acknowledgement of the Métis as one of Canada's founding peoples is frequently cited as contributing to the conscious evolution of the Métis into a "new nation" (p. 112).

In 1981, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the leaders of 17 Métis families launched a court case (MMF v. Canada) to seek a ruling that the government acted wrongly in passing laws such as the Manitoba Act and the scrip laws that followed. Fiola explains, "[I]n other words, these Métis argued that, since Métis land was stolen, *Indian title* was never lost; therefore, contemporary Manitoba Métis, as descendants of the historic Métis Nation whose ancestors received scrip, should legally continue to enjoy *Indian title* and rights and be financially compensated for the massive theft of our land" (p. 51, emphasis in original). Upon the rejection of the Federation's claim in 2007, MMF appealed the decision and took their case to the Supreme Court of Canada, where on March 3rd 2013, they were granted a declaration that "the federal government failed to uphold section 31 of the Manitoba Act of 1870 and that the delay in making land grants was a historically injustice" (p. 51). Though the declaration was not itself legally binding, it acted as an impetus to (finally) engage federal and provincial governments in productive negotiations with the Métis (Chartrand, 2013).

The Indian Act, Treaties, and Halfbreed Scrip

Canada's Indian Act is largely responsible for the categories of Aboriginality that are currently reinforced by the Canadian Constitution. The regulation of Indigenous identities that began with the Indian Act of 1876, as the Federal government took responsibility to oversee those persons defined as Indians, perpetuated the racist assumptions that Indigenous peoples required protection and should be wards of the state (Barman, 2006). This perspective was widely accepted as a scientific principle, as the notion of the time was that "non-Europeans think

somewhat like children, and will be led toward adulthood by Europeans” (Blaut, 1993, p. 96). Gendered attitudes determined descent to be patrilineal, resulting in the loss of Indian status for Indigenous women who married non-status men, as well as that of their children (Barman, 2006, p. 13). The effect of the Indian Act on contemporary Indigenous identity politics and definitions of indigeneity within Canada cannot be overstated. As Andersen explains, the very identifier of ‘Indian’ is an administrative creation; “Indians are the effect of a specific system of classification that has, through Canada’s tremendous material and cultural influence, produced a register of images that emphasizes a severely limited, isolated, and de-contextualized range of realities of historical and contemporary indigeneity” (2014, p. 33). Furthermore, as Ens and Sawchuk explain, “[S]crip and treaty administrative practices that defined and counted collective identities in an all or nothing manner enabled/forced people to see or organize themselves in light of these categories” (2016, p. 34).

Lawrence describes how the Indian Act was the ultimate catalyst for dividing those categorized as half-breeds from those categorized as ‘Indians: “[T]he act contained a provision that for the first time excluded anybody who was not considered to be ‘pure Indian’ from Indianness” (2004, p. 88).⁵⁴ However, the criteria that government agents used for determining Indigenous rights and Aboriginal title had a tendency to bear “little resemblance to the on-the-ground reality of who is recognized as an Indian person in terms of family ties, lifestyles, social and cultural orientations, and participation in community life” (Sawchuk, 1996, p. 68). This process did not simply require that individuals conform to racial blood quantum or even self-identify as a ‘half-breed,’ but also included factors such as language, lifestyle, and place of residence. Lawrence describes the problem with such an arbitrary process as follows:

Individuals who were considered to be “living like Indians” were taken into treaty, while those who had worked hauling supplies for the Hudson Bay Company and as a result knew some English, were

⁵⁴ Note that prior to the Indian Act, the question of “halfbreed rights” arose during the discussion of the Robinson treaties, which were signed in 1850. Fiola explains as follows: “Chief Shingwauk tried to secure reserve land for ‘Halfbreeds’ at 100 acres per head, but Robinson refused because he was given instructions to deal with ‘Indians not whites’; Métis were considered ‘white’ according to the government’s assimilation agenda. Both Robinson treaties contained a clause stating that reserves could not be sold or leased without the consent of the Chief Indian Superintendent; therefore, the question arose of whether treaty Indians could give reserve land to Halfbreeds ‘by permitting persons of mixed blood to join the band and/or to share in the annuity money.’ Robinson himself suggested this could be done, and the matter was resolved by requiring that ‘half-breeds declare themselves as either Indian or non Indian”” (2015, p. 43). This instance has been used as evidence to support the inclusion of Métis as Indians under s. 91(24) of the Canadian Constitution (Canada v. Daniels, 2016).

registered as half-breeds, in each case regardless of ancestry. This standard used to distinguish Indians from half-breeds in western Canada has in fact been virtually meaningless since its inception, given the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century most individuals categorized as Indian in eastern Canada had already been forced into some sort of transition to farming life or seasonal wage labor. In the context of over two centuries of colonial contact, so-called authentic Indianness was a rare commodity. And yet it was a commodity that Europeans craved and which colonial governments clearly demanded in order to acknowledge Indianness.... any adulteration of popular stereotypes of Indianness was interpreted as evidence of mixed-blood. (2004, 89)

As Nicks & Morgan illustrate, “[T]he biological criterion was a convenient way of identifying those eligible, but it was not an all-encompassing rule,” as many mixed Indigenous peoples entered into treaty (1985, p. 176).

Stereotypes of the time informed the decisions made by government agents regarding treaty eligibility.

Individuals who seemed successful or had qualities of leadership were considered half-breeds, while those who appeared to require charitable assistance were deemed ‘Indians.’ However, “once ascribed, an individual became, irrevocably, Indian or halfbreed (as did their descendants)...” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 10). Furthermore, those who were not present during scrip signing “became de facto ‘Halfbreeds’” (Fiola, 2015, p. 44).⁵⁵ Gaudry argues that this category of ‘half-breeds’ was a “category significantly broader than the Métis Nation” and that with the inclusion of Métis in the 1982 constitution, “a lot of non-Métis ‘half-breeds’ were remade as ‘Métis’” (2015, p. 95). Similarly, Fiola explains that “historically (and contemporarily), not everyone with Indigenous and European blood would automatically be considered ‘Métis’” (2015, p. 16). Such colonial categories, however, seemed to be meaningless to many Indigenous people across the prairies, as with the distribution of Halfbreed Scrip, thousands of people regardless of ancestry chose to discharge from treaty (Lawrence, 2004). It is clear that the Indian Act and the accompanying issuing of scrip marked a significant “terminological shift” which continues to foster confusion about who is Métis (Gaudry, 2015).

As a response to Métis persistence to be included in the treaty process, the government devised the scrip system to extinguish Métis Aboriginal title and administer lands that were previously promised to the Métis. Ens & Sawchuk explain in the following how instrumental the scrip process was in sustaining and defining Métis identity:

⁵⁵ Note that despite attempts to exclude Métis from treaty, there is evidence that Métis people continued to be included in treaty discussions. For instance, Fiola explains: “during Treaty 8 discussions, the Dene people recommended Pierre Beaulieu- a well-known and respected local Métis leader- as their chief” (2015, p. 45).

This massive administrative program constituted the governmental roots of a modern Métis ethnicity at a time when the occupational bases of Métis ethnicity were disappearing on the plains. The various scrip commissions that held hearings in the North-West Territories from the 1880s to the 1920s not only created a massive administrative, statistical, and genealogical archive, but named and defined an ethnicity or identity to which the Metis ascribed to in order to receive the benefits of scrip. (2016, p. 34)

The administration of scrip was implemented in three phases, through the Manitoba Act in the 1870s, through the North-West Halfbreed Commissions following the 1885 Resistance, and through the Treaty 10 Scrip Commissions in the early 1900s (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992; Fiola, 2015; Hatt, 1983). Attempts to appease the restless Métis peoples meanwhile weakening Métis unification took the form of land or money scrip; essentially a coupon granting land or actual dollars that could be used to buy land (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992).⁵⁶ To be eligible for receiving scrip, one had to be a descendant of a union between European and Indian peoples. Andersen suggests that early on these categories lacked authority and were particularly fluid in terms of who could and could not occupy them, stating that “racialized scrip application eligibility criteria changed constantly in the thirteen scrip commissions that visited Métis communities in the Red River and Canadian Northwest” (p. 42). Many people accepted scrip, later selling it to land speculators and bankers for a fraction of its value on account of the dire conditions that the Métis faced (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992, p. 128). The consequences of the corrupted scrip system were devastating, as according to Fiola, “by the turn of the century, 90% of the Métis were landless and destitute and a number of prominent (White settler) individuals and institutions had amassed considerable fortunes from scrip speculation, including the Bank of Montreal and Bank of Nova Scotia” (cited in 2015:48). Similarly, Madden, Graham, & Wilson (2005) argue that scrip acted to disenfranchise Métis people: “[B]y and large, the Métis were dealt with as individuals rather than as an Aboriginal people with collective rights and interests... These individual-based systems were fraught with maladministration, sharp dealings and outright fraud and resulted in Métis becoming a landless Aboriginal people by the end of the 1800s” (p. 13). Despite the Federal government’s attempt to compensate the Métis for the land that had once been promised to them, the issuance of scrip to the Métis ultimately failed, further disconnecting and disenfranchising Canada’s Métis population.

⁵⁶ According to Fiola (2015), the intent of the scrip system to destroy Métis solidarity is evidenced by the ways in which land allotments were purposely distant from Métis settlements.

Indisputably, the long-term implications of policy development concerning Indian status on Indigenous populations throughout Canada are extensive (Sawchuk, 1996). Colonial policies had a profound effect on identities as Métis people were considerably marginalized, yet were not considered to be marginal enough to gain any type of special status (Douaud, 1983). Chartrand (2001) argues that the Métis have been doubly discriminated through racist treatment and lack of funding for programs. The question of Indigenous rights and Aboriginal title is particularly problematic for the Métis, as they do not fit easily into legal definitions as determined by the Indian Act. Measuring Métis peoples in comparison to other Indigenous peoples within a legal framework has presented and still presents several challenges, as “Métis peoples were not here since time immemorial and they did not occupy exclusive territories because their origins are linked to white contact” (Sawchuk, 1996, p. 69). Alternatively, according to Macdougall, “[T]he Métis became indigenous not because they were born, but because they lived in the lands of our mothers and grandmothers. Its where we are from” (2016).

As the predecessor to Halfbreed Scrip, the Indian Act’s use of patrilineal descent, supplanted traditional means for determining community belonging and kinship amongst Indigenous communities across Canada. Fiola explains:

Such colonial legislation has many consequences for all Aboriginal people, including divisions between Métis and First Nation people and exclusion of some Aboriginal people from access to ceremonies due to geographic distance, loss of cultural and spiritual identity, and hierarchies of Nativeness wherein some people are seen as “more Indian” than others- for example, because they grew up on a reserve and have Indian status. Particularly damaging consequences for Métis people include internalized tensions surrounding identity as a result of being externalized from “Indianness,” severed ties with out First Nations relatives, and a subsequent lack of opportunities to participate in the spiritual ceremonies and beliefs of our [Indigenous] relatives and ancestors. (2015, p. 59-60)

Such colonial legislation may be considered the root of the current political predicaments of Métis, as differing groups began to identify as Métis or were identified as such due to exclusion from treaty processes. Ens & Sawchuk’s (2016) work *From New Peoples to New Nations* persuasively argues that the emergence of a distinct Métis status (and inextricably, Métis identity) in the late 19th century materialized *out of* government interventions and policies that were intended to corral Indigenous people and extinguish their existing Aboriginal rights. Their argument is based on the notion that the creation of administrative categories such as ‘Métis’ to

measure those who might have previously been considered as either Métis and half-breeds not only resulted in increasing self-ascription as Métis, but also reinforced the existence of such a category.

The Northwest Resistance

As Métis peoples moved westwards out of Manitoba, life continued to change as decreasing bison populations curtailed traditional hunting practices. Beginning in 1884, Métis peoples living in the historic Northwest became restless and frustrated as their traditional river lot system of land ownership was overridden by the township system being imposed by incoming surveyors. Furthermore, steamships and the newly built railroad encouraged immigrants to occupy the Northwest. The Métis Council of Saskatchewan, led by Gabriel Dumont, sent petitions and letters to Ottawa to resolve land claims, which were supported by white settlers who were also at risk of losing land (Hatt, 1983). Although the Dominion Land Act was established in 1879 and was to provide land to the Métis of the Northwest in order to extinguish Indian title, it wasn't until 1885 that the government established a commission to review and settle claims (Hatt, 1983). By this time, the Métis were again restless and seeking the help of Louis Riel, imploring him to return from exile to help them to voice their concerns (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992). Riel sent a message to Ottawa stating that the Métis of Saskatchewan would prevent, by armed force if necessary, the surveying of claimed land. In late March, he seized hostages at Batoche, proclaiming a new Provisional government (Hatt, 1983). The height of the resistance began at Duck Lake, where Gabriel Dumont and a few other Métis clashed with North West Mounted Police. In response, Ottawa sent out a volunteer army led by General-Major Frederick Middleton. The violence continued as Dumont ambushed Middleton's army at Fish Creek on 24 April 1885, but after a three-day stand at Batoche, the Métis were defeated on 12 May 1885 (Boisvert & Turnbull, 1992).

On 16 November 1885, Louis Riel was tried and executed for treason, initiating a national divide between English-speaking Canadians who condemned Riel's actions and French-speaking Canadians, who followed the Catholic Church's support of Riel. Riel continues to be viewed under various opposing guises: a madman, a leader, a martyr, a prophet, a rebel, or a folk hero. Ens & Sawchuk (2016) argue that, "twentieth-century Métis leaders have jettisoned a good part of Riel's vision while retaining Riel as a symbol and martyr of their Nation"

(2016, p. 93). This is largely because Riel's multiple visions of Métis nationalism were conflicting, at times describing Métis claims to land as "based not only on descent from their Indian mothers, but also on their military prowess in defending their territory from hostile Indian groups, and the existence of their own political organization and traditions" (p. 92); and at other times "propos[ing] a defense of their rights based on [Catholic] religion and [French] language" (p. 93). In fact, Riel, along with Fathers Ritchot and Dugast adamantly opposed the Aboriginal rights paradigm proposed by Métis leaders William Dease, Pascal Breland, and William Hallet (known as the Dease Initiative), arguing for "another paradigm of Metis nationality that carried more emotional weight with the French Métis" (p. 99).⁵⁷

Additionally, according to Gaudry (2013) Louis Riel has been recently appropriated within Canadian literature as a 'Canadian' hero, due to his "position as a bi-racial, French-speaking Métis, and a man who embraced diversity in social and political relations," an identity that appeals to the liberal multi-cultural myth of Canada, which "allow[s] Canadians to make sense of their country's 'history of disjunction'" (p. 72). Most recently, on November 16, 2015, on the 130th anniversary of the execution of Louis Riel, Canada's Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs released a statement in commemoration of Louis Riel where she describes him as "a leader not only for the Métis but for all Canadians" and "a key contributor to Canadian Confederation" (Government of Canada News, 2015). The appropriation of Riel, a leader who fought against the Canadian state's encroachment onto Métis lands and was consequently charged by the Canadian Prime Minister John A. Macdonald for high treason, should seem ironic to anyone with minimal knowledge of the Métis National historical narrative. According to Gaudry, such mythological claims that render Métis somehow equal to Canadian act as a means to "not just erasing the injustice of the past and present" but also "subvert[s] the already existing set treaty relationships" that allow for nation-to-nation political arrangements (2013, p. 68). Gaudry explains that, problematically, "in this process of re-defining Riel as a Canadian, Métis have traditionally had very little influence on the conversation; in many ways, Riel has become the object of someone else's discourse" (p. 70). The recent appropriation of Riel and Métis history points to the continued ways in which Canadian

⁵⁷ See Sawkchuk & Ens (2016) for a detailed description of the events involved in the debate over how the Métis should advance their claims.

colonial tactics assimilate and erase Indigenous histories and bodies.

4.3.4.4 Historical Experiences of Discrimination

Following the Northwest Resistance, those who self-identified or were identified by others as being Métis or half-breeds were treated with increasing prejudice by non-Indigenous peoples living and traveling amongst them. Coupled with the rapid decline of the fur trade and bison hunting economy, as well as a rising tide of immigration, the Métis were pushed to the edges of mainstream Canadian society, occupying marginal spaces. Some people adopted a Euro-Canadian facade to become more upwardly mobile, but for the visibly Indigenous, this was not an option.

Immigration campaigns were proving to be successful, as non-Indigenous populations rose dramatically, causing the rift between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to grow even further (Barman, 2006). A hardening racist attitude towards half-breeds forcibly caused many mixed Indigenous peoples to change their lifestyles, including types of employment, residence, language, and outwards appearance. Hierarchical notions that stemmed from Social Darwinism resulted in a particular disdain for half-breeds, as they were deemed inferior to both white and Indigenous peoples, and thought to inherit the vices of both groups.⁵⁸ For instance, contemporaneous anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan argued that varying degrees of blood heritage resulted in specific characteristics:

[T]he half-blood is inferior, both physically and mentally, to the pure Indian; but the second cross, giving three-quarters Indian, is an advance upon the Native; and giving three-fourths white is still greater advance, approximating to equality with the white ancestor. With the white still carried further, full equality is reached, tending to show that Indian blood can be taken up without physical or intellectual detriment. (1871, p. 207)

Furthermore, Ens & Sawchuk (2016) clearly illustrate how half-breed (or Métis) status became synonymous with a lack of economic self-sufficiency during the early 1900s. For instance, they describe the definition of Metis that resulted from the 1930s Ewing Commission as follows:

Apparently, being economically self-sufficient was not “normal” behaviour for the Métis; the commission had decided that the most important criteria for inclusion was “living the normal life of a half-breed.” The implications were that if there was no demonstrable need- that is, if the person was not

⁵⁸ Social Darwinism is the notion that applied the principles of Darwinian theory to racial categories.

indigent- he or she was not a “Metis,” but was merely a citizen with some Indian ancestry, no matter what he thought of himself in cultural or social terms. (p. 273)

The emergence of a two-tier scheme, whereby Métis were positioned as either “working class” Métis (which included farmers and small businessmen) or as nomadic Métis, living off traditional subsistence practices in more “northern areas” or “suffering from malnutrition, disease and lack of medical treatment” in areas south of the North Saskatchewan River (p. 274). Such two-tiered models emerged out of assimilationist thinking that understood Métis people as representing a stage in the inevitable process of the “vanishing Indian” (p. 275). Some Métis were able to keep their lands, working as farmers or farm labourers, whereas others were forced to live along public roads, becoming known as “road allowance people” (Campbell 1973:13). For the most part, the Métis became a landless population and to avoid the stigmas that were attached to being ‘road allowance people’ as well as increasing racism towards half-breeds, many Métis peoples chose to assimilate.

Direct colonial policies that pushed assimilation such as residential schooling and child apprehension also had significant intergenerational effects on Métis people. The continued negative impacts of Indian Residential Schools have been thoroughly documented by the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC Report, 2015), however, according to Fiola (2015), “there is still much confusion surrounding Métis experiences within this system” (p. 63). Official policies on the admittance of Métis children into residential schools shifted according to the Canadian government’s agenda and often depended on the degree to which a child was perceived as assimilated. Children were either forced to attend residential school or turned away from provincial schools, depending on what was essentially a determination of class that equated proximity to Indianness to lower-class status. Fiola explains the consequence for Métis peoples:

By the 1930s, most Métis were excluded from formal education due to federal government policy. All this left many Métis in the lower class structure, which was created, in part, by the schools. Determining the actual number of Métis attendees at residential schools is very difficult, especially given the silence both from the government and until recently, from the Métis themselves (p. 65).

Education experiences varied according to perceptions about children’s identities and their abilities to pass as white. Many Métis residential school survivors continue to suffer cultural and psychological trauma, yet have yet to be acknowledged as such due to the exclusion of many schools attended by former Métis students from the list

of official residential schools.

Métis people have also been subjected to aggressive assimilation tactics through the child welfare system, whereby children “were targeted and stolen from their families, but instead of being placed in residential schools they were usually placed with White families far from their home communities, many never able to return” (Fiola, 2015, p. 68-69). Though the exact numbers of Métis children in the child welfare system across Canada remains unknown (Carriere, 2008), it appears that the number of Métis children taken into care is disproportionately high, with a high percentage of Métis children being adopted into non-Aboriginal homes or even out of country (Barkwell et al., 1989; Kimelman, 1983). Furthermore, the lack of funding for child welfare activities for Métis organizations is miniscule in comparison to agencies for status-Indian groups.⁵⁹ The treatment of Métis children within the child welfare system is argued to have been the leading cause of the current overrepresentation of Métis offenders within the justice system (Fiola, 2015). The destruction caused by disrupting the primary social unit of Métis people (families) through residential schooling and the child welfare system has been devastating for Métis communities throughout Canada.

The structural and real violence caused by colonial tactics and religious doctrine has resulted in shared experiences between Indigenous communities in Canada. However, one must be careful not to define Indigenous peoples based on these experiences alone, as Indigenous identity has a history of being positioned within a moral spectrum synonymous with suffering, marginality, and ‘victimhood’ (Paradies, 2006). Nonetheless, the degradation caused by assimilation and forcible displacement has had a profound effect on Métis peoples, as communities became geographically dispersed- disrupting kinship ties, intergenerational transfer of knowledge between youth and elders, community cohesion, cultural continuity, and traditional identities. While some Métis retained a clear understanding of their roots, others kept their ancestry hidden. As Weinstein explains, “for those Métis stuck in limbo between white and Indian societies, identity shifting became a means of meeting the needs of the situation” (2008:22). According to Barman (1991), “‘Halfbreeds’ or Métis would often ‘go white’ or ‘go

⁵⁹ For example, Fiola explains that in 1988, more than 62% of Aboriginal children adopted were Métis, despite the MMF only receiving \$140,000 for child welfare activities between the years of 1987-1989 vs. Indian agencies receiving \$8 million annually (2015, p. 72).

Indian”’, depending on one’s personal circumstance (p. 171). Lawrence explains the dire nature of the situation for Métis people as follows:

[Those who] chose scrip instead of treaty, could not have conceived of the landlessness and desperation that would be the lot of most half-breeds (now called Métis) in the years after 1885. Those who fled white encroachment to live in the north struggled to survive, without a land base and with the basic source of their livelihoods—hunting and fishing—unprotected by treaty rights. Over the years, as status Indians organized to demand the rights to health care and education promised in the treaties, the contrasts grew even greater, as Métis people were denied these services, even though in many cases they lived in communities as remote as reserve communities, miles from hospitals or schools. Finally, the reality of landlessness meant that many Métis were reduced to a semi-squatting existence on marginal lands, always on the move, with the only alternative being the violence, poverty, and racism of the segregated spaces reserved for Native people in the cities of western Canada. (2004, p. 95)

Landlessness has since characterized the Métis people, as has the resulting diaspora and extremely high levels of mobility that continue among modern self-identified Métis peoples. Yet, the notion of a bounded Métis territory has been central to the discourse of Métis Nationhood.

4.3.5 Tracing the Boundaries of the Métis Homeland

The region of Central and Western Canada that came to be known as the Historic Métis Nation Homeland developed out of not only Métis territorial occupation, but also through ancestral connections to the land through the Indigenous women that made up a substantial portion of Métis relations (Macdougall, 2010). According to Macdougall’s study of Métis in northwestern Saskatchewan, patterns of (at times temporary) Métis residence were broadly defined by matrilocal residency, “where women drew men into the region and grounded them in the values, beliefs, and behaviours of the local culture” (p. 54). This distinct pattern was counter-balanced by the sociological importance of patronymic connections and the recognition of the location of particular family surnames in certain places. Family narratives gave particular places meaning and acted as a means for passing on collective histories. The land that the historic Métis people interacted with was closely tied to their identity as Indigenous people.

The notion of matrilocal residency is somewhat contradictory to the typical narratives that regard historic Métis society as transient and unstable. Undoubtedly, networks of Métis families demonstrated high levels of mobility within this region and extended beyond the edges of the Métis National homeland (Evans et al., 2012),

which were either marked with the difficult terrain to the West or the encroaching settler societies to the East and South. However, Macdougall argues that the emphasis on “a form of nomadism that discouraged permanent settlement in favour of following animals and goods between distant posts” is a male-centric interpretation that tends to relegate women to the position of inactive assistants or complete absence (2010, p. 94). According to this narrative, the only possibility of stability occurred at the political core of the Métis Homeland, the Red River Settlement, which acted as a mere stopover during the perpetual movement of Métis men.

Academic and political discourses concerning the Métis have a history of placing emphasis on the centrality of the historic Red River settlement. Macdougall argues that the previous “Red River myopia has given way to a Plains - whether Canadian or American - myopia that still constrains our ability to recognize the diversity of the Métis experience in Canada” (2006, p. 440). The shift from examining solely the Red River Métis and their descendants as homogenous groups, centralized in Canada’s prairie provinces, to an exploration of localized peoples with distinct characteristics and traditions was introduced in 1985 with Peterson & Brown’s volume *The New Peoples*. This volume made a significant contribution to the growing body of literature pertaining to the Métis as it explored not only the historical components of Métis identity (Dickason, 1985; Dusenberry, 1985; Foster, 1985; Nicks & Morgan, 1985; Peterson, 1985), but also other cultural facets such as language and material culture (Brasser, 1985). Following Peterson & Brown’s volume, multiple studies have emerged that use micro-historical and genealogical approaches to study specific historical communities of Métis peoples (Burley, Horsfall, & Brandon, 1992; Devine, 2004; Lischke & McNab, 2007; Macdougall, 2006; 2010; Pannekoek, 1991; St-Onge, 2004).

The shift away from the Red River Settlement towards a more regional focus has often been centralized on the Upper Great Lakes region. According to Peterson, “intraregional mobility seems to have fostered, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, a personal and group identity which was less place-specific than regionally and occupationally defined” (1985, p. 63). As these historical relations predate events that are considered to mark the beginning of the historic Métis Nation (such as the Battle of Seven Oaks), scholars have tended to designate Upper Great Lakes Métis communities as “other métis” or lower case ‘m’ métis.

Ethnohistorians argue that mixed ancestry fur trading communities in the upper Great Lakes region should be considered upper case ‘M’ Métis, based on historic distinctions from European and other First Nations communities, mixed ancestry, and the contemporary self-identification as Métis of descendants. Andersen argues that this use of the term Métis as “a conceptual placeholder to mark a perceived distinctiveness- technological, political, economical, and biological- from social relations pre-dating ‘their’ genesis” is based on a racialized understanding of historic Métis identity, which is ultimately detrimental to the Métis as a whole (2014, p. 49). Moreover, he suggests that rather than debating over whether self-identifying Métis communities outside of the geographic and temporal core of Métissage are in fact Métis, we should be exploring how such communities are Métis (beyond understandings based simply on interracial relationships).

The same holds true for other self-identifying Métis communities that occupy the geographical, temporal, and sociological edges of the historic Métis Nation homeland. Ens & Sawchuk (2016) explain that biologically-speaking, racial mixing was not uncommon among various Indigenous and European groups since early contact, however being distinctly Métis as a community was “an infrequent, if not unique, sociocultural product of particular events and circumstances” (p. 43). Furthermore, “racial mixing or ‘métissage,’ however, did not automatically determine a person’s social, ethnic, or political identity and many children of mixed ancestry were raised with no identity other than Ottawa, Fox, Osage, Ojibwa, Cree, Dene, British, or French” (p. 42). Nonetheless, Ens & Sawchuk approach Métis ethnogenesis in the Great Lakes region as Métis not based on their mixedness, but instead “try to contextualize a ‘process’ of ethnogenesis through a fur trade instrumentality” (p. 48). In doing so, they describe Great Lakes Métis as being culturally and ethnically distinct from surrounding Indigenous and European communities. However, they note, “[T]hese Metis communities did not have an overt political consciousness of themselves as a ‘new people’ or behave in collective action, as would the Plains Metis further west” (p. 48). For Métis groups outside of the prairie core, such as those in the North, Ens & Sawchuk argue that Métis ethnogenesis occurred at different rates, as “political developments such as the Battle of Seven Oaks and the Riel uprisings had little resonance” (p. 59). Rather than depending on acts of nationalism in defining Métis identity, Ens & Sawchuk argue that despite divergences in the process of Métis ethnogenesis throughout

North America, common patterns exist among Métis peoples with the fur trade economy as the central catalyst.

Namely, they list the following three specific stages through which Métis ethnogenesis emerges:

- 1) Wintering in ‘Indian country’
- 2) ‘Going free’ to become an independent trapper, trader, or freighter (leaving fur trade companies)
- 3) Joining together with other freemen families in communities that were often near trading posts and Native kin. This final step would result in successive generations of Métis children marrying among themselves, and carrying on economic and cultural practices of their parents. (p. 65-6)

According to the Ens & Sawchuk’s pattern of ethnogenesis, various groups living along the geographical and sociological edge of the Métis Homeland could potentially be understood as Métis, not as a matter of mixed blood, race, or ancestry, but due to shared experiences as emerging bi-cultural peoples during a specific time in history. Similar arguments have been made within the context of historical Métis peoples living in British Columbia.

4.3.6 Métis in British Columbia

Some scholars have argued that an historical Métis presence in British Columbia did not exist (for example see Dickason, 1985, p. 31). Despite significant historical evidence of fur trade activities occurring west of the Rockies (see Barman, 2014; Perry, 2001; & Watson, 2010), there is a widespread perception that Métis fur traders did not settle collectively in British Columbia. In 2006 the British Columbia Provincial Court applied the Powley test within British Columbia in *R. v. Willison*, to determine whether there was a distinctive Métis community in a specific region prior to ‘effective European control’ and whether hunting was a traditional practice of such a community. While the Provincial Court judge concluded that the accused Mr. Willison had a proven Aboriginal right to hunt, the BC Supreme Court appeal overturned the judgment on the basis that based on the trial evidence “there was no historical or contemporary Métis community in the relevant region” (Peach, 2013, p. 289). Despite such ‘evidence’ that no historic Métis communities existed in BC, some scholars continue to argue that historical experiences within British Columbia are similar to those of other regions outside of the Red River settlement, in that “ethnic differentiation was not a matter of blood but a social process reinforced by government policy,” and even in cases where there was an absence of external intervention, it appears that “social forces [determined] patterns of association and identification” (Coates & Morrison, 1986, p. 270; see Barman &

Evans, 2009 and Evans et al., 2012).

According to Barman & Evans (2009), the process of the ethnogenesis of the Métis in British Columbia can be understood as being autochthonous, yet continuing the social processes of ethnic formation that once flourished at the confluence of the Assinaboine and Red Rivers. They argue for a broader understanding of the historical process of métissage, as tracing ancestry to the Historic Métis Homeland centralized at the Red River can be problematic for many self-identified Métis living in British Columbia. Tracing ancestry to a community that is heavily linked to traditionally accepted Métis communities would allow the definition to be more inclusive to those who currently self-identify as being Métis. Building on this work, Evans et al. (2012) provide evidence of a historic Métis presence in the central interior region of B.C., comprising of a network of families with ties to both local Indigenous communities as well the Historic Red River community, and are thus part of the Historic Métis Nation (Barman & Evans, 2009; Evans et al., 2012). The processes of both being and becoming part of the Métis community are documented using sources such as vital statistic records, census records, as well as first person narratives. Linkages between families appear to result from close geographic proximity, working relationships within fur trade posts, intermarriage, god-parentage, and witnessing religious events such as marriages. The historical experiences of mixed Indigenous peoples deemed historically as either half-breeds or Métis in British Columbia since the fur trade, suggest that the ongoing process of being and becoming Métis that was happening simultaneously throughout the prairies was also occurring in BC. Although there were no specific events in BC that crystallized a singular image of Métis identity within the Canadian psyche (such as military conflicts), the overall experience within British Columbia was similar to that of the Métis living east of the Rockies. For instance, a “common experience of racism” contributed to the processes that transformed mixed Indigenous British Columbians into a group with a shared identity centered on distinct customs (Barman & Evans, 2009, p. 77).

These kind of arguments appear to be based on the notion that the Métis Nation as a political entity did not “spring from the soil” at the confluence of the Assinaboine and Red Rivers, but rather can be understood as a form of social cohesion “rooted in a historic past and a wider geographical frame” as it had grown out of

networks of relationships that were established during the fur trade in the Great Lakes region of North America (Peterson & Brown, 1985, p. 5; Peterson, 1985, p. 38). The argument is that this process of ethnic formation would continue outside of the Red River settlement, beyond the period of cultural florescence. The process of the ethnogenesis of the Métis living west of the Rocky Mountains can thus be understood as a continuation of the social processes of ethnic formation that once flourished at the confluence of the Assinaboine and Red Rivers.

Barman & Evans' argument conceives of Métis as more of a sociological category with distinct cultural patterns, as opposed to a predominantly political category centered on nationhood and acts of military resistance. While independent of the Red River settlement, the process of becoming Métis in British Columbia results in communities that are linked to widely accepted historic Métis communities situated east of the Rocky Mountains. While some Métis families may have migrated west prior to 'effective colonial control,' several other waves of Métis peoples moved westward following the federal scrip program to British Columbia, seeking employment, opportunity, and/or following earlier family members. As a result, despite having no successful harvesting rights claims and/or legally validated evidence of a historical community in BC, there is a sizeable number of people that claim a Métis identity living in British Columbia. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there are 69,475 self-identifying Métis live in British Columbia, thus making up 15.4% of the total national Métis population and 28% of the total Aboriginal population in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2013).

4.3.6.1 Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) Citizenship

Similar to the Métis Nation of Ontario, Metis Nation Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation British Columbia exists under the umbrella of the Métis National Council. According to Madden et al. (2005), provincial Métis organizations are responsible for the following:

- (1) They politically represent (i.e. act as an advocate for, negotiate on behalf of) the Métis people within their respective province and
- (2) They undertake cultural and socio-economic programming and services for Métis people living within their respective province. (p. 16)

Though the structures of each of these provincial organizations vary, they are responsible for the following: maintaining a membership list or citizenship registry within their provincial boundaries; having a governance structure that both allows for local, provincial, and national interests to be represented while incorporating elders,

women, and youth into decision-making processes; having democratically selected leadership including a provincial President who acts as a spokesperson; having annual assemblies to update members, gain member input and direction to the board of directors; and finally, having infrastructure to deliver programs and services, including cultural and socio-economic initiatives to all Métis people in the province (Madden et al., 2005).

Formerly known as the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia, Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) is recognized by provincial and federal governments as the official governing organization for Métis people in British Columbia. Since 1996, MNBC's governance structure includes a Senate, Métis Nation governing assembly, youth representation, women's representation, as well as 36 Métis chartered communities in British Columbia.⁶⁰ MNBC is mandated "to develop and enhance opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services" (Métis Nation British Columbia, 2016a). Of the nearly 70,000 self-identified Métis living in British Columbia, at the time of writing approximately 14,000 people are registered Métis citizens with Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC, 2016a). These citizens have obtained citizenship through meeting the requirements of MNBC as determined by Powley, including: 1) Self-identification, 2) Ancestral connection to the historic Métis community, 3) Contemporary Métis community acceptance. Making an application for citizenship requires long form birth certificates (or baptismal records) for Métis family members going back to 1901, a pedigree chart that links the applicant to a recognized Métis family (as determined primarily through Scrip records), a copy of photo ID, a passport photograph, a signed and witnessed Consent to Release form, a completed Indian Registry Screening Consent form (to determine if the applicant is registered as an Indian), proof of residency, and a completed Application form. Community acceptance is thus determined by MNBC and not the local community where the applicant may currently reside or have been born and/or raised. Local Chartered Communities, in contrast, have their own system of verification and acceptance regarding 'Métis cards'. Due to the considerable changes over time in the ways in which Métis identity has been regulated, legitimated, and validated, many self-identifying Métis who have previously held local community cards may not be eligible for MNBC citizenship cards. It appears that

⁶⁰ Note that to be considered an MNBC chartered community, the local Métis organization must have at least 25 members with their MNBC citizenship card and there can only be one chartered community per geographic location (MNBC, 2003, para. 55-7).

MNBC has been attempting to remedy this problem through the proposed ‘associate membership.’⁶¹ However, currently, those who may have been previously considered Métis and continue to consider themselves Métis may not be eligible to be registered as a member of the Métis Nation. As a result, many self-identified Métis people who have been unable to attain citizenship have joined the British Columbia Métis Federation (BCMF), a non-profit organization founded by former MNBC CEO Keith Henry in BC that critically opposes MNBC’s “‘narrow’ definition of Métis identity” (Hui, 2013).⁶² Though MNBC remains the only representative organization recognized by the federal and provincial governments, similar ‘oppositional’ organizations have emerged throughout Canada, including the Métis Federation of Canada, whose membership criteria include self-identification as Métis and documentary proof of any Aboriginal ancestry (Métis Federation of Canada, 2016).

4.3.7 The Nationhood Debate

A nation-based approach to recognition has been foundational for the Métis National Council, but has had received significant opposition. The Métis National Council has maintained a regional orientation, where the “contemporary territorial composition is parallel to the historical traditional territory of the Métis as it existed during the height of Métis nationalism prior to and during the leadership of President Louis Riel” (Chartrand, 2001, p. 14). This has to some extent, resulted in MNC-based provincial Métis organizations issuing citizenship cards based on where one currently resides (Green, 2011). Critical of adopting a ‘golden age paradigm’ that tends to only acknowledge a specific time frame (Bell, 2013), some scholars see that while the coalescence of Métis peoples at the confluence of the Assinaboine and Red Rivers was an instrumental stage in the ethnogenesis of the Métis, prior to this rich cultural period, the Métis can be viewed as “a people in the process of becoming” as “their distinctiveness was fully apparent to outsiders, if not to themselves” (Peterson, 1985, p. 39). Bell argues that many historical Métis people had no need to identify collectively, because they were deeply embedded in kinship ties (2013).

⁶¹ During the time of writing, proposals had been brought forward during the MNBC Annual General Meetings regarding the possibility of an ‘associate membership’, whereby those who may not be able to attain the appropriate historical documentation may be able to receive an MNBC associate membership card, but would be ineligible for voting rights.

⁶² While seeking community input following the presentation of preliminary results of this study, both Métis Community Services Society of BC and Métis participants of this study requested that a discussion of the intra-community conflicts that exist between MNBC and BCMF be removed from this study, as it was considered to be internally divisive.

Much of the argument regarding Métis Nationhood has centered on the exclusion of Canada's Eastern provinces from the Métis National Council's definition of the Métis Nation homeland. This results from the notion that the Eastern Métis didn't develop a separate group consciousness. Self-identifying Métis from eastern Canada argue that this is a misconception that has resulted from a lack of historical research due to the undocumented nature of oral histories in these areas (Chretien, 2005). Instead of seeing the Red River Métis as one nation and 'Other Métis' as illegitimate, Chretien (2005) suggests that due to the diversity of communities, we re-imagine the Métis as one people with many nations. Although there have been few studies concerning contemporary Métis identity politics, Berry (1999), Halldorson (2009), and Chretien (2005), have each conducted studies that ask contemporary Métis people about how they perceive themselves and their Métis identities. In all studies, participants did not perceive the diversity between Métis people and communities to be problematic, but simply a result of the differing historical geographies of both Indigenous and European ancestors. They felt that Métis identity was a matter of agency, as one participant stated, "[E]ach Métis person has a choice, to live their sense of Métis identity in their own way" (Chretien, 2005, p. 242). Some participants struggled against stereotyped descriptions of Métis identity and culture. This may point to the challenge for Métis people to see themselves within the strict restrictions that have been developed for one to be considered an 'authentic' Métis person. Lawrence argues that the notion of gathering many historically different experiences under one homogeneous descriptor 'Métis' seems to obscure more than it clarifies (2004). Rather than viewing conflicting definitions among Aboriginal organizations as problematic, Green suggests that instead, this lack of consensus should be viewed as representing a healthy diversity (2009).

A key argument against MNC's exclusive definition of Métis is that it is not an authentic representation of Métis identity, but is a political construction that developed from a position of political powerlessness (Peressini, 2001). Peressini argues that reformulation of Métis identity was a political and economic approach used by the Manitoba Métis Federation to obtain financial aid from the Canadian government for Métis communities (2001, p. 96). Similarly, Lawrence argues that "the very existence of the label Métis today for such a wide range of nonstatus people in western Canada owes more to the creation of the legal category of "half-breed" during the

signing of the numbered treaties than from a desire by all of the ancestors of the people who are today called Métis to remain permanently defined by a specific historic interval of mixed-blood experience under the fur trade” (2004:87). Chretien argues that this approach is reductive, as it erases and silences the rich and varied traditions of all Métis (2005). Accusations of ‘lateral violence’ and ‘internal colonization’ are flung at politicians and scholars who advocate for a bounded Métis Nation, as the act of “Aboriginal people polic[ing] other Aboriginal people in terms of degree of supposed authentic Aboriginal identity” is an often cited example of internal colonization (Fiola, 2015, p. 30). The co-opting of Aboriginal leaders on behalf of the Canadian government’s objective of reducing the government’s fiscal responsibilities is a sore spot in the history of the Indigenous politics (Adams, 1989). Chretien argues that by prescribing the correct cultural model for Métis, all Métis who wish to legitimately belong to the Métis Nation must internalize this particular view of themselves, adopting the appropriate cultural model. Chretien suggests that such an “authority of correctness” privileges origin myths that understand Métis history to be complete, whereas the argument remains that it is a “half-made history,” as the definition of Métis and the use of the nation-model as legitimate remains unclear (2005, p. 22).

Métis scholars who support Métis nationhood such as Andersen are well aware of the objections to the assertion of a singular Métis Nation with its core centered at Red River (2014). Though drawing distinct boundaries around the Métis Nation may exclude particular mixed Aboriginal populations from access to (future) government programs and services, Andersen (2011) argues that it is not the obligation of the Métis Nation to assist dispossessed Indigenous individuals who forward illegitimate Métis identity claims, simply because they have no other choice:

Whatever we imagine a fair response to look like, it must account for the fact that “Métis” refers to a nation with membership codes that deserve to be respected. We are not a soup kitchen for those disenfranchised by past and present Canadian Indian policy and, as such, although we should sympathize with those who bear the brunt of this particular form of dispossession, we cannot do so at expense of eviscerating our identity. (2011, p. 164-5)

Andersen is also critical of the ways in which those who defend a nation- or people- based definition of Métis identity are accused of being exclusionary, an affect, he suggests, results from a more recent discourse of Canadian multi-culturalism that (rhetorically) promotes “the accommodation of cultural diversity” (2013, p. 92).

He explains that acknowledging the exclusionary aspects of nation-building within the context of Indigenous nationhood is particularly irritating, considering “that they exist in a shadow of massive state-sponsored historical and contemporary attempts to eradicate the very possibility for Indigenous peoples” (p. 92).

As such, his definition of Métis is restricted to “refer to the history, events, leaders, territories, language, and culture associated with the growth of the buffalo hunting, and trading Métis of the northern Plains, in particular during the period between the beginning of the Métis buffalo brigades in the early nineteenth century and the 1885 North West Uprising” (p. 23). Although his argument might be perceived as controversial, Andersen is not alone in his thinking as he is following the lead of other Indigenous scholars who assert that the rights of an Indigenous nation to decide who belongs take precedence over individual claims to self-identification (Cook-Lynn, 1997; Simpson, 2014). Furthermore, the notion Métis Nationhood citizenship requirements to be based on ancestral relation to the Métis families that belonged to the historic Métis Nation is consistent with arguments put forth by the Métis National Council and their associated provincial organizations.

