

# Communing with the Dead

The “New Métis,” Métis Identity Appropriation,  
and the Displacement of Living Métis Culture

ADAM GAUDRY

**Abstract:** Métis are witnessing an increase in the number of self-identified “Métis” individuals and groups lacking affiliation with long-standing Métis communities. For these groups, genealogical discovery of previously unknown Indian ancestors acts as a catalyst for personal self-discovery, spiritual growth, and ultimately the assertion of a Métis identity, regardless of whether or not this identity is accepted by contemporary Métis communities. These “new Métis” do not situate their Métis identity in the lived practice of Métis communities that have persisted for generations throughout Western Canada but in written genealogical reports that link them to long-dead Indigenous relatives who may not have even understood themselves to be Métis. In light of this problematic “new Métis” orientation to “the dead,” this article explores the narratives generated by the unprecedented growth of Métis self-identification, particularly in Eastern Canada, and how shifting conceptions of Métis identity have inaugurated a problematic “new Métis” subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Métis identity, Indigenous identity politics, Indigenous citizenship

After weeks of controversy over his questionable Indigenous identity claims, the one-time “Métis” author Joseph Boyden went on CBC Radio’s popular pop-culture show *Q* on January 12, 2017, in order to shore up his claims to Indigenous identity. Using pseudospiritual language, Boyden claimed that he didn’t choose the Indigenous characters he wrote about; rather, they chose him. Specifically, they spoke to him: “The stories that I tell are . . . the voices that come to me.” These voices appear not as mere artistic muses but as the apparent spirits of actual Indigenous peoples. He describes it as a kind of compulsive conversa-

tion where “voices who come to me are the voices who come to me. I’m not one to say I’m not able to tell the stories that [these voices] want me to tell.” While these claims could be dismissed as artistic process, they also speak to something more, that Boyden sees himself as an individual chosen by long-dead Indigenous people to tell their stories. Amid a loud and sustained criticism of Boyden’s claims to be Indigenous, it was as if this self-proclaimed personal connection with long-dead Native people was supposed to override the concerns of still-living Indigenous voices. He acted as if this communion with the dead overrode any challenges from any living community.

This phenomenon isn’t confined to the literary pursuits of Canadian authors, however; it also informs the construction of many genealogy-based Indigenous identities formed through engagement with genealogy websites, often without any input from actual Indigenous communities. A significant number of individuals following this path come to identify as Métis, and members of Métis communities are witnessing an increase in the number of self-identified Métis individuals who lack meaningful connection to long-standing Métis communities. I refer to these individuals as “new Métis” in juxtaposition to Métis families and communities who have a much longer intergenerational identification with Métis nationhood and history. In these new Métis circles, individuals assert a self-proclaimed Métisness drawn from long-hidden family secrets, now being called back into the present by their ancient relatives. The genealogical discovery of previously unknown Indian ancestors can act as a catalyst for personal self-discovery, spiritual growth, and ultimately the assertion of a Métis identity—regardless of whether or not this identity is accepted by contemporary Métis political communities. Unlike long-standing Métis communities, however, these self-identified Métis do not situate their Métis identity—and the authority to speak about being Métis—in the lived practice of Métis communities that have persisted for generations throughout Western Canada but in written genealogical reports that link them to long-dead Indigenous relatives who may not have even understood themselves to be Métis.

I argue that it is the discursive disregard of living Métis that locates the promise of Métis cultural revival in blood memory, genealogy, and lineal descent—connections to the dead—rather than a connection to the living culture of Métis communities. This is what Circe Sturm refers to as “a presumed void of Indianness,” the belief that contemporary In-

Indigenous communities either don't exist or are less capable of providing commentary about their own existence than authoritative outsiders, including those interested in reviving a lost identity.<sup>1</sup> But there is no Métis cultural or political void to fill, no void of Métisness. Métis communities still exist, and so do Métis governments, all of whom, despite some shortcomings owing to a century of colonial interference, are generally responsible for safeguarding Métis identity and political interests.

Living Métis communities have a historical continuity within the Métis Nation as it existed long before Canada colonized the West. Even after Canada's violent entrance into the Métis homeland, Métis communities existed openly, expanding, contracting, and germinating in new locations as the flows of colonial power pushed and pulled at them. Today they are historically rooted and persistent, continuing to practice Métis culture, politics, and the obligations of kinship. These communities have inherited these practices from their parents and grandparents, who in turn inherited them from their parents and grandparents, forming a living lineage to the days of an independent Métis Nation. While not all Métis are born into these families and communities, Métis collectives are sites of repatriation as well where those who have been disconnected from this living chain of Métis cultural, political, and social practice can be reintegrated into communal life among their living relatives.