4.3.8 Summary

Taking into account the history of identity politics surrounding métissage throughout Canada, the complexity of expressing Métis identities becomes apparent. As various definitions of Métis remain in conflict with each other, the question of ‘who are the Métis?’ remains difficult if not impossible to answer. For Canada’s Métis, the nation-model has been effective for the purpose of gaining legitimacy and recognition, but has often been interpreted through a lens that emphasizes a Western understanding of nationhood as equalling nation-state, which may not be appropriate for Indigenous communities. It is not yet clear whether the nation-based approach remains to be a useful strategy for Indigenous people in Canada, whether they live on or off of reserve, are status or non-status are Inuit or are Métis. It is, however, becoming increasingly clear that the legal solidification of particular definitions of Métis affect all Indigenous people who lack Indian status, including urban non-status Indigenous people, historic Métis communities, eastern non-status communities and those from Western Canada (Lawrence, 2004). Perhaps more important than the ways in which Métis organizations are defining Métis are the ways in which Canadian legal bodies are regulating Indigenous identities, as Supreme Court Cases appear to be a

driving force in the development of legally validated definitions of Métis. Though governing bodies seek to strategically define 'Métis,' through the reproduction, citation, and repetition of language and social practices, Métis individuals simultaneously contribute to the dominant discourses that construct 'Métis.

CHAPTER 5: NARRATIVES OF MÉTIS IN BC

This study began with an overview of the ways in which Métis identity and understandings of Métis subject(s) have been created through dominant discourses. Employing a thematic form of critical discourse analysis somewhat similar to Foucault's genealogy, this was not "a romantic or humanist wish to write the history of who we are," but rather "an attempt to develop an analytic that could make visible the vectors that shape our relation to ourselves" (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. xx). Through prefacing the participant narratives with the dominant discourses, the nature of the power relations that are embedded in the words of participants becomes apparent. Furthermore, this illustrates the ways in which language reflects and constructs social phenomena. This is an ideal approach since narration relies not only on a dialogue between the storyteller and the audience, but is also interwoven with the cultural context in which the story is situated. Understanding that we are all 'knitted into' the historical constructions of others and our narratives are interdependent, co-constructed, and "tested through performance in the context of social relationships" (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 36), it is crucial to reflect on my own position as a Métis researcher and my role in co-constructing participant narratives. This may have been as simple an act as confirming their statements as acceptable by nodding my head during the interview or the presence of a shared knowledge that did not need to be explained.

Opposed to other conventional approaches that distil and fragment interview responses into strictly defined codes and categories, I was intentional in keeping extended narrative accounts intact for a variety of reasons. The first goal of this approach was to avoid "recolonizing" the stories of participants through extractive methods (Mallon, 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999) while working against decontextualizing the meanings behind particular passages that were of relevance to the study. The argument that extractive methods of sharing knowledge whereby the author of a study condenses and repackages the words of another are yet another form of colonization relying on Indigenous perspectives of knowledge, whereby knowledge is not something that can be disconnected from individuals, but is connected to a person's lived experience (see Chapter 2). Hence, by attempting to contextualize the stories shared by providing a broader understanding of each participant's perspective, it becomes clear that their stories and knowledge are directly connected to their personal experiences.

Furthermore, their knowledge is not appropriated as my own knowledge, but I strive to provide a particular lens from which to interpret their unique knowledge.

This is closely related to another reason why I chose to preserve extended accounts of the interviews, which was to allow for the reader to have an interpretative experience, whereby based on the information provided in the previous chapters regarding theories of postcolonial subject positions (including performativity) as well as the kinds of discourses that have been and continue to be engaged with among Métis peoples, one can see for themselves how deeply entrenched such discourses are in the everyday talk of Métis people in BC. Furthermore, the stories themselves illustrate how certain discourses, though at times contradictory, can operate and be reproduced simultaneously. For instance, several participants have simultaneously both “inclusive” and “exclusive” stances towards the boundaries of the Métis Nation, exposing a complex and pervasive issue within the Métis community in British Columbia.

Another reason for presenting several extended accounts is to demonstrate the variability of personal experiences and perspectives amongst Métis living within the relatively small region of British Columbia’s Southern Interior. Importantly, sharing a variety of individual narratives disrupts the hegemonic discourses that people strive to conform to in order to be considered part of the status quo. The degree to which people are involved with various organizations and their individual sense of cultural and historical knowledge pertaining to ‘What it means to be Métis’ varies considerably. Furthermore, their experiences with and opinions towards ‘hot button’ issues such as citizenship criteria were diverse. For instance, out of the 20 interviewed participants, 11 held MNBC cards, two were in process of applying, one was “too busy” to apply, one was not aware of the card, one was denied citizenship, and five had never applied or let their card lapse because they were opposed to registering for MNBC citizenship. While several participants, who either worked directly with MNBC or indirectly with MNBC via their local Métis chartered community, advocated for Métis people to apply for MNBC citizenship, others applied for citizenship due to social pressure, personal validation of their identity as a Métis person and/or for their own or family members access to MNBC programs. The issue of Métis citizenship in BC remains contested by some, as it requires applicants to trace their family ancestry to the historical Métis Nation.

Yet, 19 of the 20 participants interviewed were able to trace their family ancestry in this way, though not all had the requisite documentary proof.⁶³

The inclusion of participants' stories in the body of this thesis serves yet another purpose, which is to provide adequate space and recognition of the experiences of Métis in British Columbia. While Métis organizations in BC have attempted to preserve family stories through MNBC-sponsored projects (such as the Boundary Métis' Story Catchers Project), the stories of Métis in BC are not widely shared or recognized (perhaps with the exception of Evans et al.'s 1999 *What it is to be a Métis: The stories and recollections of the elders of the Prince George Métis Elders Society*). As Kearns (2013) illustrates, "[T]he sharing of Métis stories, family histories and life experiences and knowledge of past community dynamics with Métis, and, or, other Indigenous people, presents many pedagogical opportunities for transforming the public realm. It helps contribute to the collective consciousness of Métis peoples, strengthening our pride in our own identities and those of all of our relations" (p. 63). Partially as a result of the lack of publicly recognized Métis histories and stories, knowledge of Métis in BC remains relatively low, especially when compared to public education regarding Métis peoples in Canada's prairie provinces, where both a historical and contemporary Métis presence is more widely accepted and recognized.

Despite the differences between the recognition of Métis in BC and Métis living east of the Rocky Mountains, the following stories often follow similar narratives to those told by Métis from throughout Canada. These stories illustrate a diverse range of experiences including narratives of familial and individual trauma, cultural disconnection, identity policing, symbolic violence, personal discomfort, familial denial, political apathy and dissatisfaction, identity confusion, internalized racism, intra-community conflict, substance abuse, familial reconnection, resilience, self-discovery, spiritual awakening, community involvement, cultural learning, social acceptance, and pride.

⁶³ It should be noted that 3 of the 20 interviews are not included in the below sections, as the interviews were either directly repetitive or largely unrelated to the topic of Métis identity. Contributions from these participants have been included throughout the analysis and are mentioned below, but not in story-form. Data exclusion was not intended to support the research results, but an issue of relevance to the research questions (Yin, 2016).

5.1 “when there’s something missing, you can feel it”

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Shelley is a middle-aged woman working as the Aboriginal Early Years Cultural Coordinator in Trail, BC. She has recently discovered her Aboriginal ancestry and now identifies as Ojibway-Métis. Shelley struggles to prove her ancestry due to the forcible removal of her grandfather from his family with roots to the Red River Métis. Here is Shelley’s story:

I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba and I’ve lived in quite a few places across Canada and some in the United States. I found out a couple years ago that I have Aboriginal heritage, it didn’t really surprise me ‘cause I just had a feeling, you know, that there was something else. And since then I have talked to my dad’s sister, who is now deceased, and she was one of the only people in the family to actually talk about it, because it was all taboo right? And my dad’s, my dad’s dad was adopted because he was white, white looking. From his Métis family because he was white looking. It was a large family and there was, I don’t even know how many children but there was a few children that were taken and adopted out because they were white looking. So the children who looked Aboriginal, they got to stay with their family, you know, but the other ones, they got adopted out. And so from that time on, he always like hushed his family. “No, we don’t have any kind of Aboriginal at all. We’re white, that’s it.” So even my dad, he still to this day denies it. And yeah it’s, it’s pretty sad. He’s, he’s dying now too, he’s the last of his family. So it’s hard to get information when there’s nobody right? It’s like a dead end. And I guess a lot of, a lot of the paperwork that my Aunt had from the family burnt in a house fire, and anything that was from before that was destroyed because they didn’t want to be known as Aboriginal anymore. So, I’m hoping to find out one day. Yeah, my family tree, but it’s really hard because I keep coming to dead ends right, because all the evidence is destroyed, so. Yeah, it was really difficult, it was really difficult. I’ve just been on this quest. To find out who I am and what it’s all about and, and yeah it’s been, it’s been awesome. Really awesome to find out, you know the missing pieces right, because you know when there’s something missing, you can feel it. So it’s not good. Um, well now that I know that I am Aboriginal I’m ...actually it doesn’t affect me at all because I am Aboriginal, I am Métis and Ojibwa and I’m really proud of it you know? So now I get to teach my children who are adults now and my grandchildren.

Though Shelley does not directly link her identity to a specific Métis family, due to her father’s adoption and her lack of documentary evidence, by providing her place of birth (Winnipeg), she indirectly links herself to the historic Métis community of the Red River Settlement. In addition, by describing her highly mobile pattern of residency, a common feature among Métis people (Stats Can 2006) as well as the forcible removal of her grandfather from his family due to his white appearance, another common experience for many Métis people across Canada throughout the 20th century, Shelley connects her life experiences to the broader discursive context of Métis experiences of forcible assimilation in Canada. In her search for missing pieces of her family history, she encounters obstacles such as genealogical dead-ends and her father’s unwillingness to talk about his Aboriginal ancestry. This is a common narrative for many participants who learnt about their Métis heritage later in life. Shelley’s story culminates with her participation in Aboriginal community groups and her ability to pass

along the new knowledge of her Aboriginal heritage and practices to her children and grandchildren, thus hopefully saving future generations from a lifetime of cultural disconnection.

Shelley's story of finding out about her Métis ancestry later in life is a common theme throughout many interviews conducted during this research and has come to be a widespread phenomenon amongst Métis circles and organizations. In fact, of the 20 people interviewed, 15 were unaware of their Métis ancestry as children, one learned about their ancestry as an adolescent, three learned about their ancestry while attending post-secondary, and 10 learned about their ancestry during mid-life years. Only five participants described themselves as being knowledgeable of their Métis ancestry at a young age, which though the sample of participants is not a direct correlation to a larger population, does coincide with the recent increase in self-identification among Métis and other Indigenous populations (Cornthassel & Primeau, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2011).

5.2 "I felt like a fraud for a long time"

Many people spoke of their family's shame as a reason for hiding their identity from them. For instance, Margaret, a respected Métis elder and MNBC senator at the time of our interview, spoke of her experience of rediscovering her identity in her sixties. Here is Margaret's story:

I trace my heritage through my mother and grandmother and they're from Northern Saskatchewan around um-, actually my grandmother's- and her folks were at Waskesiu in Prince Albert National Park. Their family was evicted in about 1927. Louis Lavallee from the-, actually Pelican Lake. It used to be Pelican Lake, it's a Pelican nesting site. They homesteaded on that lake and they renamed the lake. When they were evicted from the park, the lake was named for the Levallee family and I understand there were all kinds of Levallees. And I've heard a lot about Waskesiu growing up. I heard lots of stories because my father was in the RCMP. And he was stationed in Prince Albert and this was in the early 1900s. My mother doesn't have a birth certificate, but she did-, she was baptized. And I don't know how old she was when she was baptized. And she was born and raised there. And they moved from-, I was about a year and a half when-. And I was born in '32, so they moved to Penticton- My older cousin, he actually spoke Cree as a baby because they spent quite a bit of time with Granny Lee (Margaret's grandmother). Yeah she spoke Cree. Her English was-. I only met her when I was about thirty-, thirty-six, and I only met her the once. She was-, she would write to my mother. She didn't read or write. And my mother would from time to time get letters from various people, you know, it was a translation and I only realized after thinking about it a bit, when she came out and spent a month with my mom and I realized she didn't speak English. My mother must have understood-, at least understood Cree. Now I'm quite sure that she would have learned English, you know, I mean living in a mixed community, she would have learned English. But the- the family said, "No, if she spoke to you, she always spoke in Cree." I couldn't ask her when I met her [if she spoke Michif], because she just smiled very shyly and hung her head. And I would make a comment to her and mom would just said, "She's not very comfortable." So and then the day that I met her, I spent a little bit of time with her. And she was-, I just remember she looked like a little black crow. She was all dressed in black, very dark lady and she had iron-gray hair and she had-, her face was relatively wrinkle-free. And I don't know how old she

would be. We tried to figure out when she was born after she-, after she'd died and we sort of got the idea that she might have been born around 1883 or so. So she was well into her nineties when she died. One of the cousins insists she was over a hundred, but not knowing when she was born. All I know was that she was old. So that's always been a sort of sad, but my grandfather and grandmother, my mother's were separated after they had nine children. And so she stayed in Saskatchewan and my grandfather immigrated out to Penticton, so I knew him and I knew that part of the family, but he was-, I think he was born in the eighteen hundreds, late eighteen hundred probably and being a stiff upper lip British, his father was a schoolmaster. You didn't ask him any questions. There was no-, he would tell you, but you-, and he'd drop little tidbits of information once in a while and that was it. So and then of course it was such a-, to quote Maxwell Smart "a cone of silence" over the whole issue. That everything that I've learned, I've learned from second hand sources or that I've read or that-. I've followed it and so I do know my grandmother was given Scrip. And but when she was-, when her mother married Louis Lavallee, she was twelve years old. So whether she was Louis' daughter or adopted daughter, we don't know. And you know, in the church papers it just said that the mother-, my great-grandmother had gotten legally married and my grandmother was-, she was baptized and my great, great grandmother, so my great-grandmother's mother, she was going to marry a fellow by the name of Landry, Alexander Landry. He wouldn't marry her unless she became a Christian. And so she was baptized and married. My grandmother was married and probably baptized and my great-grandmother was probably baptized, because it is all in French. Yeah all Catholics and so it was, like I say, when I've seen pictures of my grandmother, which I have, she-, there's no indication of any mixed blood or not, but that doesn't mean a thing. Because one of my aunts is-, she looks like she is just off the Penticton Indian Reserve. And she was very dark and very-, very all of the Native, you know what the throwbacks are? You probably know better than I do. Like the genes and so on. So, that was the sense. So yeah, interesting. For me it's interesting.

And I came in to my heritage late in the life, when I was in my sixties. I always knew who I was, but it was-, it was a learning experience because the aunts and uncles-, even though one of my aunts is very Native looking, they had always said that they were English. They hid that and you've heard that story I'm sure just about from every family. So after my mother died and a lot of her brothers and sisters were gone, I always knew some cousins from Saskatchewan who moved to BC and then moved back to Saskatchewan, so I kind of got in touch with them again. You know I was finished raising my family and had free time, so basically I kept pushing until I found more and more. And it's-, it's been a journey that um I think you've probably heard over and over again, because I was very adaptable. When I would be with school friends or white friends, I was just a little white girl and when I was with my cousins and so on I became a good little Native girl. And I felt like a-, I felt like a fraud for a long time. And then when I really started to look into the history, I realized it was a very rich history. Not just my family, but the whole nation.

It's like I said it's been a journey and it's been a wonderful journey. My basic nature, I'm very reserved. When I joined the senate and was asked to be a senator, it was either speak up or I was going to get swallowed up and never say nothing; so I got very mouthy and I am quite vocal now. And but I've also reached the point where I really don't care what other people think. I know who I am, I know that I'm an honest straightforward person and if they question me, that's fine. And a lot of what I have learned who I am is mainly because I've gotten older. I'm eighty-one now and I think I've just started. So I don't know if my mother would be proud of me or not. She hid the fact of her family being Native, having a Native background, Native roots for so many years.

Although Margaret states that she always knew who she was, and felt like a fraud as a child, performing a white identity among white friends and a Native identity among her cousins, her experience of 'passing' as either white or Native as well as the ways in which her family's Métis background was silenced is similarly expressed by other study participants. She describes some family members in terms of their dark 'Native-looking' appearance, but also talks about her Granny Lee speaking only Cree and being given Halfbreed Scrip.

Furthermore, Margaret's story detailed her family's separation from their Métis side, both geographically and sociologically. In BC, this appears to be a common experience for many Métis people, as multiple waves of families with ties to historically Métis communities migrated westwards from the prairies.

5.3 "I'm not sure where I fit"

Sarah also came to understand that she was Métis later in life, while attending university and working with the campus Aboriginal Programs and Services. In her mid-20s, Sarah recently moved from Saskatchewan to Kelowna, where she became involved with the local Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, attends a weekly sweat-lodge ceremony and has participated in several local Okanagan Nation Alliance cultural events. When I asked her if she feels accepted at the sweat-lodge ceremony as someone who identifies as Métis, she described her experience identifying as Metis in her story below:

Sometimes, but they understand now that I am Cree, but it's the marginalization that I've heard people talk about and read in books a lot, that I'm not quite white and I'm not quite brown. So I'm not sure where I fit and I'm not jaded to the fact that I think I'm the only one. I mean we all feel a little bit terminally unique. (laughs). But we're not. We're doing the same things in different ways.

I used to tell people that I had Cree ancestry, but now I've learned that Métis is a more encompassing term and people kind of get that. Although I think from what I've heard that a lot of people don't accept Métis, especially if they're-, you know Okanagan is really strong here. And this is just a-, it's just a personal experience of a friend, but she's working for the ONA [Okanagan Nation Alliance], Métis. Maybe this friend was watching for it, but feeling that there was a lot of lateral violence, because of being Métis. And I don't know if that is real or if that's imagined, and I've never experienced it myself, but I watch for it I guess now. I'm just curious if that's real. Up at the lodge they are wonderful and I work at the university here with the Aboriginal crew. APS [Aboriginal Programs and Services]. And they've been nothing but inviting. I don't even have my status card in my hand yet, like that's a whole can of worms in its own. I put my application in, except we don't have any of our own documentation so we have to wait on vital statistics and they told me it could take a year.

But I'm interested in getting on, I've had an offer from a couple of the different [Métis service agency] boards to be a young person on the board of directors. And so I am interested in doing those things, I'm just- kind of as someone who is newly immersed in the culture stop, stopping myself from feeling like an imposter all the time. Like I don't have the skills or knowledge to help.

There's a lot of jokes that, you know because Métis are-, this is at the lodge and other places, because Métis are half, they do it their 'own way.' They do it kind of half-assed I guess they would say. (laughs). One of the guys is building the fire and he built it way too big one day, and they said, "Oh you are doing it your Métis way" (laughs). Just teasing him, but you know it's, it's another thing that can be a little bit stigmatizing if you don't understand or it's not always said in the sweetest way.

Like several other interview participants, Sarah is new to identifying as Métis and moves between identifying herself to others as Cree and Métis. She is accepted at sweatlodge on account of others' understanding of her Cree ancestry, yet she also uses the term Métis because it is "more encompassing." She talks about being unsure as to

where she fits, as she is “not quite white” and “not quite brown,” citing that her experience is similar to experiences of marginalization that she has heard and read about. In some ways, this kind of talk reflects the dominant rhetoric that many Métis have themselves uncritically internalized that Métis identity is a sort of waypoint, “like a transfer station—like changing buses; it’s where they wait in between becoming white or Indian” (Gaudry 2015:95). Yet, when telling a story of her friend, Sarah is unsure of her friend’s experience with lateral violence, as she has had positive experienced, despite her lack of official status. Despite being approached by Métis service agencies to volunteer as a board member, Sarah is hesitant due to her lack of cultural knowledge and feelings of being ‘an imposter’. The sense of feeling inadequately knowledgeable or lacking in authenticity is a theme that re-emerges throughout many participant interviews. Though she may not perceive it as symbolic violence, Sarah cites instances where being Métis is equated to being half-Indigenous, and thus ‘doing it half-assed,’ reproducing the rhetoric that understands Métis to be mixed-blood and thus a diluted instance of full-blooded indigeneity.

5.4 “They get their card and you never see them again”

Above, Sarah is surprised that she is so easily accepted by the university’s Aboriginal Programs and Services despite her lack of official documentation. Sarah’s commentary on her lack of status speaks to the ways in which official documentation such as citizenship is perceived as a legitimating factor for many Métis people. For instance, Chretien’s (2005) interviews with Métis musicians provide some insight into the realities of the lives of grassroots community members in Manitoba. Interestingly, Chretien’s interview results suggested a resistance to political definitions. Many participants were explicitly “not into politics” and resisted the Métis status card as a symbol of identity. They claimed that status is not important regarding their rights, yet some still applied for some kind of membership, as they perceived it to be an important means for validating their claim to being Métis. The same was certainly true for many of the participants that I interviewed, who were decidedly against the politics of Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), but considered attaining their provincial citizenship card from MNBC to be important. For instance, I asked Jean N., a local elder, if she had ever been involved in the politics of MNBC; here is her response:

No. I don't want to do that. I volunteered with the Kelowna Métis Association for, let's say about ten years. I've been a member I believe for longer but I didn't get involved. I don't like politics because I don't think it's honest. It just, there's too much, "If you do this for me I'll do that for you". And that's ok to a point but then I think that's where the really big politicians get in trouble because then it goes beyond that it becomes too big of a debt to repay to another person to do something, so then you're caught and you have, you end up doing things you don't want to do.

See I think they're (MNBC) like the other governments, like Christy Clark [the current premier of BC] and even here in Kelowna they're not listening to the people. What they're looking at is if we, the people want this, but if we do this we'll make more money and we'll be able to do this, even though it might be more beneficial to the average citizen. They go for the money all the time. You know? So politics I don't think is an honest thing, and I don't think MNBC, they've done a good job. It's been hard.

Though she finds the politics of *quid pro quo* to be dishonest and thinks that politicians lose sight of 'the people' in pursuit of their own personal benefit (while also expressing disappointment with the politics of MNBC), Jean N. remains engaged at the local chartered community level and indicates that she has retained her MNBC citizenship.⁶⁴ I asked her what motivated her to apply for MNBC citizenship, and she replied, "Because it was a provincial card, it was recognized by the government and I've wanted recognition for myself and for all my other Métis ancestors. I wanted to be counted. When my grandkids were going to school I made sure the kids identified them as Métis, they all got their cards." My conversation with Jean turned to a discussion of the benefits of applying for MNBC citizenship, a controversial subject amongst both Métis and non-Métis people. When I asked her if any of children or grandchildren attended post-secondary with assistance from a Métis organization, she responds:

My grandson, the oldest one went to university. He got help through the Manitoba Métis, yes. And I think he's going to go back, he wants to be a web designer, so he's going to go back to school and take some training for that. And he'll probably apply for help. My one grandson out in Prince George, he also got help from the Métis, BC Métis, to go to school, which helped him get a good job. There's been a lot of people like, I've met quite a few students from Kelowna that applied for help from MNBC for help and they're going to university in Vancouver, doctors, dentists, yes.

Well a lot of them, I hate to say it, they do need help, and that's why they come for their card. Yes, but I didn't, I came because I wanted to be recognized as a Métis. They come for their school funding. They get their card and you never see them again. Occasionally. And when I had them come in and they were applying I would always tell them, "You come back and let me know how you did. Let me know how your schooling went". And I think I had maybe one or two, I'd say three at the most that did that. And I remember another young girl that came in, she wasn't sure of her genealogy and a lot of people came in and they thought that we would do the genealogy for them and we couldn't do that. I, first place I don't know enough, and she was having a hard time so I gave her a few ideas of how to find it and she was getting very discouraged and I told her, and I said "Don't be discouraged," I said, "It's going to be so interesting", I said "You're going to find out all kinds of things you never knew, and you'll find people in your ancestry that have behaviours that, like you do." You know where

⁶⁴ Note that Jean is referred to as Jean N., to distinguish her from another research participant Jean L.

they don't make a connection. So she kept at it and she kept at it and she came back about six months, a year later and she was just so happy. She said, "I am so glad you told me not to quit." She had found it so interesting and thrilling and whatever she found out about herself, it just made her day. Yes, she was really happy. And of course that made me feel good that she'd come back to tell me. But they can't give up. If least, if not to give back then do the genealogy and find out about your ancestors and why you're getting this card, you know because if you, there's always a story behind the names, especially if they're a voyager and, and there's so many history books that will have their ancestors name in there or a little story about their ancestor. Well and you're also learning about how the whole Canada was developed.

While Jean's grandchildren benefitted from having their citizenship card through provincial assistance programs, she was adamant that her reasoning for applying for citizenship was "to be counted." She was empathetic towards those who apply for their cards for access to post-secondary education programs, but disappointed when they do not return to their local chartered community organization after receiving their citizenship card and completing their education. At a minimum, she hopes that those who apply for their card and don't give back to their community will at least learn more about their Métis ancestors and Canadian history.

5.5 "it's hard for me to identify with Louis Riel, Red River..."

Brittany, born and raised in Vernon, BC, is in her early 20s. She learned about her Métis ancestry prior to attending university, and has since become involved with the Métis community. She understands that there is a perception that people 'use' their Métis ancestry to access scholarships and she does herself engage in programs for Aboriginal students, but takes offense when her friends accuse her of taking advantage of her ancestry, as she genuinely identifies as Métis. Here is her story:

My Métis ancestry dates back to-, actually I don't know when it dates back to, but it originates in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan on my grandma's side. I've been trying to figure out more about my ancestry, but I ask my grandma, but they kind of lost their identity during that era. You know, like people being ashamed and stuff. So nobody really identified with it, they just kind of lost it then. But I've been talking to my grandma more about it and she kind of vaguely remembers her parents or grandparents speaking Cree to her. Yeah, so that was neat. It was lost then and then up until when I was in high school. I think it was a distant cousin that my mom got ahold of. I never met her, but she's been working on the genealogy, the family tree and everything. She's actually found quite a few Aboriginal connections in the family and how the Métis comes together. I think I might be 1/16th when it comes down to it. Cree I believe, but maybe métis because I think we never had two Aboriginals having a baby together. It was always an Aboriginal and a European. I've learned more over the years. Actually four years ago I didn't know I was a Cree. I just knew I was métis. Cree-métis, that's recent. Mostly métis, because I don't know that for sure. It's just kind of like from my grandma, but she doesn't know for sure. I went to this Father-child retreat [with Métis Community Services]. I volunteered there and we all had to introduce ourselves. And a lot of people either identify as Cree-Métis or Ojibway-Métis. And I was like, oh that's interesting. And I wondered what I am.

I am proud of it. Proud of where I come from and like what my ancestors went through and everything. I feel like as a métis person, I kind of get the best of both worlds, because I don't get like the negative stigma. Like I don't have racism or anything towards me, but I get to celebrate the culture and everything. However, like sometimes I do feel like, in high school especially, it would be weird to go to the Aboriginal centre, because usually it was just First Nations. Métis didn't really associate with it. First Nations are kind of like, "You're not Aboriginal". Like "Look at you, you're very white and blonde hair and blue eyes." So you kind of get discouraged to I guess participate that way, but once I found like the métis community...

My mom actually got us into it, even though she doesn't have any Aboriginal ancestry. Yeah, my mom got us into it and started taking us to go to community meetings and potlucks and she loves it. Like she wishes she was Aboriginal. She would join them too. I'm one of the only ones in my family who actually goes now. Sometimes I get my brother to tag along to events and stuff. Yeah during high school, we would all go as a family. And I found my own interest in it, learning about the culture and traditions and everything.

I've never-, it's hard for me to identify with Louis Riel, Red River and all that homelands and stuff because I've never been there. I've been here and I like to identify with my community and other métis people. Just like the things we do. So we try to still follow the culture and we'll try the bannock, do the jigging and we'll having drumming sessions. Kind of do that kind of stuff, but it's nothing like the land-, isn't-. I know land is super important to being Aboriginal, but I don't personally identify with it because I didn't-, I wasn't born and raised like that I guess. So yeah I think it's-, for somebody who grew up with that, it's extremely important. It's definitely of value to them, but for I guess an urban Aboriginal, it's a little different. I think it's being around the métis community that makes me feel most métis. Just being around other métis and at events and gatherings and everything. So I'm the Vernon District Métis Association Youth Rep. We just got a CCAY proposal-. It's Cultural Connections Among Youth or something. It's really to promote more involvement by the youth, to do a bunch of really cool activities.

I coached last year, an Aboriginal girls' soccer team, Okanagan Interior Region. And it was actually-, there was no métis girls on the team. They were all First Nations and even the way they spoke about métis too. Like even though I was their coach, they were just like-, the head coach was full First Nations was like, "Oh." He's like "Girls, gather up all your friends. We need more players," he's like, "even métis can play." And then they kind of laughed about that. We're Aboriginal too, yeah. A lot of people don't believe me because of my fair skin. The Aboriginal centre [at university] was very welcoming and always very helpful. Extremely helpful actually, especially for my sister. They helped her get into nursing I believe. I want to go into Medicine, so there's been a lot of opportunities like Aboriginals in Medicine, it's a three day little workshop to get Aboriginal people together, who are all interested in going into medicine and kind of like give them a-, write down what it's like and do like mock interviews and talk to them about the MCAT, the curriculum and all that. It was super helpful. I've gone there twice now. Just like just having that availability and everything I wouldn't probably have as a non-Aboriginal, so that's been like-. I cherish that so much. I will be applying to medicine as an Aboriginal. There are extra steps, like I have to do a panel interview, which is totally daunting, because I'm a terrible public speaker. But I feel like, I just feel like the Aboriginal community, it will help me. As a doctor, I do want to promote more health among Aboriginal communities, seeing the statistics. They're all-, they're just not very good. Very poor-, they've got a lot of poor health among them. Yeah, so that's one reason why I want to be a doctor and kind of go in that direction.

My friends even actually sometimes, like I've gotten Aboriginal scholarships before and sometimes-. My one friend said, "It's totally unfair" and he's like, "But-" he said, "if you got it I guess, then use it." So that was interesting to me like, well I mean I guess, but it was just like a scholarship. I don't look at it as just exclusively Aboriginal scholarship. It was just something I could apply to. It was kind of like, well no, I'm not using it, because I actually like do want to learn more about community and culture and history and everything. Like I have this interest in it and desire to learn more. I'm just not *saying* I'm Aboriginal. I identify with it. I don't just like *use* my ancestry. So I think like, it's kind of like offensive I guess, when he says that. I do know some people though who do do that. Yeah, there are a few people that applied to medicine as Aboriginals but they don't identify at all. They have their ancestry, but then, people see through that, especially during the Aboriginal Panel

Interview. So a lot of them don't make it through, but some of them think it's their card to get in, right? I don't think I would get it if I just had my ancestry. I think I have to like really be submerged in the culture.

Brittany, now in her twenties, learned about her Métis heritage in high school and has since become an active volunteer with her local chartered community (Vernon and District Métis Association). She identifies more closely with the community where she currently resides than the historic community of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, where her father's family is from. Though now Brittany is the only one in her family to participate in community events and is not entirely sure about the origin of her Indigenous heritage, she is interested in learning about Métis culture and tradition. She has experienced disbelief when she claims a Métis identity, due to her ability to pass as white; however, she feels lucky to have never been the subject of racism and to now be able to celebrate the métis culture, though she did feel discouraged to participate in Aboriginal activities during high school.

While Brittany has gained significant knowledge about Métis cultural practices, she is less concerned about Métis history and Métis identity politics. Brittany was aware of the significance of land to many Indigenous people, but does not identify with such notions, as she identifies as an urban Aboriginal and links her Métis identity to her relationship with members of the local VDMA community. Brittany is aware of the cultural stereotypes that she is expected to adhere to, but resists identifying in the way that others expect her to. Her identification with her local community, rather than the land marks a significant shift among many Métis who reside in BC and though having ancestral connections to the Métis National Homeland, do not identify with places east of the Rockies, but rather communities that are located in British Columbia.

As a youth representative for her local chartered community, she organizes and attends youth events. Brittany describes her experiences identifying as Métis at university as positive, especially in terms of opportunities such as Aboriginals in Medicine, a program to increase Aboriginal enrolment in the University of British Columbia's Medicine program. She is motivated to become a doctor so as to contribute to improving health among Aboriginal people.

Brittany describes friends who have judged her for "using" her Métis identity to access scholarships, which she finds offensive, as she is engaged in her local Métis community and identifies as Métis. She does know

others who do apply into the medicine program as Aboriginal due to their ancestry but do not actually identify as Aboriginal. She says, “Some of them think it’s their card to get in,” but she believes that others “see through that” and such applicants don’t make it through the Aboriginal Panel Interview stage of the application. Brittany thinks that if she simply applied based on her ancestry, she would not be accepted into the program, stating, “I think I have to like really be submerged in the culture.” Her argument points to the dissonance between self-identification and community acceptance, whereby those who may claim a Métis identity for individual benefit will be identified by other Aboriginal people as interlopers, due to their lack of connection to identifiable Aboriginal communities.

5.6 “I grew up in a Métis family and it was just kind of what you did”

Zach is a law student in his late twenties who was raised in Penticton, BC. He is particularly engaged in identity politics of Métis as his family has long been involved with Métis organizations and he has himself worked with MNBC and local Métis service agencies. Zach attributes the increased self-identification as Métis to the widespread perception that one could potentially receive benefits for doing so. Zach feels that identifying as Métis has lost its meaning due to the increase in identification as Métis by those who lack an understanding of the term and the community and familial responsibilities associated with identifying. This kind of (mis)identification as Métis is inconsistent with the ways in which Zach was raised within his family and taught about being Métis.

Zach begins his story by locating his family relations and the places from which his Métis ancestry emerges:

Okay, well my mom’s family has roots in the historic Métis community of Lac Ste. Anne and also Big Lake, like, St. Albert. My mom’s grandfather was descended from George Bouchard Gairdner who was one of the first Scot traders to work for the HBC. And, he essentially married a Cree woman. It was kind of the first ethnogenesis of our family I guess on that side, to use that great term. And then, on my mom’s grandma’s side, they are L’Hirondelles and their family essentially descended from in one way or another, Kerquaté who was a trader from Montreal with the North West Company that settled on the foothills of the Rockies. And his history is kind of interesting because he basically married right into and lived with a bunch of Cree people who then overtime of course, married into other traders, like Scots and French primarily, like who then developed their own community and they were known as the Michele Band. That group of families that essentially was then recognized as the treaty of signatory of treaty six, ended up essentially living outside Edmonton, but that family line then basically was kind of divided because you had family that were descendants on the-. They were all recognized as Status Indians even though they identified as Métis, from what I’ve-, from what our family history says, they’ve always identified as Métis, but the Indian Agents essentially located them visually as being Indians and gave them status. But at one point, some families took Scrip and some families decided to retain status and live on reserve. Our family was one of the families that took Scrip and our family has scrip around Villeneuve, Alberta. And that’s

kind of the central core where our family identifies with, in my sense. I don't know if there was ever really-, like as far as identify as Métis, like I didn't really-, it wasn't something that I thought about because you'd go and visit your grandparents in Villeneuve. We'd have family reunions all the time, there was jiggling, there was fiddling, we'd have family just sitting around talking, telling stories, like just-, it was just like getting together with family. But of course when you get a bit older, you start to hear these terms thrown around and understand that that's where your identity is. But it was not so much like something that I thought about actively. It was something that was just so quotidian. Like you just did it and that's what it was. And so your family kind of informed the way you lived with your family at a grassroots level, but also later on you start to realize that your family history is also just linked to this broader community and then you start hearing the stories about how that community emerged and basically for us like as early as the 1700s and 1800s as basically a distinct people that was linked to that broader network of Métis people that of course, were descended from Red River. And then of course, it gets interesting because you start to realize that there's a really broad network because your families are then by family line of course linked to descendants of the Red River who were actually in the resistance both in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. So, it's kind of I guess for me, I didn't really actively think about it. It was not like something like BC. I don't remember somebody saying you're Métis clearly, but I remember knowing I was Métis because someone probably did tell me I was Métis. I just don't remember or it could just be the fact that I grew up in a Métis family and it was just kind of what you did.

I've actually asked my uncle this-, they are very-, they look Native, like they look like First Nations people, their skin. They have status but they identify as Métis.

My grandma actually has status under Bill C-31. She regained it and I've got cousins now who under McIvor have regained their status. I have a lot of other members of my family because Michelle Band was essentially legislatively enfranchised; there is no reserve to go to to get status. For others though, it's something that they just-, you know, you have a legal card, but they identify externally to our family and others as Métis or Cree-Métis. And I've heard people use that a lot lately. And I know my uncle-, getting back to my uncle, he's-, the way they used to identify was Cree-Métis and that was because they spoke Cree; they were Cree-speaking Métis people, like Plains Cree. And I always thought that was interesting because they never really spoke about speaking Michif, they spoke about speaking Cree. And I don't know, other sides-, other families I've heard from further up in the area, they spoke Michif. They spoke very-, they identified as speaking Michif. So I think in my uncle in talking with him, it was more- to be honest, it was something that like emerged as a term in like-, kind of as a result of growing motivation, like the Indian Brotherhood and these other movements, to identify who these people were. Because they kind of internally referred to themselves as-, people referred to themselves as halfbreeds, but they also knew they were Métis and identified as Métis, but other members of my family were identified as Cree-Métis, because they spoke Cree. So I think-, yeah, it's tough, I've read work by my great-aunt and she refers to herself as a Cree-Métis person and other members of the family speak about being half-breed or being Métis. And it's not like in a-, you would never say it outwardly, like, "I'm a halfbreed," but that was like the term that was colloquially used at the time.

But I know with-, yeah, with our family, it was very clear that you were Métis. There was not, from my sense, anyways, even though we spoke Cree, even though our family history included a lot of Cree people and the teachings that my grandmother passed on to us, my kokum. She essentially possessed a very strong Cree spirituality and sense of like a worldview. As opposed to like a very catholic worldview that a lot of people after her received through residential school and other things. Some of our family went to residential school; some of them went to Day School at Grouard Mission. But, I mean, it's kind of interesting again, because then you look at why that happened and you have people that basically have a sense of the fact when those missionaries were first kind of getting going, there was almost this synergy between Catholicism and Cree spirituality, in a sense it was highly ritualized and it wasn't seen as a threat in the way the missionaries were operating. It wasn't so much-, it was in other parts of Canada where it was very much like adopt or die. Like adopt it or we are going to beat it out of you and force you to adopt a new religion. It was more like, this is a complementary spiritual worldview. It's about Creator and God. It's kind of like-, there's ways to basically express your spirituality in a way that would basically kind of combine those two systems. And it's kind of like Lac Ste. Anne is a perfect symbol of that. There's a pilgrimage every year and it's, you know, combining a lot of people who have a very strong Christian

values and teachings and upbringings who also have this very First Nati-, Indigenous spirituality that would link to their Cree ancestries essentially. I was raised in a family that was-, yeah, we were raised catholic, but my aunties and uncles went to-, they also did ceremony in the wintertime and the summertime up in Alberta. And they drummed at church and they still do ceremony when we meet up in the summer now. It wasn't really something that I thought much about or that I felt like was something that I needed to explore more, because it was just like the way it was.

I think obviously though, there are a lot of-, I know I have cousins that lament the fact that to a large degree, because of the impact that schools had on our family, that our-, you know, a lot of people in our family do-, some people do have a very strong sense of Cree spirituality from the fact that they've been more exposed to that worldview and they've had more exposure to ceremony like on a very-, like very like intimate level. And that's simply because how their family was-, for some of them they seem to perceive that as something that was kind of a product of the fact that they didn't have to go to residential school. Or that has been something that wasn't as affected or kind of like displaced by Catholicism. But by and large, yeah, I don't think it was ever, it's never really been anything that's really come up for me or that I felt like I missed anything on. Because there are other ways, like when we are harvesting as a family, there is spirituality there. The teachings that you get from your elders when you are out on the land that is much different than the way you express your spirituality in a church, but it's still just as sacred and a teaching that isn't from my sense, hard line Catholics might argue that it's not the best way to go about doing things, but it's never been in my sense of the family that that's anything that's wrong or that you need to be worried about because it's perfectly acceptable in the way that you understand your relationship to the land and to Creator.

Our family was quite active [hunters] and when I was growing up some of my cousins weren't. Like in Alberta, they were, I think it's all of our family was pretty pretty active like growing up, we yeah hunted as a family predominantly in the Okanagan for me and the Kootenays. My grandma's family was the only-, she was the only sibling that basically ever family to move out to BC. So they moved out in the 70s kind of with that third wave of migration. There's also the argument that there's people who have come out you know later on maybe as a result of the diaspora from the resistance and that wasn't us either. But it was more like our family moved out here strictly for economic reasons with a flood of other people who ended up here or Prince George or Dawson Creek or wherever else. So my grandma's family moved to Creston and we always seemed to harvest in the Okanagan or the Kootenays.

So, as far as when did the term Métis come up, though it's tough because I keep hearing like people will say, "It's always been that way." And I think we have a very romanticized view of what that means and what the national memory is. And I think it's a function of the fact that Métis people were for so long forgotten and invisible to everyone else except the Métis people themselves. I think now it's just for convenience sake, because people are so confused about what a Métis is and who a Métis is and where they are and when they are. It's-, it seems to me that it's almost easier to just say, "You know what? We were always Métis." And those people that we descend from were Métis. They may not have been explicitly recognized as such or identified themselves as "I'm Joe Métis." They might have identified themselves as mixed blood or non-status Indians or whatever. Or white, but those ancestors we had are still part of our families and for all intents or purposes the term that now we seem to have been forced to collectively identify with is Métis. And that national memory seems to link easier for people if you don't have to question all those sorts of more difficult questions and about like, "How did you identify?" Well, because I don't know how they identified, it seems to me they always did identify as Métis, in one way or another.

I think first and foremost, it has to be a definition that emanates from community; and by community, I mean family. And to me that's all really what a community is, a bunch of families. So I think that if family or community recognizes you as one of the family, well than, yeah you're a Métis. I think, however, if the family doesn't recognize you as one of the family and it doesn't necessarily mean that you are not a good person or that they don't want you around. And I think that's what MNBC-, MNC has really said is, you know you can still hang out and do community stuff, but when it comes down to rights claims and when it come down to you know reconciling the fact that Métis people were part of the struggle and basically forged from the aftermath of a violent history where they stood up for their rights and for a lot of people maybe took scrip or didn't, but linked

to that national narrative. I think it's difficult for me to comprehend that other people would try and ride the coattails of that struggle in a contemporary society to further their own interests, or if they have no connection to that history, be upset when the broader [group] didn't accept them to be a part of it. You know what I mean? But I think first it has to come from community. I think that's the true Indigenous way to look at it, otherwise you're just going by how someone else is defining you. Well, it's difficult to argue with that.

I think the saddest part is that there are people who- (sighs). There's a lot of people that benefit from families that do have records. There is a lot of people that have no intent or sense of obligation to the community at all and they have cards because they have better records of grandma's birth and marriage than other families do. And that makes me sad. But I don't know what the alternative is, and if there is one. Maybe the alternative is that you ensure that you have elders in place who act as a, like essentially a overview tribunal that can in specific cases grant citizenship if that's what they choose to do to people who are through oral history connected to the community and can demonstrate verifiably that, you know, it doesn't just come down to paper. It comes down to whether we can identify you in our family trees that we hold in our hearts and our minds. That's what I think we need to work towards.

(I ask him about MNBC's associate membership)

I don't think it's a good idea, because it inflates the numbers then really gets down to like statistics. And I know government operates on statistics, but I think at some level we have to step back as a people and say, "What's in the best interest for our kids?" Is it trying to defend our non-existent rights claims like you know a bunch about stats we purport to have? I don't know if that's really in the best interest of everyone. I'm also not directly involved in negotiations with the province on Métis issues, so maybe there's other people that disagree with that. When I see things like that, it makes me wonder what their motivation is. It makes me then worry again, that's what I was getting at. It seems to devalue this sense of citizenship. Citizenship should flow from the nation, like nations have membership codes that should be respected. Chris Andersen writes that, but it's like that's the foundation. Someone who can identify for themselves who they are. And it shouldn't be like secondary citizenship. It doesn't make any sense. Like we have first class and second class. Great! (sarcastic) That'd be like something that was sorted out a long time ago.