These, however, are not the communities that many newly self-identifying Métis seek out. Instead, many have created their own communities, and they aspire to commune with the dead rather than reconnect to the living lineage of Métis communities. As a result, these "new Métis necro-communities" generate a kind of kinship that connects the disconnected, forming kin-like relations to those whose sole commonality is their distant and often unrelated Indigenous ancestry. While some individuals from Métis Nation families have found their way into these necro-communities, membership is based almost exclusively on genealogical claims to oft-distant Indigenous ancestors, including many drawn from places where historical Métis communities never existed, particularly southern and eastern Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes, and parts of the United States beyond the Dakotas and Montana. Similar to many New Age "Indians" and self-identifying "Cherokees" in the United States, these "Métis" identities are described as a personal journey rather than a connection to a historically

continuous and still-living Métis community, making them relatively difficult to critique in settler societies that privilege self-identification in identity construction. Self-identification, along with “new Métis” self-proclaimed connections to the dead, make relationships with the living lineage of historically continuous Indigenous communities of secondary importance and, for some, altogether irrelevant.

In light of this problematic “new Métis” orientation to the dead, this article explores the narratives generated by the unprecedented growth of Métis self-identification, particularly in Eastern Canada, and argues that shifting conceptions of Métis identity have inaugurated a problematic “new Métis” subjectivity. Using Sturm’s analysis of “race shifting” among self-identified Cherokees in the United States and the large body of critical Indigenous scholarship on New Age identity appropriation, this article explores how the “new Métis” movement constitutes itself.<sup>2</sup> Anchored almost entirely in amateur genealogical studies and in New Age notions of blood memory and hypodescent, “new Métis” self-identification downplays the need for substantive connections to living communities of Métis people grounded in generations of cultural continuity and political struggle. The result is an attempt by these “new Métis” to define Métis identity almost exclusively through long-dormant ancestral connections—the dead—rather than the still-living Métis communities throughout Western Canada and in diasporadic communities beyond.

This article analyzes five “new Métis” organizations and the narratives produced by their public assertions of Métis identity, constructed in their constitutions, press releases, websites, social media communications, and the writings of “new Métis” organizers:

1. the Métis Federation of Canada (MFC), the umbrella organization for “new Métis” (it incorporates other “new Métis” into its network through a series of “treaties”);
2. the Bras d’Or Lake Metis Nation, based in Cape Breton (this group changed its name from Unama’ki Voyageur Metis in 2016; it has primarily been concerned with gaining Métis Aboriginal harvesting rights and expresses propipeline, antiunion, and Conservative partisan viewpoints; and it has an antagonistic relationship with both the provincial government and the Mi’kmaq);<sup>3</sup>
3. the Communities of the Voyageur Métis, based in the loosely

- defined Great Lakes region but also including much of the U.S. Midwest (they are vocally opposed to Métis nationalism);
4. the Canadian Métis Council, based in New Brunswick (the council tried and failed to have Métis Aboriginal rights in the Maritimes recognized through litigation);
  5. the Métis Nation of Canada (at one point it aspired to be the “new Métis” umbrella group but has since seen this role filled by the MFC).

Despite significant geographic variation and differing levels of professionalism, each organization has constructed a remarkably similar “new Métis” identity that prioritizes genealogy-based self-identification in place of substantial connection to long-standing Métis communities and the Métis Nation generally.

#### THE MÉTIS PEOPLE AND THE “NEW MÉTIS”

Why “new Métis” choose to make Métis identity claims as opposed to other Indigenous identities is likely explained by the enduring confusion about what it means to be Métis. Generally speaking, there are two uses of the term, one with historical origins and one that has emerged more recently. The first is the oldest form of Métis identity, grounded in collective Métis action, cultural practice, and political assertions from at least 1816.<sup>4</sup> This identity is grounded in a common culture, common historical experience, and a common sense of self that emerged in the historic “North-West,” the prairies and parkland in what are now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta and whose diaspora put Métis farther afield. Thus, the Métis are both a *people* and an *Indigenous people* in the fullest sense of those terms, leading to the common use of the collective name “Métis Nation” among Métis.<sup>5</sup> The Métis Nation has for at least two centuries organized itself around shared cultural and political institutions, fought to preserve Métis self-determination as a people, and maintained a continual and living national community on a shared land base recognized by other Indigenous peoples. This living national community of Metis is also a self-aware collective, sharing a common sense of relatedness and national belonging and possessing extensive historical evidence of social and diplomatic connections between Métis families and communities across the historic North-West over the past two hundred years.<sup>6</sup>

Drawing on the collective experience of this shared history, early and mid-twentieth-century Métis leaders built a number of provincial political organizations to protect their interests in the face of an increasingly intrusive Canadian state. In 1983 these organizations formed the Métis National Council (MNC) to protect Métis Nation interests in the federal sphere. Today, these Métis political bodies continue to represent Métis people (even if imperfectly) in a confederal structure. The MNC represents Métis issues at the federal level and is given political authority by its provincial affiliates, the Métis Nation of Ontario, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan, the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Métis Nation of British Columbia.<sup>7</sup> Among other things, the Métis Nation organizations oversee Métis social programming and the provincial Métis Nation registries. The Métis Nation’s citizenship criteria require Métis Nation citizens to demonstrate a connection to a historical Métis community in the Métis Nation homeland, which encompasses the three prairie provinces and parts of British Columbia and Ontario. Citizenship in the Métis Nation is also recognized by the *contemporary* Métis people through the apparatus of the Métis Nation organizations, giving the Métis Nation’s citizenship code both historical and contemporary criteria.<sup>8</sup> Despite criticism of its “exclusivity” by “new Métis” critics, the MNC’s identity criteria are actually quite broad,<sup>9</sup> requiring only that an applicant demonstrate a genealogical connection to a historical Métis community and that he or she be accepted by the contemporary Métis community as Métis, usually using Canadian scrip records from the nineteenth century as the baseline for a membership roll. As such, Métis Nation communities, particularly in urban centers, are instrumental not only in the recognition of Métis individuals but also in the repatriation of many people who, through colonial policy, have been adopted out or otherwise separated from their people. Métis inclusivity and repatriation, however, should not be confused with a borderless identity. Inclusivity does not mean the community is open to anyone who feels entitled to claim it.