I think it's part of like-, if you have citizen-. Like I'm thinking of a situation where you have you have a citizen who's like some guy who's not a citizen, but he's friends with two guys who are and he still identifies on a basic level as Métis, but can't get citizenship, I don't know many Métis people who would say, "You can't hang out" or that you can't come hunting because you're not Métis, for the purposes of a fucking card. It would be a matter of like, "Do you mesh with us because we are Métis? If you are Métis you are going to be accepted, if you aren't, well, paper ain't going to help ya."

And it's shifting our focus to paper, to arbitrary definitions of identity and what it means to be somebody who holds a card. And what is that all mean? Why would you want a card? Benefits. I mean, first of all, we don't get education funding and I don't know if we should. I mean, it would be great if we did, but there's a legal argument against, being simply that we are not Indians for the purpose of the constitution, so why would the government fund us in terms of education funding. And also like if you took title, like Métis scrip, well then apparently your rights were extinguished, right? So, it's difficult to argue against that the government has an obligation under law to provide educational funding to you. At the same time, I mean if the government just really cared about making sure that Aboriginal people had the help that they needed when they need it, well then maybe there is an argument for education. I mean obviously, education for Métis people, it's a given. I just think that the fact that we don't get it, obviously there are no benefits. Like you don't have hunting rights if you live in BC. You don't have education benefits.

At law school they think you got a free ride. They think you got into school easier; they think you could check the box and basically you didn't have to do as much work as they did to get in. You have to work your ass off hard to make sure they know that you are not a dumbass. And I mean, it's difficult because I'll tell you quite frankly, I've heard some very embarrassing things said by people who have recently taken to using the term Métis to identify themselves, in a matter that then derides the rest. It paints us all with the same brush again. You got someone who has like figured out that they may be Métis, whatever that means to them, on Google, that then saying it at school

in a way that delegitimizes the claims of legitimate people who come from families who aren't having an identity crisis and are actually doing work that could benefit the Métis community that they're not a part of. And that is a huge problem. I've seen that a ton. And also it feeds into that rhetoric where you get a bunch of extra benefits based on the luck of the draw of who you are descended from. And that's hugely problematic.

I think the flip side though, if they're going to-, I mean if people are going to identify as Métis and that is, I really think that's super, like right on, do it. But I think there should be more emphasis all the way from our s to our provincial leaders to our local leaders and at the grassroots level on people saying, "Listen, you want to identify, we will accept you but it comes with obligations, obligations to your community and to your family. And if you are not going to be involved, you are going to do basically everything you would do normally as you were two days ago before you were Métis, well then we don't want ya."

I think, well I know with this one fellow that does that, -is that he's confused at a very basic level, he's confused about where he comes from. He says, "You know with Métis, you know we have no community, we have no place to call home." And I just laugh because I'm like, that just epitomizes someone who misunderstands who the Métis people are. It's like-, it's not about place, it's about family networks. Your networks extend beyond borders, they extend to wherever you are. Like your sense of identity isn't bound by a physical location. That's one of the fundamental, for me at least it seems to be one of the fundamental tenets of what it means to be Métis. You know? And when you hear people that say that, "Like well now, I'm Cree-Métis, because at least now I can link myself to the Cree ancestry, which is a place and a people and a language." It's like, you clearly weren't raised Métis. You don't understand that we have a language. You don't understand that there's a spirituality attached to being Métis. You don't understand that there's places that people practice Métis culture all the time. It's just such a-, and that's a law student, that's someone who just doesn't like understand his own sense of identity, at least in terms of how it would relate to people who are legitimately Métis. And that's just-, oh it makes me just-, it angers me and saddens me at the same time. It just really takes away from the fact that there's people who don't wear it on their sleeve because they've been around enough people who have and have seen the reactions to those people and have then realized...they have said to me and others, "You know it's so nice to finally see people who like actually care about the culture and it's not about benefits." It's about sharing food. It's about a jigging instruction workshop with live music, to get people to know what Métis people are. It's not about like going in without any preparation and [being] like, "We are Métis and we're here to stay! In your face!" Like, it doesn't get you very far and I think there's a lot of people that just don't get that and it's sad.

I've seen at law school all the time, seen it at university all the time. There's a lot of people whose identity is intimately, like essentially, like ultimately linked to a card that said you are Métis. And some people by no fault of their own have been disconnected to a contemporary community or a historic community or their family ancestry and that's like really sad for them, but I think it's even worse when you start to only have a sense of identity based on you know, a piece of paper. Like it seems so, to me it just seems so meaningless really. Other than the fact that it does indicate some sort of acceptance like at a very political level. It's a process of acceptance that's pretty much, it's like a-, it's not a very-, it's a process that really just says you have paper. Yeah, and if that's what you are basing your entire sense of identity on, I could see how that would be very confusing and difficult.

It's like you've got 70,000 people who identify on census because there is no disincentive to identify versus 20 years ago when it was really not even comfortable then. But I think what I find frustrating about that number is that it's just really for me, signifying that there's an emergence of people who perceive, I think perceive a benefit and it's almost become cache and lost its meaning to identify. It's to a point now where you see it in the community today, where you got 70,000 Métis, great well what do they do? Do they serve on boards? Do they provide any service or support on a grassroots level? Do they connect with the community? Do they provide anything to their elders? Do they hunt? If they do hunt, do they give their families meat? Like all those sorts of like obligations that come along I think with being, or at least identifying as being a part of a community has just been lost and is just continually, it's almost being demeaned. In a sense of like, people just check that box, it's like, "Oh yeah, I'm Métis." But do you know what that means? What does that mean to you? The way- the way you think about that term is that consistent with the federal census makers are concerning that term? Is that

consistent with the way community interprets that term? Or understands their own community and individual identity? I don't know. I think for a lot of people they haven't even thought about that. They just check that box. I think it's sad. And it just seems to me that it's not reflective of what our family-, the way I was raised. It's not reflective of the fact that I was raised in a local community that was quite active and there's an obligation there. You didn't ask for a benefit. You came there because you wanted to be there, and you wanted to do some good work and more than that, you just wanted to meet some other good people because Métis people are good people. They are.

My connection to the Métis community now is predominantly through my family. Honestly, I enjoy being a part of the board (Métis Community Services Society of BC) because it is an opportunity to do work that isn't dealing with a political war. And it's not like I'm scared of politics. I am extremely frustrated by the manner of the fight is just not something I want to associate with. So, I think it's just a very unique opportunity to do really meaningful work for people who need it. And that's like a reason for me that I am involved with that organization. But at school, I just feel like I have an obligation because I was blessed with the opportunity to know who I was and grow up in a family who wasn't scared of who they were and you were taught and I think implicitly that there was an obligation to be a part of it and not hide your identity because I mean, I think whether it was intended or not there was a sense that my elders ex-, part of this obligation. This sense that you have to give back and you have to be-, I think a huge part of it now is like trying to help other people understand who the Métis are. At school for instance, being a part of Indigenous awareness week and making sure that we have a dedicated Métis culture day. Those kinds of things are just so important because there's lots of students that check the box to get into university and either have no connection to a community or no connection to their history and want to learn and those are great people. They just want to be a part of it and want to learn more about the culture and be involved, that's great. But then there's others that just don't really care. They don't want to be involved, and they are missing out. And I think there's an obligation among students, especially in the law context, to be up front about who you are and where you are from and to do your best to help other people understand who we are. Because it's clear that the governments and the courts are confused about who the Métis people are. I don't think they get it. I still don't think they get it.

(I ask Zach about groups that claim a Métis identity with no connection to the Red River Métis)

Well, it depends what level you look at it I guess. I guess on a very high level, I mean for a policy maker or a decision maker like in a government, I mean it's probably confusing. I'm not trying to villainize government, but there's people who just like, they could be like Ukrainian and they're like, "What the heck is Métis?" And then you hear these claims from these Ukrainians purporting to be Métis all of a sudden; like what the hell does that mean? I think that it has the effect that it can really further a muddy an already murky understanding of a people. That's not good. I think on a very practical level, when you've got an obligation of the crown to consult with purported rights holders on decisions that could impact their asserted rights, there is a very real possibility that if you have four groups saying we have an interest in this project and we've got two Métis groups, well then obviously you are going to have to dedicate some time to that other group and that time can take away from legitimate rights holders who are the Métis people. And there's that impact, but there's also the impact I think socially, where I think you start to then, what we were just saying, people who don't understand who the Métis are, don't understand who they are, have now latched onto a legal term that they really don't understand to further their own ends, because it's politically or legally expedient. And that's hugely problematic. I think it has a very real possibility of detracting from legitimate claims of Métis people and making it more difficult for those legitimate claimants to essentially convince the people who matter that their claim is legitimate. You've got to siphon through a bunch of the fluff to get through the real claim. It's not efficient. It's problematic. I think it's like on a number of levels. It's particularly socially though that it's a huge problem. I think it's unprincipled as well though, if nothing else. I get that communities-, there's some very very-. People have been marginalized through colonial mechanics by no fault of their own. And that's sad, but that's just reality. But I don't think that we're then meant to function as the vehicle for those people to then ride our coattails to recognition. Because it's like, "We have our own battle. You have to fight yours." You know? But I think also, saying that, I do empathize with people who you know are non-status people or others who just can't fit neatly into that box and have

struggled and will continue to struggle to do it, but that's kind of what the Métis did for over a hundred and fifty years.

So I guess to answer your question, I do identify as Métis. I also make clear that I have two sets of grandparents. I am Métis. I identify as Métis, but I was also descended from my dad's side as well and I can't dishonour that family by not acknowledging that that's who my people are. It doesn't delegitimize my claim. It's a fact of life. And that's another thing. People just don't realize like Métis isn't a racial category. Métis is an ethnicity. You know what I mean? Like if you are a quarter or an eighth or a half First Nations, you know it doesn't matter. And that's the beauty of what Métis people are, and it gets back to what you were saying, you have these creative ways communities and families accept new people, like any smart community would to avoid the problems of not doing that. And the overemphasis on blood is just like perpetuated by what our courts teach people to think about Aboriginal people. "I'm a 6-1, or I'm a 6-2." or you know, "I have a double mother so I am not Indian anymore." I look like I have a really good winter tan but I'm not a status Indian anymore. You know what I mean?

Zach's narrative directly references the cultural repertoire of Métis Nation Historical Narrative (HBC, NWC, emergence of a distinct people at Red River, Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage, Métis resistances) including the various colonial policies that affected his family's identification as Métis. Zach is resistant to the ways in which dominant descriptions of missionary intervention have represented Indigenous people as victims of colonization in his detailing of the integration of Catholic and Cree spiritualities. Zach is also knowledgeable about his family history and strongly locates his perspectives regarding his identity in terms of his ties to his family and his family's ties to recognized historic Métis communities in the prairies. He is aware of the critique of historical revisionism and is himself critical of the ways in which the Métis National memory has been, at times, romanticized. Nonetheless, he describes his knowledge of being Métis as being implicit, rather than explicit in that it was not thought or talked about actively necessarily, but just a way of being and acting.

Zach believes that definitions of 'Métis' should emanate from community and family recognition, although he stresses that even though one might now be recognized as Métis for the purpose of rights claims, it doesn't mean that they cannot participate in the Métis community. He is angered by people that might "try and ride the coattails" of the Métis National struggle "to further their own interests" and sees community acceptance as "the true Indigenous way" to avoid outsider definitions. Zach is dismayed by the exclusion of Métis people who lack sufficient documentation but also disagrees with attempts such as MNBC's associate membership to bolster provincial numbers, as it devalues citizenship and is hierarchical. Referencing Chris Andersen, Zach agrees that citizenship codes should be determined by the nation and respected. He understands community acceptance as taking priority over legal identification (through the citizenship card) and sees the main reason for

seeking a card as access to benefits. While he would like to see increased education access for Métis people, he believes that non-Métis people have a misperception that all Métis people get “a free ride” in terms of bypassing entrance requirements and having their education funded. He explains that in law school, he has had to work hard to prove to others that he gained entry to the program based on merit and not his Métis status. Zach is clearly frustrated by the ways in which newly identified Métis have become representative of all Métis, acknowledging that new claims to Métis identity based primarily on ancestry feeds into the ongoing rhetoric regarding the perceived benefits of a fortuitous genealogy.

However, Zach is not entirely opposed to those who have recently begun to identify as Métis, but argues that Métis leaders should emphasize the community and family obligations that come with Métis identification and that those who are not willing to contribute are unwelcome. Understanding that some people are confused about their identity, Zach describes the kinds of myths about Métis identity that are perpetuated by those who were not raised Métis, including the notion that Métis “have no community” and “no place to call home.” He considers this to be the epitome of misunderstanding who the métis people are, as for Zach, Métis identity “isn’t bound by a physical location” and is “not about place,” but is instead “about family networks.” He points to the ways in which those who have recently begun to identify as Métis reference their Cree ancestry as a means to legitimately locate their ancestry, which he argues ignores the reality of contemporary Métis culture. Zach contends that the claims of non-Red River Métis are ultimately confusing and “can really further muddy an already murky understanding of a people” and is also troubled by the overemphasis on blood rhetoric and understandings that posit Métis as a racial category. While he is understanding of groups that have been “marginalized through colonial mechanics by no fault of their own,” he doesn’t believe that it is fair for claims to being ‘Métis’ to be a vehicle to recognition, arguing that such claims detract from legitimate claims for the sake of political and legal expediency. While a supporter of broader notions of Métis nationhood, Zach is cautious about asserting Métis nationhood within British Columbia. He explains:

There’s a number of people in political organizations who don’t fundamentally understand that the assertion of Métis rights claims in the province is an affront to unresolved title and rights claims of First Nations. And I think it’s a function of the fact that maybe they weren’t raised to. They just weren’t exposed to what protocol means on a very practical level. That you have to respect that you came here later. And yeah, the court might say that your

rights are just as equal as First Nations, but, on a practical level, I think from a perspective of respect it means something entirely different when you are on the ground and you ask permission from a family or community to hunt in their traditional territory as a Métis person. You might not always get consent and if you don't you shouldn't hunt, but I think you should be asking. So it worries me. I think there is a lot of people who don't think like that and probably because they were never raised to think like that. But the risk that that could harm my relationship with First Nations people because of the fact that I'm going to be painted with the same brush scares me.

Zach is aware of the risk of Métis people not recognizing First Nations' claims to territory in British Columbia. He does not want to harm his own relationships with First Nations peoples and feels that as a Métis person, the actions of others who have not been raised with the same moral values and knowledge of protocols will be representative of Métis people as a whole. Zach implies that those who have not been raised Métis should not represent all Métis people, as they rely too much on legal and policy categories and not enough on traditional teachings.

5.7 “It’s a part of the game”

In contrast to Zach's sentiment that the increasing number of self-identifying Métis delegitimizes the identity of Métis people, Dan argues that the increasing the number of Métis citizens through MNBC's proposed associate membership process is crucial to Métis being recognized provincially, especially as it pertains to rights within BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Though his family has significant roots in British Columbia, as his grandfather settled early on in Rock Creek, Dan learned about his Métis ancestry in his forties. Since learning about his ancestry, he became involved in Métis politics and is the current MNBC Regional Director for the Thompson-Okanagan Region, MNBC Minister for Children and Family, MNBC Minister for Culture, Heritage and Language and treasurer on MNBC's Executive.

We don't have [rights within BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development] because a) we're not recognized again by the federal government. This province doesn't recognize Métis rights. Provincially you know Métis don't have any rights. Why? “Well, there's not enough numbers.” But hold on, it says 70,000 in the federal statistics. “Well prove that.” That's actually why we're creating an associate membership at MNBC, well, associate membership. Every community basically has an associate membership. So, if you can't prove your ancestral genealogy to have an application for citizenship. I can do that right? My card has more information about me proving that I'm Canadian than a passport does right? So, you know, the bottom line, is that, um, a mem-, if you have 70,000 [self-identified] and you say you have 10,000 [registered MNBC] citizens so now what about these 60,000 [that self-identify but are not registered]? Well, they are self-identified as Métis. Okay, but we can't get them to the well to apply for their citizenship card, what can we do? Well, we can provide an associate membership. This community (Kelowna), I forget what it is, I think it's somewhere between three and five

hundred citizens. MNBC right? But the numbers being thrown out is that there's-, if they really added them up, there could be 2700 members who have a community card. Not a citizenship card, it's a community card okay. See a one time, I mean I call them, Wal-mart Métis, is a, "Oh you think you are Métis, want a card?" And people would say, "Oh great yeah, I got a card, Métis" but it didn't do anything. I mean even before the-, the border situation, the 2011- Well it's-, well it's kind of interesting because there were community cards before there were MNBC cards. And the original MNBC, so, MNBC is the business. Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia is our societal name. At one time the MPCBC cards looked like status cards. They had that red stripe across which really, pardon my language, pissed off a lot of First Nations right? (laughing) Because before 9/11 we could take our cards and go across back and forth the border, right? So, then we legitimized the MNBC citizenship card. But again, there's this vacuum of-, of people that say, "Well I think I'm Métis, but I can't prove it" or "I'm too lazy to want to do it" or whatever the reason. So, right now MNBC is going through the process of drafting a resolution. We're in the final draft stage to be presented for first reading at the um-, for first approval of the draft at the AGM coming up on September 26th (2014). People are a little-, got their nose out of joint about it because there's a lot of fear, and of course there's things like, "Well, we had to go through this rigorous process. How come you guys don't have to?" Well that's not really true. So, every person who wants to apply for associate membership of MNBC first of all has to show through objective verification some proof, some document, some sworn oath that they believe that they are Métis. So that's the first pillar right? Second pillar is you know, you sign a form declaring that you are not applying for First Nations or Inuit status- You're just applying for Métis status. The third would be then your genealogy. They still will require genealogy and then of course the fourth is community acceptance. Well back to the genealogy piece, we will still ask them to fill out an application for citizenship. Okay, if after that time it's still not credible, but the objective verification is. Some government document, something, a sworn affidavit. Could be from a notary republic or-, yeah, if you sign a sworn affidavit right? But, here's the thing. They're not going to have any more rights than they would as a community associate member. So they're not going to get to vote as a citizen would at the AGM (Annual General Meeting). For example, they wouldn't be able to run for office, anything like that. But what it does is it gives some kind of recognition that "I have believed I am Métis." So for example, I was not the chair, but I spearheaded the adoption resolution for MNBC from 2009 to 2011 and I did a lot of historical gathering of information with that. We even got Jean Teillet in, who is a very noted Métis lawyer. We did-, we went back to traditional adoptions by the Red River Settlements and what not and, again, what we came up with was 'objectively verifiable.' That if you have some kind of government document, something that says, "Yes, I am-, I'm Métis," but you don't have the rest that goes with it, what we'll do is we'll give it like a Bill-C31, where you get lifetime Métis status, but only until your death. And unless your family members marry into a Métis bloodline, it will not be transferred. Right? So even Les, I can't remember Les' last name, he was the president for Chilliwack during this whole time. And he could never-, he could never come and vote at the MNGA (MNBC Métis Nation Governing Assembly) and AGM, right? He always had to have the vice-president step in. Well, he met the objective verifiable proof and he got his MNBC card, which will last until his lifetime; when he dies it will be gone. Unless if his family members have married into a Métis bloodline- So I think it's very significant. Why is it significant? I'm going to come back to that right? Because numbers move system. Right? We can't get MCFD, Ministry of Child and Family Development to listen to us because they say, "Well you only got 565 out of 5500 Aboriginal people in care. We don't need to pay attention to you." Right? Province of British Columbia, "But there's no Métis rights here. Yeah, you've got some, you know, land up there in the north east in what's called Kelly Lake," you know, but we have more. We know there are Forts, Fort Langley, Fort is it Simpson? Up north. There's a number of recognized, traditional homeland Métis communities. We know that. And if you have 70,000 approximately self-identifying as Métis, that is significant. If all of a sudden we captured, say even out of that 60,000 we captured 30,000, our numbers are now up to 40,000 at MNBC. People will listen then. 40,000, that's a lot of votes. People will start to listen. It's sad though, that we have to use, you know, figures and other prominences to get recognized. It's really sad that way for me. Going back to your original question, you know, one of your original questions about Métis identity. I don't need a card to say that I am Métis. I know that I am Métis. I know that for a fact, however, if that's what I have to do to get a stamp of approval so that future generations earn that respect and those rights that government should have

done 135 years ago then it'll be worth it. It'll be well worth it. But First Nations have to do it as well. Inuit have to do it. It's a part of the game and they like-, you know, Federal government, provincial governments, they like to play games, right?

Dan attributes the lack of rights for Métis in BC to the lack of “numbers” of Métis citizens, arguing that Métis aren't being listened to as “numbers move system.” Personally, Dan says that he does need a card to validate his identity. He expresses disappointment over the use of citizenship figures as a means for achieving recognition, but justifies it on the basis that it is the only means to do so and is “part of the game.” Much of Dan's discussion cites the dominant political discourse of Métis nationalism, unsurprisingly considering his affiliations with MNBC. However, his talk of bloodlines suggests that the political discourse of Métis nationhood that is perpetuated by such organizations is complexly intertwined with discourses of cultural essentialism that depend on descent and by extension, blood. He states that MNBC is attempting to prove that the 70,000 people who self-identified as Métis in the federal census via their proposed associate membership. Though Dan refers to the widespread distribution of Métis community cards as “Wal-mart Métis,” where those who thought they were Métis but lacked proof could be given a local community card, he believes that a large percentage of self-identifying Métis do not have their citizenship card because they cannot prove their ancestral link to the historic Métis Nation (among other reasons). The proposed associate membership would benefit MNBC by increasing their “numbers” and associate members would receive a card, but they would receive no more rights than the Chartered Community card and could not pass on their ‘Métis status’ to their children or grandchildren. Such an attempt on behalf of MNBC is based on the assumption that all of the approximately 70,000 self-identified Métis in British Columbia also identify as being a part of the Métis Nation, however, this is clearly not the case.

5.8 “my mom is where I get my Native blood”

Much of the discussion about Métis in BC is centered on those whose families migrated westward prior to ‘effective colonial control,’ as this is a requirement of proof in order to access particular rights in accordance with the Powley decision. Yet, none of the participants that I interviewed claimed their identity as Métis within British Columbia on this basis. Most people either moved to BC from the prairies themselves or described their families taking part in later waves of migration (1940s and on). However, one participant, Carla, a single mom in her

twenties, identified as Métis on the basis of her connection to her great-grandmother who is from an unrecognized tribe in British Columbia and therefore she made no association with Métis nationhood. Carla understood 'Métis' not on the basis of being a distinct culture historically centered at the Red River, but on the basis of being of mixed blood and having a 'Native' ancestor. Here is her story:

I was born in Kelowna and so I've been in this valley, the boundary, all my life. So I haven't strayed far from home. My parents still live pretty local. My dad is entirely Italian and my mom is where I get my Native blood. And we weren't so Native; we were always very in touch with the land and everything, but I always knew that I had-, like even if I didn't have Native in me I think that I'd still be very respectful for the-, the bigger schemes of things, like you know Father Sky, Mother Earth. It only makes sense. Like I'm-, I'm not so much God-fearing or anything, but I always believed in Mother Earth and Father Sky.

When I got older I was definitely, you know, I was more respectful of the land than even some of the Natives I know. I know some like half-breeds and full-bloods that are just not so respectful over the situation you know? And I was like, "God, just because you have your status." You know? So I always enjoyed gardening and eating fresh wild game. You know like it only seems right?

My mom's grandma was full-blood, Juliana Willamataka I think her name was. We're from BC, but apparently we're not recognized as a tribe. My cousins have their status, but then legislate [sic] has changed and we don't have-, like my sisters have tried to get theirs and-, even Métis status to help with school and such and we can't. It's kind of [frustrating]. but it's okay. I'm self-recognized is how I see it and always have been. I think it's more frustrating for my sisters because they've tried it, but it's frustrating a little, because I'm not recognized. On paper I'm not recognized so I'm self-recognized.

(I ask her what the word 'Métis' means to her)

A European and a Native (laughs). What does it mean? In elementary school I used to go to Métis things, but I'm just as an adult getting more into my Native-. I've gone to like sweat lodges with Natives, but I'm really-. And I've always enjoyed the stories, you know, like the raven and the light, you know? So, those have always been good ones. So, just as an adult it is very new, like coming to these groups (Friday group). I want to teach my kids. And the crafts. I just want to get more into my Native community, because I always felt like I'm a part of it, just I'm just not really Native enough, so I kind of felt like an outcast. Like, "You are not really Native." But I am and it's about-, like a white person could be Native, you know what I mean? If you really wanted to enjoy the culture. You know, it's a lifestyle choice and it's a feeling and it's not just about how much blood you have. Am I right? Some people just take advantage of that and they cash a cheque. I think that a lot of full-blood Natives take advantage of it and that's probably my negative thought about it. Yeah.

I want to learn how to tan hide and make my own-, make my own clothing, yeah of course. Being in my tradition. I guess I kind of feel like some people have a big ego about it. They are like, "Oh I am more Native than you." And it's like I said it's the feeling and I've got a lot of heart for it.

But you know then there are some people that are Native and just because you have the blood, they have kind of lost that kind of essential feeling. (laughs) I think that hippies are the Natives of today. You know what I mean? They still live off the land and they are still trying to do these basic things. But I would love to find people who still live in teepees and are doing it right up to traditional. You know what I mean?

I would love to get in touch with Natives at the coast, like down in Comox and stuff.

But yeah, you know, it does bug me that I've never been on a reserve and like some reserves are kind of taken advantage of. They don't respect the things, you know, they get houses and they beat 'em up. You know? I'm like, why can't I have a little land or something? You know? I'm young, I have the-, I would like to get more knowledge, but I have the-, the will. I'm like why do these take-advantageofers get property and stuff like that. I want a garden! I want animals! (laughs). I am there in life. I have kids and I want to teach them these morals and I can't. So I'm frustrated. That actually frustrates me a lot, but that's okay. I understand that they can't give

everybody a handout and that's not exactly what I am looking for, but a little bit more help. Just even, like whatever. I'm a single mother and a little bit Native, so I'm like, "What? You guys are by-passing me?" But any little help would be nice. Right and then there's also people that totally-, like they are not Native but somehow they live on reserves. Like I have a girlfriend that's-, it's totally silliness. On paper she's full Native, but she's like French and everything and I'm like "Ah!." And she reaps the benefits and I'm like "Okay." I guess if you've got it, flaunt it.

Carla begins by explaining that her Native blood comes from her mother, but immediately afterwards states that "we weren't so Native." She explains that even without Native ancestry, she would still be respectful to what may be considered Indigenous environmental concerns or spiritual values concerning the land. Carla talks about Native people that she knows in terms of breed and blood quantum. She describes her family as being from a BC First Nations group and cousins with Indian status, but is frustrated with her own siblings struggle to apply for "even Métis status" for educational support. The lack of recognition is a chief concern for Carla, so she resorts to being self-recognized. When asked about the definition of 'Métis,' Carla is unsure but understands it on the basis of Indigenous-European mixed ancestry. Her knowledge on the subject results from her experience attending Métis events as a child and activities such as attending the local sweatlodge and the Boundary Family and Individual Service Society (BFISS) Friday group as an adult. She feels excluded for not being "Native enough," arguing that being Native is "a lifestyle choice and it's a feeling" more than being a matter of blood quantum. Again, she brings up her problems with those with legal status who take advantage of financial benefits and consider themselves to be "more Native" than her. She talks about Native people losing their essence, which have been replaced by hippies who live off the land. It is apparent that much of the rhetoric regarding 'Indians' that Carla draws from results from dominant discourses of cultural essentialism that posit 'Indians' as simultaneously lacking in morality/civility and noble in their 'authentic' and 'untouched' form. Her understanding of Indigenous people seems to occur on either end of the dichotomy of traditional and authentic (historicized) versus those who do not live traditionally and take advantage of their Indian status. As a struggling single mother with Native ancestry she feels frustrated that she cannot get government assistance via Indian (or Métis) status.

Although Carla was the only participant that I interviewed that identified solely on the basis of her mixed-blood, she represents a percentage of self-identifying métis people across Canada. While scholars, politicians and

even legal decisions may not agree with Carla's decision to identify as Métis, several participants that I interviewed were welcoming of those who identified as Métis on the basis of their mixed-blood, arguing that it was the shared experience of being mixed-blood that made them Métis. When talking to participant Jean L., she considers the exclusion of those without ties to the historic Métis Nation to be "a head-scratcher," stating, "to me that's ludicrous. It really is. I mean if you have that First Nations and you have that European, it's a blend that-. It's common. It's a commonality through the whole community. For me it is anyway." Others like Laranna, an Aboriginal support worker, though repeatedly referencing her ties to the history and key figures and places of the historic Métis Nation, understood the term Métis based on how it was initially explained to her: "It's mixed blood is how I think of it. My understanding of Métis is, it's First Nations mixed with English or Irish or French or, it's mixed blood. Is that correct? Mixed blood would be my definition because that's how my grandfather would describe it to me." It was apparent throughout the interview process that most participants understood 'Métis' according to the ways in which it was explained to them. Furthermore, the diversity of understandings regarding what qualifies as Métis ancestry suggests a lack of clarity on behalf of Métis and Aboriginal organizations.

5.9 "Whatever gave you the idea I wanted to be an Indian?"

Joanie, a Métis elder born in New Westminster BC, now resides in Grand Forks. She has a broad understanding of Métis that is based on how it was initially explained to her. Here is Joanie's story:

My mother and father moved out from Alberta in 1939. I was born in 1944. We had a fairly good-sized family. There were five of us and that's not enormous compared to a lot of Métis families, but it was a big family even at that. And my mother's parents lived nearby and several of her siblings, my aunts and uncles. And we lived at Crescent Beach, which was a really nice place. We lived year round and the city kids came out and harassed us to no end in the summertime because they all had summer homes. It was a nice community to grow up in. I was very fortunate to have grandparents and aunts and uncles that I really miss, because none of them are there anymore. And I didn't grow up knowing anything about my Métis heritage, because my dad was French. He spoke French fluently, that was his first language, but my mother didn't so we didn't learn French. And never was there a word spoken about Aboriginal heritage. You know, if anybody asked about me, my dad was French so I was French.

So, years later after I was married, my dad's oldest brother came down and lived [near us]. We stayed in a motel one winter because we were building a house and it wasn't ready and he lived in the motel room next to us. And so, I got thinking, "I don't even know who my grandfather was on my dad's side." So, I heard his name was Max, that's all I knew. And so, I went over to ask my uncle and he was very reluctant to tell me anything so I just sort of [said], "Well, tell me at least what his name was." And his name was Maxine Berard. And my dad's name was Benard and my uncle's name was Bernard. So, we had three spellings so that was always kind of hazy to me, but I just figured well my dad was left handed and couldn't write-, only this way and I never knew my uncle Louis

much and so finally after I nagged at him enough he said, “If you must know, your grandfather was a half-breed.” And I thought, “Wow! This is pretty neat!” (laughs). I was thrilled actually. But he wouldn’t tell me anymore. He said he wasn’t-, he was in World War I, but I never asked my dad about it because my dad was the youngest in his family and I now know why he partly never spoke about it. His parents were separated when he was a young child and I don’t think he knew his dad that well, except that his name was Max. And my parents both died in 1984.

There was a meeting going to be held here in Grand Forks about 1995. There was some Métis people coming over and I never connected half-breed with Métis, because I didn’t know much about it. What you learn in school is limited. And this friend of mine-, she looked like she was First Nation (and it turned out she was), she said, “Will you go to this meeting for me, because I can’t go? And find out what this Métis thing is all about?” So, I said, “Sure!” So her and I looked in the dictionaries and analyzed the situation ‘what was Métis?’ to the best of our ability and then I went to that meeting and it was really enlightening because one of the questions I asked privately, like, “How much Native do you have to have in your background to be called Métis?” And this guy said, “Well, let’s put it this way, the first Métis were born about nine months after the Europeans arrived on the east coast” (laughing). So I said, “So, there’s no quantum amount or anything?” And he said, “No, if there’s Native in your background somewhere, whether it was your great great great great grandmother, you’re classed as Métis.” Which was very interesting, I thought, “Wow! I am Métis.” I was pretty excited about it.

One time after I found out that my grandfather was a half-breed, I said to my husband whose you know, his heritage is German, English and Scottish; and I said, he was talking about Canadian and I said, “You know I’m-“ This is really silly, “I’m more Canadian than you are!” He looked at me and he said, “Why do you say that?” And I said, “Well, because there was some Native in my background. My grandfather was a half-breed.”

But from that point on I started doing some research and I didn’t have any relatives to ask about, except one of my mom’s sister was still alive at the time and she said, “We knew your dad was part Native.” I said, “Well, how come nobody ever talked about it?” “Well, they didn’t want to talk about it I guess. I don’t know.” So, they knew! Somebody knew! But not us kids.

And so, I phoned back to, I got a phone number from Winnipeg Métis association, something to do with it. And the guy was actually quite rude to me. He said, “Oh you guys out there in BC.” Oh, you know, “You’re not from the Homeland and you’re not this and you’re not that.” Well, my dad was from the Homeland, and my dad was born in Marquette, Manitoba, well actually Pigeon Lake, but Marquette was the next little town and they went to the church in Saint-, it’s now called Saint Francis Xavier, but it was Grant Town, where Cuthbert Grant had his little empire there, which I don’t know that much about. So, when I got that I found out my great grandmother’s name and I have a book. It’s a light green book. It’s called, Métis Heritage. I traced it right back and then I was at a provincial Métis session [Annual General Meeting] and there was a gentleman there whose wife was Métis and he was very good with the computer and he said, “If you give me your name, I can give you some history.” So, I gave him my grandfather’s name and it went right back to 1630. It made my application for Métis citizenship in the province of BC with Métis Nation BC very easy, because I could fill out beyond what was the required-. And the day I got my card I was pretty excited. It was just six years ago that I got my card and so it was quite a while and I filled out forms for my siblings and my grandkids. Some of them don’t have their cards although I have everything sitting there waiting for them, but when they are ready, they’re ready, because they didn’t grow up with it.

And you know my going on about it and every once in a while my husband says, “Why do you want to be an Indian?” I said, “Whatever gave you the idea I wanted to be an Indian? I know who I am.” That’s a part of my heritage and it’s a part I don’t know about. So my enthusiasm to learn is going to be there until I learn-, til I’m-, it’s never going to stop. (laughs) And when I say I didn’t grow up with it, after being a part of many gatherings and sessions and meetings and talking and listening to people talk about the good old days of Métis families and whatever, my father displayed many of those traits and characteristics, even though he never spoke about it, but they were there. And maybe it’s common with everybody, I don’t know, but my dad would never-, you know people would come to our house and they’d never go away without taking a bunch of food with ‘em. They’d you know, and we never went anywhere without taking things with us to leave there. And, that’s definitely Métis. And it might be another hundred things, cultures and heritages too, but I know it’s Métis. I know it’s First

Nations even. When there's a gathering, there's no food left in that home, because they send it all with the travellers and they send it-. And I'm really proud to wear this sash. I'm proud to be a part of that group of people that were hearty, that were you know, not quitters. They've had to be resilient and that's sad that they've had to be so much, but it doesn't do you any harm either. There's that saying about "women are like teabags, the hotter the water, the stronger they get." Well, I think Métis people are like teabags, the more adversity that you come across, the stronger you become and learn from it.

I would probably be more involved [in Métis politics] if my husband wasn't so reluctant. He never liked politics and he never, you know, like I've always been a part of executive, and belong to organizations and things like that and he would kind of say, "That's too political" or "You're so political." But I like politics. I don't like the way it goes, I think there's a lot of underhandedness. I don't like the idea that lawyers are the ones that you know, have such say in, you know, even like how all political parties run. I don't like that at all. And I don't agree with the Homeland thing. You know, I don't think Métis people from Quebec dropped out of the sky and landed on the Homeland. I don't think anybody dropped out of the sky. They migrated from the ocean, they came over on ships, and intermingled and maybe they settled in Manitoba. I have a friend, she's not from Quebec, she's from Ontario, but she's on the Quebec border. And she's Métis and they have such struggles for identity because well I think the governments there don't want it. And when she applied to get a citizenship in BC, they said no, they don't recognize that. And I don't agree with that myself. I think if that's a part of your heritage and they accept it. If you only had one grandmother out of ten that was Native and you still are considered Métis, does it matter if you were at the Red River Settlement or whether you were at the Gaspé Peninsula or whether you were up in Alaska, or up in the Yukon. I think if that's considered a part of your heritage, it should be. That's my thinking. And I'm not alone.

There's a lot of lateral violence. I even had somebody say to me one time and it was-, I didn't even know how to take it. And I was kind of struggling with trying to get some information on my family, being a little hesitant to-, not ever to wear the sash, but to even connect with people and this person said to me, she was quite dark skinned, she said, "Maybe you have trouble with your identity, because your skin is so fair." And I thought, "My skin isn't even fair." So I just said, "Well maybe." But I thought about that lots and I don't even know exactly what she meant. Well, I didn't until I was listening to some motivational tapes and it was about deflecting. I think she was Métis, but I think she had her own discomfort about her skin being so dark, that she deflected that on me, because I have a problem because my skin is so light. And my skin isn't light. And I have a nice line now: "See these freckles? That's what's left." (laughs). We make drums here and I've been on the regional employment training committee ever since it's been active in region three and that goes up to Ashcroft, Okanagan and Kamloops and down; we're a part of region three and Osooyoos, the Okanagan, Similkameen. And there was a committee meeting at Ashcroft and so I took my drum, because I wanted to say, "Here is something we did." And there was this man there, a young man, I don't know, he was probably in his thirties and I was probably in my fifties. And he had quite dark-skin. He looked like my nephews. And I said, you know we had a break, and I said, "I brought my drum. This is what we made." And he looked at me and said, "Métis people don't drum." And I thought, "Oh." So, I put my drum back in the bag and never said another word. And I lived with that for quite a while and you know Phillip Gladue? I talked to him about it, just a few years ago. And my husband makes drum frames, and so I was talking to him about drum frames and I said, "Tell me Phillip, did Métis people do much drumming?" Because he has drum-making classes down there [on the coast]. And he said, "Of course! Of course they drummed! Our grandmothers were Native. They drummed. Why wouldn't they?" And so that's, you know to me that's lateral violence to a degree. And I have a friend here, she's really fair, she has dark hair, black hair, but really fair skin and she said to me, "I never seen a Métis person with freckles." And I said, "Wow that's really interesting. I've seen First Nations with lots of freckles, because I've got some in my family." And I said, "What does that mean? Like what do you mean by that?." "Well I don't know, I just never seen anybody with freckles" And that, I don't know, I thought, "Are you saying something to me? That I'm maybe not Métis?" Yeah, I just have to consider that that's where she's coming from.

We've got Scottish and Irish and you name it. So you know, it's nice to know who you are, even though you had no say in it. And you didn't. Just don't be ashamed of things. If something bad happened in the past, I didn't cause it. And we're still carrying on. And we're still energy and a spirit that we have to carry on. If I didn't know

about it growing up, I'm really entitled to learn as much as I can. And if it feels really good within your heart to, you know, have opening and closing prayers, to smudge, to have talking circles, it can't be wrong for you. If it's done with a good heart, with good intentions and you know, I don't like it when somebody says, "Métis people didn't do that." How do we know?

Clearly, throughout her time identifying as Métis Joanie had experienced significant 'identity policing', whereby others enforced normative expressions of a particular identity through devaluing deviating expressions of that identity. This likely contributed to her widely inclusive stance on the use of the term Métis, as she was wary of excluding others on the basis of their lack of connection to the Métis Nation Homeland. Like others who didn't know about their Métis heritage, Joanie grew up understanding herself as French Canadian. After being married, she talked with uncle about her grandfather Maxine Berard, who she found out was a half-breed. Joanie describes attending a meeting where she first learned about what 'Métis' meant, as she had never connected being a half-breed to being Métis. At the meeting she asked (the facilitator) if being Métis was a matter of blood quantum and the response she was received was, "If there's Native in your background somewhere, whether it was your great great great great grandmother, you're classed as Métis." This perspective, though widespread, incorrectly overshadows Joanie's actual kin relationship to the historic Métis nation.

Joanie recounts calling Winnipeg Métis Association and being met with a negative response when she identified as being 'a Métis in BC.' When asked about Métis politics, Joanie describes herself as interested, however she disagrees with the notion of a bounded Métis Nation homeland, stating "I don't think anybody dropped out of the sky." She believes the exclusion of 'eastern Métis' results from government attempts to restrict identification. She adds that she believes that any Native ancestry qualifies one to be Métis, reflecting the initial way in which 'Métis' was described to her. She now recognizes through conversations with Métis people about "the good old days of Métis families" that her family demonstrated many similar characteristics. She is proud to be Métis because of the resilience of the Métis people. Joanie talks about her experiences with lateral violence, stating that she has had her identity questioned due to her light skin, freckles, and told that Métis people do not drum. While Joanie has a response for every act of identity policing that she has been faced with, she believes she has a right to learn more about Métis culture and that if she conducts herself with good intentions, "it can't be wrong."

5.10 “Métis is of Mixed blood”

Dennis, in his 60s, is an artist living in Kelowna, whose work largely focuses on Aboriginal content.

Though he spent his childhood going back and forth from Batoche, Dennis describes his upbringing as existing within Calgary. With an understanding that Métis culture results from the mixing of Indigenous and European ways, Dennis believes that those who identify as Métis claiming ancestors prior to the Red River Settlement (east of Manitoba) should be accepted as Métis:

Métis is of mixed blood. It's Aboriginal and it's the First Nation and European; and that's-, that's how I understand it. And I understand the mixing of culture and the things that came out of it. There's a lot of Aboriginal in their traditions and a lot of European traditions. I don't want to, you know, split hairs and say, “Oh this-, you're not Aboriginal,” you know, “you're not métis.” Like there's this conflict going on that you have to be a part of the-, the fifty families from the Red River Settlement to be Métis, and if you're not a part of that fifty families from the Red River Settlement, then you're not considered Métis. And so they're saying that anybody east of Winnipeg are not Métis. But they're the ones that started it. There's lots of voyageurs out there, you know-, that started the whole thing, that became Métis.

So if you count the people descended from there, there's lots in Quebec that were Métis before the Red River Settlement was even thought of. Sharon did my family tree. She went back to the 1500s. So these are the-, these are the first Canadians, the first Europeans to settle in Canada. So, I'm related to a lot of those. So, I go way back and I think there is what, about 1700 names in my family tree. Louis Riel, Louis Riel is my first cousin. His grandfather, his-, his mom's dad um, what was her name? Lagimodiers, that's my fifth great grandfather. So Lagimodier. And that's his-, that's his mom's, that's his grandfather. I think they had, my grandfather-, there's a few of them that are buried in the cemetery there (Batoche) and they fought in the battle (1885 Resistance).

While related to such pre-Red River Settlement mixed peoples, Dennis is also related to prominent Red River era Métis such as Louis Riel and has ancestors buried at Batoche. Dennis' conflicting heritage is reflected in his choice to carry cards from both MNC provincial organizations and their opponent, the Métis Federation of Canada (MFC). However, Dennis is less concerned with politics than his family, who are involved with the Federation. Not all of his family identifies as Métis, despite being raised surrounded by Michif language and songs. Sharon explains that the denial of Métis heritage results from widespread discrimination. Dennis explains that growing up he (and his siblings) had many friends that were Métis or First Nations, although he was unaware of it at the time, but that he finds it easier to relate to other Métis people. The sentiment that there was an intangible quality about Métis people that attracted other Métis people was expressed by multiple participants,

who found themselves friends with and even married to Métis people often without their express knowledge of their background.

5.11 “we’re all different kinds of cultures put together”

Though understanding his own identity as Métis to be in relation to Red River Métis, Terry believes that all mixed-blood people can relate, on account of their shared experiences of cultural ambiguity and social exclusion. Born and raised in Victoria, BC and now residing in Rock Creek, BC with his wife who is Sami (Indigenous Finno-Ugric from northern Europe), Terry is a skilled artist in his 60s. He has experienced his personal share of exclusion and has being accused (by academics) of cultural appropriation, as his carving style borrows heavily from the northwest coastal tradition in which he was trained. Here is Terry’s story:

My family is from the prairies. My mom is from Southern Manitoba, the Plum Coulee area of Manitoba, which is not too far from the border there. And she’s Métis and my dad was born in central Saskatchewan. So they moved out after World War II, and they moved out to Vancouver and they had some kids and they moved out to Victoria. My dad was in the Navy. He joined the Navy just at the very end of World War II. So we had six kids in our family. And three of us were dark skin and dark eyes and dark hair and then three were blonde and blue eyed. And it was half and half. And there was no talk about any Native heritage or anything. We just at that time thought we were just normal kids. And my dad used to always tease my mom and call her a Blackfoot all the time. I didn’t really think about it much when I was a kid, so when I became a teenager and went searching for my identity, I kind of thought, “well maybe I am Blackfoot.” I knew I was European, but maybe I was Blackfoot too. And well I realized, “Okay, no we didn’t come from the area of Blackfoot people.” But my mom and dad were very closed. They didn’t want me to really look into it. I grew up the generation where we started really looking at First Nations, the history, not as it was taught, but new information was starting to come up in the ‘60s about how they were treated. And the actual stories were coming from people and it was quite different from what the school history was, you know, European history. So, it was an eye opener.

Yeah, so, that’s basically the start. And me, I sensed the Métis identity. I really felt a strong thing with the Land, with the animals, the creatures, the Creation I call it, the Living Creation. I really felt a strong bond with it. And I knew ok, there is something that is First Nations in me. It is deep there. And I didn’t know what it was at the time, but I sensed it. It was a strong thing. I was searching, you know, for who I was when I was getting into my teens, and I grew my hair long, and started wearing feathers in my hair sometimes. Just spending time out in nature, spending time out there.

And then I was fortunate one day. We lived in Victoria and I saw so much beautiful artwork, Northwest Coast artwork. And that was at the museum and it was all around the city. They had a competition actually for carving poles in 1967. So all these master carvers on the coast at this time had carved all these posts and they were going to put ‘em on the highways-, all over the highways on Vancouver Island. It was just powerful in me when I saw those. I went to the museum quite a bit to see the work there. And at the time Tony Hunt was opening up a gallery, and the Hunt family was a very well known family down in the coast in Victoria. They come from Fort Rupert, near Alert Bay. And they are Kwakwaka’wakw. And they really had a presence in Victoria. They were carving at the museum. They were able to carve their own style of carving, but they carved the Haida and Tsimshian poles, the reproductions. And they did an incredible job, and just seeing that work as a young person, I said, “This is something I really want to know about.” And so I really went into depth reading what books. And I met Tony Hunt one day in his gallery. I had a girlfriend and I did a design on a t-shirt with a felt pen and he liked

it, and he invited me to carve with him. So he noticed I had some talent there. So I worked with him and Richard Hunt, there's Calvin Hunt, Jean Hunt. Like some great guys, they treated me good there and we just sat around and worked together. They showed me how to make tools, knife-making. one of the most important things is making knives so you can carve whatever and make the tools for. And we carved at a bank vault in the back of the store. There was an old old building. And the bank vault was about half the size of this room and we'd have everyday six inches of chips in there, carving away. So, I was really fortunate working with them. And John Livingstone he was a good friend of Tony Hunt's and he, you know, who I felt was really very very talented and very special, and he really helped them a lot in their work. So we would all work together. And later I took one year of university, and I wanted to carve in university, and when I went there they gave me a really hard time. They wanted me to do modern conceptual art. They figured carving was just craft. They treated it very superior, kind of thing. And I was sad. So I left the university, I felt really discouraged being there. So I just left, and I went up to the Hornby Island. The Hornby Island is a beautiful Gulf Island near Courtenay, up there. And I spent time there, learning, doing my carving. So over the years I just developed my carving and it took years, literally years to get to the skill level. Developing it is not something that you can do over night. I gravitated to the Northern styles of carving, which is the Haida-Tsimshian, Tlingit, areas of the Bella-bella, Nuxalt styles. You know, a good carver can carve different styles. And you eventually develop your own style because you pull the things you like from all of them and then it becomes your own style. It's like music. When you make your own music, you can't do it from zero, you always have influences, so you put it together.

And when I started learning more about the Métis identity, I didn't have it confirmed. I really struggled knowing who I was for many years. I suspected I was Métis, but my parents wouldn't admit it. They denied it and they would go into denial. And later on when I got older, into my thirties, my mother finally she would admit that we have Métis heritage, and then she would go into denial. Look, so, she was in that generation that they totally denied it. They wanted to erase it and they didn't want to have it exposed. And I was a bit of a sore point. I was the black sheep of the family for doing that for many years, and funny how things turn around. Now people want to know more about it in the family. My sisters want to know more about it and have-. My brother's involved with the Métis association in Nanaimo now. I can see it more in them. It's just funny how it happens. Everybody was saying, "Oh don't bring it up." But as far as the identity, it's been a struggle. It's been a struggle because some people would-, at that time I was working with First Nations people, some people have accepted me because of my talent, and my skill, and my attitude towards them, and honoured me because of that, other people didn't like that.

So, eventually, when I got into my forties, I went and did a thing, like a history in Saint Boniface Society, and that's back in Winnipeg. And they showed my heritage there, then. And the people, well a lot of French-Canadian and then voyageurs that came out and then there was First Nations around that area. So I believe I am Cree and Sioux, and English and French. And it was really good, it was good to confirm it, because when you got that doubt, well you're thinking, "I think I am but I'm not sure," but you go through that self-doubt and it's really a struggle. So, it was really good to see that. And still you have time-to-time struggles because you-, you don't want any-, well I shouldn't say (laughs). When you look at the mirror sometimes, you see yourself, you say, "yeah," you can see it. And other times, it depends on your insecurity at the time.

You know, Métis art. The Métis society didn't really exist long enough to make an art form. They had done beadwork, and done the sort of beadwork that was taught by nuns. So, they did floral beadwork. But it really didn't get a chance to really develop into its own, really at all, because there's a lot of tribes that did floral beadwork. And it's like it was just cut off so short. You know and after the resistances, everybody sort of scattered. And you know so it's just the last decade or two that artists are starting to really figure out what is a Métis identity in art. Some do use a form of beadwork and they use paintings based on that. Myself, I am going into a totally different kind of way. So, I was very heavily influenced by Northwest Coast art, but also now I've really learned about European scrollwork and European scrollwork is like the equivalent to the Northwest Coast form-line. Different nations in Europe all had scrollwork, but different line weight to it, different thicknesses of the line, just identifying each country, and the same as the Haida and Tsimshian and Tlingit. They had different weight in the form line structure. So, it's just kind of a way that each group had identified and this is the way we were. So scrollwork was really interesting to me, because as a way to just portray nature. And so my interest and

challenge to me was how can I integrate my influences in Northwest Coast, the scrollwork. And I love the simplicity of the geometric work of the Plains people: that's the Sioux and the Cree, and just geometric, really simplistic. So I've been challenging myself over the last couple of decades how to do that and to do that in a really harmonious way. I just don't want to throw it together. I want to have something that's unified and brought together. So I'm just showing an example of that as we move ahead as Métis people. Like we're all different kinds of cultures put together. You know it's obvious the French and Cree, but there's English and Scottish on the European side, sometimes you have German, and there's Cree and Sioux, Ojibway, and other tribes. And it's actually infinite, the varieties and diversity of different elements that can come together. I am hoping as a role model in that way that people see for the future being a Métis as an artist. They are not just stuck to the Plains and the flower beadwork. That they have a whole range in their cultural identities they can work with, and they can explore both and see how they can integrate them and integrate as a full human being. That's been my real struggle, to come together as a whole human being. And I hope to, you know, show that it's possible and it's a good thing. If you use those good things from different cultures and bring them together, then we could really be a part of the world stage, being a part of the world and be standing there. It's nice to know about what cultural traditions are there, but it is fairly limited. Yeah, that's nice to have that and also be moving on.

We're fortunate to be here (Terry lives in a very rural setting), and my wife and I. She's Finnish, you know, the Northern Finnish, the Indigenous Finnish, like the Sami people. Yeah, so, she's a person of the Land and animals too. She loves her animals. So, being up here in the quiet and the Land. We moved from the coast because it was really wet there of course, and we fell in love with this area. I love the big sky, the big open sky, you can see the clouds and everything, and the rolling hills, and the grasslands. And that part of me, it's a connection with the Land. You don't realize until later that you pick up-, your whole body and sensors are open. You know, sight, smell, ears, touch, feel, of all the things going on. You know, it's just full of life around you and there's so many things that are going on. And in the country you can open up all your senses. When you go to a city, you've got to reverse that, because there's too much going on. It's over-. And that to me, I want to live in that sensitive place where I could open up my being to all the living creatures around and you feel like it's a part of your family. You feel really close and comfortable with it.

Yeah, I think that part came out strong. You know, I know DNA can, you know, play funny games with people. And, you know, with me, I think the genes-, those genes came up really strong, whereas in my brothers and sisters, as much, it didn't. And I've heard that from different Métis families. You know, some people really feel that connection and other people, it just doesn't matter. It's not important to them. I didn't know they were Métis at the time, but you just gravitate with people that have sort of similar, you know, feelings about things and then you learn later that they're Métis too.

And I believe in including people. You know, there's different kinds of-, to me, there's kind of, the Métis from southern Manitoba, Red River Métis, which I am, and then there's the more generic term 'métis'. And I want that to embrace all people, because identity is where our-, it's more important in the long haul. The mixed-blood people can get together and relate to one another, because they can understand each others' issues, and things they go through more. And if you're just a pure-blood whatever, you don't have the same kind of issues. They're different. And we have different issues than First Nations people, and there's different kinds of prejudice. I fought prejudice from both sides, from pure-blood First Nations and from pure-blood Europeans. They can get stuck in their minds very rigidly about who they are and who we are, and then have prejudices. One foot in both worlds, and it takes time to feel comfortable there. To be ok with who I am and recognize that there's both-, you know, embracing people in both cultures. There's great people in First Nations and there's great people in European as well. That it's important that we can understand that.

And you know so it's taught me a lot of patience over time, as I used to get angry. You know, go through drinking things, problems with that, and different things. Be able to come to a point, okay, there's always going to be a variety of people. And work with good-hearted people, because it really comes down to, you know, the heart, the way people are. I'm a Métis person and I'm a Christian as well as I believe in a lot of the First Nations ways too. And I want the right to be able to navigate, where I can live comfortably as a human being in my beliefs. And so I can believe in Christ, you know, and God in that way and also I can respect the traditions of-, and how Land and certain ways of viewing them and stuff right? To me that's a real healthy balance. You got to. You always get

flack from people who think, “This way is right” and “that way is right,” but no. I know who I am now. I’m learning that. So I don’t let anybody push me around that way anymore. So this is the way I am. And I am going to respect your First Nations ways and I respect Christianity, but I don’t have to believe it identical to you. I’m allowed to believe who I am as I am.

(I ask him more about what he believes ‘métis’ to mean)

Yeah I know metizo, metizo is the right word [mestizo]. It’s a word that describes mixed blood people. And it’s a broader definition than the cultural/historical [definition]. Even though I am from that background, I identify with all mixed-blood people. In our world today, it’s happening more and more people. And you really see some beautiful people coming out of that mixing of the genes and cultures. And I think that starts to happen beforehand. And it’s what our world needs, because people are too insular, too national. And it just really causes a lot of problems.

I’ve gotten two Métis cards when I was in Vancouver Island and then I got one here from the Penticton [Métis Association]. And then I went in, and I feel I’m a little bit rebellious, I said, “I don’t need a card to know who I am.” I said, “Okay, it was nice to have at first,” but then I got tired. I said, “No.” Like, you know, I am who I am, and I’m Métis. I know that now. And, you know, that’s kind of a rebellious attitude, but that’s the way. Who’s the card checker? It’s so much more complicated than just blood quantum and back, back [ancestry]. Because there’s people that-. The attitudes to it is-, you’ve probably ran into people who, the only point they want a card for is what can they get. And I really want to discourage that. There’s not a lot that you can get, it’s what you can give. As a human being, what your heart is about and what you are willing to give. Because we’ve got enough takers, in any kind of cultures, that just take. We want to encourage people to be givers. To be able to use their abilities and talents and to be included and to give what they’ve got to give. And I think they’ll make a healthier society and Métis culture. Yeah, and I’ve met many good Métis people that are very giving. They would give the shirt off their back and they would work and do whatever, and volunteer until they are blue in the face, and don’t ask for anything back. That’s a generous spirit. And you get to know the same people who are dedicated and stuff, and they come and they want to give.

And everybody has different life experiences, but I’d see people be involved with each other and see each other through things. Because people get through drug issues, alcohol issues, family issues, mental health, different things. Like I think a lot of Métis have suffered rejection over the years and I don’t know if you’ve heard about the Road Allowance People? And that people weren’t allowed in the towns and weren’t allowed in reserves and places. And they could only camp on the road and so that sense of rejection is in a lot of people. And that’s a hard thing to overcome, because it’s like I have a mental thing that we are all trying to work out, figure out. Ok, that’s in us. It’s your families who pass it on down through the families. And a lot of First Nations, they know who they belong to. They can hang out together all the time, because they can recognize each other quite easily by-, visually a lot of times. Whereas the Métis people, like you don’t know by looking. You only know by talking and sharing, you know, comparing and connecting in that way.

I go to galleries in the Lower Mainland, big galleries. Like my work, I could do the highest level of quality in my work and because I didn’t have First Nations blood there, I would be received by galleries, like people didn’t value it. Like they would if I was a First Nations person, which is okay, I understand that, but at the same time, the work should stand up on its own. That’s what I’ve come to believe. And I look up to people like Robert Davidson, a Haida master, Bill Reid, those are people that I really study and was inspired by. And it turned out Robert Davidson, he spent three thousand dollars of his earned money to buy one of my pieces. And so, he is the highest standards of the art there is. And for him to spend that money on my work it helped validate me. So, I had a lot of negative experience with galleries, but having him buy my work, I said, “Ok, that made me feel good.” And the same thing, a lot of the people, well I hate to say it, but, I have to say it, you get a lot of educated people, academics sometimes, sometimes that they can have a rigid idea of how things should be. You know, it’s called appropriation or whatever, to misappropriate stuff. And they get a very rigid view of what misappropriations or appropriation are. And I attribute it back to maybe how it was totally mistreated in the past. There is kind of guilt complex going on subconsciously, so it went to the other extreme.

Like at the farmer's market, there's some people who come up and just enjoy the work as it is and other people walk by with their nose in the air. And I said, "Okay, you know, that's fine." It's that kind of rigid idea, it's political correctness, it's rigid, because they don't know my history right? They don't know the whole story of how it became like this. And that's like a lot of things, you don't see a person's tree. I have a-, unfortunately a son-in-law who is actually, my wife saw him today and his whole story and the struggles he has, you know. There is mental illness in there and different things, but he's got a story and he's a human being. There are things in his life. And it's how we can get really rigid in our thinking, and I include myself in that. I've got to be careful and watch my thinking, so it doesn't crystalize and become judgmental, become prejudice. Because we've got to be open constantly and realize there is more going on than what meets the eye. There's actually more there. And if we are quiet and we listen and see. And see I use the word seeing as perceiving, actually, you know, observing, and getting to know what you are seeing there. So it's an interesting thing, the prejudices that-, in terms of my art career and as an artist and as a Métis person. Like I've really been embraced-, I've been really fortunate, by Grand Forks School Board and the Boundary School in Midway. And they encourage me to come in and it's a real joy now in my life at this stage to just share with them, and not be judged. Yeah, and that's the question, like authenticity, what is authenticity? And I guess it boils down to what the person's spirit, integrity, and character [is]. It comes to that. And I have First Nations people that love my work and buy my work, because they enjoy it and others...- So now, you know, I said, "Okay, I can only live and be as real as I can be in this lifetime," right? I've done what I can and I hope to do more in the future and to keep doing-, and living that way. And that's my authenticity.

Terry explains that he "sensed" his Métis identity from an early age, attributing it to his strong connection to the Land. Growing up in Victoria, he was exposed to Northwest Coast artwork and as a teenager, began carving alongside renowned Kwakwaka'wakw carvers, including the Hunt family. Terry developed his own style of carving, influenced heavily by northern styles, but feels his work hasn't been fully accepted. Terry is the only member of his family to be interested in his Métis heritage and sought out confirmation of his ancestry from the St. Boniface Historical Society because his mother denied her Métis identity. For Terry, the external validation that he gained from confirming his identity aided in relieving self-doubt about his Indigenous ancestry. He hopes that his work, which harmoniously combines Northwest Coast influences, European scrollwork and Sioux/Cree geometric design will further develop Métis art, which he feels requires expansion due to its short historical period of development. A theme throughout our conversation is Terry's struggle to reconcile all parts of himself, even that which may be contradictory (or controversial). For instance, he describes the ways in which he integrates his Christian beliefs with his (First Nations) and his wife's (Sami) spiritual cultural practices. Furthermore, he has struggled with having his work valued within art galleries, as he is not a First Nations person, though he explains that he has received validation from First Nations artists that he respects purchasing his art work, despite his ancestry. Terry specifies that educated people, particularly academics are quick to label cultural appropriation in

the name of political correctness, without having sufficient knowledge of context. He has come to terms with the judgments of others, but he is careful not to become too rigid in his own thinking or prejudicial. Terry's story points to a common theme that emerged throughout many interviews whereby experiences with identity policing resulted in continued concern over being judged by others. For Terry authenticity exists not in the ways in which he is policed as being authentic or not by others, but in his ability to be true to himself. Though he distinguishes between Red River Métis (which he descends from) and the more generic use of the term 'Métis' to refer to people of mixed-blood, he embraces an inclusive stance, as he feels that those of mixed-blood have similar experiences and issues that differ from "pure-blood" First Nations people. He speaks of not only the cultural ambiguity of being of dual ancestry, but also the invisibility, as métis people cannot always be visually recognized. He believes that people are too focused on belonging to a single nation and that it can cause problems and be divisive.

5.12 "We are not just a leftover"

Maria, in her 60s, works for Métis Community Services Society of BC in Kelowna as an Aboriginal Infant Development Consultant. Born in Mannville, Alberta, Maria descends from a large well-known Métis family. Like Dennis, she doesn't agree with the temporal and geographic limitations of Métis nationhood that exclude 'eastern métis,' but is simultaneously adamant that Métis heritage is located in a specific culture and should not extend to all 'mixed' people. Here is Maria's story:

My dad's nationality is Métis. Its got just a whole bunch of nationalities, its got Métis, French, Irish, Scottish and Cree and Ojibway. But when I was growing up, my father never ever said that I was Métis. The word Métis, I've never heard it. I've heard half-breed, but I never heard Métis. So he never ever told us we were Métis. Anyway, my family, like my ancestors actually come from St. Paul [Alberta]. And Duhamel [Alberta] is where my ancestors came out from the Red River in Manitoba. And they came out in probably in late 1800s. My idea is that they probably high-tailed it out of there after Louis Riel lost the Rebellion, right? There was nine brothers in the LaBoucan family. Those brothers, they stayed and they worked with the settlers. They built a little Catholic church and a cemetery and they all settled in. And they had land actually in this little area of Duhamel, but they couldn't afford to stay there, so they needed to disperse. So, that's what they did. Some of the family, some of that LaBoucan family went--they went to Slave Lake. It just happened that my Great Grandfather went to St. Paul, and that is hence, why my grandfather Grandpa Joe was born in St. Paul. He married a French woman that was born in France, and so he never lived Métis. I think they lived kind of like--, they farmed in Vermillion as far as I know. I have a feeling that the farm might have been my grandfather's family's farm, right? I don't know that Grandpa Joe--, well, his mother got scrip, so she had some money. And I think too, from what I hear--, I'm going to go back a few years, and I think too that in St. Paul, I believe that-, that they had horses, I believe, and I think

that they might have had a store. So, I think that they were kind of entrepreneurs, and they didn't stay in St. Paul. My dad never ever said anything, he was not proud of being Métis or because at that particular time it was not a cool time to have any Native heritage.

When I went to university from 2000 to 2004 I got thinking about my roots, and I had an opportunity to kind of study it, actually, the First Nations part of it, and also the Métis, like identify as a Métis person. You know, in First Nations, it's our mother's side that we come from, so I could never figure out in my own brain, we always heard about LaBoucans, but I didn't hear very much about my great grandmother. I thought, "hmm, I'm going to look into this," so I searched and I asked some people, and they looked into the Dene Reports right? I knew her last name, it was Villeneuve. So I knew that and I thought, you know what, we always thought she was French, because they told us she was French, right? My dad was told that she was French, my grandpa was told that she was French. It was hidden, being Métis was hidden by being French.

In those days we always talked about the LaBoucans, but I never heard my great grandma mention her family, her brothers, her sisters, her aunts. I don't remember any of that. And then I'll tell you too that she had an accent and I always thought it was a French accent, but right now I believe it was a Michif accent. So what I did is I searched it out, I had some friends, and I searched it out and my goodness, her genealogy goes all the way back to the Red River and I saw her signature. So it's actually my great-grandmother and my great-grandfather both were Métis, which is very cool.

So we'll jump a few years and I'll jump to about 1969, because that's when I graduated high school. And really before that I never heard anything about being mixed-blood or Métis. I wouldn't really have called it Métis. And then in 1969 my dad's younger brothers said that we were Cree. It was the happiest thing for me, because I thought, "Oh my goodness, that is very cool. I'm not only Canadian, but I'm *really* Canadian." That's kind of where, when I first. It wasn't very long until some of those younger uncles would mostly-, they would joke about being Cree. Yeah, they would joke about having the language. Not really negative, just in mocking fun I think. I think that's more what it was. No, it wasn't negative. Two of my dad's youngest brothers, they talked about it and they also thought, "Well there must be some benefits about being Métis." So they got more interested in joining, like my uncle Louis was in the Kelowna Métis Association. Like, I learned about my heritage when it was about 1969, and I never really started looking into it until-- Well my uncle Louis taught me some, and then I could link it, I could link what he taught me with my uncles. When they got together they had a different accent. I remember especially a few times, when they used to go hunting for geese in the fall. When they got together they would-, they had a language of their own. They had a way of talking and a language of their own. And so when I learnt about that more in the 1990s, I don't think I really got it until then.

But fortunately when I got to university I got to take a few courses that I really liked. I took a First Nations course, and I hung around with First Nations people. What it really got me interested in my First Nations part. I would say when I finished university I was very respectful of First Nations traditions, values. I could sort of see in my background how it linked with my family, and I think that's what grounded me in my identity. It's because everything that I remembered I could link with my dad's family. Even though my dad didn't really keep in touch with a lot of his brothers, they were very--, the Métis family were a very loving close family who didn't see each other a lot [laughs], but when they were together you could really see a bond. And not only a bond with my uncles and my aunts, but I could also see a bond with their uncles and their aunts. Like there was, there was something very, we call it, "very LaBoucan." It was a very dominant family, like a dominant kind of family. Yeah, I was fortunate enough when I left school to get a job at a Métis organization.

I think when I was in university it tipped more towards First Nations values and beliefs and then I believe I realized more the identity of Métis people and I can recognize it. And I can also recognize the Cree in people, like and I can recognize when people get together, their-- What would I say? Their identity. When you get lots of identities together, I see something, I feel something, right? And when I left university, what I really wanted to do is that I realized that Métis people were a very dispersed people and they were kind of left, not--, especially in Kelowna, they were not recognized. Like it was kind of like--, for the-, probably for the first few years the question that plagued me was, "Who are Métis?" Like because people wouldn't say that right to my face, but- I mean in organizations, I mean even in University, everywhere, they really don't know who Métis people are. Because there is not enough Métis people here to really have, for people to have a picture about who Métis people

are. So when I started working along with Val, who is Métis too, when I started I-, my main thesis in my social work paper was to, what would I say? to create a community-, to create community. To bring this dispersed people-, or at least to have the dispersed people have somewhere where they could find other Métis people. I would say for my first years in the organization of Métis Community Services, I would say I probably--. You know, I know all people give, have a lot of passion for what they do, but I really think it's taken up a lot of my time, and I feel that I am maturing in my career that I am not so idealistic about being able to create community. Because in every family it seems to me like I have, I can only look at my only family right. I'm just trying to think when you speak of Métis identity, I would say my family have a Métis identity, even though we are not traditional Métis people. And I get that from little examples. Some people have a Métis heart and some people who are Métis nationality don't have a Métis heart. A Métis heart is someone--. I can give you an example. I had a little tiny lapel pin with the Métis flag on it. Just really small, like really small. I've had it for a long time. I have a brother that is high in the union of the steelworkers and ironworkers. I didn't say anything to it, I just put it on his suit jacket. And in a few days later, maybe 4 days later, he thanked me for it. And another thing, the reason I think he's got a Métis heart is because he's very involved with attempting and having a great interest in having Aboriginal people in ironwork and to work on programs that actually get youth interested. Like that's what I mean a Métis heart is. It's when a person wants to not only recognize who they are, but they want to do something for the community. They have a heart for it. Like that's a person that really has it within them. Because you can have a nationality and call yourself Métis and it may not mean that much to you.

So now I think I see myself as an Urban Métis. I think I see myself as a proud Métis woman. Being Métis is very interesting because there is all this mix [laughs]. There is all this mix, but this is how I kind of do it. I have my spiritual belief, which is Christian and I have my Métis or my First Nations, which is the way I walk. This is how I walk in the world. What they can do is if you think of a bird flying, they can actually fly together [moves hands like bird flying, each hand as a wing]. Like a bird flies, I can have my First Nations way of walking, which respects my Christian--. I think they fly very well together. Like, so that's how I walk in the world. If someone were to ask me, and people very seldom ask nowadays, "What is your kind of spiritual path?" I would say it is Christian, but that I walk in a First Nations way. Like, I walk with respect of the grass, respect of the trees. I feel the trees, yeah, I thank Mother Earth, right? I look to the unseen world. So it isn't really Métis specific.

I find Métis identity--, I'm always defending Métis actually. Or I'm needing to sit at the table, so that people will remember Métis. Like, we really are forgotten people. I feel we are. I feel that unless I say something--. In the Okanagan specifically, I feel as a Métis person, I have to [fight]. And I don't fight verbally, but I fight by being present, so that I am not forgotten. I don't sit there for myself, I sit there for Métis people. That's kind of how I assert my Métis individuality, I would think. When I sit at tables I'll put on a Métis sash, like a small sash. But there is this elder who said one time, "We don't have to dress in full regalia to say who we are." Yeah, it's one part of me. I think that's what I am learning is that it's one part of me, it's not all of me, it's one part of me. Even in my work and my home I found that the question 'Who are Métis?' has really taken up a lot of space in my brain, for years (laughs). Yeah, eventually it just can't take up that much space, because I am lots more than Métis. I am many, many things, right? Yeah, but I think it's because I'm always having to defend or present our nationality, and clarify it. I think that that's probably why it stays in my brain, trying to answer the question; because that is a very huge question, because it's so different for everybody.

And I have some kind of misgivings because I don't really understand the part about Métis people and the Red River Settlement mostly going west because they can't not go east, which is Quebec, yeah, well like just the geographical [aspect]. Like to me, how could we say that we don't have Métis people in Quebec? Maybe they do. What I hear people say across the Métis Nation across the land is that it's Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba that have the strength, that have the strength of the Métis. And then it's kind of British Columbia is kind of an add-on. Which it's not really an add-on, because I've read that anywhere there is a Hudson Bay post, there were Métis people. I mean even in Victoria there was a Hudson's Bay post, and in northern British Columbia, right? There was lots of fur trading. So yeah, it depends on who the Métis Nation is today.

Well because it's kind of a popular thing to be, to be First Nations or Métis. And you know there is more than that. And I hear people say it and I really address it when they say it. So a person will come in and they will be First Nations. They'll be a non-status First Nations and they'll say, "Oh well, if I can't get my status, I'll get my

Métis [citizenship].” And I’ll tell ya, that gets my huckles up right away. Because I like to say to them, “You know Métis people are a people that have a history in Canada. We are a people that have a language, we have a way of dressing, we have a spirituality, we have our songs, we have our dance, we are a nationality. We are not just a leftover. We are a recognized-, the newest nationality in Canada. I think besides Canadian. But it’s a nationality.”

I guess how we keep track, or how I keep track of that is who identifies as Métis are people who want their local, they want their Métis local card. They are looking for the Métis local card, or they are looking for a-. Usually they are looking for education actually, either them or their grandchildren. That’s what brings them, but that’s how we get a count. So Métis Nation BC has locals all around, all around British Columbia. If they have a family tree that’s agreed upon in that particular local, they can become part of that local. Well in this particular one they ask for signed scrip. In the early days before anyone really knew, they were just basically signing people in their locals, right? Anyone who self-identified with really any Aboriginal, they would be able to get a card. And I’m trying to think. You know, like as a person who knew I was Métis and as my family members that were searching for their cards, you know, it’s not easy to get your card. When you are looking for it, it’s not easy. It’s not easy actually to find. And sometimes there is no community. So it’s very hard to join the community. Nobody wants to really admit there is no community (laughs). You know there isn’t. It’s very hard to find a Métis community, right? Like a Métis working kind of community. I believe that community is hard to reconstruct. So in early days it was because people lived in the same area and they visited their families in the same area, and now people have moved into lets say, like Kelowna.

You know, if I think about it, it feels like in some ways a failure, but it’s very hard to recreate community. We hear that word often in the general public and urban centres, but it’s very hard. And so I think-, to think about nationhood, I think that’s a different realm than I live in. I think I go as individuals and families and maybe to community events. I don’t know that I can comprehend any bigger, personally. All I know is that if I’m here and I go to an event, and if I go to Alberta and I go to an event, I’m sure I would feel the same feeling. It’s a feeling right? I would feel the same connection, because it is about connection. And whether I am part of their community or not, I probably wouldn’t want to leave, like it’s hard to pull myself away where I recognize Métis people. Yeah, to me there is a connection. It’s an unseen connection and maybe that’s what I was speaking about, the heart. It’s an unseen connection. And when I meet someone who is Métis, when I meet someone who doesn’t know very much about Métis I’m very welcoming, “That’s very cool.” right?, “That’s wonderful!” You know? Always has a story to give and I’m interested in their stories, because it adds to my identity really; and then I can link it with my brothers and sisters and then I can link it with my aunts and uncles and then-. Yeah so, I was at our family reunion, so some other folks were there that had a different great-grandfather, but it was just nice to be together and to have a similar background. And it was spoken about, right? It was, you know, it was unseen too.

Although Maria never heard of ‘Métis’ growing up (only about being Cree or a half-breed), she has substantial knowledge of family history, including scrip. Similar to others, her family never mentioned anything specific about Métis heritage and in hindsight she believes that ‘being French’ hid being Métis. Though her uncles joined Métis associations early on, Maria became interested in her Métis ancestry while attending university, as through taking courses about and with First Nations people she became interested in First Nations traditions and values, as she saw parallels with her own family experiences.

During her time at university, she became interested in the ways in which Métis people were dispersed and the possibility of creating a community in Kelowna where Métis people could find one another. This project

continued as she became employed at MCSSBC in Kelowna, but she has since decided that her endeavour to create community was idealistic. She now believes that it is difficult to find a community, and it is difficult to reconstruct due to the transient nature of Kelowna as people move in and out the city. In some ways she considers her own attempt to recreate Métis community as insufficient, stating that now it is more about connecting with individuals and families at community events. She talks about a feeling and unseen connection when she engages with other Métis people and the way that it relates to her own family. Her identity is added to through dialogic interaction with other Métis, which provides further content for her own recognition.

Maria struggles to think of Métis people on the scale of nationhood, and is confused by notions of Métis nationhood that exclude Métis from east of and prior to the Red River Settlement as well as claims to Métis ethnogenesis in BC. The question of ‘who are Métis?’ has preoccupied Maria’s thoughts for years, as she feels like she is constantly defending and representing Métis people. She sees Métis culture as distinct and “not a leftover.” She does, however, give credit to those that seek out their local community card, however, she points out that many of those who do, do so for educational funding for themselves or their families.

Alternatively, she distinguishes between those with nationality (ancestry) who have what she terms “a Métis heart” and those without ancestry who have a Métis heart. She understands Métis heart as those with compassion and interest in improving the quality life of Aboriginal community. She explains this as when “a person wants to not only recognize who they are, but they want to do something for the community. They have a heart for it.” Describing herself as an urban Métis, Maria explains how she integrates her Christian and First Nations spiritual beliefs, which she explains are not necessarily Métis specific, but as “a way of waking on the earth” that involves looking to the unseen world.

Throughout Maria’s story, she draws from multiple discourses and makes statements that may appear to be contradictory (especially concerning ‘who is Métis’), however this illustrates the conundrum in which Métis people find themselves, whereby they repeat particular sentiments regarding Métis nationhood that suggest exclusive group boundaries, yet feel that to be anything other than inclusive is somehow immoral. This lies at the heart of the contemporary debate over Métis identity and appears throughout multiple participant narratives.

5.13 “I don’t feel like I have a hole in me anymore. I know where I belong.”

Like Maria, Val was also employed by MCSSBC at the time of this interview. Growing up in Northern Saskatchewan, Val, now in her 50s, resides in Lumby, BC. Val is perceptive in terms of understanding multiple perspectives to current arguments regarding identification and citizenship. She has had the unique experience of growing up amongst Métis activists in the prairies and only later realizing that she too is Métis. Val gains strength by knowing that she is connected to a resilient and resourceful people, but also sees Métis people as a bridge between cultures. Like Maria, she articulates the notion of “a Métis heart” as including the sense of belonging to a Métis community and the obligation to serve the Métis community. For Val, part of being Métis is about taking a responsibility to improve the human condition, while also being connected to the land. She differentiates between First Nations’ connections to specific parts of land and Métis connections “to the earth, to the Land period.” Though she does feel connected to Saskatchewan (as her family still resides there) and more recently, the north Okanagan area where she now lives, her story of living in Toronto illustrates that her connection is to the Land in a broader sense. Here is Val’s story

So, interesting for me I guess is that we were brought up with a very keen awareness of some pretty significant values that have a lot to do with respecting the environment, the land, and animals. We were brought up in days where people didn’t actually recycle, but we were absolutely required to do everything possible, make everything ourselves that we could. You know, I hated that soap my dad made (laughs), but we were totally looked at as being as self-sufficient as possible, with the least amount of impact on the land. You know, the whole sharing and caring and those values, which I just went with.

And I was always very aware that my father is from Ireland and that he came to Canada and through his work in a number of different ways. He spent a lot of time in the North with First Nations and Métis people, really, I think adopted the way of the people himself. It just seemed very logical to him and he was a very logical person. That’s what we would have to do. So many people said that he was so ahead of his time. Actually, [he was] an MLA for The Pas, Manitoba in the ‘40s. At that time he was the youngest MLA of the history of Canada and he was involved in advocating for a lot of Aboriginal rights. We lived in communities that were-, like Aboriginal people were our closest friends and kind of pseudo-relatives. Then we spent a lot of time up North, like way up northern Saskatchewan, like north of La Ronge. That’s where my parents met actually. My mom had a restaurant up there. And again, the people closest to her were all Native people in the north. So that was just the way that we kind of came into this world, with that type of reality. My dad was a really strong social and political activist and got into a lot of trouble all the time for standing up for people. So, I was really aware of growing up-, the racism and discrimination, and the extent to which Aboriginal people were faced with that, but not just racism in particular, but any kind of discrimination. I had a protest sign in my hand when I was two and a half (laughs).

So, we never said the word Métis. It was interesting, because I’m not sure if it’s because of the time that we spent in the North and just kind of lived that way of life. Like I grew up eating moose meat and bannock and my mom taught me how to do beadwork and she used to make our mukluks all the time. Like that’s what I had, that’s what I grew up with, but it was never named. It was just something that we did. I went to powwows and stuff like that.

Our parents brought us, but we never ever spoke the word. Anybody that knows my mom and look at her, like you can tell she's got an Aboriginal background, but she never knew anything about it.

So it wasn't until I was actually in university that I started to really talk about-. I guess taking social work, you kind of like tear yourself down to put yourself back together. So, part of that process for me was to acknowledge that, in fact, there's something there. Like there's a big hole that I didn't understand about myself. I tried to look at different things, especially around religion and spirituality. You know we weren't a religious family at all. I wasn't baptized. We never went to church. Dad was like (makes 'X' with fingers). That was not something he was interested in at all. But back then, because he actually passed away in 1982, not a lot of people talked about spirituality. It was just you were religious or not. He definitely was not (laughs), right? But I do look back now and see that he, in fact, was very spiritual. So that again is another piece that-. It was more about that connection to other living things. He had a very good understanding of that and he respected that and taught that. Both mom and dad taught that to us, to respect that and not to waste. And so, when I was in university and I started really looking, my older brother, he said to me, "I always knew something was there, but I don't what it is." Again, when I looked at some of my family members and my aunts in particular, right? Although my aunts and uncles on mom's side are all different shades of brown, from like really dark to like red hair and freckles, right? (laughs) So I started digging. I started doing the research and I started to try it on I think. Like just looking at my own cultural identity and developing that as an adult. I had a lot of support from other Aboriginal students that saw me as an Aboriginal woman. At first I thought, you know, "Do I have a right to even be here?" Like I've always fought the fight for our people. That's the way I was raised, but I tell my sisters, "You go ahead and I'll stand behind you" and they're like, "No. No, you're standing with us. You're not standing behind us." So that really I guess kind of forced me to look at it a little bit closer about how I knew that there was a huge piece missing for me. Then I started digging into it and I realized yes, that the Aboriginal piece that was missing was definitely Métis on my mother's mom's side. Later got to realize that her mom had actually passed away when she was really young and so she didn't have an opportunity to-, and her step-mom was a white woman. So that whole piece was hidden there. I interviewed all my aunts and I interviewed my mom and I gathered all the information and I did our genealogy and sure enough it's very much Métis. So, then I went through this whole thing about: okay, I have my Irish side, which is very aristocratic, very well off, probably not so nice people (laughs), then I have the other side of my family history, where they were living in poverty. So we have the oppressed on one side and the oppressors on the other side. I had a real difficulty with that. Like how does that all fit inside me, right?

I had the most incredible experience that I don't mind sharing with you. Clem Cummings is a Métis elder from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. When we were in university, we, a group of us, participated in a healing ceremony with Clem. He came, (he travels around a lot), he came to the university and there was a few Aboriginal students that were able to go into this healing circle with him. So, we were able to just look at whatever it is that we wanted to heal from and pray about that. He prayed with us individually in the circle. So, that's what I was praying about, this how to integrate all that I found out about my background and my history and how I could integrate that into my own being. So as I was praying, and as Clem was praying over me, and we were doing the smudge, I had a vision. It was probably one of the most incredible experiences of my entire life. In this vision, I had three grandmothers' faces that came to me. One was obviously white, and one was obviously black, and one was obviously Native. There they were. They were three old lady faces in front of me, these three women. They didn't speak to me directly, but they gave me a message, a very very strong message. I felt like I was being scolded by these three grandmothers. These three grandmothers just looked at me and the message was clear as anything. I was told, "You must honour us all." That was it. But it was told to me in such a way that I felt like I was being scolded (laughs). So, that was a huge turning point for me. So, from that moment it was, you know, I am who I am. I have these different-. I have no idea who the black woman came from-, unless it's somewhere back in the Irish side. It certainly-, I have no idea, but she was there with the other two so- (laughs). It is kind of crazy because I have two black children. It all came together for me then. I was able to claim that then. That just gave me permission to claim all those pieces. When I started thinking about that very strong connection to the grandmothers and that direction that I realized that my mom didn't have the information, my granny didn't have the information about where we came from. Then who knows? From before the women in my family tree. What they weren't able to express about who they were. So I am able to stand today and say, 'I'm not just speaking for

myself, but I am speaking for my mom and my grandmothers before her.' I'm so honoured that I've had an opportunity to learn this, so that I am able to pass it on to my own children.

Then working at Métis Community Services [MCSSBC] just gave me every opportunity to learn more and more. All the things that I've learned from the elders all over has just been an incredible gift to me. I just soak it up like a sponge, I tell ya (laughs). Well good too that I'm in a position then to pass it on to other kids that aren't connected to their family because they're in foster care. A lot of their parents grew up in foster care. So, I'm able to kind of, bring what helped me become a whole person. I don't feel like I have a hole in me anymore, I know where I belong; I know where I fit in. And that I can help other vulnerable people throughout that process is really really important to me. I've been doing this long enough that I've witnessed what that's done to better people's health in their own lives that have had way more challenges than I have, that's for sure. You know, the difference it's made for them it's been such a joy for me, and a blessing. I'm so honoured to have been able to witness those changes in other people that I work with, that I'm able to pass on our culture too and my kids have taken it on really strongly too.

I've always seen myself to be pretty strong, resilient, pretty resourceful. You could throw me anywhere and I could make it, you know? And I think that has to do with the strength of the people before us, that we have that sense and the adaptability and resourcefulness, that there's something-, it's not just taught, you know? There's something in us that I really cherish, you know, that there's a strength in our Métis blood that I can recognize and I can feel that. I remind my children, like, "You have that. You can do and go through anything because you have that strength that not everybody has." And it was actually a First Nations elder that did a talk years ago with some Métis youth here and she said, "You know, in looking at the medicine wheel and the races-, the four races and the different gifts that each race bring to the earth, and how fortunate Métis are because you carry the gifts of different races." So we're seen as that bridge or very gifted that way.

I think we have a responsibility to do something with that and to better our condition here as humans. I know First Nations people take especially their connection to specific pieces of land very seriously, and I can understand that because just the way I was brought up and knowing our history, that we don't necessarily have to be connected to a piece of land, but we're just connected to the earth, to the land period. It's much broader than a specific piece of land. So, I just find that kind of interesting. When I go back to Saskatchewan, I feel there's something there that's not anywhere else. It's kind of interesting that I can feel that connection. It is different. But then there's other places that I've had a different kind of, but very strong connection. And the North Okanagan area is one. I've lived in the Okanagan for over twenty years. There's something there that pulls me there. I don't know what it is, it just is.

I lived in Toronto for six years, but nothing like that happened out there at all (laughs). I missed it [the Land]. I was like crying for it, in all the concrete. You had to go so far to get into any kind of bush, like I lived downtown Toronto. I can do it now, and I've been teaching my daughter about how you can really connect to Mother Earth through all that concrete, but that was a long time ago and I didn't know how to do that then. Well, I'll tell you a little story. A friend of mine from Northern Saskatchewan knows, like we spent our childhood in the bush. He sent me a package. So I got the card, and I went to the post office, grabbed this parcel that I got from Robert. I brought it to work and I opened it and there was like stuff that he had gathered in the bush. There was like a stick with moss growing on it and there was like all these things that he had just picked up in a bush. He threw it in a box and mailed it to Toronto. And I was almost crying,- I was like, "Oh my goodness, I can't believe how he knew that I needed this." And the women that I worked with looked at me and they thought, "Are you crazy lady?" They didn't see anything of value in that box whatsoever, no idea whatsoever what I was going through. I thought that was just kind of funny, because it really did bring tears to my eyes just to have that. They just thought I was nuts (laughs). Yeah, like it's the big skies [in Saskatchewan] and there's things that are very unique to that. I learned a lot there and so that way I'm connected to it, but I'm very much connected to this land here, very much so. So, I like to go back and visit and experience that big sky and some of the other things that you just don't get here. I have my family there still, I have three brothers and a sister and my mom that still live there in Northern Saskatchewan, and our people, the Métis people.