There are, of course, many individuals who have claimed a Métis identity for other reasons. For many years Métis organizations had worked closely with—and included in their membership—nonstatus Indians, that is, those who had been defined out of Indian status and band membership by Canadian legislation. While complicated, the relationship be-

tween Métis and nonstatus Indians is a relationship of a different sort from that of the “new Métis,” as it historically involved matters of jurisdiction. Both Métis and nonstatus Indians have historically fallen under provincial jurisdiction, but both a merger and a schism between these groups continue to inform Métis politics, although in most cases the Indigeneity of all involved wasn’t questioned, as it is with the “new Métis.”<sup>10</sup>

There is also a deeper sense of being Métis that goes beyond citizenship cards and registration. Belonging to a Métis family and community is a vital part of being Métis. Historically speaking, Métis have organized themselves around notions of kinship, what Brenda Macdougall calls *wahkohtowin*, a Cree/Michif term that signifies the many family-like responsibilities of being a good relative as a foundational orientation to Métis social life.<sup>11</sup> Utilizing this concept, contemporary notions of citizenship practiced in Métis communities are maintained not just by abstract relationships to one’s ancestors but also by practicing proper social conduct in everyday relationships with fellow community members, a practice in which many First Nations people are also linked to Métis communities through generations of intermarriage.<sup>12</sup> In other words, belonging to a Métis community is a practice of being a relative. Other Indigenous peoples share similar obligations. As Cherokee scholar Eva Marie Garrouette argues, Indigenous kinship is “an ongoing practice or skill, an *active relationship that must be maintained* and that is not invariably tied to one’s genealogical connections.”<sup>13</sup> Thus *wahkohtowin* and kinship obligations involve not merely a “relationship to ancestry” but also a “responsibility to reciprocity” that involves reciprocal relationships with living communities that can demonstrate historical-contemporary continuity and are regularly practiced in a contemporary setting.<sup>14</sup>

While this Métis identity remains the center of Métis life, Métisness has long been distorted in the historical and scholarly archive by its equation with simple mixedness. So alongside this living Métis identity there is a persistent, yet largely ahistorical, identity category that I label “Métis” identity, (using scare quotes). Predicated more on notions of racial mixing than on a common culture or history, this form of identity is variously called “small-m metis,” “the other Métis,” and “Métis-as-mixed.”<sup>15</sup> This identity category is based on a negative definition in which individuals who are neither white nor Indian are classified as “Métis.”<sup>16</sup> In many ways, this is the default definition for those who do

not see a fit in other identity categories. Such an identity is largely rejected by Métis intellectuals because it lacks a historical basis and it undermines Métis self-determination in matters of citizenship.<sup>17</sup> As I argue elsewhere, this “Métis” identity is rejected because, according to its logic, there is no clear unifying element of “Métis” identity.<sup>18</sup> The unifying feature is not cultural or historical commonality but rather the supposedly unifying historical process of Indian-white racial mixing that was common during the fur trade. This experience is said by many “new Métis” to have produced a common culture, although there is no clear point of origin or even geographic contact between its supposed component parts that would make such cultural commonality possible.

Several scholars have raised serious criticisms of these “Métis” identities based in mixedness, instead defining Métis identity based on historical self-ascription and a historical self-consciousness *as Métis*. Instead of rooting Métis identity in this mixing of “races” and cultures, Andersen argues that Métis peoplehood emerged *as a people* who were capable of establishing “intersocietal norms” and who self-consciously identified themselves as Métis. That is, they used the term “Métis” in order to differentiate themselves from others and produced broadly accepted social norms that Métis understood as Métis ways of acting.<sup>19</sup> In a similar manner, Jacqueline Peterson, a one-time proponent of a nascent “Métis” identity in the Great Lakes, now argues that only historical communities that understood themselves as Métis should be considered as such by contemporary observers, which for her means the prairies as a site of Métis emergence, not the Great Lakes.<sup>20</sup> Peterson looks to Métis self-consciousness as the basis for Métis identity rather than “insert[ing] Métis consciousness into areas and eras where they did not previously exist,” as scholars have in the Great Lakes region and as the “new Métis” do almost everywhere.<sup>21</sup> Scholars like Andersen and Peterson have thus refocused discussion of Métis identity on historical self-ascription and political consciousness *as Métis* rather than defaulting to a mixed-descent definition, as many other scholars seem to do.