We had these political meetings in our home when I was little. People like Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris and Howard Adams and, you know, very strong Métis people came to our house all the time. Maria Campbell is one

of my mom's friends. I grew up with a very strong understanding of what Métis people have faced throughout history. So, very interesting that I ended up here [in British Columbia] where for the first, I don't know, six years that I lived-, well, actually since I graduated from university and started working for Métis Community Services, and I was surprised over and over and over and over of how many people said, "Well, what's a Métis?" It just totally blew me away, coming from Saskatchewan, like Prince Albert. Like I'm sure half of the population is Métis. And that I never knew there was such an incredible gap in people's understanding of our people. And because I was brought up to be such a strong advocate and because I have this history, I somehow think that I'm supposed to be here. To help raise awareness about our people, to help people connect like I had an opportunity to. Because reconnecting to your Métis roots here is far more difficult and complicated than if you're in Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Manitoba, let me tell you. Again, like even-, one of the things that blew me away was we're looking for donations and one of our board members went to The Bay [The Hudson's Bay Company] and asked for donations and the person, the manager who worked in the office said, "what's a Métis?." Now I know there's some serious issues here. Like Hello! (laughs). Yeah that was a tough one for the elder that got that. She had a really hard time with that, and so she was just totally blown away by the ignorance of people. But you know, what really surprised me-, I wasn't so surprised in the non-Aboriginal community how much of a lack of understanding there was, but what really surprised me was the lack of understanding within the First Nations communities here. That totally blew me away, and the resistance to even allowing somebody to identify in their presence just blew me away.

The experiences that I've had here have been incredibly harsh. One in particular, I was asked to be on a hiring panel for an Aboriginal organization, and so different Aboriginal people were sitting on the hiring panel. So, here we are sitting beside each other, waiting for the applicant to come in, and the woman sitting next to me was First Nations from a local band, looked at me and said, "You know what, the only time I would ever pick up a gun, is it would be against a Métis." She said it right to my face. I've gone into three or four different meetings with First Nations people that I've been yelled at, people stand up, slamming their fist on the table, yelling at me, calling me disrespectful, that this is Okanagan territory and how dare me state what I was stating that was really on behalf of Métis students and on behalf of Métis children in this territory. So, I've had to have extremely thick skin. I was seriously being attacked, just for being Métis and saying something I guess (laughs). As long as you shut up and you're Métis, you're okay (laughs). A couple of those instances were quite a few years ago and people that were in that arena actually do have a better understanding and respect for me as a Métis person today, so that's really interesting.

Over years of continuing to engage with them, continuing to just be who I am, showing my respect to First Peoples, showing my curiosity in trying to understand what the issue is, instead of just reacting to it. I try to go underneath. Say well, I was told once that there's no way that we can be recognized as a nation on this territory. I said, "Can you help me understand why?" because that's what I was asking for really, is acknowledgement of that belonging to a nation, the Métis Nation. And he said, "We can't do that." I said, "Well, I need to understand why, like what's the barrier?" So, what I learned about that is that in some First Nations cultures, especially where there's been no treaties or agreements with anybody, that if they acknowledge another nation on their territory, that they're in the same breath, they're giving up some rights to their territory. So now that people have got to know me, and got to know our community, the people that work here maybe, that there's a softening to it now, and there's an acceptance that was never there before...and partnership's that exist now that never would have existed ten years ago when I started. So, there's growth, but it's taken some really strong advocacy skills and really thick skin. So, there's been a huge evolution to a lot of people's understandings here, not just our own people, because that's what I do, is help people connect to our history and our culture, but for other groups around us, their awareness has been raised too and level of acceptance has increased. It takes fighting, like in a good way. It takes fighting to get there.

I have to say if I try and put myself in somebody else's shoes I can understand. Especially when I've gained such a strong understanding about the people here, the First People here and their connection and their sense of responsibility for caring for this land. When I've learned that Métis Nation BC, for instance, has a Ministry of Natural Resources and they have activities happening, you know, in the province without the blessing of First Nations peoples that have no agreements with anybody. So, when I really look at, and I try and put myself in their

shoes, yeah, I probably wouldn't be too crazy about that. When I see it as wholly my responsibility for this, to ensure that this land is taken care of, and another group has come in and set up a whole political structure, including a Ministry of Natural Resources and never said anything to me about it, right? So yeah, maybe things could have been done differently that we wouldn't be in the position that we're in. And it's really hard to backtrack.

Yeah, and I never thought about that until I was able to get into a meaningful conversation with somebody that was willing to share with me what it is, what the issues they have, you know, and be able to give me that time to explain to me, why, why do you hate us so much, right? (laughs). So I've gained some understanding around what the resistance, where it comes from. So what I've learned is that maybe you know, things could have been done a little differently than they were. But it is what it is and it's again just very different here coming from Saskatchewan, there was always that partnership. And that First Nations and Métis aren't separate where I come from. There, we're all related and in my own family, Métis status or-, we're all in the same family together. And in Prince Albert it was the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre since 1957. And it's so different here. I mean think about even the very first Métis groups that were set up in Alberta in 1923. There was Métis and First Nations people that worked together to build that, it wasn't done separate. So I think maybe that's where we kind of missed the boat here. And I mean, I don't know much about how Métis Nation BC in particular was established here, but it seems to me that that's probably why it's so much different here. It takes a lot of time and energy to build those relationships. But again, I think because there was no treaties signed here with First Nations set us in a totally different arena in trying to establish our own governance structure for our people.

(I ask how do you define the word 'Métis'?)

That for myself specifically, that I do have generations of people that have identified as Métis in my family and that I know from doing my genealogy back to the 1600s that it's French and Cree. And recognize that that's not the case for everyone, but certainly that is for, I believe, the majority of us- the Cree-French mixture. That throughout those generations of my family that identified as Métis and took scrip, that I'm connected to all that history. And so that historical connection is what provides the basis of my understanding as a Métis woman today.

I've come across a lot of people that don't fit. Like I fit the criteria for citizenship, but I have come across a very many people from different backgrounds that still have identified as Métis for a long time, that don't fit the criteria. It makes me feel very uncomfortable that that right to take that extra step, or to be recognized by a provincial body is taken away from them. So I'm very uncomfortable with that for others that I know really have a Métis heart and they see themselves as Métis and yet, they're not recognized. So, because of that I don't have my provincial card, even though I'm eligible for it (laughs). So, I get pressured quite a bit from certain people in the community, like, "You haven't got your membership yet, or your citizenship card." I just can't do it (laughs). I have told people a number of times that actually I don't and this is why. Because I don't agree that other people are pushed out because of this. I understand that Métis Nation BC was put under quite a bit of pressure, not just Métis Nation BC, but through the Métis National body, that we were under pressure to come up with a standard definition if you will, but it's politics.

I think that comes from where I come from in Saskatchewan and when I talk to people there, they're like (scoffs) "Oh yeah, first I'm an Indian, my status was taken away, I was totally taken into the Métis community. Now through Bill C-31 I'm an Indian again and I can't be Métis." It's just crap, right? And so a lot of the "mixed" people, First Nations and Métis in Saskatchewan that I know call themselves dual citizens and they don't take membership to anything, because they're not allowed to have both, they're not allowed to be both. And so therefore they're like, "Well to hell with ya, I know what I am and I don't need a membership card to tell me," right? So yeah, it's a dilemma for a lot of people. I come across a lot of people that don't fit the criteria. I think our history as Métis people can pretty much be equated to the history of this country. And we've traveled from the beginning across this land, so why is it that we're separated again by these political boundaries that really-, what's that really about? I'm not sure. Well my understanding is first that, there was a lot of pressure put on Métis political bodies from First Nations and saying, "Oh you guys just hand out your memberships to

anybody. And you got your numbers, and half of your membership is non-status First Nations.” There was a lot of that criticism. So, I think they were really put in a position where they had to narrow the scope, they had to have a process, that to go through Indian Affairs to make sure that you are not eligible for status. It is set up by our governments to have separate, because God-forbid that we are all mixed together because that would be too confusing for government to handle. So, I think it’s instigated by our Federal or provincial governments that we have to be separate, so that they can keep track, especially for First Nations because they’re in pretty precarious situation, at least I fully understand federal government’s move to reduce their responsibilities, their fiduciary responsibilities to First Nations people. So, they need to keep all the numbers straight, so that they know what’s going on. Yeah, because it’s all about not fulfilling those responsibilities I think, because it’s too expensive. In light of the fact that we’re the fastest growing population in the country too, I think it must be pretty scary for government right? Well Aboriginal, like generally speaking right? I don’t know what the comparison is between First Nations and Métis. And then it’s our own political leadership, we always have to have the numbers to argue right? And nobody likes to see overlap because that’s like double dipping right? In whatever funding might be available for people. They want to make sure that they just have the numbers straight I guess. So, I understand to a point why it gets confusing when people are identifying as both, but I don’t think it needs to be stopped altogether. I think there’s other ways of gathering the information, like through census. Why couldn’t you identify as both First Nations and Métis. And you can right? Through census, but you just aren’t eligible for an actual card.

Although I do understand the importance of it in being able to bring up our numbers, to be able to advocate to government and others, especially funders, to say, “Yes, we have this many Métis people,” but I don’t think through citizenship is necessarily the only way to do that. We have census, you know what I mean? But I think that as a political leader you have a responsibility to stand up and speak your truth. And again, so I’m not, I haven’t been particularly impressed with our leadership (laughs). I mean as people, you know I can say that’s it, but I expect more from our political leaders. I really do. I expect a lot more and so I’m disappointed in that.

I think that some people just get their cards so that they’re eligible for education funding, to apply for it. I think if you’re Métis then you are entitled to it. If you are entitled to your card, that’s the way it is, right? Like I don’t criticize people that will use that, but I hope that something will start to grow within themselves, that sense of responsibility to a community that has helped you right? I really believe that some of those things are kind of intrinsic in who we are, but it takes some time for it to come out and develop, like some of those values. It certainly isn’t going to be the case with everybody, but I do believe that even if somebody isn’t quite there, that maybe they are just going through that process and maybe they have mixed feelings about having applied for the money in the first place. I talk to people all the time that say, “I am Métis, but I don’t really deserve that money because I haven’t lived like a Métis.” But I mean I have an argument for that. If you’re willing to learn about where we came from and learn about where your family comes from and how significant that is to who you are as a person then that’s a huge process and it’ll come up for adults in particular at different times. It could be when they start to have their own children, or even grandchildren, but there’s always that potential for them to develop that interest. And if they don’t have that heart, I don’t think it’s that they don’t have the potential to develop it. I think it’s a process. Yeah, some things will come up and it’s different for everybody so I’m not very critical of people that appear to just do it for one reason. But there’s something in going for that process, even applying for the money that’s going to start something, right? (laughs). Yeah, because it’s either you’re just too messed up to enjoy a lot of what the potential we have as humans and that would be just one thing of many that you are missing out on so I tend to feel sorry for people like that as opposed to criticize them as being manipulative or whatever right?

When I talked to you earlier about having this hole inside of me, like I didn’t feel whole. And part of that is, I guess what some people would associate with their, and that there was a piece that was missing and along with that there was some sadness right? Maybe that’s why I associate that with a heart. But being able to really come into this experience and being able to identify and feeling a right to identify, it fills my heart right? There are those people that may not fit the criteria for citizenship-. I can see people have that same experience in their heart and soul. That they have this feeling of belonging, but it hurts them really when they don’t feel a part of-, because

they're not able to-, they're not enough, right? It is like kind of my own heart is full with the ability to just be who I am. I don't care about the membership card either, really. Another layer to that is that there are some people that really understand, I would say, the plight of Métis people, and have a real interest in seeing equality for Métis people, and they may not be Métis themselves. And so, I hear other people talk about that too. They're of some other nationality, but they have a Métis heart. They see the need in the community and they're invested in supporting and addressing those needs in our community. People talk about people outside of the Métis community having a Métis heart. They just really care, are invested in being good allies, if you will.

I work with people quite often in adoption for instance, adoption of Métis children into non-Métis homes that have occurred. So, I've worked with some non-Métis adoptive parents to teach them about their child's history and culture really before they become the adoptive parents. So, where I see people are really invested in that and really get the importance of that, then I tell them, "You know, you are adopting a Métis child and in turn, our community is adopting you. So we're not separate." But I can be that person to help bring them in and invite them in to the community, that they are accepted, maybe not by membership, but their children are Métis and I want them to feel like they can participate in our community events.

I think (historically) people needed to hide from being a half-breed, because it was dangerous. It was self-preservation not to identify as Métis or a half-breed then, right? Because it was the worst possible thing you could be. It's taken a couple generations to recognize that, like the same process I went through. Like I know something was missing, I went looking, and I found it. And I think that there's a whole wave of that occurring, and it was hidden specifically by our ancestors to protect us, that part I think is well understood, but that there's a missing piece. And people are looking. And the whole looking at our genealogy and the whole family tree, ancestry.ca, look at the TV show and so everybody's in to it, like genealogists are like everywhere from the hobbyists to... Yeah, so inevitably people are finding out where they come from right? In masses right now (laughs), yeah, and specifically for us because it was hidden and now it's being found out, so kind of reclaimed right? I always found it just so interesting that that scrip, that that was compensation for extinguishment of Aboriginal rights. And that same piece of paper that take our rights away from us as Aboriginal people, is the same piece of paper that we have to submit for our card (laughs) to gain our rights back, right?

Val begins her story of identification by describing the environmental values with which she was raised.

Furthermore, her father, a local MLA for The Pas, Manitoba advocated for Aboriginal rights in their largely Aboriginal community. She also talks about spending significant time in northern Saskatchewan with Aboriginal family friends, living "that way of life," which included eating traditional foods, practicing Métis crafts and attending community events, despite her mother not knowing about her Aboriginal ancestry. Val only learned about her Aboriginal heritage when studying for social work at the university. For Val, her gateway into Indigenous culture came through her spirituality. She talks about feeling uncomfortable trying on her own cultural identity, until she found that she was Métis on her mother's side of the family. Once she found out about her Aboriginal heritage, she, like others such as Terry, struggled to reconcile her conflicting colonizer/colonized heritage. She describes having a vision during a healing ceremony with a respected Métis elder, where her grandmothers gave her a message to honour all of her ancestors. She now feels that she can speak for her

grandmothers and seeks to pass on the knowledge that she has gained to the children and families that she works with at MCSSBC.

Val reminisces about growing up amongst Métis activists, comparing it to her experience identifying in BC, where both non-Aboriginal and other Aboriginal people do not recognize Métis. Like several participants, she felt her presence as a Métis representative to be misunderstood or treated negatively. Val explains that through conversation with local First Nations people, she has come to understand the problems with asserting nationhood in their territory. Her increased understanding has improved her relationship with First Nations people, while also causing her to be more critical of MNBC's activities. As someone who moved from Saskatchewan to British Columbia, Val has come to learn how to navigate Indigenous politics in BC, an experience that was new to her coming from Saskatchewan where she feels that there is less of a divide between First Nations and Métis groups, especially within her own family. She attributes the initial lack of collaboration between First Nations and Métis people in establishing Aboriginal organizations as a root cause of the continued conflicts between First Nations and Métis people in BC. She is patient in teaching others about Métis and in her work as an advocate for Métis families.

When I ask Val how she defines the word Métis, she responds that she understands it on the basis of her genealogy to a predominantly Cree-French family and her connection to the history of the people who took scrip. She is disconcerted when those who have long identified as Métis and have "a Métis heart" are not eligible for Métis Nation citizenship. She explains to me that 'a Métis heart' means that someone has the Métis experience in their heart and soul, understands the plight of Métis people and is interested in supporting and addressing the needs of the Métis community. As a result of their exclusion, she refuses to apply for her own citizenship, even though she is eligible. She understands the politics surrounding registries, but is aware of the ways in which mutually exclusive Aboriginal identities have been constructed by the state. While she does understand the importance of increasing the Métis "numbers" in order to advocate for Métis people, she believes that citizenship is not the solution. She understands disallowing multiple identifications to be a conscious attempt on behalf of

governments to “reduce their fiduciary responsibilities to First Nations people” and that the growing Aboriginal population is a direct financial threat.

However, Val understands that many people apply for citizenship solely to access education funding. She reserves her judgment in the hopes that those who do apply for citizenship will someday feel a sense of responsibility towards the Métis community, understanding that identification is a process which people engage in at different times in their lives. Val attributes the increase in Métis identification to the decrease in discrimination towards being Métis as well as the increase in access to genealogical resources. She sees irony in the way in which scrip was once used to extinguish the Aboriginal rights of Métis people and is now the same document used for citizenship application to eventually regain rights.

5.14 “I didn’t know I was Métis until 1982, but I always knew I was a half-breed”

Similar to Val who was critical of the ways in which external identity labels shifted according to government policy, Janet views ‘Métis’ as simply a new identifier that became available with the 1982 recognition of Métis as an Aboriginal people in the Canadian Constitution and was preferable to the demeaning term ‘half-breed.’ Born in northern Alberta, but raised in Coldstream BC, Janet is now in her 50s, is a grandmother, works with an Aboriginal elders group in Vernon and the local school district. She experienced significant discrimination for being a half-breed while growing up. Here is Janet’s story:

I was born in northern Alberta, however, when I was young, like four or five, we moved to the interior of BC. When did I first know that I was Métis? I didn’t know I was Métis until 1982, but I always knew I was a half-breed. And that’s where it gets a little tricky because you didn’t want to be a half-breed either, you wanted to be an Indian or you wanted to be a white person, but you didn’t want to be a half-breed. So when I was in Coldstream, I was totally French, however my dad looked very First Nations. So he would take us up to the reserve and then we knew that we were Indian. So we could be ourselves when we were out there. It was ‘cause my dad was so dark that everyone knew he was a First Nation half-breed. He never used the word Métis because before 1982 you had to hide the fact that you were. And then he died before the government said. “Oh, we made a mistake and you can be proud to be Métis,” but he was already deceased. So it didn’t do him any good. You just couldn’t keep him away from the reserve or from First Nation people. And then it was just some of the things he did, he’d like to fish, he’d like the music, he’d like the fiddle, he’d like the gathering, he’d like the dancing. So you just knew that, after awhile you knew you were Métis and when word came out, but before that you knew you were a half-breed. Well he, like I said he looked 100% First Nations (laughs). And that’s-, that’s where he got along with family the best. Everyone just thought we were dark because we were outside and our last name is French, and French were always a darker group of people so you could get away with your olive skin because you were French. So, as soon as you hit Coldstream you were French again, that’s all it was, you were just French. On the reserve you were Cree. Yep, you were one or the other, you were not that half-breed because

if you were a half-breed everybody would call you names and you'd be looked down on. Now you can be proud to be Métis even though you are a half-breed. I see myself as a union of two, of the two best things. You know I can live off the land, but I sure like the modern things like the washing machine (laughs), you know. Yes I can wash my clothes in the river, but I prefer the washing machine, thank you. I can ride a horse, but in the wintertime during a snowstorm I'd really like the warmth of a car.

We went back (to Alberta) very seldom for visits, but when the adults talked the children were kicked outside so we were never part of the-, of the conversation. But I remember in grade 8, maybe 9, I was taking French classes here in Seaton [school], and because my dad would say some what I thought were French words and I would go to school and my teacher would get upset with me and say, "That's slang. Where did you learn those words?" And I'd go home and I'd say, "Dad, what are you teaching me?" And it was actually Michif. So, then he quit speaking it, so I never heard that any longer after that either. I just knew that I wasn't allowed to say them 'cause I'd get in trouble at school. I was like, "What are you teaching me? What are these words? They're slang. They're not to be spoken here especially. It's proper French."

And then yeah, he gave up on the Church. He was raised Catholic until he was dying, and he knew he was dying in bed and he went back to the rosary. The rosary became very important again when he knew he was passing, but before then no, he gave up on the Church. But he was very proud that I was left-handed because he had gone to Residential School 'til grade 3 when my grandfather had had a stroke and he was left-handed and he used to say that the nuns used to beat him for being left-handed. Yeah, because that was the devil, right? It was the grey nuns up in Lac La Biche, up around Lac La Biche. Well, that's where he was born.

I was born in Barrhead, Alberta. My older sister and brothers were born in Edmonton, the grey nun's hospital. But his mum was a L'Hirondelle. Our family tree, thank the Lord for the Red Cross because they did our family tree back until 1759 to Jacque L'Hirondelle and Josette Pilon. And then with the Hudson Bay Company doing such good records and keeping such great records you can follow them when they were fur traders, see how much money they made and where they sat on the boat.

In 1982 I was working for the government in Saskatchewan and that's where it was okay to have Aboriginal blood, you got to tick a box off, it was okay to be a female, you got to tick another box off (laughs), and it was okay if you had a disability because you got to tick another box off and that made the government look really good. And that I know it was 1982 and I worked for the Saskatchewan government. The prairies are always well ahead of the rest of Canada as far as accepting their Aboriginal people, especially Métis, yeah. Here in BC, it's a new word to them, it's a new people. You're not so welcome; some people think it's all made up. Oh, I've had that experience; I've had it many, many times. Yes by my coworkers, by some of my best friends are First Nations and they call me a wannabe, a wannabe Indian. I've been called a teaspoon. Well, because you only have a teaspoon of Aboriginal blood, First Nations blood. So, you're a teaspoon, I said, "But take all those teaspoons out of the drawer and now you're drawer is pretty empty. Teaspoons is what makes it all go around." Well when it's by my coworkers I feel well, how are you doing your job if that's how you're, you're being biased to me and I'm your co-worker? I used to work at the school district, and that's like, yeah, was for the Aboriginal department. And so I was like, I can't work here if this is how my coworkers are thinking of me. Or do they really care about the Métis children because they're all just made up? The greed of money. I've been told it's, we (the Métis) just want their money.

When they gave us a name besides half-breed and you could be proud to be Métis, well, I was right in Regina where they hung Louis, where they hung Louis Riel. So, so it was – . I think so, being right there and like only a few blocks from where they actually hung him even was probably pretty, pretty significant. It's a better word than half-breed. It's a-, it's more of a respected word than half-breed, half-breed to me is like when they used to call me Squaw, very bad word, a dirty word, almost like a swear word. Where Métis to me is a proud word and as long as I use the word Métis I can be proud of who I am, and it's a proud culture. I just have a different name and to me that's a positive and explaining to my grandchildren that they're Métis, I don't have to say, "Oh you're a half-breed." I have grandchildren from eighteen down to six. I have a lot of grandchildren. Yeah, but they really don't care anyways. No, and even with all the family books written and stuff they couldn't care less. Like Dr. Anne Anderson wrote that book, the first Métis, new nation, new nation, first Métis, and it's got all of the L'Hirondelles and all that stuff in there and they couldn't care less if that's their ancestors. But I was like that too.

Well it comes later after the persons passed and you can't ask any questions anymore. Yeah, because I would have really liked to ask my dad a lot of questions and I wish I would've paid more attention when we were walking through the forest and he was pointing out plants and stuff. I never went to Batoche. My dad took us up to Alberta when there was a Lac Ste Anne's pilgrimage and I remember when I was little and my dad was pointing stuff out and of course you're little you don't give a crap (laughs). "Let's just go to the watering holes and then go swimming." But now I just like, ah jeez I wish I would have paid more attention because I remember that – We, we went up there and it was all of our relatives and everything but like [at the time], "Who cares, can we just all just go swimming now?" Yeah, and then later seeing that, it's like you know what I was there and I remember being there, and I didn't give a crap.

My mom didn't raise us my dad raised us. They separated and-. She's French but she's passed away too. I don't have any elders, I am the elder (laughs) of my siblings and my cousins, we are all of the elders. When I was little, little, because when my parents split, my one grandparents took the boys and my other grandparents took the girls. And, although they only lived a few blocks away and we would see each other, we'd just have to run down the street to see each other right or go to church and we'd see each other. And then during the summers, my dad would always send us back to Alberta, even though we lived here, we would all hop on the bus and go back and we'd spend a week with this uncle and a week with that uncle and a week with this grandparents and-. Well, yeah you had all those cousins and they had all the help during the summer. I had one uncle that was a pig farmer, one uncle that was a cow farmer, one uncle that was a rancher with a bunch of horses.

When I was in grade five we had a teacher, Mrs. Maloney, oh she was just a fabulous teacher, and she said I want you to think about downtown Vernon because at that time there was a Indian bar called The Kal, there was an old people's bar called The National, a regular bar, and then across the street was the biker bar called The Ellison and they were all three just like right there. And if you were an Indian you couldn't go to these other two, you weren't allowed in. My dad would, he would go to all three (laughs). It wasn't a problem because he could fit in with the Indians and then there was usually myself or somebody sitting in the biker bar so he could come in and visit us too, wouldn't that be great? So, but he could travel to all three, but she, my teacher would say now you think of downtown Vernon and you see a white man stumbling down one side of the road, and you see a Indian on the other side stumbling. The white man falls down because he's so drunk, the Indian keeps on stumbling, who do you think that you're going to look at and talk about? Are you going to care about that white person? No, you're watching that friggin' Indian. And that's exactly what everybody was doing. Big deal that's a white man he can do whatever he wants, but look at that drunken Indian. Look at that drunken white man he's twice as drunk, but nobody's paying attention! But my teacher, like in grade five and I, that was a long time ago. A long time ago I was in grade five and that's how she was thinking.

But there was also a teacher in grade two, her name was Mrs. Brady, I don't know if you know Jim Brady, the old Métis? Well, I didn't know, not in grade two I didn't know, and so the name didn't speak to me or whatever but she always took a liking to us Aboriginal children and I couldn't understand. She goes, "I understand you guys, I understand." And I didn't understand but she already knew that we were Métis, but she couldn't say. Well of course she's dead now. Well we were all friends and I'm thinking, well okay, there was just a whole group of us and we were all friends and it wasn't until after, 'til I was older that I found out they were all Métis. We didn't know why we connected as youth in elementary school until we were all old and we found out that we were all Métis. That was here in Vernon. Yeah, it's like something inside your soul, you know that you're related, you have something in common, whether it's the music or I don't know. My dad always, every weekend he would have everybody over on a Sunday and they'd all sit in the back yard with their guitars and banjos and harmonicas and get the spoons out and-, and that was every Sunday there was a gathering and it was always this music. Here in Vernon. Like the spoons yeah, I remember my dad trying to teach me to play the spoons like with real spoons (laughs). And I loved square dancing at school and I couldn't figure out how, how do I, how come I love square dancing like that's a country thing? But no it's actually the quadrel and it is all Métis dance.

Oh yeah well, that's all I can do is be proud to be Métis. I don't see anything, I don't see any hunting rights, I don't see any fishing rights, I don't see anything. I've let mine (citizenship card) lapse because there's so much of politics right now. It (citizenship) used to be important to me but I found that having my citizenship doesn't given me any-, any more right then not having it. I always knew who I was. I think if I moved to Alberta, or

Saskatchewan, there it might be more of use but here in BC it's –here in BC I've found it's, it's kind of useless. I have a right to be Métis no matter whether I carry a card or not. I think it's up to the person how they want to identify. Yeah, I don't think it's up to any kind of government or anything to say how a person, who a person is, or how a person should feel. I mean after all we have men walking around that want to be women. Who's to say that they're right or wrong? And I just know who I am and it doesn't matter if the government agrees with me or not, it doesn't matter, I-, I know who I am. That's the government again because you need the numbers to get the funding. But who's getting the funding, it's not coming to me, so do I give a shit? Oops sorry (laughs). But do I care? It's not going to help me. It's not helping me build my roads, it's not helping me pay my taxes, it's not helping me with my medical or my dental or my education. So how is it helping me? It's not educating the population as to what a Métis is. So who cares? I would, but right now it just making sure that there's a job for certain people so. And who cares? It's-, it's not helping me or my family or my relatives, my ancestors. I've seen somewhere they tried to take over from the people who have known that they've been Métis. And I don't care how many books you've read, you're not going to, it's not going to be deeper in you then it is in me. I've been raised that way. I've known I've been that way for years and years and years, it's part of me, I don't know how to be anything else. You used to be something else and then you became (Métis) so (laughs), but I was always this. Well, and the way that you were raised and the feelings and the bruising that you got being raised that way. Okay, well now it's okay to be Métis and now, you know, five hundred years from now, I'm proud. Well, where is your cuts and your bruises and your scars from being raised when it wasn't proud, when you couldn't be proud? Yeah, because they think it's their right? Well now they're going to think that, "Okay well, somewhere down the way I'm going to get my education paid for." And they all know how expensive it is so if they're taking a four year course the last two years are paid for. As long as there's funds available and, you know, who? You know, because I never got any of my education-, I never got any of my education paid for, and they were screaming for more Métis in the schools. So, I went to college, but I didn't bother-, it didn't help me at all I had to pay and I'm still paying my student loans, so there is nothing. There is absolutely nothing. You can be proud to be Métis, but you don't need a card as far as I'm concerned. It's like having a husband, you can be married or you can just live in sin, it don't matter the benefits are still the same. Yep, one just, you got a piece of paper and one you don't.

Well and a lot of you would be amazed at how many non-Aboriginal people believe that the Métis get all the same benefits. Are you kidding me? I said, "I'm no different from you. I got to pay my taxes, I got to pay for my medical, my dental, my education. I got to get a hunting licence and a fishing licence, the same as everybody else." So the only thing I get to say is, "Hey, I'm-, I'm Aboriginal." That is it, but I, that's the only break I get. You're in BC; I don't think there is any (benefits).

Born in northern Alberta, Janet describes herself as being raised by her father as a half-breed, but that it was an unwelcome label. Janet recalls her father, whose mother was a L'Hirondelle, as enjoying music, gatherings, fiddling, dancing, fishing and speaking michif, as well as having attended residential school. She details her experience of being able to pass as "totally French" in white Coldstream, due to her olive skin tone and "Indian" and Cree on the local reserve. She believes that things have changed since the inclusion of Métis in the 1982 Canadian constitution, stating that "now you can be proud to be Métis even though you are a half-breed." In contrast to the ways in which she was treated early on, Janet now tries to see the positive aspects of being of dual descent, as being the best of both worlds.

Janet describes differences between living in Canada's prairie provinces versus her experience in BC, stating that Métis is a new word and a new people in British Columbia. She explains that some people think Métis is "made up," calling her a "wannabe Indian" or a "teaspoon." Yet, Janet remains proud to be Métis and tries to pass on her pride to her grandchildren, who "don't care anyways." She believes that is a normal reaction for children, as she believes that interest comes later and is personally regretful that she didn't pay more attention to her father as a child, during events such as the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage. She returned to Alberta during the summers to stay with her grandparents and help out extended family. Janet recalls two of her childhood teachers, one of which who tells a moral story about stereotyping 'Indians' and another, who she implies was a relative of Métis activist Jim Brady who expressed compassion towards Janet's experience as a half-breed. Janet, like others, describes finding out later that most of her friends in elementary school were Métis, despite not talking about it at the time. She supposes that this phenomenon results from "something inside your soul, you know that you're related, you have something in common."

In my conversation with Janet she felt that being able to identify with the more acceptable term Métis was the most significant benefit of identifying as Métis. She explains that she has let her MNBC citizenship lapse due to "so much politics," stating that she has always known who she is and citizenship might be more useful in Prairie Provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan. Janet strongly believes that her identity comes from within and cannot be determined or sanctioned by the government. Interestingly, she equates self-identification to the ability of transgendered people to choose their gender. Furthermore, she doesn't believe that anybody has the right to judge self-identification. Like others, she suggests that citizenship registration is emphasized for the purpose of increasing "numbers" to attain government funding, but since she is not seeing any benefits from registering as a citizen for herself, her family, relatives or ancestors she allows her citizenship card to lapse.

She describes situations where people who have only recently discovered their Métis ancestry have taken over from those who have been "raised that way." She feels this is unfair, because those who newly claim a Métis identity have not had the "bruising that you got being raised that way" when it was not acceptable to be Métis. Janet believes that such 'newcomers' claim a Métis identity for education funding, although she had never

received any support for education herself and is still paying off her student loans. She believes these are only perceived benefits and that in reality, there are no benefits for Métis in BC, besides being proud to be Métis. Janet's story points to the challenges around citizenship that MNBC faces. On one hand, there are people who are seeking citizenship to validate an identity that may have been previously hidden from them and on the other hand, there are those who do not feel that they need a citizenship card to validate the identity with which they were raised.

5.15 “Oh, you’re one of those green-eyed Indians”

Peter, in his 40s, is from Lac La Biche, Alberta, but now resides at Big White Mountain near Kelowna BC. A father, adjunct professor, hunter and former MNBC employee, Peter understands his identity as Métis based on the values with which he was raised, especially in terms of obligations to family (and by extension, community, the Land) and his spiritual beliefs. Though having worked closely with MNBC, Pete is explicitly anti-national as he feels that it is restrictive, divisive, hierarchical and inconsistent with the values with which he was raised. Here is Peter's story:

I talked to my mom about it now, she says, “You know we never called ourselves-, we couldn't call ourselves that (Métis).” “Canadian Damnit! Bastards!” (laughs) That's what my granddad, Danish granddad said “Canadian!” Right? But he was an immigrant right? And that's so typical of immigrants, so proud to be Canadian because they-, you know, they sacrificed a lot to come here and to be Canadian so in the face of that, that's what he said. And then we all-, yeah, like we all just knew who our grannies were. But my dad, it never really mattered much to them, to identify, right? They never talked about being Native. They talked about things that were Native, or were Abor-, were Métis, you know, especially from their youth and from how they grew up and what not. There was never anything negative about it growing up.

My granny she would teach us things. She taught us a rabbit hunting song and she taught my brothers how to snare, and me how to snare rabbits and stuff like that. She taught us about plants and you know, “You can eat this one, you can eat that one.” She, talking to my mom now (my mom is loosened up to talk about it now), she said, “Yeah, they always had those types of conversations, but I was never part of them.” She really regretted not being a part of it. Now, she regrets it now. She's disappointed that she never sat down and talked with her mom in those discussions when she had all her Métis friends over. So they'd sit around and they'd talk in Michif, -that they would talk, yeah, and Cree and French and English. Yeah, she had a Grade 8 education, you know? She self taught herself. I remember doing the same workbooks as her when I was going to elementary school. She was getting her education too, like finishing up, so she had the same textbooks as I did. So, you know, I thought that was really admirable.

So I've been talking to my mom about it just recently and I always thought she went to the mission in Lac La Biche, I don't know if you know where that is? It's outside of Lac La Biche and I always thought she went there, but I'm pretty sure she went there for awhile, but we're in the process of finding out exactly where she went to school. Yeah, both of my parents went to, like if you look down the list of day schools and residential schools, both the schools my parents went to are on those lists. They're day schools and residential schools. Yeah, they

were bringing the kids in, right? Like a lot of my dad's friends, some of my dad's friends he still talks about them as if they were being brought in-, they were brought in. He knows people that sit on the reconciliation board that were negatively affected by that experience so, but they never talk about it as negative. And I remember my mom too saying that my grandma went to the mission school and that's where the nuns were and she said that she loved it. Yeah, because there was, you know what was going on in her home wasn't a positive experience-, wasn't a good place to grow up.

We grew up in like Lac La Biche, like you know, Métis Central (laughter). For a lot of people it's Métis Central, type thing. There's a huge Métis population around there. You know, you got two Métis settlements that access that town for their services, then so many people in that town are just Métis. At the same time though there's a huge Lebanese population. Yeah, one of the first mosques ever built in Alberta is in Lac La Biche. I had a lot of Lebanese friends as well and it was like that too. Like if you look back on it and how we hung out and who we fought with as kids and stuff like this it's a definitive class structure (laughs). It's kind of sad, but you never think of it back then. It's more just an act (laughs). Yeah, and the protestants and the, we had like a French contingent, and so the protestants, I can just remember all their last names and then all the French you know the proper, proper Québécois French. And then there was the Lebanese, First Nations, and the Métis. And I hung out with the Lebanese, First Nations, and Métis. And I think about the fights that I got into and I fought with Anglicans and I fought with Frenchmen (laughs). It's funny (laughs). Well, we didn't-, you know, we couldn't-, we didn't associate with the Anglicans or we didn't associate with the French.

We had, I had a cousin, I had one cousin that lived with us for quite a while but we had five kids in our family already. And so, he lived with us for a while and then we had-, and I don't really know if he was a foster kid but he was somehow related to us as well. Like he went to school with us, so I just always thought of him as a friend. You know he lived with us for a while, so that was cool, totally fine. It was my-, I know my Auntie was having a tough time for a while so her-, that's when my cousin, he lived with us, seemed for years that he lived with us. Yeah, and he was younger than me. I think he was, might have been a year younger than Melanie my youngest sister, so two to three years younger than me. We had people come over because my parents were always open to even our friends, even when we moved down here. When we moved to the Lower Mainland it was cool so we still had our friends come over and (stay). Yeah, there wasn't an argument or anything like that if they were having problems with their family at home or something like that.

I just couldn't imagine sending me and my two brothers off to stay with anybody (laughs). A quarter section of bush and farmland wasn't enough to contain us (laughs). My dad couldn't do much because he was always working, but we'd end up with my uncles and-, my younger uncles. We'd end up hanging out with them and they would teach-. And my oldest brothers would help me out and me and my, not my oldest brother but my next brother Joe we'd always go out fishing together as kids. We'd always go out, like we had a little trapline and everything where we'd get our rabbits and squirrels, collect pinecones to sell. Yeah, so we sold like pellets, the rabbit pellets and the squirrel pellets, collecting pinecones was the other one that we could-, you know, we did out in the bush. Well, they would take the seeds and plant seeds to grow trees. Like I don't remember my sisters being around all that much when we did that sort of stuff. Not at all, fishing you know, they'd come out fishing, everybody would go fishing, ice fishing and what not. My mom can fillet a fish better than anybody, I'd take her to Vegas any day if they had a filleting fish contest down there (laughs). Yeah, they used to go to fish camps, that was their jobs was to fillet a fish that anyone pulled out. You know, and that's the sort of stuff that I hear, you know well do you, do you think anybody else did that? You know, you know when you-, when they think about being Métis or being Aboriginal, doing those Aboriginal type things, you know, "Other kids didn't do that Mom" (laughs).

You know, we didn't-, nobody jigs, nobody plays the fiddle and stuff like [that]. The reason why I really say that I'm Métis is because I have, you know, my grandparents both grew up in big Métis communities and they take part in the community, they work with them and everything. Back then the Welsh and the Danish, they were this, it's just a different immigrant and so they went into Métis communities and they were accepted and they worked with them. I mean, if they didn't like it they would have moved on. You're not tied to a bush, piece of bush. I mean you know Lac La Biche. I mean those places are hard places to live. You don't go there and stay there just because you like to be brutalized by horrible winters and mosquitoes that put you down (laughs).

Yeah, the Ukrainians were, that's the other group that were big in Lac La Biche, the Ukrainians. Huge Ukrainian population and you know, who were they? But a few decades later the Lebanese and the Iranians that came across, that immigrated to Canada later that I grew up with or that you grew up with, so that's why you know, because we're in those Métis communities and because we're accepted and we worked-, they worked within them and then they married within them and all their friends were there. That's, if I was to define myself, like I can't define myself as Canadian because I'm definitely not Torontonian. I'm partly urban (laughs), so I can't-, like Canada is just so huge and there's such a variety. I've also believed in the idea of the multicultural-, but I do say I'm Canadian, but I'm Métis. It's not hyphenated or nothing like that; it's just Canadian and Métis. Because I think the people who started the Métis Provisional Governments and stuff like that, yeah, I don't think they ever intended to have a separate Métis Nation. I think they meant to be part of Canada and they just wanted the respect and that was an equity that was afforded to other Canadians. They didn't want to be controlled by a colonial government, somebody that wasn't in their backyard. They wanted the backyard government. They wanted their say. I don't think they ever stood up to say, "We are the Métis Nation." Because they all knew it wasn't theirs, because they all got it from somebody else as well and I think they knew it more than anybody. So I think it's just a twist of politics today that says we have to be nationalized. I don't like the idea of nationalism. I think it's detrimental to the human race and to your experience as human and to mine, because it stereotypes us, it puts us into a box. It says suddenly you're like everybody else.

But I can say I'm Canadian, I'm a Métis, you know, and if you're curious well then you ask, "What's Métis?" You know? I tell them, "Well, Métis were here prior to Canada being Canada," and I say that we lived with First Nations and we lived with the European settlers. I don't tell the creation stories that they give about being interbred. No, I stay away from that because everybody is. I think that's kind of to focus and to put all of my identity onto the idea that I'm just mixed. I mean that blindly ignores the fact that everybody else is. And if you try to go the other way and try not to be mixed, you know, we see examples of that happening in the UK. I tell people I'm Métis and I hang out with the Europeans, the immigrants, you know, and they're like, "What?" "I'm Métis," you know? And I say, "You know, we were here before Canada was here, we had like government structures, we had a social structure, we had a language, we had cultural things, we had dances and songs and stuff like that and this is what we did, this is who we interacted with." Europeans are fascinated. Canadians are dismayed, especially like Anglo-Canadians. So, the most frequent question I get from Canadian community members is "can't the rest of them be like you?" And that's always a challenge to, you know, to politely beat them over the head (laughs) with a total, "you need a better education." You know, you want to say all sorts of nasty things to them. But then there's some that one's like, "Oh, I grew up on the reserve and, you know, best friends with so and so," that type. Some of them are just totally [confused], and then there's the Albertans are like, "Oh yeah." [In BC] people will say, "Hutchinson, that's not a Métis name. Oh, you're one of those green eyed Indians." I've got that one, or the "what the hell does that mean?" (laughs) and that's like ok. Yeah, you totally can allow yourself to be sucked into think that it's not a legitimate thing entirely. I just think it's the lack of education, you know. There's just a lack of critical thought in general. So, I stay away from-, I don't know, I stay away from that.

So, when somebody says that, asks me that, you know, I still-, like I still am Métis because I still go out-. Like for me I'm on the land and that's really important. I'm in the community, that's really important to be active. My parents even though they say, "Ahy are you involved that way?" They were involved as well. They were, it was just different there. Yeah, and even now I'm not even involved in the Métis community where I am, I'm just involved in the community and that's the way it always was and that's the way I always say my parents, was just being involved in the community whether it was through the church or whether it was through some local organization or just a bunch of guys getting together to do community oriented things.

[They were] the lay low, duck and cover type Métis (laughs). My dad still has that in him, my mom too. I get involved now in the community where I am and I tell my parents and they're just like, "Why? You don't need that" (laughs). Well I think it's a direct response to just authority, it's just how authority's been through their lives, how they've interacted with authority. Well, just go about doing your thing, you know, and if your thing isn't interfering with anybody then all's good. I think it's survival aid, like protect your family, make your family strong and make sure that everybody can get to where they're going and where they want to go, and support them

like that. I think that's the primary objective and that's what they concentrate on their entire life. Yeah, it wasn't to try to become filthy rich, don't run off and get a job somewhere and have to travel back to your family. It's always in the family, stay with the family, support your family, support your brother and sisters, you know?

(I ask Peter about the citizenship registry process)

When I think about registry, the first thing I think about is World War II and Jewish people. They had registries. I don't agree with it, I don't agree that we should have to sign something to prove what I am. I know what I am, and I'm okay with it. I don't ask for anything. I don't ask for any reparations for anything that went on in the past. The political motivation of registries is what I have the issue which. See too many people, they're just trying to collect names. It's like a popularity game. I'm not here to become-, and I don't want to be in everybody's face saying, "Métis!" Especially when we have the Okanagan Nation here and ever since, we moved up here we've been involved in the Métis community one way or another, working with them, volunteering with them, whatever. And I've been saying all along, you know, we have to really improve our relationship with the Okanagan people here. And it always ends up in these, "Let's write a letter of understanding" (laughs), "we'll call it a memorandum or whatever". And as a technocrat I know all about that stuff and it's just-, I don't see it going anywhere. What I'd really like to see is the presidents of the communities-, of the Métis community going to the Okanagan and saying-, doing it traditionally, "Thank you" and having a-, give them a feast and sharing with them and not asking anything of them. Just saying, "You know we do appreciate you. We appreciate you and your people and that's it, thank you." And walk away, you know. That's all it has to be. We don't have to fight over health care resources.

If it's not a safe place we're not going to be able to, Métis people won't access it. Whether I'm more informed, I don't know how like other Métis people feel about the ONA relationship throughout here, but you know, and that's why I don't-. It's a long way from the registry discussion where this started but do you see what I'm saying? One of the Métis elders I was doing some-, that's on the ethics committee for MNBC said he teaches down in the Langley school districts down there on Métis culture. And he said that "you first have to provide that safe environment. If you can't have that safe environment nobody's going do anything. Nobody will access it, nobody will open up." And I think that's the thing for Métis identity too. You have to have that safety first. That's what he's saying to those kids when he sits down with a bunch of Aboriginal kids, "Well you're Aboriginal, what are you?" You know, and it's like he provides that safe environment first where you get to share and then they open up and they start to identify and then from that, after that they can move on to whatever their next objective is, right? But they have to have those two things first and right now I mean even for me I feel threatened if I identify as a Métis around an Okanagan person, well, because of the lack of recognition for Métis. Saying that you know, we're not a cultured people and we're not-. That's how it was before, so if they used to say, "You're not cultured people." And then there's also the stories of all the Métis people are going to open up a-, make a land application for the Westside. Yeah, like these myths that go around like I don't know-. I have no idea where they would get such ideas from and really-, well, I kind of get an idea of where they get the threats from. They established a Métis community on the Westside. You know there was an established Westside Métis community, wasn't there? Well, wouldn't there be with the fur trade trail?... and I think they know this. It's like the Dickinson Trapline as well right, that's a, -he was Métis (laughs)

(I ask about people claiming a Métis identity for benefits)

Oh yeah. I have no idea [what]. They're misinformed. I think so. It's horrible because I know that more so of a fact from my work with the registry than anything else. People call me up and ask me. Yeah, "I got my Métis citizenship, what can I get?," you know, "can I get this?," "can I get that?." Or you look at the Métis demographic and that boost of that 18 to 35 or 30 year olds, that's huge. That's so wrong. I think that's people, that's a change in policy that you have to have a card, you have to identify to get this, you know that's one of the most frequent places where you can actually benefit identifying as Métis. I'm still over the shell shock of paying off sixty some odd thousand dollars of student debt. I didn't even-, when I got into university it wasn't because I was Métis. I identified as Métis, but I didn't get in because I was Métis. They didn't hold any seats for me. I got in because I was persistent. My first scholarships were the non-, they weren't Aboriginal focused. I had to get the ones that

were general population before I got anything from, that was Aboriginal focused, or for the Aboriginal population. I couldn't get any of them, because it was all First Nations. There wasn't anything that was Métis specific or even inclusive of Métis. You had to be a status cardholder, right?

I don't put it out there. When people start bad-mouthing Métis, or bad-mouthing Indians or Indigenous peoples that's the end of that. You know, that's where I put it out there and that's the only time I see it necessary to put it out there, because it positions me within the argument or within the discussion that we're about to have out. No, I don't. I've been kicked down enough I think-, you know, I think this is where my parents get it from. You don't get your head out. You know, it's totally fine for me to be, and it's not like I'm a closet Métis person either. I don't have to wear a sash. I don't have to jig everywhere I go, I don't have to have fiddle music as my (laughs) soundtrack.

I don't think we should be nationalized. That I think is the biggest problem with the Métis politics today, because we're communities. We'll always be communities. Last time we tried to nationalize we started firing shots at other people (laughs). If you want to go down that road... I think it's the colonial government. It's a tactic by the colonial government to remove the culture from the people. It makes it easier to manage. What's more financially-, what's easier fiscally to do is to provide one service to one group of people and hopefully that one group is you. So, you just can duplicate and cookie cutter everything to resolve social issues that every community experiences. That's the easiest way to do it and that's the way they go about it. When they ask-, when we sit down in front of them and say, "There is a community of people out there that's experienced high rates of diabetes and we have to do something about it. They happen to be Métis and we know that the best way to deal with these people is because of their experiences and there is a definitive way to increase the accessibility of the health care." We know that way, but are we doing it? No, because it looks like it's more expensive because we have to spend money on the sub population. And it's easier to just get one blanket then to have to buy a blanket and some quilts or something. That's how I think that's the nationalism of it is that we have to get behind and support our communities, because the economics and because of the way the governments operating today they forced us into that situation, because they're not going to do anything without the numbers. What numbers do you want? Well, you want population? Okay well, here's a population: there's 70,000 of us. Well that's not enough. Status? Non-status? Métis? Aboriginal? And I can do that, why would I do that? Why would I position myself over top of somebody else right? Just because of what my ancestors did? (laughs). It's ludicrous. It's so not the values that I grew up with. I think the government should provide social services, so that way every person can experience life equally. Equitably. We have a lot of choice. We live in a democratic society. We can get together and try to nationalize and if that's going to work and that will put those people over above other people, what good will it do?

My hunting, I love hunting. I wish I could go out there and hunt anytime. I don't think we should. I think the land has suffered a lot of abuse at our hands and I think First Nations-, I think everybody should follow those regulations. I understand that it's hard to collect food. I think we should change those regulations on how we harvest for food, make that distinction. I don't want to be a big game hunter. I don't want to hunt with big game hunters. You know, I think there's a better way to manage what we have access to for harvesting. I don't think it has to be outside of the regulations that we currently have or that we share with other people. I think we all should have access to the land. If you're an immigrant and you want to harvest here, why shouldn't you be allowed to harvest a deer for food? If you're an immigrant and you want to big game hunt, I think you should have more restrictions on you. Yeah, identify right? What do I want to do? I want food. That's what I want. A full freezer, that's what I want. I want my girls' bellies full with good meat from the land. I don't think that I should have any right more so or less so. I don't think any person should have any more right. I don't care if you've been here for eternity and I don't care if you got a written note from God that these are all your deer. And I think the First Nations don't apply that. It's over here it's okay, over there is not okay. I don't need any reparations. When I see that my ancestors name on scrip, I see my ancestor's name on historical documents that say we're Métis and we're First Nations and what not. My parents raised me strong enough that I can do it myself and that's what, - that's what I always thought the Métis community was. That we did it ourselves-, we did it strong. I always thought that maybe we're Métis-, maybe they left the reserve because they didn't like the way it was being run, or

the First Nations community, the way it was being run. Maybe they saw something that was, that other people saw and they got together and made their community, you know?

Peter begins by explaining that his parents never explicitly called themselves ‘Métis,’ but talked about things that were Métis. He describes his grandmother passing on knowledge about harvesting plants and animals and his own mother being regretful of not being more engaged in the past. Speaking Cree and Michif, his grandmother taught herself, but also attended the mission in Lac La Biche, which she considered to be an improvement upon her home environment. Both of Peter’s parents attended residential and/or day schools. He describes his experience growing up at Lac La Biche, which he terms ‘Métis Central,’ due to the large Métis population that accessed the town for services. He also describes his experiences interacting with Lebanese, French Canadian, Anglican and First Nations populations, attributing community divisions to class structure. Furthermore, Peter tells a story of a cousin who came to live with his family for several years, as his family was always welcoming of those who needed a place to stay. Reminiscing about growing up, Peter describes his activities with his brothers such as trapping, fishing, as well as collecting and selling pinecones and animal pellets. He also proudly describes his mother’s fish filleting skills, which she learned while working at fish camps. He has to remind her that this experience is something that was particularly Métis when he states, “Other kids didn’t do that mom.” Peter’s family didn’t jig or play the fiddle, but identifies as Métis on the basis that his parents grew up in large Métis communities.

Peter identifies as both Canadian and Métis, but does not agree with Métis nationalism as he doesn’t believe that the original Métis provisional government intended to be a nation that was separate from Canada. Rather, he argues that they were seeking equitable treatment and a truly representative government. He states that “more than anybody,” the historic Métis knew that the land wasn’t theirs, “because they all got it from somebody else.” He believes the focus on Métis nationalism is a “twist of politics” that is “detrimental to the human race,” because of the ways in which it narrowly defines diverse populations. When describing Métis, Peter emphasizes their pre-colonial presence (including distinct social structure, government structure, language and culture), as opposed to their mixedness, as he believes that it is not what makes Métis people distinct. He believes that he continues to be Métis because he continues to be on the land and involved with the community.

He explains that his parents have always been involved with their community, whether or not it was Métis-specific. Describing his parents as “the lay low, duck and cover type Métis,” Peter believes that his family intentionally avoids identification as a response to authority, instead focusing on the needs of the family. He makes negative associations with registries and feels that they are politically motivated. Peter doesn’t feel like he needs reparations and doesn’t feel the need to publicly pronounce that he is Métis. He is especially aware of the problems of doing so on unceded Syilx territory in the Okanagan and doesn’t feel that technocratic letters of understanding are the appropriate solution to improving Métis-Okanagan relationships. He believes that protocol should be observed, whereby Métis leaders invite Okanagan people to a feast where they are acknowledged and thanked for sharing their territory. Peter does not feel that currently the Okanagan is a safe place for Métis to publicly identify due to misunderstandings about Métis people and their motives. Peter also differentiates between the ways in which people from British Columbia understand Métis identity versus those from Alberta. He attributes the lack of understanding of Métis identity to not only a lack of education and critical thought, but also to a lack of familiarity with Métis people. Rather than engage in such difficult conversations, Peter prefers a tactic of avoidance.

That said, he believes that a large percentage of people who apply for an MNBC citizenship card do so for the purpose of attaining benefits, especially in terms of education. Peter points to the skewed age demographic, where a large percentage of new applicants fall between the age range of 18-30/35. He believes this results in the recent change in scholarship applications that require proof of a provincial citizenship card, as opposed to self-identification. He explains his own experience of having large amounts of student debts, and receiving little funding from being Métis.

While Peter does not feel that he has to tell everyone that he is Métis, he does so when he feels that he needs to position himself within arguments when people “start bad-mouthing Métis, or bad-mouthing Indians or Indigenous peoples.” He repeats that the Métis should not be nationalized, arguing that doing so is falling in line with the tactics of the colonial government to simultaneously remove culture while limiting and simplifying their financial obligations. Peter does not agree that Aboriginal people should be placed on a hierarchy based on

ancestry, stating that it is “so not the values that I grew up with.” Alternatively, he suggests, “the government should provide social services so that way every person can experience life equally. Equitably.” Peter points to harvesting rights, arguing that the purpose of hunting should determine restrictions, rather than the status of the hunter. He believes that if the animal is harvested for sustenance it should be less restricted, whereas big game hunting should be restricted, regardless of ancestry.

Similar to Zach, the emphasis on family relations and notions Métisness were often interchangeable. This seemed to be the case for those participants who were raised with knowledge of their Métis heritage. Nearly all of these participants were from Métis communities in Alberta, had parents or grandparents who attended residential school, were expressly skeptical of politics and especially the Canadian government, and took a predominantly ethno-cultural approach to their own identification as Métis.

5.16 "What if you do have an Indian grandma in the closet though, right?"

Born in Whitehorse and raised in Hixon, a small community near Prince George BC, Carlene grew up in a large but close knit family. Carlene was raised with the knowledge of her ‘Native heritage,’ but struggled with her identity as she was told that her ‘Native side’ was her ‘bad blood.’ Now in her 50s, she proudly identifies as Métis and as a two-spirited person. Like Peter’s family, for Carlene evading government identification is purposeful, as for her family a visible ‘Indian’ identity led to the placement of her family members into residential school. Here is her story:

So, my Métis heritage comes from my mother’s side. My mom had me when she was sixteen and I’ve never known my dad. So, I feel very Métis because really that’s all that I’ve known. So, my family comes from Alberta and from what I understand my grandma’s family, my mom and grandma’s family, but my grandma’s generation was really centered around Lac La Biche area. And actually my grandma married a man from Norway when she was thirteen, no twelve actually. So, my grandma she was sold, “sold” to a white man, this is my grandfather right, for a team of horses when she was twelve and had her first baby at thirteen. And she was the youngest in her family. My grandma when she told those stories, I mean it was difficult and painful for her, that being her reality. So I’ve traced our genealogy back and I’ve met, you know, a lot of our family members from Lac La Biche. Family is pretty centered in Alberta. And I mean it’s kind of neat with modern genealogy, like being able to trace that back to like the 1700s. So, that’s cool, coming right from France and then the migration over. And then in Lac La Biche, there is a mission school, residential school, and apparently it’s one of the first residential schools in the country. So yes, that was my grandma. And she had a few kids, five kids I guess, and when her kids were quite young, she wound up leaving the family. And so my mom was raised primarily by her dad, which means my mom and her siblings all went to residential school and were in and out of foster homes and all that kind of stuff growing up.

And my grandfather was a very strict Jehovah Witness, so my mom and my aunty both had children very young at sixteen and so they were excommunicated for having children. So, you know from the time when my mom was a very young woman she was out on her own. And then my grandma came back in our lives, when my mom had her second child, so I was about five at the time, and that was really cool. So, filling in the gaps around what she did when she left the family, she just continued to live off the land. Like when she was married to my grandfather, they had traplines and they had dogsleds and that's how they survived and my grandma pretty much kept that kind of lifestyle up. I mean so she was a bush woman. Well, then she moved into BC and she became a prospector. I mean she did a lot of different things, but she was a prospector. She discovered some copper mines and did all this kind of stuff. I was really close with my grandma. We spent a lot of time together, being the oldest child. And I was born in Whitehorse. Dad moved over there-. There they went to a residential school around there. Mom was born in Conklin actually, there was a fair amount of movement, yeah. Then Whitehorse and then we moved down to the lower Mainland, I think when I was three, and then up to Hixon. I was raised in Hixon. That's like forty miles south of Prince George, so close to PG, like a little tiny, little tiny community. It's just like one of those five hundred people kind of thing-. I grew up on a farm there. Yeah, so my mom remarried, well got married, well actually she never really got married, but you know, "got married" to the person I call my dad, when I was about five. And yeah, so then they had more kids. So my dad had two kids from a previous marriage, my mom there are four of us, then my mom also had another child. You know all these stories, but she had another child between me and meeting my dad and the child she ended up being given up for adoption. It's neat because we're all pretty connected and pretty close, a pretty close knit group yeah.

When I say I'm Métis, I say I'm Métis because of the Métis cultural heritage, because the whole I mean kind of-, what do you call it? Like a little shiny case for Métis-ism. Like when you look at the fur trade and the Indian wife connections and all those things, that's how it worked in my family. So there's Métis cultural identity then there's métis, being of mixed heritage. I think they are different. I think they are different, but how you draw that line I think is tricky. I think it's a bit tricky. You know, I mean I've heard people usually in some kind of a racist kind of context, say, "Oh yeah, they just pulled their Indian grandma out of the closet." Well, what if you do have an Indian grandma in the closet though right?

I mean it's funny, in our family we never identified specifically as Métis but as Native. That's how it was talked about, "being Native." Yeah. Oh it was all kinds of things. I mean, it's funny, like my grandma she was a Cree speaker and when she would get together with her sisters and family and stuff like that they'd speak Cree, but when we asked them what they were-, "What are you saying?" They'd say, "Oh, we're just speaking French." For my grandmother, there was never a kind of talk that I remember anyways or anything that was like, "Hey, we're Native. It's something to be proud of." I know there was a lot of shame. There was a lot of shame and I don't know necessarily if she felt the shame or just knowing that by disclosing or by talking-. I don't know, I mean my grandma was very Native-looking. So, there was a lot of racism, even in my own family from the non-Aboriginal people, yeah. Yeah, there always was. So, I kind of grew up with this weird kind of thing where we are out hunting, trapping, fishing, living off the land, picking berries, like doing that kind of stuff and that's how we lived, but also with this shame as well. And it was with this understanding that the Native side was our bad blood. Like that was our bad blood. I don't look particularly Native, so going to school and things like that, I never identified as Aboriginal, Native, Métis. Growing up, it wasn't anything that I necessarily hid. When I was sixteen, I wound up going up North and working for thirteen years in a guiding-outfitting business and we used to hire First Nations guides, cooks, and stuff. The racism! Like it was just everywhere. Certainly like the people, like my husband and all that obviously knew my family and knew our background, but it wasn't something that I felt like a lot of pride around. It was just the way things were. So it wasn't until after the bush experience I came back out of the bush and decided that I wanted to continue with education so I went to UBC.

It's not like I wasn't interested in First Nations, I really wanted to learn the history and find out more. I totally had that curiosity, because I certainly felt the injustice. I was certainly aware of the injustice and the stories that had impacted, residential school and all those pieces, and I wanted to learn more so at university I did start learning more. And then there when I wanted to write about First Nations issues or Métis issues or whatever, "Oh well that's-, you know, you really should-, that's for-, for Aboriginal people to write about themselves." And I was kind of like, "Well, I am," and so then it's like, "Oh, you are? Wow!" Then all of a sudden, it was totally

cool in university right? In these settings to do what I want now if I say that I'm Aboriginal. It was total opposite of what I experienced growing up, but it was equally weird. It was equally weird. Like so, in one setting I am totally denigrated for my heritage and another I am totally revered. So, it was a bit weird, yeah.

And so, after university, I mean by then I totally knew that my career-, that I was really committed to working with and being with my community, Aboriginal community, like really connecting. So I went back to PG and started working for the friendship centre there. Yeah, by then I said I was Métis. It was also a bit of a journey for me to figure out for myself, like who am I? Like what does it mean to be Métis? So I had to sort out those kinds of things. Because I came out to Prince George feeling like, "Yeah! Aboriginal! Métis!" You know? (laughs). And then I experienced so much racism from First Nations, like, "Who are you to be teaching our First Nations kids?" Like, "Who are you?" This kind of thing right, because if you're not First Nations, then there was this whole other level of-. Yeah, which is kind of shocking because like it was really the first time I experienced racism from First Nations people. Yeah, and then so it took me-, the journey of identity it took awhile because I was like, "Yeah, really? Really is it okay? Do I know enough? What does it mean?" Like, "I've never lived on reserve, so should only people who've lived on reserve teach kids who come from reserve?" Because those were the kinds of things that people say and argued right? I mean it was definitely a process. I mean and I resolved it really through just honestly coming to a place where it just really didn't matter what other people thought. I know my own history, I know my family's history. I know what they experienced. I know the impact that colonization in particular-, colonization has had on my family and those impacts are so similar as the way that colonization has impacted other Aboriginal people. If somebody thinks I'm not Native enough or something, that's their opinion. Like, I'm Native enough to speak to my own experiences and my family's experiences and those experiences are like I said, they're connected to others' experiences.

I mean being in an urban environment right there are a lot of people like me right? But there [Prince George] was just this-, and I mean there still is that tension between First Nations and Métis right? And so I guess where I am now with it all is I really understand that being Métis which means having this set of experiences like being raised in particular ways and coming to understand the world in particular ways is really different than First Nations. But it doesn't mean that I don't necessarily understand First Nations issues. I feel like I have a way of-, I exist in both worlds, and I think I have a much broader capacity for understanding things and for diversity and multiplicity and all of that kind of stuff. So, I see it really as a gift and a strength, like a bridge. And sometimes a bridge isn't needed and sometimes it is. Like I'm a pretty great mediator and those kinds of things. So my cultural heritage has given me so much strength and resilience.

And it's interesting too, because last night I was working on the [MNBC citizenship] application yesterday and I'm like, "I don't think-, I don't think I can do this." You know? "I don't want to be identified in a-, I don't want to be legally identified as Métis." And I'm trying to sort out what that is. I was raised in a way that I was taught like society and urban environments, all of this it's kind of like a mirage. Like go ahead and do all that, but man if you don't know how to live off the land, like you have to know how to live off the land. Like my family has always had trapper's cabins, we've always had bug-out places. We've always been in and out of the bush. And yeah, with my grandma...

Identifying, being visible has been really at the crux of the abuses, right, for Aboriginal people. Like so if you're Aboriginal, your kids- "Oh, you're Aboriginal?" Aboriginal kids off they go to residential school. So, identifying it makes me scared, government-wise. It's all safe and yeah, we're living democratically and things are all nicey-niceyish, but things can turn pretty, pretty bad right? Possibly. And what does it mean? Well, I just need to kind of get over that because I feel protective of my family and my children right? I'm the head of my family, my whole family. And so outing myself in the government, I'm outing my whole family. But it's not like I'm in the closet about it. I mean I'm out anyway and my children have been identified in school. I'm the gatekeeper in that way. In a sense I'm sort of the family historian. My family looks to me towards those kinds of things. A lot of my family members have been interested in getting their Métis card. Well, I mean there is some real benefits in terms of like there are certain scholarships. When I think about it for my kids, there are certain scholarships and things that where you have to prove your identity. It's not enough anymore just to identify, you have to actually prove it. So there's that. I'm really hoping that-, like my family we're hunters, fishers, and gatherers so I'm hoping that it may result in some rights, some further harvesting rights down the road. And I don't know, there really isn't a lot.

There's nothing specifically that's an advantage to doing it, which is maybe one of the reasons why I've not done it for so long.

You know, [the citizenship process] is quite complex. And I mean, my God, it's great for us because my mom and grandma come from a really well known, well-researched Métis background. But for others that could be really difficult. And I think that's such a big piece, being accepted by your community right? I think ultimately that should be the litmus test, right, is that genuine acceptance. Like do you participate in the community? Are you involved in the community? Because it's one thing-. To me that's where you live and breathe. If you can't prove your heritage and you have no connection to the community, what-. I don't know. There might be reasons why a person would want to get their Métis card. As you can see, I'm still kind of ambivalent about-, I mean I'm on the side of yeah, you know, I've filled out the application and all that kind of stuff, but there are so many tricky bits about it right, so many tricky bits about it. Like whether I have my Métis card or not-, unless there is some future harvesting things or something, like it will make no difference in my life, you know? And it will make no difference in my kids' life or my family's life except when they want to get something from the system in a way, like a scholarship. There's no extra benefits. There's no benefits anywhere for being a Métis cardholder. It's interesting too because last year there was oh some scholarship. Anyways it was this small little scholarship that you could apply for. So, I'm going through the application, and then it's like, this is the first time it happened to me where they wanted you to actually prove your identity. So, you know, you produce some kind of card, status card, Métis card or you get your community to vouch for you, and I stopped the application, I contacted them, I said, "This is not good. I totally don't agree with that." I mean in my community, because I've worked in the Aboriginal community for so long and because, being Prince George, like my family is known, so our heritage wouldn't be up for debate, but it just felt really weird to me to think about going-. Who would I [go to] to say that I'm Métis? Like it just seemed really strange. Yeah, and it was like, "Ah! No!" What happened to self-identification? Like, why having a card does it make us more something or less something? And this is coming from not necessarily the government; it's coming from funding-, granting bodies and things like that. I have concerns about system identification.

(Our conversation turns to the topic of cultural markers such as the Métis sash)

I think they can be really, really, really, special and significant. Yeah, I do. I mean I really believe in the power of ceremony and those things come with ceremony, right, and are a part of that. Yeah, but then there's this-, like there's also like Thomas King writes this little piece in one of his books 'The Truth About Stories,' you know? I mean performing Indian right? Like, there is also performing Indian. Like, there were times, honest to God, when I was feeling like insecure or I didn't really know how to-, I was insecure about my place in Aboriginal community where I thought, "Well, if I put some feathers in my ears, if I-, like I could dress more Indian. I could perform Indian if that's what you want me to do," because, I don't know, you put some beads on. You know, what I mean? Like it's not something I've ever done because it just felt shallow. It felt shallow. Yeah, and I don't want to give the impression at all that people who do wear cultural markers are in anyway shallow. I'm not saying that, [it's] just totally an individual thing. I mean in my family we didn't wear like-, like my grandma didn't wear a Métis sash or-. She was a beader and we did all moccasins and all those kinds of things, right? But yeah, it wasn't tied to identity I guess, just the way it was, yeah. "Here, wear these. These will keep your feet warm" (laughs).

I mean I guess all of that [culture] is really around food gathering mostly. You know, I said the hunting, the fishing, but not just doing those things, but the understanding of the-, like compassion for the animals, the deep compassion for the animals and that. Understanding that we as human beings are no better or no worse than any other living thing. We are all equals. All living things are equal. You know, I used to feel that-, and I guess I still do, but I used to honestly feel that I wanted to argue that there's genetic memory, because you know, I would go into ceremony, a ceremony that I had never participated in before or and just that feeling of being home, going to sweat lodge and being home. It's like where does that stuff-, hearing the drumming, the songs, you know? Like knowing them, but not knowing them, but that total sense of being at home in those practices.

You know, a friend of mine tells this story, like the first time she understood being different, understood that she was an Indian. She was on a bus, riding to school and some kids saw these First Nations-, Native people on the

side of the road and they were just like you know, “Oh, drunken Indians” or some kind of comment like that. And it was the first time she sort of recog-. That’s sort of how it was for me as well. You know, you’re living your life and then it’s really through hearing racist comments and things like that that you get this understanding that somehow-. And as a young person it was really bad blood, like, “that’s the Indian in you.” You know? Right? And so, I mean yeah, I understood that, but I also had a lot of anger about it, like I grew up with a lot of anger. Well, one thing that I will say about identity, I think identity is absolutely- it’s crucial. That was one of the struggles that the folks that I’ve been working with, who have been really, really, really fucking devastated by colonization, you know? You know that learning our history, having a place to make sense of that and then experiencing positive cultural-, understanding culture. Because the thing that’s tricky kind of growing up, I mean I don’t know how it was for you, but when they talked about the bad blood kind of stuff, some of it resonated because there’s some substance-, there’s some alcohol stuff going on and there’s some of this going on and there’s some of that going on. All those impacts right? And so it can be difficult to sort out and not just feel like you’re just fucked up, or your family is just messed up. And you have to connect with positive cultural experiences. It has to be reframed. And then when you do-, I mean when I first, at university, and I first started really understanding this from a critical perspective, I became so angry that I didn’t even know what to do. I do a lot of work with service providers and that’s one of the things that they struggle with is the anger and hostility that people can be experiencing or they act out. And it’s like yeah, but that’s healthy. That’s a healthy step in this process of decolonizing our mind, I mean which is partly what I think happens right? Like through that process of identity is actually decolonizing the mind from whatever, the racism and all those ideas that we maybe we don’t believe, but have internalized in different ways and need to sort out.

Carlene “feels very Métis” having been raised by her Métis mother. Her grandmother was from the Lac La Biche area where she attended residential school, later leaving the family to return when Carlene was five years old. While away from the family, Carlene describes her grandmother as “a bush woman,” as she lived off the land, had traplines, used dogsleds and worked as a prospector. Carlene, like others, distinguishes Métis cultural identity from Métis-as-mixed, but finds it “tricky” to draw the line between the groups at times. She is aware of the critique of pulling an “Indian grandma out of the closet,” but understands it to be a reality for many people. Growing up, Carlene never identified specifically as Métis, but as “being Native.” She heard her grandmother and aunts speaking Cree, but like so many participants I interviewed, they hid the language by calling it French. Carlene believes there was a lot of shame around being Native in her family and that her grandma experienced racism for being “very Native-looking.” She explains that she understood that “the Native side was our bad blood.” Since she was able to pass as non-Native she did so until she attended university where it emerged as a positive aspect, and allowed her to be able to write about Aboriginal issues. This was a strange experience for Carlene, as was returning to her community of Prince George only to be greeted by what she termed later in our conversation as a “baptism by fire” from First Nations people that treated her with skepticism. She became self-

doubtful but eventually resolved it through understanding that she could only speak from her own experiences and the experiences of colonization that her family experienced.

While filling out her application for MNBC citizenship, Carlene has second thoughts, because she does not trust that governmental institutions will not punish her family (again) for their Aboriginal identity. She feels a sense of responsibility to protect her family. She is interested in citizenship so that her children can access educational funding and for the possibility of future harvesting rights. Rather than legal identification through citizenship, she sees genuine community acceptance as “the litmus test” of Métis identification, as “that’s where you live and breath.” When applying for a scholarship she was challenged by the request for a status card or for a community to vouch for her. Although Carlene would likely successfully receive her citizenship card if she applied, due to her strong ancestral connections to the historic Métis Nation (and contemporary connections to Métis communities), she prefers self-identification due to her concerns with being identified by the government.

When I bring up the question of cultural markers, Carlene understands the significance that comes with ceremonial materials, but is also personally wary of “performing Indian” by wearing ‘cultural items’ out of a sense of insecurity. She believes that it depends on the ways in which individual families were raised. For instance, for Carlene moccasins were not considered ‘cultural,’ but functional. Carlene identifies culture within her family as being centered around gathering food through fishing and hunting and the understanding that all living things are equals. Carlene believes that having a strong sense of identity and positive cultural experiences are important in reframing the negative messages that people receive about being Native and that it’s “a healthy step in this process of decolonizing our mind” from internalized racism.

5.17 “my grandmother lived in the fast lane”

Greg’s story of learning about his Métis heritage later in life is not unusual; however, Greg does not idealize ‘being Native’ or romanticize over a nostalgic past. Born and raised in East Vancouver, Greg’s story reflects the grim reality that many urban Aboriginal people face. Yet, he remains grounded in the values that he was brought up with. Now in his sixties, he is the president of the Boundary Local Métis Association, where he seeks to pass on Métis culture to youth. Here is Greg’s story:

I think you'll find with the most Métis is that we didn't talk about it, even on my side my mom is where I get a lot of the Aboriginal from but my mom was also half Chinese so after that being said, going to school, being teased at an early age. Our household we weren't allowed to talk or even play cowboys and Indians, put it that way, where maybe other kids were doing at that time. But I always knew I had Métis in me because my grandmother used to come over and you knew right away she was Native and we tried to question it a few times as kids and again, "No, you're not." So, it always put lights on in your head even at an early age and, "How come we weren't allowed to go see our grandmother?"

My mom wouldn't let us go over there, we'd sneak over and you know, my grandmother would phone and I could hear the voice on the phone, you know, her asking to send one of us kids up to help her do something and-, and mom would actually as much as lie and say, "No they-, you know, they're out," or "they're doing things in the yard that they got to do," and-, and we'd be sitting right there. So, we used to sneak out and see our grandmother. We got to know her just a little bit as we did it. We would come home and we'd get scolded and we'd get our slaps on the hands and, you know, back in those days the belts were common and wooden spoons were common, so we got that.

And it was a shame it had to go that way because we were all just curious on who we were, but like I said, when I look at it now I have to think about why these things happen. And it all goes back to my mom's roots, she was raised in Saskatchewan by her grandparents. She was left there by her mom at an early age and so the grandparents, they were half-breed. They were Cree and French and I met them when I was five years old and I still remember them in my head to this day. And they were, you know, I couldn't understand their language but you know, I guess it would be Michif now, what they speak, but at the time I didn't know. But my mom, like I said, they raised my mom from a baby right until she was about thirteen. And she saved enough money to go back down and try and find her mom in Vancouver. And through her years in Saskatchewan where she was raised and going to the Catholic schools there was a lot of teasing going on, because she was half Chinese and Native so she didn't look the same as maybe others did. So, she got teased quite a bit. So, from that part I-, I guess we were fortunate in school where we never got teased that much. I know my brother, a couple of my brothers, maybe my sister a little bit they might have but not very much. My oldest brother maybe more because he looked more Hawaiian Native and I never did because I was always a joker at school. People hung around me just because I always had things going on and so they left me alone. I guess that's some of the sad parts of the-, it all became-, it wore us down to the point that we could never really find our family roots.

And it wasn't just until you know, two decades ago that I was searching and I actually had filed for Métis citizenship, but I was turned down. It was through Alberta. At the time I had a fellow that was Métis and I got talking to him in the seventies about my life and much what I'm doing here now, and he says, "Well, you're Métis," he says. So, he brought me an application, but I just didn't have all the pieces so I got turned down. I filed through a-, I believe it was the-, the federal government and I believe I got turned down on that one too. So then you just carry on with life and it wasn't until about eight years ago that my daughter had landed a job with the government, she's a paralegal. And I believe she worked for the Indian affairs or something, but anyways she started gathering up some stuff because she knew I was looking for this stuff and she said, "Dad," she says, "I think I got everything." And I said, "Oh wow, really?" She says, "Yeah," but she says, "if you can ask grandma if she can find this one thing on her own." Great! (sarcastically) I got to ask my mom right? This is going to be hard. So, I did and I was amazed. My mom did come and give me some paperwork that she had cut out from Saskatchewan of the burial obituaries. So, it had everybody in there of all my great grandparents and all her children and relatives and my cousins and so I sent that in. I ended up getting my citizenship. Well, basically my daughter got hers first, then I got mine. That would have been through here, through our BC Métis [MNBC]. So we ended up obtaining it, which now like I said, I am so proud I got it. Now I got lots to talk about because now I know who I am.

My mom is eighty and she is basically still not willing to share all the stories, but she is realizing now that she is starting to open up and she's starting to follow a little bit more. I've given her some of my Native artwork that I do and it's just like surprising her. She's starting to reminisce maybe of some of the childhood days and things that she saw. And I was just starting to get stories out of her about what my great grandmother told her, so some of the things they had to put up with on the farm with the Natives and the war times and stuff like that-, that was

going on with the government. So, it was quite a history. The Fiddler's were my great grandparents. Matilda, her maiden name would have been Henry and my great grandfather was Joseph Fiddler and we have a very big stand of Fiddlers. From what I understand there's over a thousand to fifteen hundred of them in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan area. They're all related to me some way, shape, or form. I ran into some that are third or fourth cousins.

I was born and raised in Vancouver until I was thirteen and the parents split up and then I went back East with my dad. So, that's when I got to know my dad's side and what they did back there. And so we did a lot of travel. My times were really hard. They weren't that easy either going to school, not getting good education, dad being separated, bouncing from town to town a lot of times and all. Moved around a lot, we were-, it was just my-, I'm the second oldest out of five kids in the family and it was myself and my other brother below me that ended up going on my dad's side. He took us back East and we lived back there for two and a half, three years I guess. But it wasn't an easy life. I didn't want to stay with my mom because of there, she was so focused on another person that had five other kids. So she still had three of my other-, two other brothers and a sister so I didn't-. I just thought, "I'm just going to my dad's because he has nobody." Yeah, and I just couldn't-, at that early age I kind of thought, "Where am I going to stay?"

I remember my dad, my dad used to take us when we were kids and lived in Vancouver, he was a believer in respect and heavy respect and the way he got it out of us is he used to take us down into skid row and I don't know if people know that term but, it's basically a lot of alcohol, a lot of drugs, and a lot of nasty things go on. My dad used to take us through the alleys and drive through the downtown area of Vancouver and then he'd park and we'd watch. And he'd tell us stories, he'd say, "You know that fella there, you know he's falling over and hitting the meter and-, you know, and how do we know he wasn't a doctor? How do we know he wasn't a lawyer? How do we know he wasn't a teacher?" my dad would say. You know, my dad tried to make it to the point that, "You don't laugh at anybody because they're that way or they're doing something silly and they fall into a meter or trip over their own shoe strings because they're not tying them up." My dad always said, "Respect. Those people are human too, something happened" You know? "We all live on a fine line," he used to tell us. He'd use the same term, "It depended how strong the wind was blowing that day and which way it's blowing and which side you're going to fall off on. That's how fine of a line we stand and some people can recover from a bad fall and other people can never recover they just don't, they just can't do it."

And he made it very simple for us as kids and it wasn't just that. I think he prepped us because we've had to go to Salvation Army, we've ate at Harbour Lite, I've slept in Harbour Lite. My dad made us when we-, when you got nothing we'd have to. It was punishing, like I was scared. I mean, I'm sitting at a table with alcoholics and the sermon-, the Salvation Army doing a sermon over the dinner and it's watered down potatoes or whatever, but these people are so hungry and my dad always went, "Don't be afraid to talk to them, they're not going to bite you. You might learn something." So yeah, I did talk to some of them and some were very interesting, some would talk just like doctors, actually they were doctors I find out, but they had some bad occurrences, something happened in their life that they never recovered and they took the easy way out, whatever way you want to call it. I don't know but one thing led to another and so my dad took us down that avenue, he made us realize that just because you know we're a little strange and this and that's going on doesn't mean we're all bad people. Something has happened and things get out of control and this is where you end up.

And that was all through my mom's side. They were, you know, very much a lot of addiction and heroine and there was lots of that. Like my grandmother lived in the fast lane. She was a hooker, she was on heroine, she was a partier, she made her own hooch. We used to find her passed out on the floor. We'd sneak up there, we'd be pounding on the door and open it up and there's grandma. Well she's made a whole pot of sake and she's on the floor. And we lived with all that, but we had a good attitude about it. We were never scared and again it was my dad that prepped us. He took us down there and he always, you know, the same thing and so he opened our eyes up wide for the fact that we weren't scared of seeing stuff like that. We weren't scared of picking grandma up and trying to put her on the couch, my brother and myself 'cause, you know, 'cause she was a fairly big woman and-, but we would. We just got her set up even it was better then nothing, but you know she'd be just didn't even know we were there. We'd have to leave her and we couldn't phone my mom because we had snuck up there so we didn't know what to do.

That would have been in Vancouver. I was raised at the east end of Vancouver by the PNE so, and she lived about fourteen blocks away from where we were so it was about a fifteen minute walk, you know, fast walk that we could get there. When we were kids, we'd ride our bikes it would be about five, ten minutes at the most. But yeah, these were things that we had to leave, you know, what-, what could we do? I'd look at my brother Al and I said, "Well, we can't tell mom. We don't know nobody here, we don't know her neighbours. We have to leave grandma." We'd just lock the door and go, and hope, listen for that call. Because my grandma would always try to phone my mom and just hope we heard that call that grandma was alright. It wasn't an easy thing to see at times because it was-, you know, you always felt sorry for grandma. But when we did see her and she was standing upright and talking it was a different story. Like, she was an interesting lady. She'd tell funny stories and we don't know if they were true or not, but you know her, she lived for partying. We used to call her 'Grandma Hip' as a matter of fact because that's the way in the seventies her whole basement was all like discotheque. She had light mirror balls, yeah. She had everything, her own bar, and she'd even, her friends would come over and bartend and she'd have them all dressed up as bartenders and then she'd put on Jimmy Hendrix or something. Vancouver is where I was born and raised, I don't call it home, I didn't do much there. Like I mean as a kid it was my childhood I guess so, born and raised there. I guess it has to be my home, but I mean the Okanagan, I spent twenty-nine years there. I raised all my kids were born there in Vernon. And yeah, I left a lot of friends behind because my parents, my dad moved out here to Grand Forks and my last wife, we bought a ranch over Mount Baldy just outside of Rock Creek so that kind of brought me out this way. So, I've been out here (Grand Forks) the last twelve years or something like that. So, I guess, you know, and I still don't know everybody because I just don't get out that much. I got so much going on internally that I don't get to the other sides and see a lot of country. Because I used to be a very avid hunter, my kids were raised on, on wild game. My grandfather used to take us rabbit hunting back East. I forgot about that, yeah, and so I started hunting in-, oh it would have been in-, in the late 70s I guess '78, '79. We did. I used to help moose hunt and deer hunt and go after grizzlies and bears. Yeah I hunted a lot of bear and my kids were raised on a lot of game. I thought that was a good thing, mixed it in with the chickens and the pork and the beef and whatever else we could do. They all knew dad was going out when hunting season. I used to take them hunting and they'd go for grouse mainly. My daughter would shoot deer if they let her but no it just one of the things that I did in my life.

I haven't hunted now for about ten years. I kind of gave it up. I like to take pictures of them now but I think I've done what I had to do, I didn't want to overdo it for the fact, I was hunting because I had a family and it was to fill my freezers to feed my family and other families. Because my neighbours were good friends of mine, they had three to five kids some of them that I knew. I would give them moose meat and whatever we had done, I'd share it. I was always, never kept everything to myself, but we'd have a big barbeque, I'd save nice steaks for the summer and I'd bring neighbours from all around the neighbourhood to come and have some wild game if they wanted to and you'd be surprised how many would show up as soon as you say moose and elk meat. Oh, I'd have twenty people at the barbeque. So, but that's the way it was. It was-, it was like a pleasure or a reward to get that animal because you know it fed your kids, it fed some of the community. I just didn't go out and get it and, you know just, like if it was just the two of us I would never do that because what am I going to do with four hundred pounds of elk meat right? I-, I'd say to myself that would have been a waste, but once my kids grew up I didn't go for any big game anymore, it was just small game. It wasn't like I was trying to overstock in wild game. Those days were gone. Now that I'm learning more about my own heritage and I'm seeing more things that I should have kept and done and I often wondered like tanning and hides and stuff like that so I thought, "Oh great, why did I do that?" I had some beautiful hides, you know, that I gave away to people that wanted them when I was hunting. I said, "You want my elk hide? Take it if you could use it." Oh they'd take it. You know to me it was just another hide, like I mean I don't want that, I'm after the meat, yeah I'm after the meat. I'm not-, what am I going to do with a hide? But you know at that time it just wasn't a thought. Yeah, it was totally different. Now, I tell you, I wouldn't have parted with them.

So, last year was funny, we have about three hundred kill here in Grand Forks a year, deer are hit by vehicles or something happened to them. And so I put in for a permit, I thought-, I'm thinking all these hides that are going to waste that we could use. We do drums and we do all kinds of stuff. So, I filed for a permit for the Métis. It was the first one ever given out and I got it, so last year I got it quite late so I thought okay, because I know even if

they get hit by a vehicle, if you get them right away you're not going to have, the meat there. You know people think, "Road kill?" right? "There's nothing left. Who's going to eat a road killed animal?" but I tell you what, there's nothing wrong with the meat, it's no different then shooting it. Sometimes a bad shot will ruin the whole animal just that one bad shot. So I was very fussy with the city. They called me in. I had people scouting. If they saw a deer to give us a call, we'd go and pick it up, and I'd process it. So, I did. Last year I had about twenty calls and out of the twenty animals only about eight of them were good. I processed the hides and the meat and we raised about four hundred pounds of venison. So, we used it for our gatherings. I sent some to Vernon. I sent a big box because they had a big gathering and they had a survival trip that they wanted to cook venison on so I sent them a whole bunch of meat and yeah, so it worked out. And so it worked out great for the ones that needed some other source of food. I always brought bags of it here (Boundary Family and Individual Service Society) and they, at our Friday groups, they would come up the families, they'd take home you know half a dozen, ten pounds of hamburger.

I think when I look at my elders and I look at myself being an elder, I say I'm not going to keep quiet, like it's totally reversed now. Like I want to open up and I want to make sure that my kids, my grandchildren know who I am. I want to make sure I leave them with things that they can remember me by, like artefacts and the stories behind it. And I make sure that even my grandchildren they all come up, I take them on nature walks. I want them to know everything that we're walking and stepping on and abusing and don't even know what we're doing half the time with our eyes closed. So, these are all things that I want to pass on and leave before I'm gone.