Determining that historical Métis communities exist, however, is only one part of the process. Historical Métis communities also exist in the present, demonstrating a *historical-contemporary continuity*. Métis communities have maintained a continuous and living Métis culture rooted in this historical Métis self-consciousness. Living cultures may change with shifting circumstances and evolve with their people, but



they retain a core connection to their origins. In this way Métis culture in Western Canada is still alive in a way that other “Métis” cultures—who were never self-consciously “Métis” or who have for whatever reason ceased to persist as a historical Indigenous collective—are not.

Given these qualifications, Andersen and Peterson are correct in asserting that little credible evidence demonstrates the existence of historically based, self-conscious Métis outside the northern plains (and its diaspora) with continuity today. While this position is largely at odds with more recent attempts by “new Métis” to situate themselves as “Métis” people, it is nonetheless consistent with traditional Métis identity boundaries that were and are rooted in an identifiable kinship network and collective Métis self-consciousness.

RACE SHIFTING, SELF-IDENTIFICATION, AND THE NEW AGE:  
“NEW MÉTIS” COME OUT OF HIDING

The assumption of a Métis identity by those who until recently did not imagine themselves to be Indigenous is by no means a phenomenon isolated to the “new Métis” movement. Ethnic mobility away from whiteness to some form of self-identified Indigeneity is common throughout North America.<sup>22</sup> Sturm labels this ethnic movement “race shifting,” where individuals whose families have (supposedly) ignored, suppressed, or forgotten their connection to Indigenous ancestors—ancestors who are disproportionately purported to be Cherokee—are now reclaiming this part of their family history.<sup>23</sup> In a comparative context, Cherokee race shifters in the United States have developed nearly identical narratives to “new Métis” in Canada. According to Sturm, race-shifting Cherokees locate their history in “a painful . . . hidden history,” where their families were forced to publicly disavow their Cherokee identity due to intense racism while supposedly maintaining some unspoken elements of Cherokeeness in private, often coded ways. For Sturm’s race shifters, hiding is constructed as “the product of grim necessity . . . lest their current efforts at Cherokee reclamation be called into question.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, race shifters believe that their Cherokee ancestors are actively calling upon them to return to Cherokeeness, to reclaim their lost culture.<sup>25</sup> Implicit in such an argument is an unspoken reliance on hypodescent, where a single drop of Cherokee blood is powerful enough to “remake one’s entire racial, cultural, and social body”

into a full-blooded Cherokee. Ironically, unlike their often minute (and sometimes invented) Cherokee blood content, they do not attribute hypodescent powers to other ancestors, say, Irish or English, meaning that their Cherokee relatives, no matter how distant, are attributed unique spiritual powers that non-Cherokee ancestors are not.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Sturm notes that many of these individuals actually retain whiteness while asserting a Cherokee identity: “Race shifters are often so busy asserting their right to indigeneity that they do not acknowledge their white skin privilege. Instead, where whiteness might otherwise have been, there are both an absence and a refusal, as if whiteness were the new hidden history, the new stigma.”<sup>27</sup> So, bound up in entitlement and privilege, when these race shifters fail to gain entry into one of the three federally recognized Cherokee tribes, they often adopt a “neotribalist” ethos. It is claimed that “if your tribe of origin will not have you . . . because you fail to meet the standards for citizenship . . . then it is better to have a tribe of your own.”<sup>28</sup>

“New Métis” identities follow a similar trajectory. Their narratives construct “new Métis” identity primarily through self-identification and a connection to an oft-distant Indigenous ancestor. With this connection and the unstated power of hypodescent, “new Métis” envision a normative Métis subject who has a hidden identity and culture secretly and subconsciously retained. The “new Métis” identity is profoundly individualized and rooted in a personal genealogical connection to an Indigenous ancestor. While this relationship to the dead is largely based in the past, it is made meaningful today by self-identification and the allusion to a legitimating journey of personal self-discovery.

A race-shifting identity trajectory is deeply bound up in the membership codes of “new Métis” organizations, which despite geographic distance have a fairly standardized definition of “Métis” identity. For example, the Métis Federation of Canada requires applicants to demonstrate “a historical blood connection to an Aboriginal and European couple.”<sup>29</sup> The Canadian Métis Council requires that applicants be “distinct from Indian and Inuit, [as well as] someone who has genealogical ties to Aboriginal ancestry.”<sup>30</sup> These “new Métis” organizations see themselves, at least partly, as independent arbiters of genealogical authenticity. The Bras d’Or Lake Metis Nation claims that their membership provides “proof of Native Aboriginal ancestry . . . who have declared themselves to be and hold themselves out to be a Métis

Aboriginal person to the satisfaction of the . . . Association.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps most bluntly, the Communities of the Voyageur Métis state: “Getting a Métis Status card . . . means your genealogy has been verified to be true and accurate. It is proof that you actually are ‘part Native.’”<sup>32</sup> These organizations unanimously equate a history of mixed descent with “Métis” identity rather than a common culture, making descent from an Indian ancestor, even if quite distant, the requisite qualification for membership rather than a connection to living Métis relations. Premised on the unspoken logic of hypodescent, a single Indigenous ancestor, one drop of blood, is enough to remake the entire identity of an individual into an Indigenous person—in this case, invariably “Métis.”