I guess it [being Métis] was in me all this time and I just couldn't display it until I actually had actual proof that I was and that I have this-, now I got the citizenship that I am and now I'm so proud of it. My time's running out now because I'm up as an elder and I got to do all these things and, and is time going to run out before I accomplish what I want to do? Like I've got so many things on the drawing board for myself to leave behind before I'm gone, it's important. And maybe we didn't see that, you know, maybe my parents, because of what happened and it was just that era, it was just-, and it was just not with me. I'm sure it'll come on most of the interviews that-, that most of us Métis we were all in-, you know, we were all told that we can't talk about this. It seems to be the biggest thing, there was just that-, somebody broke the link and that was it and I don't want to see that happen. I want to make sure that now that we are registered and that it follows through.

We've had so many talks and issues over Métis because, you look at me I don't know maybe, whether I look Métis or not, I don't know. But there are some you can't see an ounce of Native in them for some reason right? It's hard. It's a political thing going on right now with digging up the ancestries to get your citizenship. It was really hard, really hard for me. And this is what's happening right now is the people that are Métis can't get their citizenship and the reason why they can't is because they didn't ask the right people or the people that they could have asked are now deceased and they can't seem to find that link, that missing piece. It was covered up which I talked about, you know a lot of things were thrown out, paperwork was hidden. A lot of things happened back in the eighteen hundreds that, because if you were Native, there were lots of, you didn't get jobs, you didn't-, so they didn't even just-, they didn't even show their baptism papers right? So there was a lot of paperwork that was lost. So for the ones that, you know, have the right names, that fit the right criteria that come from the right areas you know they're Métis. How do you-, how do we get past it and how do we get them registered as Métis? I'm fortunate that I got [my citizenship card]. I mean I think we're over 10,000 citizenships right now. When I got my citizenship it was like 3200. So in, from four or five years ago it just went boom! I think it has to do with the Daniel, with the court case (Daniels decision). They read it, it was on TV, it was in the newspapers. I think what it did it just-, again people, they don't want to maybe be involved with the Métis, but maybe they want the opportunities, whether it's for their kids, school. And so I think sometimes it's utilized again just for the fact, "Oh, now I'll go get it." So it's a shame in that regard, but it is what it is I guess now that we have been noticed as that we do have the same rights as the First Nation as far as the Indian Act goes that things have changed.

And there are issues that are in front of the court right now and if that should go through, that 10,000 it'll jump to 60,000. So, there's a holding pattern there right now that, who knows how many Métis are just sitting back and waiting but it could mean a big payday for some communities. We don't know, but I mean I'm just politically talking wild here, but it could be where we could end up owning more Métis businesses or having something that would generate more income into the Métis government that would then be dispersed to the communities, so it

would benefit. Whether it be our health and welfare end of it, housing, we don't know. Well, we might even be able to have our own banking, who knows, we might be able to have our own financial institution that you can go and get financing through the Métis to do Métis business, you know?

So [locally] we want to acknowledge that the ones that want to be members and want to participate in the Métis because there are so many that are not even close to being Métis, that don't even have an ounce of even Native blood in them, but yet they just love everything and they're willing to help. They want to be a part of it. And we do have some in our association that have done a lot of things. Written grants, done all kinds of stuff for us, and they haven't got an ounce of Métis, but they believe. Some of them are more Native than we are, you know, it's funny to say that. Some have a heavy, heavy belief whether it come from reading, movies, I don't know but I mean really – I do (accept them) and the thing is you can tell if it's the ones that are there for specific things or if they're there for the fact that it's a cultural-. There's a difference, you know, being here, but there's a difference of being cultural and showing, you know, like even some of them have got, have done talents that are just unbelievable and they're not even like I said again, not an ounce of Native in them, but yet they can-, they can paint and they can do craftsmanship and yeah, and we can feel that. Actually, I get vibes from it because we have, like I said, three or four and you can tell when they got that big heart and they open up. Like I said they're more Métis than some of the Métis. So, it's sad to say that but some of them should have been Métis. I don't know any other word to say it but they've done great in other areas. I know there's, you know, talks about how many are there, like that aren't Métis that are spouses. They're a good example and the spouse whether it's a man or wife, they're so involved, and they're totally involved with the cooking aspect if it's a woman, you know cooking meals for potluck dinners, Métis stuff, bannock, all this stuff. Their heart and soul is into everything. So yeah, I would open arms and take them under my wing and say, "You can come to us. You're a strong member and we love you to death." So, I would not ever have that problem and it's people that want to believe in something and maybe they never had nothing to believe in their life before either, which is another thing. So you know, if they have to come in believing that they are Métis, why spoil it for them? Why take something away from them that, you know, they enjoy just as much as we do? They want to participate, they want to help, they want to craft, they want to do everything. I couldn't take that away from them. To me it would kill me. It'd be like, you're going to deprive them or rob them of something you know that they believe in. So why, why would you do it?

Despite family denial and his mother's attempts to silence and keep his grandmother away from him, Greg was aware of his Métis-Chinese heritage. He describes his mother being raised by her Cree-French half-breed grandparents in Saskatchewan after being left by his grandmother. He describes his mother's experience in catholic school as difficult due to her Chinese-Métis background. Greg discovered that he was Métis in the 1970s, while in Alberta, but he was unable to attain citizenship due to lack of documentation. Only a few years ago was Greg able to receive his MNBC citizenship, but was faced with the daunting task of asking his mother for her family documentation. While he explains that his mother is still unwilling to "share all the stories," she is beginning to open up about her heritage and reminisce about growing up in Saskatchewan with her grandparents Matilda and Henry Fiddler. Born and raised in Vancouver, Greg moved out east to Ontario as a teenager with father when his parents separated. Greg describes his father exposing him to Vancouver's 'skid row' with the intent of teaching his children to be non-judgmental to those who had fallen on hard times. He describes his own

experience sleeping and eating at shelters in Vancouver's downtown eastside as a child as well as his grandmother's work as a sex-worker and her challenges with heroine addiction and alcohol. Greg tells tragic stories of sneaking out of his home with his brother to take care of his grandmother only to return home and hope that she was safe.

Greg doesn't identify with Vancouver as 'his home,' but rather the Southern Interior, as he raised his children in Vernon and later moved to Grand Forks and Rock Creek. He describes his experiences hunting for wild game such as rabbits, moose, deer, elk and bear, primarily for feeding his children, whom he also taught to hunt grouse and deer. While Greg talks about filling the freezers of his family, he also mentions sharing meat with other families such as neighbours and good friends. He is now regretful that he never kept and tanned the hides of the animals he killed for food, as he has more recently become interested in 'Native' crafting. Greg explains that last year he applied for a permit from Grand Forks to process select road-killed deer for their hides and meat, which he distributed at gatherings to low-income families. As an elder, he is conscious about passing on his Métis culture and values to his grandchildren. Although he believes that being Métis was always a part of who he was, it was only until he attained his citizenship that he felt that his identity was validated. He believes citizenship is important to prevent 'the link' from being broken, as it was for him when his mother hid her Métis identity.

Greg discusses the increase in MNBC citizenship application over the past few years and attributes it to the recent Daniels decision. He believes that there are many people applying that "don't want to be involved in the Métis," but want the opportunities associated with citizenship, pointing to education funding for their children, which Greg thinks is "a shame." Greg thinks that there could potentially be significant benefits for some communities in terms of financial payouts, business ownership and Métis banking, but admits that he is "just politically talking wild."

In Grand Forks where he lives, they have struggled with local membership and attendance, which he attributes partly to the rural nature of their area and the lack of transportation for members. Greg says that as an association they want to acknowledge those who are not Métis, but participate in the Métis community through

grant writing, preparing food, volunteering, traditional crafting, etc. He describes some of these members without ancestry as either having a “heavy, heavy belief whether it come from reading, movies, I don’t know” or being spouses of Métis who are involved, stating that “they’re more Métis than some of the Métis” and that “some of them should have been Métis.” Greg is welcoming to these community members and accepts them, believing that it would be wrong to deprive them of the opportunity to participate.

A significant concern for some participants was the increasing amounts of people that sought MNBC citizenship for the sole purpose of accessing (often perceived or misunderstood) benefits such as education funding and social service programming. Participants, such as Zach and Jean N., were dismayed by those who claimed a Métis identity, applied for citizenship, but did not return to contribute to their local community organizations. Others like Greg, Jean L., Dennis, and Laranna were welcoming of those who wanted to attend Métis community events and disagreed with rigid membership boundaries. Some other participants felt that Métis ancestry meant entitlement to citizenship and whatever benefits may be associated with them. Val, for instance, was hopeful that those who applied for citizenship would eventually come back to the community. Other participants indicated that while access to benefits (usually for their children or grandchildren) may have been an initial motivator for their application for citizenship, that it was merely the catalyst for their interest in their previously hidden ancestry. For some, their interest led to uncomfortable conversations with parents and grandparents, the unearthing of family secrets and eventually, participation in local Métis or urban Aboriginal organizations.

5.18 Summary

In this chapter, I presented the narratives of the study participants as a means for explaining the ways in which Métisness is enacted in everyday life through the repetition, citation, and referencing of the identified dominant discourses. Narrative analysis allows for the textual content of participant’s narratives to be connected to the broader discursive contexts. Interview participants drew on shared representations in stories to give situated meanings to social categories, making implicit stances apparent as they negotiated their own sense of belonging or opposition to such social categories. As their stories moved through evaluative spaces, participants constructed

preferred narratives to guide their audience towards accepting taken-for-granted ‘truths’ (Gergen, 1999; Reissman, 2008). Paying attention to the ways in which cultural stories, representations, ideas, and images were drawn from in participant discussions of Métis identity allowed for an analysis of both explicit and implicit stances towards group boundaries (including citizenship practices) as well as individual and group interests and values. By highlighting and analyzing the statements, language practices, and cultural resources that are drawn on, we can come to understand how participants define (and don’t define) Métisness for themselves and others.

For many participants, their narratives draw from multiple or even all of the discourses described in Chapter 4. The spectrum of the use of ‘Métis’ extended from being an inclusive term for anyone who self-identifies as such to a term that was reserved for only those who had ancestral connections to the Historic Métis Nation and had also been ‘raised Métis.’ While nearly all participants were able to trace their Métis heritage to an ancestral network of families and important associated events that were historically centered in Canada’s prairies, not all participants identified with the notion of Métis nationhood, nor had any current relationship to the places, people, and practices of the historic (or even contemporary) Métis Nation. Those who were either directly employed with MNBC or indirectly involved as active members of the chartered community organizations as well as those involved with MCSSBC generally had the most interest in discussing issues related to politics and the politics of identity.

There appears to be a sense of uncertainty among most participants when it comes to articulating what it means to be Métis. This likely results from continued exposure to the variety of articulations of Métis identity as well as conflicting discourses that act to regulate and discipline Métisness (such as the exclusive boundaries of Métis nationalism versus a dominant discourse that values inclusiveness). Furthermore, a chief concern is cohesion amongst a community that includes people with diverse experiences and opinions. The diversity of experiences identifying as Métis demonstrate that there are distinct differences between the rigid identities that are constructed and expected by decision-makers and the fluid realities of Métis identities, thereby undermining assumptions of Métis identities as fixed, instrumental, passive, and power-neutral in lieu of poststructuralist notions of identity as constructed, fluid, incomplete, and thus, continuously evolving.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Examining not only how participants see themselves as Métis, but also how they understand who is and is not Métis, this study seeks to unravel the ideas that inform the identities that are projected by political and government organizational definitions and those of the interviewed Métis community members. Chapter 3 detailed the theoretical orientation of this study of Métis identity. It follows that participant narratives were analyzed using various (though not mutually-exclusive) theoretical lenses, including theories of place-identity, conceptions of a ‘poststructural subject’ (which are related to critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis) and Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. As a result, the following three sections provide discussions of 1) The effect of place on the identities of Métis living in British Columbia; 2) The construction of Métis subjectivity through drawing on discourses of Mixed-ness (race and hybridity), ethno-cultural understandings of Métis (including an emerging discourse of *wahkootowin*), as well as Métis nationalism and citizenship; and 3) Métis identity as performative. These three sections represent important areas of investigation in terms of clarifying the ways in which contemporary Métis identity is constructed through self-understanding as well as the reification of and resistance to external definitions.

6.1 Place-Identity: Being Métis in BC

Exploring place-based identity within the context of Métis identity is significant as place is crucial to narratives of the self, with particular expressive factors of identities being represented in relation to places (Broto et al., 2010; Christou, 2006; Entrikin, 1997; Gregson & Rose, 2000; Paasi, 2002). Recognizing that place and the histories of places are themselves constructed has been critical within human geography as a means for opposing essentialist notions of identity (Entrikin, 1997). Western, colonial, and cartographic understandings of places as fixed territories have been increasingly overridden in favour of notions of places as “locations of particular sets of intersecting social relations” (cited in Paasi 2002, p. 807). Recognizing that place is the contextual basis that forms identity (Entrikin, 1997; Gregson & Rose, 2000), the spatial aspects of identification as Métis in BC are significant in examinations of self-understanding and external categorization. Places such as British Columbia, then are not restricted to being a matter of location or scale, but instead, are accepted as “narrated into being” and

emerging out of historically contingent processes and practices as well as the structural features that support them (Wetherell, 2001C, p. 396; see Paasi, 2002; Pred, 1984; Tuan, 1975).

The rhetorical construction of British Columbia as a place where no Métis have lived (or continue to live) results from political, legal, and scholarly discourses centered on the expansion of colonialism through the fur trade, notions of cultural essentialism, and legal forms of recognition. Participants described localized experiences of exclusion within BC and a lack of awareness in BC regarding Métis peoples. For most participants who had moved from Canada's prairie provinces, their experiences identifying as Métis while residing in British Columbia differed from those that they had previously experienced. Participants, such as Val, Peter, and Janet describe a lack of understanding and knowledge about Métis people (as a distinct culture) within BC. For instance, Val describes moments of tensions with local First Nations people, Peter describes being told that "Hutchinson, that's not a Métis name. Oh you're one of those green eyed Indians," and Janet explains being called a "wannabe Indian" by local First Nations people who see 'Métis' as "a new word". For these participants, articulating a Métis identity while residing in British Columbia can be challenging, whereas for others who were raised in BC such as Zach who travelled between his home in Penticton to his Métis family in Alberta and Greg, who was raised in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, being Métis in BC is all they have known. Most interviewed participants had a keen awareness of local First Nation claims to territory, and located their Métis ancestry in the Canadian prairies, however a few participants justified a Métis presence in BC by citing historical fur trading posts as proof of historical Métis communities. Only one participant Carla identified as Métis solely on the basis of being descended from a BC First Nations woman (being of mixed-blood).

It is clear that asserting Métis nationhood in British Columbia is an approach that is not readily accepted by First Nations and the political and social ramifications of doing so are not well understood by the very people who are doing so. A result of such missteps is that Métis people have been stereotyped as naively breaching protocols in territories where there are at times, multiple overlapping First Nations claims to land. While some participants, like Val, indicate that relationships are improving and others, like Sarah have yet to experience lateral violence, some participants, such as Zach, are fearful that the increasing number of people whose

identification is primarily based on their MNBC citizenship (as opposed to their experience within Métis communities), that they lack the knowledge to appropriately represent Métis people and thus reinforce the negative stereotypes that have been attributed to Métis people in BC.

There appear to be clearly visible challenges in British Columbia that needed to be addressed. Not only was a lack of understanding of Métis people and issues cited as important, but Zach, Dan, and Peter each identified that there has been a previous lack of protocol observed by Métis people within territories claimed by other First Nations groups. Zach suggested that this could potentially be remedied through Métis political representatives learning and adopting Indigenous protocols, while Dan suggested that MNBC was in process of correcting former missteps through processes such as signing nation-to-nation protocol agreements between MNBC and First Nations. Having experience living and working in British Columbia, Dan describes his work with MNBC to repair damaged relationships through establishing traditional protocols regarding children and families. Alternatively, Peter felt that the current ‘technocratic’ approach to form relationships with other Indigenous groups is proving to be insufficient and that a ‘traditional’ approach (such as hosting a feast) would be more appropriate. Similarly, Val suggests that it is the responsibility of Métis people to learn about local First Nations people and be cautious about asserting a Métis identity and especially nationhood within unceded territories. These attitudes echo Andersen’s call for Métis people to address the “form of conceptual *Terra Nullius*...where people who are making claims to Métis indigeneity are simply claiming particular territories as though their aren’t living breathing Indigenous people already living on those territories and taking ownership of those territories” (Andersen, 2015). I would add to this argument that if Métis people seek to position themselves as belonging to an Indigenous nation while living in British Columbia, then it is crucial that we are accountable to already Indigenous places and our ongoing relationships with other Indigenous nations. The theoretical lens of place-identity is particularly significant in such discussions of Métis people as our changing relationships to land due to diaspora has significantly affected articulations of Métis identity.

Based on the 20 interviews conducted through this study, it is clear that participants have diverse understandings of what it means to be Métis in British Columbia. For participants such as Carla, it means having

“Native blood” and a “Native great-grandmother” Indigenous to British Columbia, with no reference to a historic Métis culture. For Joanie, Laranna, Jean L. and Terry, all of whom have family ties to the historic Métis Nation centered in Canada’s prairies, being Métis is about a shared experience of being of mixed Indigenous descent. For those who have only recently begun to identify as Métis, such as Sarah and Barb, there are still many questions in their own minds about what it means to be Métis. Like others who locate their Métis identity based on shared experiences of being of mixed descent (even with ties to the Historic Métis Nation), the ways in which Sarah identifies as Métis is tied to her involvement in the local urban Aboriginal community (as opposed to a Métis-specific community). Meanwhile, many participants who were raised with the knowledge of their Métis identity, such as Zach, Carlene, and Peter understand ‘Métis’ less in the political sphere of citizenship and nationhood, but more specifically in the shared experiences of their families (and communities) and the values with which they were raised. Yet, such participants were also aware of the needs of Métis communities and interested in accessing harvesting rights and/or increasing Métis recognition. For participants whose experience of ‘being Métis’ followed their involvement with MNBC or a local Chartered Community (Métis association), such as Dan, Brittany, and Jean N., their understanding of what it meant to be ‘Métis’ was directly tied to their experiences within such organizations. It is clear that the ways in which participants define Métis for themselves and for others is closely associated with their position and participation with particular communities- their place. Learning about what it means to be Métis or ‘how to be Métis’ extends from experiences with immediate and extended family and through interactions with people and texts at organizations such as urban Aboriginal organizations, post-secondary institutions, MNBC, MCSSBC, as well as local Métis Chartered Communities. Extending understandings of ‘places’ beyond cartographic notions (as in the Province of British Columbia) to places as social locations (such as particular organizations and institutions) allows for a more specific analysis of Métis place-identity. Participant interviews indicate that particular articulations of Métis identity (including the discourses that are drawn upon) are closely related the places (communities, political and service organizations, educational institutions) where Métis people are or have been positioned. Furthermore, as it is through the

histories of particular places that various ideas and discourses regarding Métis identity have emerged, the notion of place-identity pervades this entire study.

6.2 Constructing Métis Identity through Dominant Discourses

This study employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Narrative Analysis (NA) to render visible that which is often invisible and taken-for-granted regarding what constitutes Métisness. As an attempt to uncover the ways in which social reality is effectively produced, CDA seeks to understand how everyday knowledge and language practices are bound up, and in turn, shape power relations (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Wodak, 2001). As a method that is complimentary to CDA, NA considers the context in which language practices occur to be fundamental to their meaning and the relation of such practices to broader contexts to be significant (Riessman, 2008). As theoretically grounded methods, CDA and NA rely on poststructuralist notions of identity.

Taking an anti-essentialist stance, individual identity has come to be understood by some poststructuralist and constructionist scholars as a process, continually reconstructed through an “internal-external dialectic” and involving self-definition and representation as well as external definition and interpretation (Christou, 2006). Understanding identities as socially produced, subject positions personify particular forms of knowledge, which are themselves produced through discourse (Hall, 2001a; Taylor, 2010). Discourse, then is considered to be regulated ways of speaking/practice that offer individuals subject positions “from which to make sense of the world while ‘subjecting’ speakers to the regulatory power of those discourses” (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 31). For theorists who employ poststructural ideas, discourses are understood as a multifaceted set of conflicting positions and principles that are actualized in everyday practices. The ‘Métis subject’ is not an easily described coherent subject, but rather a co-constructed description based on transient identification with multiple and sometimes contradictory texts, which are themselves made meaningful through relational connections to other discourses (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

The danger of the instability of the meaning of ‘Métis’ lies in the politics of representation, or more specifically, who has the power to determine the meaning of ‘Métis.’ Power, circulating among localized currents is exercised through various strategies and mechanisms to produce particular bodies of knowledge. When linked

with power, knowledge is given authority and rendered to be true. The power to name behaviours, practices, histories, and people as Métis is structured by the Canadian nation-state and its governmental arms including the legal system, Métis political organizations and politicians, academics and historians, as well as more abstract powers such as white supremacy, racism, and settler colonialism. Métis individuals remain elements of power articulation, but more so in that it is the effect of power that particular bodies can identify (and are identifiable). Understanding 'Métis' as a co-constructed description allows for an exploration of how individuals, groups, and institutions can strategically mobilize particular meanings and the role of power in producing meanings (Wetherell, 2001a).

Reading participant narratives as a whole it is clear that the meaning of 'Métis' remains fractured, uncertain, and subject to multiple iterations. Like texts, the meanings of particular discourses accumulate through their interconnections to other discourses and texts that exist alongside them. For instance, emerging discourses of multiculturalism and Canadian nationalism have extended, transformed, and become interwoven in some participants' understandings of themselves as Métis. For instance, after finding out about her Cree heritage Maria's response was, "I'm not only Canadian, but I'm really Canadian." Joanie and Dennis express similar sentiments about their Métis ancestry positioning themselves firmly in Canada's origin story. According to Gaudry, the Canadianizing of prominent Métis historical figures such as Louis Riel and the simultaneous imagining of an indigenized (or more specifically 'métis-ized') Canada is a recent development (2013). For some participants of this study, it is clear that the recent discourse of the métis-ization of Canada has become entangled with their own understandings of the meaning of Métis, thus altering an already unstable discourse of Métis identity.

Participants privileged particular knowledges about what it means to be Métis when making their own truth claims about their identity as Métis. The intent is not to question their 'truth claims,' but rather interrogate the discourses and texts that produce them. Participants' narratives about Métis identification are understood as reflecting particular discourses, some of which are considered to be detrimental to the political direction of the Métis Nation. However, although participants may not be aware of the consequences of reproducing particular

discourses, they are not understood as passive vehicles of discourses, but active agents in their reproduction and resistance. This follows from the poststructuralist notion that subjects are “simultaneously produced by discourse and manipulators of it” (Burr, 1995, p. 141). Despite my personal disagreement with particular participant perspectives, as this project is conducted through employing an Indigenous methodology whereby relational accountability is prioritized, I recognize the requirement to be respectful of all participants, regardless of their perspective. Furthermore, I understand that multiple and even contradictory truths in life stories are important in terms of directing our attention to the conditions and relationships that shape narratives and inform meaning as opposed to seeking a single truth in the name of objectivity.

Participants engaged with multiple and often contradictory ideas drawn from the discourses of nationhood, citizenship, culture, and mixed-bloodedness. While the political discourse of Métis nationhood was drawn on most frequently by participants directly or indirectly employed by Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), some participants continued to employ the rhetoric of mixed-bloodedness or hybridity, confirming Andersen’s (2014) recognition that “those who should know better” continue to identify based on a racialized understanding of historic Métis identity. Furthermore, participants who describe themselves as ‘being raised Métis,’ compared to those who began to identify as Métis later in life on the basis of their ancestral ties to the historic Métis Nation, primarily identified on the basis of a shared Métis philosophy of living ‘in a good way.’ By drawing on dominant discourses, participants reproduce and reify what may be considered ‘normal’ or even ‘stereotypical’ descriptions of ‘a Métis subject.’ The function of such social norms often persists without being questioned, as they are often difficult to discern and operate implicitly. The repetition of elements of the following three dominant discourses is one of the key mechanisms through which naturalization occurs and that which may have once been visible becomes invisible and taken-for-granted.

6.2.1 Reproducing and Resisting Racialized Discourses

As demonstrated in this study, the scholarly, legal, and widespread pre-occupation with race and cultural essentialism at the expense of Aboriginality acts to further debilitate Métis rights, political struggles and people. However, even as race and ethnicity may exist as socio-political constructions, they bear real consequences for

the people who inhabit racial and ethnic identities (Nagel, 2000). For many of the participants that I interviewed, the language of blood quantum was present and for some the experience of being of mixed-blood was at the heart of their reason for identifying as Métis.

Participants used the language of blood quantum when discussing themselves, others, and in conversations about identity policing. For instance, Janet described her friends who lived on reserve as calling her “a teaspoon,” in reference to her comparatively small amount of ‘Indian blood.’ Recognizing that the notion of blood quantum is based on out-dated theories that viewed biology (race) as definitive and indistinguishable from culture, blood is often seen as the vehicle for transmitting cultural characteristics. Like other North American Indigenous peoples, Métis people have internalized colonization and legitimized historic racism through the adoption of racial identities and terminologies. Society at large, other Indigenous people and Métis people themselves have come to recognize mixedness as a central factor of Métis identity, as opposed to the political standing of Métis as a pre-colonial nation with a distinct culture.

It is clear that misunderstandings of Métis as mixed has resulted in significant challenges in terms of muddying the claims of culturally distinct and historically grounded Métis people, however the result of such a longstanding racial understanding of Métis-as-mixed has also resulted in the historical inclusion of what would otherwise be considered ‘non-status Indians’ in the Métis community. This seemed especially apparent throughout the interview process for participants who were engaged in urban Aboriginal organizations versus Métis-specific organizations. The ‘grandfathering’ of such ‘mixed-blood métis’ into contemporary Métis communities is well documented and even accepted by those who advocate for a distinct Métis Nation based on ancestral ties to the historic Métis Nation. For instance, Fiola (2015) explains that Chris Andersen, who argues that the misrecognition of Métis as mixed, “thereby inhibit[s] Métis political self-determination... agrees with former leader of the Métis Nation of Ontario Tony Belcourt’s suggestion that such individuals might be ‘grandfathered’ into the Métis Nation via citizenship codes, thereby maintaining the integrity of the Métis Nation while resisting identity politics of exclusion based on colonial divide and conquer tactics” (p. 33-4). So while the

misrecognition of Métis as a racial category remains troubling, its affects on the composition of Métis communities cannot be understated.

6.2.2 Reproducing and Resisting Ethno-Cultural Discourses

Throughout the interview process, it was increasingly clear that many urban Aboriginal organizations, though often employing a Métis-as-mixed perspective on membership, simultaneously forwarded ethno-cultural understandings of Métis. Ethno-cultural definitions can provide useful ways for understanding the socio-cultural qualities of indigeneity including shared language, spiritual beliefs and practices, social norms, and relationships, however have been complicated by the ways in which cultural essentialism have permeated mainstream Canadian perspectives and more problematically, the Canadian judiciary. Specifically, within the Canadian legal system Aboriginality has been equated to ‘Indianness,’ which is defined in terms of perceptible difference to non-Aboriginal people. The maintenance of outmoded conceptions of Aboriginal culture within Canadian legal institutions (whereby adaptation is equated to cultural erosion) coupled with the incapability to accommodate the fluid reality of past and contemporary Indigenous communities is particularly problematic for Métis claimants and especially the large population of Métis people living in urban spaces. Suggesting that there are distinct differences between the static identities that are constructed and expected by decision-makers and the fluid realities of Aboriginal identities, Andersen describes the reality of urban Métis communities as follows:

[U]rban Métis are not wandering aimlessly around the city; they have coalesced into viable, enduring communities that handle much of the service delivery to their community members, in addition to the numerous community activities they sponsor. ... [Métis youth] may participate in tea and bannock socials, urban powwows, fiddling or jigging competitions, and in rare cases they may even understand or speak an Indigenous language. Regardless, they also hang out with their own and other Native families, playing X-Box, skateboarding, being bored at school, playing hockey, or engaging in freestyle rap competitions - things that many teenagers do. (2003, p. 623)

Translating the lived realities and historical political struggles of Aboriginal people based on a (fictional) archetype of cultural difference inevitably results in a power imbalance, as “Aboriginal groups themselves have little or no say in what counts as difference, or in how that difference is mobilized” (Patzner, 2013, p. 323). Instead, the identity of Aboriginal claimants must be authentic, singular, undisputed, and essentially different from that of non-Indigenous people. For study participants who participated in urban Aboriginal organizations, it

was clear that non-Métis organization members continuously policed study participants' identity as Métis or more specifically, their 'Indianness.' For instance, Joanie describes multiple experiences of identity policing, where she was judged for practicing ceremonies such as smudging or activities such as drumming, practices that she learnt at urban Aboriginal organizations, but that were not considered 'authentically Métis'. Andersen & Hokowhitu (2007) express concerns over the ways in which contemporary Indigenous groups have developed such 'authenticity' criteria within their own communities, "to ground oneself in the logic of tradition is an attractive idea for Indigenous people still suffering from the genealogical eddy of colonisation - perhaps even necessary in a utilitarian sense - but I am concerned that the colonial and, now, self-imposed notions of tradition and authenticity have led to the development of 'authenticity' gauges of Indigenous peoples which are just as oppressive as their colonial derivatives" (p. 44). They further caution that Indigenous attempts to resist colonization through traditional revitalization can have adverse affects as follows:

[A]s Indigenous renaissances are emboldened, as they create momentum, the reaction/resistance to the singular universalising discourses of the coloniser reflects their anti-pluralism. Counter-hegemonic discourses can, if they are monolithic, become hegemonic in themselves. It seems to me that many Indigenous people, often those in vanguard positions, constantly engage with and validate the delimiting and hegemonic notion of "authenticity" to the detriment, I believe, of cultural vitality. It is as if the will to power inherently needs the will to unify. (p. 43)

Some Métis scholars and grassroots groups have advocated for "re-traditionalization" as determining contemporary cultural identity whereby the traditional structures of cultural systems and contemporary societal demands are integrated (Fiola, 2015). An approach based in 'retraditionalization' that understands Métisness as a product of an underlying philosophy (opposed to uninterrupted visible cultural practices), allows for the continuation of place-specific Métis cultural practices and collective identities, despite social changes due to colonial context. Some scholars believe that government and judicial attempts at developing definitions of Métis identity by focusing on external social and political processes that identify a community of individuals have only undermined the efforts of Métis peoples, as such approaches neglect the cultural qualities of Métis identity (Peressini, 2001). As a response to the over-politicized nature of Métis collectivity, there has been a shift within Métis communities, as new groups and organizations have emerged that emphasize the cultural, spiritual, and

social factors of Métis identities, rather than political or legal issues and rights (Chretien, 2005). Quoting

Lawrence, Fiola explains that for some Indigenous people in Canada:

[F]amily bonds, family beliefs about spirituality and connection to nature, and ties to ancestors ‘were some of the few things left about being Native that [participants] still had access to on a daily basis, as people from extremely acculturated and diasporic families’...returning to traditional values and world views is a way of understanding existing identity categories available to Métis people. Advocates of this view are often concerned with traditional definitions of identity, re-traditionalization, reclaiming tribal heritage, strengthening collective identity, community recognition and participation, participation in Aboriginal organizations, and reclaiming traditions, including ceremony. (2015, p. 37)

Returning to traditional values was a concern for nearly all participants and was also cited by Métis Community Services Society of BC (MCSSBC) as a significant organizational aspiration when the preliminary results of this research was presented to them.

6.2.2.1 An Emerging Sub-discourse of Relationality (*Wahkootowin*)

Throughout the study, a powerful sub-discourse centred on relationality emerged. *Wahkootowin*, as an ‘intersocietal norm’ that emphasizes familial and community obligation, was a recurring theme throughout interviews that was positioned in contrast to individualistic attempts of claiming Métis identities without contributing back to Métis communities. Participant narratives centred on family, adoption, community, women, and inclusion converged to form a unique body of knowledge. Women in particular were often positioned as family matriarchs as well as the keepers of Métis identity, family (including genealogical) knowledge and traditional knowledge. Community and family were often considered synonymous, adoption (familial and fictive) was described as commonplace, and reciprocal obligations to community were strongly emphasized. This discourse of relationality at times conflicted with antiquated discourses of racialized hybridity, state-based notions of nationalism, and the romanticized rhetoric of cultural essentialism.

Historic Métis social structures were determined through *wahkootowin* and closely tied to ancestral Indigenous women and the land to which they were devoted (Macdougall, 2010). She explains: “[W]ahkootowin was not simply a way to organize people socially in family units- it was also part of a religious system that drew the land, creatures, and people together as spiritual relatives with all creation and, therefore, included spirit beings as a part of the extended family” (Macdougall, 2010, p. 132). The emphasis of relational values in not only

structuring family relations, but everyday interactions extends to other (non-Cree/Dene) Métis communities, such as Anishnaabe Métis. For instance, Métis-Anishnaabe scholar Chantal Fiola explains similar relational values among Anishinaabeg as follows: “[T]here is a fundamental value among the Anishinaabeg of being accountable to all of your relations in creation: this is one way to strive towards *mino-bimaadiziwin* [a balanced life]...the ethic of reciprocity stems from the Anishinaabe understanding of reality as essentially spiritual and interdependent, and the importance of balance” (p. 81). Cultural values based on relational accountability are prominent amongst many Indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Such complex and dynamic philosophies provide a foundation for Indigenous relationships to land, however, a pervasive cosmology understands humans as part of the natural world, which opposes the Western binary (or hierarchy) of humans versus ‘nature.’ In addition to these understandings of the land, Indigenous worldviews emphasize that people who are no longer living remain as members of the community and continue to have a role in the world, as “the unseen is as much a part of reality as that which is seen” (cited in Posey & Plenderleith, 2004, p. 196). As a result of such a strong connection with the land and the spiritual relevance of this connection, maintaining a healthy ecosystem is crucial for Indigenous peoples, as the health of the land is closely tied to the health of the communities and families (Armstrong, 1996; Posey, 1998). Spirituality is central and at times can even be quotidian, as Maracle explains, “[S]pirituality is re-connecting with the self and with our ancestry. It is doing the right thing for our family and our community” (1996, p. 134). Such conceptualizations of spirit, the land, and community inform Métis philosophies and ways of being. Thus, relationality deeply informs identity among Métis people, “[I]dentity, in this conceptualization, is inseparable from land, home, community, or family. They are all one and the same” (Macdougall, 2010, p. 3).

Interview participants often described Métis spirituality as integrating Christian and Indigenous worldviews. For instance, Terry and Maria describe their sense of spiritual beliefs as navigating between Indigenous and Christian beliefs. Both participants were unaware of their Métis identity while growing up, but later felt drawn to their Indigenous heritage through a growing connection to the land, eventually arriving at Indigenous spirituality following transformative experiences and personal crises. This is a pattern that is

consistent with many other people of Métis ancestry (Fiola, 2015). Similarly, Zach who was brought up knowing that he was Métis, describes his understanding of Métis spirituality as a “synergy between Catholicism and Cree spirituality”, stating that the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage “is a perfect symbol of that”. Many participants described participating in Indigenous-based spiritual practices such as sweatlodge and smudging ceremonies, talking/praying circles, and drumming. Spiritual knowledges such as dreams and visions of ancestors were considered valid sources of knowledge, a direct contrast to Western ways of knowing (Fiola, 2015). Both Val and Sarah describe experiences of visions during spiritual ceremonies (a healing circle and sweatlodge ceremony) where they received messages from their grandmothers. Relationships to spirit, ancestors, and land-based relations are part of participants’ understandings of themselves as Métis.

Similar to historic Métis, who, despite being defined by outsiders according to homogenizing and racialized categories, defined their own identity according to kin networks (Bell, 2013), participants predominantly located their Métis identity within their family or community. Similar to Macdougall’s description of Métis in Saskatchewan (2010), many participants did not distinguish between immediate and extended family members, but described values based on obligations to their children, grandchildren, cousins, aunts, grandparents, fictive kin, and community. This “reciprocal family model” (p. 162) is illustrated throughout Greg’s narrative, as he tells stories from his adolescence of sneaking out of his home to go take care of his grandmother, his decision to move east with his father to take care of him, as well as multiple instances of sharing harvested meat with his family, neighbours, and the local urban Aboriginal community. Similar to Fiola’s (2015) study with people of Métis ancestry, multiple participants in this study cited community participation or participation in Aboriginal organizations as being integral to their understanding of Métisness and acting as an impetus for community recognition. For instance, Carlene describes her community as “where you live and breath.” As the eldest of her siblings, she feels protective of her family and is hesitant to identify them as Aboriginal through applying for citizenship, as a result of past persecutions. Janet is also unwilling to renew her citizenship, stating, “[I]t’s not helping me or my family or my relatives, my ancestors,” a clear indication of her priorities. Janet’s sentiment of family taking priority and Carlene’s protectiveness are shared by Peter, who states

that his parents' primary objective in life was to "protect your family, make your family strong, and make sure that everybody can get to where they're going and where they want to go, and support them like that." This sort of talk permeated discussions with many participants, but especially those who had been raised within Métis families.

Not only was obligation to family highlighted, but the 'reciprocal family model' extended to the broader Métis community. In our conversation about defining 'Métis,' Zach uses community and family interchangeably: "I think first and foremost it has to be a definition that emanates from community. And by community I mean family. And to me that's all really what a community is, a bunch of families. So, I think that if family or community recognizes you as one of the family, well then, yeah, you're a Métis." Zach refers to a number of possible reciprocal obligations when he questions those who apply for citizenship based on ancestry alone, including providing for elders and sharing harvested meat. Such comments suggest that the values of *wahkootowin* have been effectively passed down through Métis families.

Participant descriptions of family systems, though forming stable communities, were flexible in that they allowed for the addition of new family members through informal adoption and socialization. As Macdougall explains, "[W]ahkootowin in the northwest was not restricted or closed to particular individuals because of their culture, race, or religion if they were willing to adjust their own expectations of family life. Rather, wahkootowin was an inclusive, holistic philosophy, predicated upon one real stricture- being a good relative- which required adherence to the values, protocols, and behaviours expected of family members" (Macdougall, 2010, p. 83). This statement suggests the possibility that the pervasive emphasis on inclusion throughout participant interviews results not necessarily a dominant discourse of Canadian multiculturalism based on rhetorical inclusion, but perhaps also from an underlying cultural philosophy based in *wahkootowin*. Furthermore, the 'inclusive' process of transforming social relations into familial relations through naturalization and adoption is a demonstrated practice throughout Indigenous communities across North America. Several participants noted instances of adoption and inclusion as common practices within their Métis families. For example, Val explains that she has taken care of close to twenty children, seven of which were their own biological children. Val's employment

involved working with families who seek to adopt Métis children. She explains how adoptive parents become a part of the Métis community through their own investment:

And so where I see people are really invested in that and really get the importance of that, then you know I tell them “you know, you are adopting a Métis child and in turn, our community is adopting you. So we’re not separate.” They are accepted, maybe not by membership, but their children are Métis and I want them to feel like they can participate in our community events.

In addition, both Zach and Peter describe instances of blood-relatives and other non-relatives being welcomed as near siblings into their families.

In her (2010) study, Macdougall tells the story of Lawrence Ahenakew, a Métis man from Lake Île à la Crosse, who considers family to be central to his sense of self, which he expresses by stating “I’m one of the family” (p. 1). She describes Ahenakew as follows:

He cites the values held by his grandparents as foundation for personal growth and development, shaping both his sense of belonging to the community and his self-worth as an individual. Furthermore, he references an ongoing connection with the land on which he was raised as an integral part of his sense of self and family. Community is established through mutual responsibility, and Ahenakew articulates his responsibility for connecting his children and grandchildren to this shared cultural identity, this community, and the land or place from which he came. He acknowledges his duty to pass on values learned through family responsibility and obligation. (p. 1-2)

Throughout participant interviews, various aspects of Macdougall’s description of Ahenakew appear salient, whether it be that participants look to their parents, grandparents, and elders as teaching them Métis values and practices, continue to connect to the land through spiritual practices, volunteer to improve their community, work to protect their families from harm, welcome others with open arms, or pass down their cultural philosophies and traditions to their children and grandchildren.

Some participants such as Val and Maria used the term ‘a Métis heart’ to describe those who give back to community, work to improve the lives of Métis people, and strive to revitalize cultural traditions. Notions of having ‘a Métis heart’ and the concept of *wahkootowin* may be related, as relationships lie at the essence of Métis cultural and social institutions. The emphasis on ‘a Métis heart’, shared cultural philosophies, or ways of being suggests that ‘being Métis’ has more to do with ‘doing’/acting Métis, than something that is inherited/inherent (similar to how Butler explains the act of ‘doing gender’). Similar perspectives are shared among other

Indigenous peoples. For instance, Garrouette's (2003), in her discussion of what is termed 'An Indian Heart,' quotes her research participant, Osage Nation citizen Archie M., who says the following:

I [mean] they're like me. Not necessarily in appearance, but in spirit. They have a "Indian heart." Somebody is like me because somebody has taught them like my teachers have taught me, on how to live and how to look at other people. How to feel about other people...I imagine myself sometimes if I was blind, and I couldn't see the colour or the tones of someone's skin. But just by talking with them, [I] could feel that they— they thought, or they sensed, the same. (p. 76)

The recognition that Archie discusses results from shared experiences, norms, and values. The same is true for another one of Garrouette's research participants, Joyce J., who outright rejects racial measurements of authenticity, in lieu of learned cultural behaviour:

It doesn't matter how much blood they are or how much this or that, but if they are of the old, of the spiritual, way; if their heart is Indian, ...their minds and their thoughts are Indian, then they're ...they're going to be enveloped in some family, in an Indian family that will take them and teach them even more. So I think what . . . what makes an Indian has nothing to do with amount of blood. . . . I think it's their thinking, their mind, their soul, and their heart. (p. 77)

Focusing on the centrality of shared ways of being and cultural philosophies such as relational accountability as opposed to the Métis as a 'people-in-between,' re-centers Métis as "truly representative of a new, viable, Aboriginal culture" (Macdougall, 2006, p. 439). Thus, the out-dated conceptual framework of Métis as mixed/hybrid is replaced with the notion of Métis as distinct people whose cultural philosophy shaped their own communities, social identities, spiritual beliefs (including their relationships to the land), and relations with others. While re-traditionalization is already in process, whether or not it will be deemed legitimate by the Canadian judiciary is unclear. To other theorists, the solution lies in claims that extend beyond racialized and culturally restricted definitions of 'Métis' to collective political claims of Aboriginal rights to autonomy, occupation, sovereignty, and self-governance.

6.2.3 Reproducing and Resisting Discourses of Métis Nationalism

The narratives in Chapter 5 detailed the ways in which issues pertaining to Métis nationhood such as citizenship, access to rights and benefits, and political geography are understood, reproduced and contested. While nearly all interview participants referenced their ancestral and familial ties to the people (i.e.: Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont), places (i.e.: Batoche, Ste Boniface) and significant events (i.e.: 1885 Resistance, Distribution of

Halfbreed Scrip) of the historic Métis Nation, less than half of the people interviewed expressed a clear understanding of Métis as a nation. While critics may argue that contemporary Métis nationhood is somehow retroactively contrived as it did not seem to take priority in most participant discussions, it would seem that the political discourse of Métis nationhood has merely taken a backseat to the more emotive discourses that result from shared experiences of cultural ambiguity. The consequences for a lack of nationhood discourse amongst Métis in BC are significant, as they have resulted in many people who have Métis ancestry, misrecognizing what it is about their ancestry that makes them Métis (ties to the historic Métis Nation, rather than their mixed heritage) (Andersen, 2014). Those who did express their identification as Métis on the basis of their tie to the Historic Métis Nation (as opposed to their ancestry as partly Indigenous or their experience as mixed-blood persons) were currently or had been previously employed by MNBC, a Métis service agency, or worked directly with a MNBC local Chartered Community. It appears that during the course of participant's engagement with such organizations, participants became increasingly educated on the significance of nationhood as a path towards legal recognition and Aboriginal rights. However, many of these participants also contended that Métis who descend from communities prior to and eastwards of the Red River Métis should also be considered Métis. Conversations on the topic of nationhood often centered on discussions of who should be allowed access to MNBC citizenship, motivation for applying for citizenship, struggles with meeting the documentary requirements for citizenship, and purposeful evasion of government identification such as MNBC citizenship.

One of the key reasons that participants attributed to their lack of engagement with Métis nationhood was their general disenchantment with internal politics. Métis 'politics' was consistently cited as the cause for division among Métis people. For instance, Carlene, raised Métis and an active member of multiple contemporary Métis communities describes a common sentiment among participants:

I have no affinity or connection or sense of obligation to Métis politics. I find it really disheartening and I'm really sad about how problematic the politics are. You know conflict isn't a bad thing, conflict is a good thing I believe, but there seems to be a lot of conflict and a lot of infighting and a lot of backstabbing sort of things. Like just kind of that stuff. Like I think we need to mature politically. And I mean it's kind of difficult because being Métis, politically you are representing such a diverse community, such a diverse community. So, how do you create a sense of cohesion? And I think that's difficult, but in that I don't think we've-, I don't think we stand firm enough in our values politically.

Participants discussed Métis nation citizenship as well as local community membership and belonging in ways that were at times muddled and overlapping. They reviewed multiple levels of membership, from what was considered the most exclusive (those with ties to specific historical Métis families) to the most inclusive (anyone with Aboriginal ancestry and good intentions). There were heated discussions on the topic of MNBC's citizenship application process, about those who learned about their Métis ancestry later in life, as well as those who sought out community memberships and citizenship cards for the sole purpose of gaining (real and/or perceived) benefits. Stories of cultural belonging and rejection intermingled with themes of legitimacy, justification, and contestation. Genealogical authority and connectedness through kin networks was a prominent form of legitimation and recognition, however due to the diasporic nature of historical Métis people and their continued high levels of mobility (Statistics Canada, 2006), such networks have been interrupted, rendering those who are disconnected, unknowable and even illegitimate. This was the experience for participants such as Shelley, whose family was disconnected from their Métis community through the forcible adoption of her grandfather. For others such as Margaret, upon moving away from her Cree-Métis grandmother, the physical distances between them as well as their inability to communicate due to language differences were significant obstacles in her connection to Métis culture. For many others, it was a matter of their Métis ancestry being hidden for years or even generations.

Silence on the topic of Métis heritage among Métis families was discussed as a strategy for survival, while values associated with particular cultures have continued to be passed down, though they have not been explicitly associated with being Métis (Lawrence, 1999; Fiola, 2015).⁶⁵ Richardson explains that “while some Métis people live in the dominant culture and practice ‘White ways,’ they think ‘Métis thoughts’ in the privacy of the mind” (p. 64). However, according to Fiola's (2015) study with people of Métis ancestry, “there are serious negative consequences when one hides behind light skin privilege, self-identifying as non-Aboriginal in daily life, and as Aboriginal only for personal gain” (p. 149). Such consequences included: “perpetuating the stereotype that Aboriginal people want everything for free; awarding scholarships and jobs to people who do not have the best

⁶⁵ Lawrence explains: “[H]umour, the importance of kindness, habits of avoiding direct questions, attitudes about the importance of family and respect for the sacred- these and other aspects of family behaviour were attributed by several participants to the Native values they had learned from their parents, in French and English rather than a Native language, and without having them named as such” (1999, p. 198).

interests of the Métis Nation at heart; taking opportunities away from people who have a vested interest in strengthening the Nation; and thus, ultimately weakening the Métis Nation” (p. 149). Though participants of this study did not identify all of the same consequences as those of Fiola’s study, it was clear that identifying based solely on ancestry, without a sufficient connection and contribution to a Métis community was collectively frowned upon.

While ancestry as a measurement for belonging may be an entry point into the Métis community, most participants regarded it to only mark the *beginning* of Métis identification. While the reinforcement of community acceptance through legal decisions such as Powley are valuable, most participants contended that community acceptance as a required factor for citizenship needed to move beyond the simple issuance of a community card and be based on active engagement with a particular Métis community. Some participants were sceptical of those who were claiming a Métis community, without being actually claimed by that community (beyond the bureaucratic process of printing a membership card for them), meanwhile having never experienced the racism associated with being a ‘half-breed’. Gaining entry (back) into Métis communities may be perceived as a simple task, as in most Chartered Communities in BC, requirements are minimal and at most, involve attending a community meeting in order to gain official ‘community acceptance.’ However, as pointed out by Zach, having a community-ratified identity ‘on paper’ does not equate to being claimed or recognizable by a community of people. This was a meaningful point of contention for several participants, who felt that many of those seeking community membership cards were not actively participating in, learning about, and/or contributing to the local community. For some participants, such ‘Wal-Mart Métis’ (handing out a card to anyone who asks) demeaned the term ‘Métis’ as it no longer held meaning. Furthermore, several participants who were raised or had later become a part of a Métis community felt misrepresented by those who were claiming a Métis identity, without sufficient ties to a Métis community (except sometimes by ancestry alone). This begs the question, “is an ancestral connection to the historical Métis Nation sufficient for one to be considered Métis?” Participants, like Val, argued that Métis identification was a birthright, whereas another participant, Zach felt that providing citizenship based on ancestry alone is problematic as “it feeds into that rhetoric where you get a bunch of extra benefits based on

the luck of the draw of who you are descended from.” Regardless of their perspectives on ancestry, both participants agreed that ancestry could be an entry point into the Métis community and were welcoming of those interested in learning about their Métis family history and participating in/contributing to their local community.

Yet, amongst some who grew up identifying (or being identified by others) as half-breeds and/or Métis, there was a sentiment that those who had not been “raised that way” should not be representing Métis people. Janet for instance, explains that those who now claim a Métis identity but “used to be something else” have a tendency to “take over from the people who have known that they’ve been Métis.” Janet’s poignant statement points us to the issue that Métis scholar Chris Andersen identifies as ethnic fraud, where Métis identity has been appropriated and reconstituted by people who have recently begun to identify as Métis (Andersen, 2015). Simpson argues that this is a significant challenge in debates over Indigenous identity, as “identity actually gets conflated with one’s sense of self, with one’s ‘ancestral’ recall of things (sometimes based on very strange and dubious evidence, family photos, cheekbones, etc.) without care for or commitment to the political reckoning system of the polity in question” (p. 63-4). This form of “abstract, culturalist or behaviourist” Indigenous identity claiming through “individualist self-fashioning” is perhaps an even more serious concern in Métis contexts (p. 64), as explained by Vowel:

In any case it is still difficult to claim one is Mohawk, or Mi'gmaq or Cree without a person from one of those First Nations asking pointed questions about relatives and community. Much easier to avoid a fuss and simply claim that any tiny scrap of Indigenous blood (again real or imagined) makes one "Métis." In this way, our nation becomes a bin for all those who are ‘not otherwise defined.’ (2015)

In light of these critiques, it appears that Aboriginal ancestry and good intentions are perhaps insufficient, unless they are accompanied by a clear relationship to Indigenous place and people. Echoed by several participants articulated in our conversations, Andersen argues that, “self-identification is a beginning, not an ending” (2015).

For some participants who were raised in Métis families and communities (such as Janet), the considerable ethnic fraud contributed to their resistance against seeking provincial membership and their involvement with Métis political organizations. Their identity was not validated in any way by having their citizenship application accepted, but instead, they perceived MNBC’s citizenship registry as a form of government identification, similar to that which their relatives experienced when forcibly removed to attend

residential schools and/or a colonial tactic to divide and conquer the Métis population. These comments suggest that perhaps provincial citizenship registries are missing a percentage of the Métis population who were raised Métis but continue to be fearful of and/or opposed to being identified as such by the Canadian government. Simultaneously, those who may only have ancestral connections to the historic Métis Nation are regularly applying for and receiving MNBC citizenship.

Not all participants understood the inflation of MNBC's citizenship registry to be problematic. In fact, the current proposal for associate membership suggests that MNBC may be attempting to more actively capture all self-identifying Métis in British Columbia so that Métis can be provincially recognized. According to Dan, political expediency has been a driving force behind MNBC citizenship, as has legality, as demonstrated by the shift in citizenship application practices following the 2003 Powley Decision. Dan, like many other political representatives, continues to argue that if Métis are going to gain recognition, then we must oblige to "play [the] games" that the federal and provincial governments like to play. He is clearly upset that this is the case, but feels that "numbers [make change in the] system" and perhaps if there are enough MNBC citizens, government offices such as the Ministry of Child and Family Development, may begin to listen to the Métis organizations. Dan's perspective is not uncommon and has been the approach of many Métis organizations and politicians since the 1982 recognition of Métis as one of Canada's Aboriginal people, however, there are indications that approaches to gain recognition on terms dictated by the Canadian state may not be sufficiently representative of traditional philosophies of Métis people.

Métis participants of this study expressed concerns over ethnic fraud, problems of political misrepresentation, divisive policies that exclude those who are accepted at community levels from citizenship, identity policing, and a sense of a lack of community obligation on behalf of those accessing citizenship. Underlying all conversations were implicit descriptions of the values that underlie being Métis, as well as varied references to group boundaries. For instance, Maria and Val both infer the values of being Métis through their detailing of what it means to have 'a Métis Heart.' Additionally, they both illustrate their perspectives on the ideal contours of the Métis population through comments such as Maria's comment that "we are not leftovers"

(referring to the shoehorning of all non-status Indians into the catch-all category Métis) and Val's explicit references to her ancestral connection to the historic Métis Nation. Such inferences to what it means to be Métis sometimes contradicted participants' stances on citizenship and membership. For instance, participants who advocated for a nation-based notion of Métis identity rejected solely ancestry-based citizenship criteria. Such contradictions highlight the ways in which 'official' processes for qualifying for citizenship that have been largely determined by the Canadian state in reaction to the Powley decision are inconsistent with some underlying collective values of Métis culture.

6.3 Métis Identity as Performative

Similar to the ways in which feminist theorist Judith Butler (1999) suggests that gender attributes are not expressive of an essential internal gender but rather performative of features that we anticipate and produce, I suggest that for participants of this study, Métisness is also "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 45). Thus, like Butler's argument, where the notion of a 'true' gender identity a "regulatory fiction" (1990, p. 162), I see the construction of Métisness to be "fictive phenomena" that accumulates power within discourse and has very real effects. So, the 'doing' of being Métis involves "repetitious, citational and mostly unselfconscious" signaling through linguistic and bodily acts, which are considered performative when their artificiality is concealed through naturalization (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 36). Deploying Butler's concept of 'performativity' enables an understanding of contemporary Métis identity as developing through discursive practices including the repetition and citation of conventions and norms (Barker & Galasiński, 2001). Participant interviews demonstrate many of the conventions and norms that are repeated by those who identify as Métis. This may include references to the Métis Nation historical narrative, introducing their ancestry by references well-known Métis patronyms, or telling common stories of cultural ambiguity.

While particular discourses may discipline subjects who do conform to specific norms, they also are active in producing the subject (Butler, 1990; Gregson & Rose, 2000; Pile & Thrift, 1995). Throughout participant interviews there are discussions of experiences of identities being policed, whereby the legitimacy of

their identification as Métis is questioned. Participants tell numerous stories about the authenticity of their indigeneity coming into question, which appears to centre on outsider perceptions of participants as non-Indigenous due to phenotypical markers that indicate whiteness. Furthermore, cultural traditions that participants learnt in urban Aboriginal contexts are called into question for being non-Métis specific and thus, is appropriative. Clearly the disciplining qualities of discourses are having substantial effects on the ways in which Métis people feel that they can behave and what is deemed permissive by some is prohibited by others. Thus, discourses can act on subjects as repressive, restricting behaviours and possible subject positions. Nonetheless, discourses can also be productive, as evidenced by the ways in which a dominant racialized discourse of Métis-as-mixed has produced particular Métis subject positions. This discourse infiltrates everyday talk about the shared experiences of mixed-blood people, to the point where some peoples' identification as Métis hinges almost exclusively on their mixed-blood ancestry.

While subjects are capable of, through discursive practices, "rewrit[ing] their scripts," such 'rewriting' will never be single authored, as it is a construction that is regulated through social norms and relationships. If Métis identity is performative in that it is a construction that is tenuously constituted through a stylized repetition of acts that are performed for a real or imagined audience, then the question becomes 'which real or imagined audiences are validating particular Métis identities as permissible?' The answer is complicated by the multiple contexts in which Métis people identify. Within this study, the ways in which Métis people identified as such were dependent on the communities that they participate in, confirming Butler's argument that subjects are regulated by social structures "by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" (Butler, 1990, p. 3). Through processes of normalization, whereby idealized behavioural norms are constructed and those who conform are rewarded for doing so, social communities determine what is and isn't considered 'Métis.' Specific knowledges are employed through discursive practices with the result of regulating people's behaviour. Therefore amongst particular contexts, certain forms of Métis identification may be considered acceptable, whereas amongst others, they may not (perhaps even causing identifiers to move on to other 'more inclusive' communities). Within such social

communities, certain ideas about ‘what it means to be Métis’ become unquestionably accepted, taken-for-granted, and naturalized as ‘truths’ and ‘facts.’ For instance, the notion that Métis means mixed has become so naturalized within particular communities that even Métis people with familial ties to distinct historic Métis communities have come to predominantly understand their own identity as Métis based solely on their mixed blood or ancestry, however, identification as Métis based solely on one’s mixed blood is not acceptable amongst Métis political organizations such as MNBC.

Within the context of Métis identification, certain mechanisms, such as normalization within specific groups/communities, are at play to facilitate the circulation of power/knowledge. While it is easy to consider normalization as a repressive mechanism for exerting disciplinary power, according to Butler (2004) it functions both to “signal the regulatory or normalizing function of power” and simultaneously “[bind] individuals together, forming the basis of their ethical and political claims” (p. 219). This appears to be the case for participants who argued for an overtly inclusive definition of ‘Métis,’ as such participants belonged to expressly open urban Aboriginal organizations. Many of these participants advocated for access to Métis programs and services solely through the basis of self-identification as Métis, as part of ‘the Métis experience’ involved marginalization via the Indian Act and continue exclusion was deemed a form of ‘internal colonization.’ Those who were willing to learn about Métis culture and participate and/or give back to Métis communities were easily welcomed into both urban Aboriginal and Métis-specific communities, causing a norm of ‘inclusiveness’ to be considered naturalized characteristic of Métis identity. This results in participants having a disdain for what they consider to be overtly exclusive definitions of Métis and also avoiding what they considered to be ‘politics’ pointing to certain organizations such as MNBC (who have strict citizenship standards based on the logic of legal decisions such as Powley) as the culprits of intra-community conflict and division. While repeating idealized understandings of Métis as indefinitely inclusive may be a local process for increasing community belonging and/or a tactic for providing community programming to people of Aboriginal descent who lack Indian status, such acts of group socialization have significant impacts on the political endeavours of Métis people, especially within the context of forwarding Aboriginal rights claims based on Métis nationhood.

Though Butler notes that categories of identity (such as gender and race) are not simply analogous, understanding the category, term, and use of 'Métis' from a poststructural perspective in that it is created discursively through language and practice by drawing on discourses that allow for the possibility of subversion. Butler argues that, "it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (Butler, 1990, p. 198-99). Such repetition offers the possibility for change through a variation on that repetition. Specifically, Butler locates performative agency in the ability to introduce new elements into repetitive iterations. Essentially, Butler is suggesting that "'you are what you do,' rather than 'you can only do what your identity allows you to do'" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 45). Her approach is particularly strategic, as she insists that, "that is no reason not to use, and be used, by identity. There is no political position purified of power, and perhaps that impurity is what produces agency as the potential interruption and reversal of regulatory regimes" (Butler, 1999, p. xxviii). Although it is impossible to transcend the relations that form the subject, through subversive repetition, it is possible "call into question the regulatory practice of identity" (1990, p. 44). By understanding such categories of identity as fictional and thus, contested sites of meaning and unnatural and not uncritically replicating them, there is the potential to displace relations of domination.

For Butler, in the context of gender, this means making "gender trouble," "not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity" (Butler, 1990, p. 46). One of the ways in which Butler troubles gender is by tracing how the terms of gender are established and naturalized, but also by locating challenges to the binary system that has historically structured gender, "where the very social life of gender turns out to be malleable and transformable" (Butler, 2004, p. 216). It was my intention throughout this thesis to trouble the category of 'Métis' by making visible the ways in which Métisness has been and continues to be constructed, legitimized, and naturalized. Furthermore, by highlighting the "foundational illusions" that contribute to dominant discourses of Métis identity, including notions such as racial mixedness, blood quantum, as well as cultural and national essentialism, rigid (and often stereotypical) notions of Métis identity can be critically questioned and subverted. Consciously claiming positions in

alternative, less damaging discourses is one way that individuals can actively resist positions of oppressions (Burr, 1995), while the act of rethinking of the self can bring new subjects and social practices into being (Barker & Galasiński, 2001). An approach such as performativity means that those occupying particular subject positions can have powerful effects on discourses. Although one may not be able to stand outside of the power relations involved, by having knowledge about the damaging qualities of certain discourses, subjects can intentionally avoid drawing from them and instead choose to reproduce and reify more productive discourses when articulating their identities. For instance, if we want to avoid the problems associated with racialized definitions of Métis, then we need to avoid drawing on these discourses in our descriptions of ourselves and others. If Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty is our goal, then we need to be intentional in our conversations about inclusiveness so that contemporary neoliberal values of individualism do not override the collective future of Métis people.

By understanding the subject as co-constructed through structural processes, rather than innate beings with universal attributes, groups such as the Métis people can undermine the taken-for-granted authority of external definitions (including those determined through Canadian judiciary). Furthermore, through transcoding, dominant discourses can be transformed, added to, and even ignored. Any attempt at trying to control discourses and meaning will be met with difficulty, as discourses are ‘super-individual’ and independent in that no single group or individual can determine the content or trajectory of a certain discourse as they result from historical processes including the multiple strategic and situated narratives that subjects express (Jäger, 2001; Luke & Luke, 1999).

It was my intent that this study was to act as a form of subversion, simply by demonstrating various Métis narratives, as an attempt to de-stabilize and humanize stereotypical Métis narratives. My interviews with participants illustrated that Métis people have had diverse life experiences, thus echoing Kearns (2013) statement, “[S]ome of us were raised with Indigenous cultures, some of us were adopted out, some of us came to learn about our ancestry as adults, and it is through opportunities to learn from, with, and alongside Elders in different contexts that we grow and deepen our connections and our understandings” (p. 62-3). The opportunities to learn from, and alongside elders is crucial to the continuation of Métis cultural practices and philosophies, but safe

spaces need to exist for such learning to occur. While, as Lawrence (2004) explains, “it is almost impossible to avoid profound intergroup conflicts while everybody is struggling with a colonial government to access rights for their community under government legislation...” it is only through “see[ing] the differences between contemporary Indian and Métis communities as distinct branches of the same root [that we] might bring about the possibility of working together for common goals as Indigenous communities” (p. 101). Perhaps widespread Canadian understandings of Métis community need to evolve, so that as a nation, we can stop making comparisons to First Nations groups and come to terms with the conditions of diaspora. Our collective histories and philosophies can stay in tact, but continue be added to by the multiple experiences of a diverse group of people.

Métis people can collectively embrace tactics of subversion to resist the symbolic violence that dictates the taxonomies from which we can understand ourselves. Métis organizations such as MNBC have already attempted to take a strategic approach in their definition of citizenship through amassing everyone with a Métis ancestor under the umbrella of the Métis Nation, but it may not have been an effective strategy for Métis in BC considering our current post-Powley circumstances. That said, a lack of legal recognition of historical proof in BC may not even be an obstacle in the movement towards the broader goal of Métis self-government and sovereignty considering the potential impacts of the Daniels decision(s) on Métis rights and self-government.

Similar to Simpson’s observations of Kahnawà:ke political membership, for the Métis, the question of membership is “underscored by existential ones: Who are we? Who shall we be for the future? Who belongs here, and why do they belong?” (2014, p. 8). In answering the question: ‘Who are the Métis?’ we can look to who we were, but more importantly, we need to look to who we will be in and where we want to be in the future. As Simpson (2014) explains, such questions are “deeply modern but signal a fear of disappearance, to be on the receiving end of an eliminatory story, disappearance at the hands of global capital, and an ongoing settler project that attempts to move Indigeneity away, to eliminate it” (p. 181). Tactical subversion within the context of Métis peoplehood means stopping the uncritical repetition of discourses that further ‘divide and conquer’ Métis peoples and instead, intentionally reproducing more constructive ones. Some participants articulated that there is a need to

take such concerns to Métis leadership provincially and in local communities so that it can gain traction and be passed onto the individuals who are perpetuating damaging rhetoric.

6.4 A Proposal for Métis Peoplehood

Like Butler, I am hesitant to suggest what other forms of subversion should take place in the future, however I do not feel that Métis people should shy away from tactical approaches for fear of the critiques of historical revisionism. However, a strategic approach to collectively defining Métis identity through the lens of peoplehood may circumvent some of the current limitations that exist within both nationhood and the current cultural rights framework. While terms such as “people” and “peoples” have become increasingly widespread in political documents, theories of “people-building” have been rarely analyzed, but have defaulted to theories of “nation-building” that have centred on the problematic dichotomy of civic and ethnic nationalism (Smith, 2003). While the current approach to Métis nationhood has been along the lines of ethno-nationalism, a tactical approach to Métis governance based in civic nationalism could potentially shift the focus away from the ethnicity of individuals to their desire to be a part of the Métis Nation political struggle for self-governance and sovereignty and importantly, their acceptance of the authority of Métis governance structures. Acknowledging that this approach would not only be controversial, but would also be nearly impossible to realize in practical terms under current government regulations that are deeply entrenched with racial/ethnic-based logics, such an approach would require asking the question “why *do* people need to be Métis in order to participate in Métis governance?” A civic approach to nationalism, as opposed to the current ethno-nationalism may be an avenue worth exploring, especially in terms of the ways in which new citizens can be formed through naturalization (socialization) versus solely through birthright. This approach speaks to the ways in which some participants of this study (such as Greg) readily accepted community members who were not Métis into the Métis community. Furthermore, among several participants interviewed, there was a common sentiment that those who have long identified as Métis and participate in Métis communities though perhaps may not have a provable link to the Red River Métis should be accepted into community.

Considering the lack of historic documentation and contemporary analyses regarding the historic progression from Métis kinship to nationalism, Andersen (2014) also argues for a peoplehood approach to understanding a collective sense of Métis identity. Though the theory of peoplehood has only recently been formulated within Indigenous contexts, it is well suited to address the unique qualities of Indigenous groups.⁶⁶ In the 1980s, Robert K. Thomas' introduced peoplehood theory to understand Native American peoples beyond conventional notions such as class, polity, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, nation, or religion (Holm, Pearson & Chavis, 2003). Basing his ideas on Edward H. Spicer's definition of "enduring peoples," whereby "human enclaves were the direct result of colonialism and that these groups most often were identified as having distinct languages, religions, and territories that the colonizers sought to destroy or, in the case of territory, claim for themselves" (p. 11), Thomas also added a fourth distinct characteristic to his understanding of peoplehood, sacred history. As a result of the lack of a spiritual component available within ethno-national categorizations, Indigenous groups have recently begun to define themselves in terms of peoplehood. Corntassel (2003) includes notions ceremony, sacred places, and history in his definition of Indigenous peoplehood:

1. Peoples who believe they are ancestrally related and identify themselves, based on oral and/or written histories, as descendants of the original inhabitants of their ancestral homelands;
2. Peoples who may, but not necessarily, have their own informal and/or formal political, economic and social institutions, which tend to be community-based and reflect their distinct ceremonial cycles, kinship networks, and continuously evolving cultural traditions;
3. Peoples who speak (or once spoke) an Indigenous language, often different from the dominant society's language- even where the Indigenous language is not 'spoken,' distinct dialects and/or uniquely Indigenous expressions may persist as a form of Indigenous identity;
4. Peoples who distinguish themselves from the dominant society and/or other cultural groups while maintaining a close relationship with their ancestral homelands/sacred sites, which may be threatened by ongoing military, economic or political encroachment or may be places where Indigenous peoples have been previously expelled, while seeking to enhance their cultural, political and economic autonomy. (p. 91-92)

Peoplehood is thus conceived of as involving the interweaving and interdependence of four factors: language, history, religion, and land. This matrix is nearly universal to all Indigenous people, thus rendering it a pervasive

⁶⁶ Other formulations of peoplehood are more political-oriented and reject the assumption that a sense of peoplehood emerges "organically or evolve out of people's particular economic, territorial, demographic, ancestral, religious, linguistic, or cultural identities in some fairly automatic, unconscious process" (Smith, 2003, p. 32). Smith explains that while such varied factors may shape a personal sense of identity for individuals, not one factor serves as an automatic basis for a political community. It is the ways in which such factors effectively mobilize constituencies and are in turn, institutionalized that create a sense of peoplehood.

theoretical underpinning to the entire field of Indigenous studies. The interrelatedness of all four aspects of the peoplehood matrix is crucial, as no single factor is more important than the others (Holm et al., 2003).

Importantly, conceiving of peoplehood in this way reflects Indigenous ways of knowing that rely on relationality (rather than fragmentation) are inclusive of everyday spiritual practices and embrace non-human relations.

Applying the peoplehood matrix to our understanding of Métis people as “enduring peoples” is essential if we are going to transcend definitions of Métis that privilege certain aspects of identity over others (whether nationalistic, ancestry-based, race-based, or culture-based). As a holistic notion, peoplehood reflects the historic reality that led to the development of a distinct historic people that is inclusive of a unique language, *michif*, a historical narrative, spiritual practice, and both historic and contemporary connections to the land. Taking one or only some of these four factors in defining Métis identity results in an incomplete understanding of the relationships that constitute Métis identity. For instance, Holm et al. (2003) explain the interrelatedness of sacred history as follows:

A group’s sacred history is told in the vernacular not only to give each member of the group an understanding of where they come from but also to impart to them proper behavior and the ways in which they maintain group cohesion through ritualism and ceremony. Sacred history also details kinship structures, the meaning of ceremonies as well as when they should be performed, and how the group fits within a particular environment. A people’s sacred history is equally an explanation of its own distinct culture, customs, and political economy. Law is derived from within the peoplehood matrix. (p. 14)

The same can be said for the ways in which the Métis national historical narrative has been passed down within families to explain kinship relations to historically significant moments of resistance, traditional cultural and spiritual practices, relationships to/ defense of land, language development, and to now inform contemporary governance (i.e.: contemporary harvesting organizations based on the traditional Law of the Hunt). Such practices, histories, and ‘kinscapes’ persist among peoples, despite intentional attempts at destroying them via colonial tactics of assimilation and disconnection.

The theory of nationhood that derives from Darwinian notions of hierarchical civility (whereby groups are categorized along a spectrum that ranges from tribes to states) lacks the permanency that is inherent in a theory of peoplehood. Nations are thought to rise and fall through time and as a result, citizenship shifts. In contrast,

Peoples, such as the Métis, persist in the face of dispossession, assimilation, and denial of their existence. Many of the stories told by study participants reflected a dominant narrative with Indigenous literary tradition, whereby the protagonist “become[s] entangled or trapped in the white world and [eventually] return to their Native roots for renewal and healing” (p. 18). Holm et al. explains, “[M]ost Native American literature contains this kind of cyclical, or at least nonlinear, structure and recognizes the holistic nature of the societies that these protagonists leave and to which they return. The land, the ceremonies, the language, and the stories drawn from the Native group’s sacred history make the protagonist whole and resolve his or her conflicts” (p. 18). Such stories of cultural rejuvenation document the persistence of peoplehood, demonstrating how Indigenous peoples have been able to adapt to changing situations without entirely losing their sense of peoplehood.

This points the imperative of autonomy in maintaining peoplehood despite syncretic change and thus the reason why Indigenous peoples strive for sovereignty and self-government. Holm et al. (2003) explains how models of peoplehood better explain the ways in which sovereignty is *inherent* in peoples, rather than *dependent* on state recognition:

Peoplehood is self-contained and self-governing. Moreover, it predates and is a prerequisite for all other forms of socio-political organization. In fact, peoplehood, rather than the band or the tribe, is the basis of nationalism and the original organization of states. Conversely, states or nations might not necessarily be considered peoples. Equally, the model of peoplehood serves to explain and define codes of conduct, civility, behavior within a given environment, and relationships between people. What we term “law,” and the enforcement thereof, is unquestionably a part of peoplehood. Sovereignty, therefore, is inherent in being a distinct people. (p. 17)

As an approach that is more focused on political rights than cultural difference and territorial ownership, applying peoplehood to the Métis involves identifying historical formal relationships between Métis collectives and the Crown as well as Métis collectives and other Indigenous groups. Contrasting administrative classifications that position the Métis based on racial mixedness and a geographically restricted historical indigeneity that is neither Indian, nor Inuit, Andersen positions peoplehood “as a distinct kind of political community that finds its roots in its historical relationality with other peoples and in its ability to produce and have respected intersocietal norms that govern expectations of behaviour” (p. 130-1). His argument for a

definition of Métis identity that extends beyond the post-colonizing racialized construction based on mixedness to a definition grounded in Métis peoplehood is as follows:

To begin with a different chain of assumptions, however- namely, that “the Métis” at Red River and elsewhere were Métis not because of our mixedness but, rather, because of (1) our ability to force the Canadian government to halt, however briefly, its annexation of territories now known as western Canada, (2) our earlier treating with the Sioux and other Indigenous collectivities, and (3) our collective self-consciousness as Métis- reveals the analytical oversimplifications wrought by a focus on mere hybridity or “separateness. Not surprisingly, a more national logic produces a radically different conclusion about the historical and contemporary meaning of “Métis” in a more just and less colonial Canadian society. (p. 198)

It is indisputable that the land that historic Métis people interacted with was closely tied to their identity as Indigenous people. Understanding the relationships that Métis people have with the Land or particular places as more fluid than the Western property-based notions of land has a particularly useful effect for Métis living along the ‘edges’ of the historic Métis homeland. Following Evans et al. (2012), I would argue that to achieve a nuanced reading of historic and contemporary Métis peoples, one must approach the Métis Historic Homeland not as a static historic territory with strictly policed boundaries, but rather, as a series of familial networks and nodes (‘kinscapes’) temporarily stabilized in particular places, which are made meaningful through continued occupation and/or relationships to local communities that were often ancestrally matrilineal. While I concur that asserting Métis nationhood in British Columbia is problematic due to the lack of legal proof of historical occupation in this province, strategically embracing a core-periphery approach (that remains fluid, but with its epicenter at the historic Red River Settlement), allows for Métis living in BC to continue engaging in Métis cultural and political communities. Moving beyond earlier analyses of the Métis Nation that were limited to the ‘Métis Homeland’ is incompatible with the territorially bounded notions of nationhood that the current Métis National Council continues to perpetuate. A peoplehood approach allows for attention to be paid to dynamics of a historical positive core (and periphery) and avoids diminishing the centrality of vast Métis kin networks.

Representative of unstable points of identification formed within cultural and historical discourses, identity is understood as being intimately connected to place, and as such, Métis identity will inevitably be articulated differently among people living and tied to differing places (and Indigenous ancestors). This study thus proposes that rather than centralizing our understandings of legitimate Métis historical communities in

Canada's prairie provinces, the geographical and territorial extent of the Métis homeland could potentially be interpreted through a peoplehood lens and therefore not as fixed points in history but rather on the basis of evolving experiences. For instance, articulations of Métis identity may differ among descendants of Red River Métis with ties to Anishinaabe people versus those in Saskatchewan who are related to Cree (Nēhiyawēwin) people. Opposing dominant neoliberal identity politics that rely on articulations of identity that are essentialized and unified (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bondi, 1993), an alternate construction of Métis identity can be articulated that instead sees "identities [as] the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1993, p. 4). Thus, within the context of identity politics, the positioning as 'other' or 'minority' can be resisted through alternative constructions of identity.

6.5 Summary

Throughout this study, various aspects of participant narratives reflected particular discourses, though participants were not always aware of the consequences of reproducing or resisting certain discourses. Phillips & Hardy (2002) argue that drawing on certain conceptual repertoires influences specific constructions of identities while simultaneously strategically aiding in institutionalizing particular patterns of resource distribution. It is apparent that the various approaches to Métis identity reflect the investments that individuals and groups have in particular discourses. Opportunities to strategically manoeuvre within discursive practices and negotiate identities hinges upon the positions available to subjects within the flow of social interaction (Burr, 1995; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

The concern with strategy and collective investment in determining the meaning of 'Métis' is closely related to the existential question of a Métis future. Before we can decide upon 'who is Métis,' we need to determine what it is we want for Métis people. If we want minimal government recognition, then our work is complete, but if we want Aboriginal rights such as the right to self-govern, to determine our own citizens, to continue cultural practices thus protecting Métis culture for future generations then our current approach to nationhood, citizenship, and community membership requires rethinking. In essence, the question remains, "what do we want a Métis future to look like?" But such a question is inevitably complex, prompting more questions,

such as “Does this future mean the continuation of cultural practices? A land base? A distinct governance system? Obligations to consult? Access to Aboriginal programs and services? And for whom?”

Membership talk persists as paradoxically both an extremely complicated concern and a simultaneously simple explanation based on relatedness (Simpson, 2014). The current approach to provincially located citizenship as a means for attracting recognition appears to be failing, in lieu of major legal decisions such as the recent Daniels Decision and more strategic political approaches. I argue that the failure of current citizenship practices to adequately represent Métis populations results from the neoliberal, individualistic, and short-sighted Western worldviews that underlie and deeply influence current Métis political practices. The challenges of determining Métis citizenship and membership are deeply embedded in historical and political contexts as well as historical and contemporary discursively produced cultural repertoires. The homogenizing of Métis identities post-1982 and the inclusion as Aboriginal peoples within the constitution remains problematic as the experiences, needs and futures of various groups claiming to be Métis differ. The untangling of such differences may need to occur in order to address the varied needs of Métis people. Such a process could be difficult, however not impossible. This study demonstrated that the needs and concerns of Métis people in BC vary considerably. It was clear throughout the interview process that while harvesting rights were a significant concern for some participants, for others, rights were less important than having a local community to connect to for social support and to learn about and continue cultural practices. For those who worked directly with child welfare organizations, it was clear that there is an immediate need for Métis-specific programs and services and one of the only avenues for accessing such programs was through advocacy on behalf of Métis political organizations. Clearly, the priorities of Métis people are as diverse as their experiences identifying as Métis.

Individual participant narratives coupled with wider historical narratives illustrate the many ways in which a legitimate Métis identity has come into view. Among participants, the meaning of ‘Métis’ and the contours of local, provincial, and national Métis communities varied considerably, depending on their proximity to particular Métis families, communities, and urban Aboriginal organizations. Many of the differences that arose depended on whether people were exposed to the racial, ethno-cultural, or political discourses of Métis and whether they had

access to the vocabulary that surrounds such discourses from a young age (constant repetition) versus those who did not and had to learn the language of Métisness through various organizations. Such participants, recognized aspects of their life own life that belonged to particular discourses of Métisness and in a sense, learned to perform Métisness, until it was internalized and became naturalized. Hopefully, by demonstrating the diverse experiences of Métis people, it has become apparent that the ‘Métis subject’ is not stable, coherent, and power-neutral, but a unique “fictive phenomena” that is in constantly metamorphosing according to its context.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study sought to illustrate the multiple difficulties, contradictions, and complexities that Métis people and organizations face as a result of the lack of consensus regarding the term 'Métis'. Providing a comprehensive solution to all of these challenges is impossible, considering the sheer diversity of Métis peoples and localized concerns, however, I hope this study provided some guidance in the labyrinth that is Métis identity. Green (2011) writes "And who are the Métis? Ask six different organizations or six different kinds of Métis; get an equivalent number of different definitions" (p. 168). This statement reflects the conundrum of contemporary Métis identity. The absolute lack of consensus that plagues the term 'Métis' has a long history and will perhaps extend indefinitely. According to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal People's (SSCAP) 2013 report on the recognition of Métis identity, "[N]o federal legislation defines the term 'Métis.' Given various developments in Aboriginal law and policy, including an emerging right of self-determination in international law, some have argued that defining 'Métis' is not a matter for the courts of legislators to unilaterally determine" (2013, p. 9-10). Yet, the issue of official recognition remains central in the debate over Métis identification. As Patzer explains, "after more than two decades with no content ascribed to the Aboriginal rights purportedly 'recognized and affirmed' in the Constitution Act, 1982, the inclusion of the Métis in section 35 seemed more and more like an empty promise" (2013, p. 208). This may be partially attributed to the lack of legislative record of recognition of Métis as a distinct people in the Indian Act as well as the lack of a consistent and intelligible definition of Métis citizenship (Peach, 2013). This is further complicated by the ways in which government policies and legal decisions have historically defined Métis as inherently different from First Nations and as such permanently segregating Métisness from Indianess (Fiola, 2015; see *Alberta vs. Cunningham* for example).

Some Indigenous scholars, such as Coulthard (2014) and Simpson (2014) have been critical of the notion that state recognition can ever produce equal relations, considering the substantial imbalance of power relations. Yet, recognition remains central for Métis, as the racialized misrecognition of Métis has already proved to be damaging and even demeaning to Métis peoples (Andersen, 2014). The challenge remains that for those who seek recognition, it is done at all costs regardless of the damage that reproducing the taxonomies of Indianness

produces. This largely results from the sentiment that “no other option seems thinkable, let alone doable” (p. 177). While Simpson (2014) explains that refusal is a possible alternative to seeking recognition from within the state, the history of Métis leaders compromising to government demands suggests that this is unlikely.⁶⁷

It appears that political theories and government processes are ill-equipped to deal with Indigenous politics beyond the realm of Western norms of acknowledgment through recognition. This incompatibility largely results from the Western notion that Métis identity (like ‘Indian identity’) is settled and complete, rather than an evolving process informed by various changing factors (Simpson, 2014). Historically, Métis identities oscillated depending on contemporaneous discourses and policies (Bell, 2013). This continues into the present as individual and collective voices as well as legal forms of authentication inform dialogues surrounding ‘What it means to be Métis.’ Accordingly, the sharing of Métis family stories and life experiences can provide opportunities to transform the public realm, increase acceptance of the diversity and complexity of Métis identities, contribute to the collective consciousness of Métis peoples and provide opportunities for healing through confronting the legacy of silence that results from colonialism (Kearns, 2013). Furthermore, as demonstrated through this study, the sharing of the narratives of Métis people can “provoke questions, consideration, attention and draw out implications, and a response” (Kearns, 2013, p. 84). The hope is that through thoughtful dialogue we can move beyond current understandings of Métis identity as “a policy category, or the place you go when you don’t fit elsewhere” (Gaudry, 2015, p. 97) to an understanding of Métis through the lens of peoplehood, so that the very real challenges and injustices that Métis people face today can be addressed in a manner that is holistic and inclusive of traditional indigenous values, such as *wahkootowin*.

The cultural politics regarding who has the power to name and legitimate Métis identity remains subject to change through political, judicial, bureaucratic, and social processes. This study can contribute to existing knowledge as it addressed the degree to which Métis political organizations and the federal and provincial governments as well as the courts represent the interests of Métis peoples. Exploring past, current, and possible Métis identity politics has the potential to contribute to larger lines of social inquiry including nationalism and

⁶⁷ For instance, several participants argued that MNC’s rigid citizenship standards are a direct response to government tactics of limiting fiscal responsibilities, since it would likely be impossible to provide comprehensive programs and services to all self-identified Métis.

peoplehood studies, Indigenous identity politics, and the relationship between social history, geography, and identity. In hindsight, there were areas of study that could have been expanded and the study could have greatly benefitted from a more intersectional analysis (most notably in terms of class and gender relations). However, considering the narrow scope of the study as well as available time and resources, this was not accomplished. Despite its restrictions, I am hopeful that this study can act as a model for developing knowledge specific to Métis communities as it is community supported and grounded within an Indigenous paradigm.

Although fairly typical in indigenist research, the research process itself proved to be equally fruitful as the resulting data. While the data and resulting analysis will contribute to a broader body of knowledge concerning Métis identity, the process of consulting with and interviewing Métis peoples throughout this research project has allowed me the opportunity to develop and strengthen my relationships with particular members as it often involved connecting with people on a profound level about issues that they held considerable emotional investment in. Through these strengthened relationships I have become increasingly involved with the Kelowna Métis Association in particular. As this methodology seeks to restore community identity, build capacity and offer a new medium for intercultural communication, it is crucial that the research extends beyond academia and is of use to Métis people. In discussion with the Kelowna Métis Association, there has been explicit interest in developing video materials for the public using the recorded interviews. Furthermore, working with local Métis organizations, a summary of research results will be presented at a Métis forum in the Central Okanagan in 2017, which will provide an opportunity to gain additional feedback from Métis community members.

Through being reflexive and applying an indigenist critical methodology based on relational accountability (described in Chapter 2), the study was grounded in a desire to “essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 747). Following a description of Critical Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis, Chapter 3 acted to preface the body of the study with a description of the theoretical ideas that were explored and applied to this study, which included various notions of subjectivity, language, and social practices, discourse, Foucault’s notion of ‘Power-Knowledge’, normalization, naturalization, cultural identity, Butler’s ‘performativity’, and a brief overview of theory regarding narrative identity. Chapter 4 examined three of

the identified dominant discourses that Métis people engage with (or are externally associated with), both collectively and individually, including 1) the racialized discourse of mixed-bloodedness, based on rhetoric regarding blood quantum, biology and hybridity; 2) the discourse of cultural tradition, based on the ways in which the indigeneity of Métis people is constructed through a lens of uninterrupted ethno-cultural practices, ways of being, and difference, as well as a legal cultural rights approach, challenges of self-identification, cultural appropriation, and ethnic fraud; and 3) the discourse of nationhood, whereby Indigenous peoples including the Métis have reinforced the notion of a singular historic and contemporary Nation, which is exhibited by a Métis National Historical Narrative, provincial political organizations, citizenship registries, distinct geographic boundaries, and resisted in various forms. Chapter 5 provided participant narratives and together with Chapter 6 described the ways in which participant narratives drew from the broader bodies of knowledge that were described in Chapter 4 including discourses centered on racial constructions of ‘Indianness’, ethno-cultural notions of indigeneity including their limitations, and political dialogue regarding Métis nationhood. In particular, Chapter 6 explained how deploying Butler’s concept of ‘performativity’ enables an understanding of contemporary Métis subject positions as capable of ‘troubling’ dominant discourses. By understanding such categories of identity as fictional and thus, contested sites of meaning and unnatural and not uncritically replicating them, there is the potential to displace relations of domination. Furthermore, Chapter 6 sought to propose a tactical strategy that could potentially transform Métis nationalism into Métis peoplehood in order to appropriately represent diverse Métis realities, with a Métis futurity in mind.

Through the processes of this research study, it has become increasingly apparent that the meaning of ‘Métis’ will continue to be contested at local, provincial, and national levels. Hall advocated for an approach to identity that “accepts and works with the shifting, unstable character of meaning, and enters, as it were, into a struggle over representation, while acknowledging that, since meaning can never be finally fixed, there can never be any final victories” (2001b, p. 342). Understanding that meaning cannot ever be finally fixed and that there will never be any final victories both for and against the Métis people allows for this debate over the meaning of ‘Métis’ to be a site of struggle that has the potential to facilitate some degree of social change.

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