For “new Métis,” notions of hiding and a subsequent coming out of hiding occupy central places in their narratives. The starting point for the “new Métis” organizations lies in the personal rediscovery of one’s “Métis” ancestry, which is often said to be “hidden” until recently. Most “New Métis” suggest that they have “always known” they were Métis, but because of the threat of anti-Indigenous racism, their family kept this identity secret, so they were, in fact, “hidden in plain sight.”<sup>33</sup> The Métis Nation of Canada indicates that many of its members had their “identity hidden from them, purposely to protect and shield them from a similar fate endured by the Métis People of the past.”<sup>34</sup> The Métis Federation of Canada describes its membership as comprising those whose “heritage [was] hidden by well meaning parents or grandparents,” but after researching their past, these families “discovered and celebrated” their Métis identity, which they had secretly known all along.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, the Bras d’Or Lake Métis Nation describe the “hundreds of years of racism, discrimination and suppression” that forced Cape Breton “Métis” to secretly pass down “customs, culture, dance, song, and Harvesting rights.”<sup>36</sup> Hidden from the public and even from themselves, these “hidden Métis” families are said to be waiting for a more enlightened and tolerant time—a kind of new age—when they can once again step forward and reclaim their true identity, knowledge, and culture as “Métis.”

This new age of tolerance has evidently arrived, as one group boldly declares, “We are coming out of hiding—an awakening that was predicted by Louis Riel.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, each of the five “new Métis” organizations identifies its membership as a “hidden” Métis group that has not come forward to be recognized as a “Métis” people because of systemic racism. But the “new Métis” narrative suggests there were also secret

ways that this “Métis” identity and culture were passed down through the generations. Often this was through subtle, unspoken acknowledgment that their “families that were ‘part Native’ and gave and received ‘that look of knowing’ in our communities.”<sup>38</sup> This points to a way of being Indigenous—and a collective culture—that has remained mostly dormant for generations, as they were living in a colonial society too toxic and too violent to allow these “hidden Métis” to practice their culture, but a new age has arrived, allowing them to reemerge.

In many cases these “new Métis” organizations actively assert a Métisness rooted in places where, according to the standard set by Andersen and Peterson, no historically continuous Métis community exists—places like southern and eastern Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes, and the southern Great Lakes. How, then, can we explain the development of a “new Métis” consciousness in regions where a historical Métis consciousness is absent? It is my contention that the same social and economic circumstances that gave rise to the New Age movement in the United States is also propelling the “new Métis” movement in Canada. It is not surprising, then, that there are similarities between New Age and “new Métis” claims of indigeneity, as they are similar responses to the same social malaise that plagues their members.

In many ways, the emergence of both the “new Métis” and New Age movements can be seen as a response to the postmodern destruction of traditional community ties, resulting in a cultural state of anomie among non-Indigenous people, that is, a distressing normalization of normlessness. The result of this normalization is an unprecedented erosion of social and cultural meaning caused by individuals being uprooted from a variety of cultural traditions that anchored community life, reinforced by the breakdown of stable social networks that previously structured kinship and community.<sup>39</sup> In response, a growing number of individuals are attempting to reclaim this lost social meaning. Many have turned to commodity consumption to create meaning in their lives, which in a postmodern advertising landscape promises social fulfillment and a permanent escape from this meaninglessness.<sup>40</sup> Some, like New Agers, seeking spiritual fulfillment and authentic community, retreat inward on a personal journey of enlightenment.<sup>41</sup> In this retreat, they “envision a literal New Age” that will “realize the full extent of human potential, including spiritual growth . . . and optimum physical health through alternative healing.”<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, however, few envision a return to the

traditional social and spiritual institutions of the West, largely avoiding Christianity and seeking instead the spiritual and social practices of others, usually Indigenous and Eastern traditions.<sup>43</sup>

Never able to completely abandon the commodification of culture endemic to postmodern capitalism, New Agers romanticize “an ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’ Native American culture whose spirituality can save them from their own sense of malaise.”<sup>44</sup> Many of these individuals form communities of their own, attempting to recover the sense of social and cultural solidarity “lost” in a postmodern consumer society. Yet in the pursuit of the social and cultural identities of others, New Agers and “new Métis” fail to end this state of anomie, as they do not generate “communities with shared histories, social ties involving interdependence, and daily interaction.”<sup>45</sup> These are the histories and identities of other peoples taken from the original context, and they now lack the deep social meaning originally sought. Compounding this failure is the increasingly negative response from Indigenous peoples, an increasing number of whom object to the appropriation of their culture and do not recognize New Agers and “new Métis” as part of their communities.<sup>46</sup>

In a consumption-based social context of postmodern societies, identity is not interpreted as a collectively determined social process but as a kind of consumer commodity. Thus, social identity “becomes simply one more commodity” in the capitalist marketplace.<sup>47</sup> In such a context, both New Agers and “new Métis” typically believe that “the human individual is responsible for the creation of his/her own reality.”<sup>48</sup> In this world, identity is a matter of personal choice, and the extensive social processes required to form individual identities are downplayed. Thus, from a New Age or “new Métis” perspective, Indigenous identities are a matter of choice and self-identification; they are not bestowed on individuals by collective social processes. In other words, individuals choose their communities, communities don’t choose their individual members—such a collectivist orientation would be considered an attack on an individual’s personal and spiritual journey.<sup>49</sup> It is this belief that allows an individual with a single distant Indigenous ancestor to become “Métis,” to journey into the past through their blood connection and return from the land of the dead with enough insight and knowledge to remake themselves as a “Métis” subject. This is a relationship between an individual and their ancestor, but because of its part in some-

one's personal spiritual journey, it is not open to criticism from others, regardless of how distant these connections may be.

#### NORMALIZING THE "UNMOORED MÉTIS" SUBJECT

Unlike New Agers, whose Indigenous identities are largely fabricated from thin air, many "new Métis" do in fact have Indigenous ancestry, yet it is their orientation to their ancestors rather than to contemporary communities that makes "new Métis" identity claims similar to New Age ones. With both movements, there seems little desire for a connection to living Indigenous communities with historical-contemporary continuity and an active "responsibility of reciprocity" enacted through the practice of kinship obligations. The connection New Agers and "new Métis" seek is invariably to the past, to distant ancestors, and to the dead, creating necrocommunities in place of Métis community continuity. This "new Métis" narrative, however, provides little acknowledgment of those Métis who grew up Métis, and it provides little space for the living Métis communities that did not hide their culture, identity, and politics. In essence, "new Métis" presume a void of Métisness in constructing a Métis subjectivity, normalizing this presumed void as *the* Métis subjectivity.

"New Métis" organizations repeatedly downplay the importance of belonging to and being accepted by a historically continuous Métis community in favor of genealogical connection to a long-dead ancestor and an accompanying unmoored contemporary "new Métis" community. By discounting these living communities, "new Métis" narratives instead normalize the "unmoored individual" as the ideal Métis subject. Although a large number of Métis have found themselves culturally and socially unmoored due to a century of colonial interference, it is the act of reconnection to living communities that differentiates repatriation from the formulation of a necrocommunity. In defense of the primacy of the unmoored Métis subject, the Métis Federation of Canada reassures its members that "not all Métis people live in a Métis community, or were born in a Métis community"; rather, hidden connections "revealed later in life" are a common source of Métis identity: "Métis are mobile, with many having lived in multiple settlements across the land and the continent. *They are still Métis if they don't belong to a distinct community.*"<sup>50</sup> Using such narratives, "new Métis" treat the unmoored

and hidden descendants of Indigenous peoples as the ideal subject, rather than advocating reconnection with the still living communities, as the Métis Nation does.

While it is certainly admirable to sympathize with those disconnected by generations of Canadian colonialism, these “new Métis” narratives rarely encourage individuals to reconnect with living Métis communities. Self-identification and ancestral connection are the key elements of a “new Métis” identity, so substantial kinship relationships or a connection to an actual Métis community are not integral components of a “new Métis” identity. More intangible qualities like “feeling Métis,” “feeling different,” or “sharing that look of knowing” with each other bring “new Métis” together.<sup>51</sup>

There are also material and professional reasons for joining a “new Métis” organization, as they provide a supposed connection to a more meaningful and authentic past by tapping into the contemporary injustice faced by Indigenous peoples—a past that may gain access to preferential hiring and admissions programs that well-meaning organizations institute to address years of exclusion and discrimination. A major motivator for some “new Métis” is to gain access to Aboriginal equity programs at universities and professional schools, a kind of “leg up” despite having largely avoided the violence and exclusion that make equity programs necessary. “New Métis” organizations are well aware of such enticements to uncover Indigenous ancestors and seem equally aware that most Canadian universities, particularly those outside of Western Canada, have difficulty differentiating their “status cards” from the Métis Nation’s. The Communities of the Voyageur Métis advertise that their Métis “status cards” can “help secure a place in a college or university.”<sup>52</sup> They share stories of “successful students” as a way to encourage more “new Métis” with traceable Indigenous ancestors to apply for “status” in their organization. One young woman’s testimony was shared on the Communities of the Voyageur Métis Facebook page: “I never sent you an official email about my school acceptances!!! I got into 4 schools! I cannot even believe it is true. I want to thank you with all of my heart, *you are one of the sole reasons why this is now a reality for me.* Thank you so so so very much.”<sup>53</sup> Another student, a young man, “needed to prove his ancestry to remain in a University program,” and he contacted the Voyageur Métis “to get his genealogy done.”<sup>54</sup> The Communities of the Voyageur Métis then reported that they had

“found a Native line, then documented it.” With genealogical evidence of an Indigenous ancestor secured, the student wrote back: “I have great news, I brought all the documentation that you found on my behalf to the University. It was brought before a committee and was approved. Therefore I am able to stay in the engineering program here! This is a huge load off my back, and I am very thankful for how fast you were able to gather so much. Thank you.”<sup>55</sup>

The “new Métis” are willing to take advantage of programs intended to increase access by Indigenous people to university programs and middle-class professions. However, while these programs are usually broad and inclusive, they typically wish to see evidence of contemporary community belonging, since most universities aspire to the kinship-based definition of Indigenous identities that involves connection to a living community. This is where “new Métis” necrocommunities can provide apparent evidence of living community, even if it is grounded in genealogical connections to the long dead instead of lived kinship relations with long-standing Métis. The “new Métis” organizations allow otherwise ineligible students to gain “community recognition” in a way that duplicates the recognition of belonging to a living Métis community.

Rather than returning to these living communities—an act of repatriation—these “new Métis” are building *new* communities populated mostly by the disconnected and the now unhidden. These “new Métis” communities, however, tend to lack the authoritative knowledge and historically continuous practice of kinship that constitute a meaningful culture. What results is an imagined remnant of a long-lost past with romanticized imagery of primitivist freedom. And it is when “new Métis” attempt to demonstrate their cultural authenticity that the cracks in their foundation begin to show, a testament to the failure of disconnected rediscovery to be the primary basis for cultural rebirth.

WHEN BLOOD MEMORY IS NOT ENOUGH:  
APPROPRIATION OF MÉTIS CULTURAL MARKERS

Part of the construction of “new Métis” identity is the attempt to articulate a substantive “Métis” culture based in Eastern Canada, which lacks the self-conscious and historical Métis communities described by Andersen and Peterson. By examining “new Métis” articulations of a



substantive “Métis” culture, we see how difficult it is to “revive” a culture through a communion with the dead—cultural fragments passed down, hypodescent-based dreams and blood memory (and, more probably, creative readings of history books)—rather than lived practice in historically continuous Métis communities. Since the hallmarks of “new Métis” identity are premised on negative definitions of culture—cultural loss and being hidden in plain sight—the articulation of a substantive and positive culture forces “new Métis” to lean heavily on Métis Nation cultural markers and the cultural capital that Métis communities have developed through more than two centuries of political life.

There is a deep irony in the use of these symbols, since most of the appropriated symbolism originates in Métis nationalist discourse—the Michif language, the Métis infinity flag, and the belief that Métis are *otipemisiwak* (their own bosses)—a discourse that “new Métis” simultaneously appropriate and reject as both totalizing and exclusionary. “New Métis” are vocal critics of Métis nationalism, claiming that it demands, in part, “orthodoxy of thought . . . that declares the word Métis as a description exclusive to a particular culture that arose at a particular place and time, the Red River area of Manitoba where Métis leader Louis Riel lived.”<sup>56</sup> Métis nationalist thought also rejects Métis-as-mixed identity formulations that constitute the “new Métis” movement in favor of a unified Métis identity, therefore excluding most “new Métis” from the Métis Nation, which perhaps provokes the biggest “new Métis” objection to nationalist discourse.<sup>57</sup>

However, in the “new Métis” quest for a substantive and meaningful culture, and likely due to a lack of personal experience with such a culture from members, “new Métis” awkwardly appropriate this Métis nationalist symbolism as their own while simultaneously attempting to undermine its power to narrate Métis experiences. This is made possible by the presumption of a void of Métisness, a culture in which there are no authorities or those with extensive experience in its practice, situating it in the public domain to appropriate at will.<sup>58</sup> Ill-fitting appropriation of Indigenous institutions is also common practice within the New Age movement. Christopher Ronwanién:te Jocks argues that New Agers appropriate the most exciting, mystical, or legitimating elements of a living culture while simultaneously ignoring other elements—such as restrictions of use—that may conflict with the narratives of the appropriators.<sup>59</sup> “New Métis” tend to highlight many Métis nationalist institu-

tions, symbols, even terminology, but as detached icons, disconnected from their Métis nationalist origins in living communities. As a result, “new Métis” narratives deny the cultural continuity and cultural ownership of the Métis people, assuming a void of Métisness that allows for their appropriation.

More broadly, “new Métis” appropriate important Métis historical events into their narratives, particularly the two Métis-Canada conflicts in Red River in 1869–70 and on the South Saskatchewan River in 1885, points in time when Canada’s anti-Métis colonial violence is most obvious. These conflicts provide a justificatory argument for why “new Métis” ancestors went into hiding, particularly the racist fallout after 1885, even if they weren’t directly involved in the fighting. It is argued that many mixed-descent families were humiliated to the point of denying “their Native ties, in favour of their more acceptable European blood lines.”<sup>60</sup> And because this “racism did not stop to ask someone who their ancestors were,” mixed-descent people across Canada were said to be affected.<sup>61</sup> Thus Métis historical resistances are struggles shared by “new Métis” as well, even if their ancestors were not involved in the actual conflict. Whatever symbolic consequences may exist in the minds of “new Métis,” the actual material consequences of the conflict were borne almost exclusively by the Métis Nation, which, alongside First Nations communities, was actively dispossessed and politically marginalized following the cessation of hostilities in 1885.

Métis are generally cognizant of this reality. The late Saskatchewan Métis leader Jim Sinclair famously replied to a government official who suggested that Métis were a diverse population from coast to coast that “Sir John A. Macdonald hadn’t sent troops to crush any Métis in the Maritimes but to Manitoba and Saskatchewan.”<sup>62</sup> Whatever impact the events of 1869–70 and 1885 may have had on other people, at their core, the major protagonists were prairie Indigenous peoples like the Métis Nation, whose communities continue to exist despite the resulting persecution by provincial and federal governments. Métis faced not only psychological fallout but also extensive political, social, and physical marginalization, including starvation and forced removal, which went beyond trying to pass as white.<sup>63</sup>

The “new Métis” attraction to these conflicts is largely symbolic, as they tend to idealize voyageurs, not necessarily the buffalo-hunting soldiers who fought the Canadian government. “New Métis” generally

celebrate the voyageur as their historical archetype, even if they occasionally fill in some cultural gaps with buffalo hunt symbolism. The celebration of the voyageur way of life provides a romantic—and deeply masculinized—escapism steeped in Indigenous imagery consistent with the search for a more meaningful past. Voyageurs are described by “new Métis” as men who “explored uncharted lands” and lived a free and culturally meaningful life free from the intrusive reach of authority so common to the modern condition.<sup>64</sup> This culture is today considered by “new Métis” to be “a special inheritance, one that we are proud to reclaim and preserve.”<sup>65</sup> However, voyageur was an occupation, not an ethnic group. While there was a voyageur culture associated with the lifestyle, the ethnic makeup of voyageurs was quite diverse, and a large number of voyageurs were French Canadian, without Indian, half-breed, or Métis “blood.” However, “new Métis” rarely question the indigeneity of these men and regularly use the term “voyageur Métis” as if syncretic. A genealogical connection to a voyageur is not the same thing as a connection to a Métis or Indian ancestor. The “new Métis” conflation of these two identities is demonstrative of a lack of understanding of historical Métis culture, where some Métis men were voyageurs, but many more were buffalo hunters and traders—and all were bound by kinship and nationality.

Of course, “new Métis” are not only constructing their own identities; they are undermining older Métis identities as well, attempting to conflate Métis cultural markers with ill-fitting local examples that ultimately downgrade Métis institutions from unique cultural entities to common occurrences wherever European populations mixed with Indigenous ones. For example, the Bras d’Or Lake Métis Nation of Cape Breton claims a local Acadian “Métis” linguistic tradition in a manner similar to the Métis production of the Michif language: “a language called *mischief*, a mix of French and Mi’kmaq, known today as Acadian French, very much different from in Quebec or the homeland of France because of its strong mix of the Mi’kmaq language.”<sup>66</sup> However, Acadian French is not at all like Michif. According to contemporary linguists, Acadian French is “a variety of North American French,” not a mixed language with a significant Mi’kmaq element.<sup>67</sup> Linguists classify Michif as a *language* and Acadian French as a *dialect*. For instance, Peter Bakker describes Michif as a mixed language, not a dialect of either Plains Cree or French or as a pidgin or creole spontaneously pieced together by its

speakers. Michif is a complex language that is not entirely intelligible to those who speak its two parent languages; it has its own rules and norms that only speakers can fully comprehend.<sup>68</sup>

Given the difference in status between the Acadian French dialect and the Michif language, these two tongues are not comparable, since such comparison implies that Acadian French is a mixed Indigenous language. It is not. In Michif most verbs are taken from Plains Cree; the same cannot be said about Mi'kmaw influence on Acadian French. While Mi'kmaw linguistic influence in Acadia shouldn't be ignored, it shouldn't be overstated either. Language borrowing likely occurred in Acadia, but there is little compelling evidence to suggest that a distinct mixed language like Michif emerged in Cape Breton or elsewhere in the Maritimes. It would also be a fantastic coincidence if Acadian French and Michif took the exact same name given the thousands of miles between their speakers and little linguistic contact between the two. Since Michif is how "Métis" is pronounced in the Michif language, the use of the term "mischief" is likely an appropriation from Métis culture and an attempt to imbue what is ultimately a French dialect with the kind of Indigenous cultural capital that they crave. Lacking their own identifiably mixed Indigenous linguistic tradition, the Bras d'Or Lake Metis Nation appropriates a distinctly Métis one. However, in doing so "new Métis" are attempting to redefine Michif as a placeholder for linguistic mixing rather than as a part of a specific linguistic tradition. In an attempt to imbue their "new Métis" culture with meaning, they are actively undermining the long-standing meaning of another.

Symbolic appropriation is also common among "new Métis" in an attempt to claim a Metis symbolic tradition as their own. They appropriate prominent Métis nationalist imagery like the Métis Nation's infinity flag, a blue flag with a white infinity symbol in its center. The infinity flag was first unfurled before the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, when Métis defeated a group of Hudson's Bay Company men at Red River. The flag has occupied a central place in Métis identity ever since. It had a place at the head of the old buffalo hunt caravans and today is used as the Métis national flag. It is also featured in each of the logos of the Métis National Council and its provincial affiliates. As the most identifiable symbol of Métis identity, even if it is a nationalist symbol, the infinity flag has been regularly adopted by "new Métis" organizations in their logos, even when few of their ancestors would have used it in its

original historical context. Like the reduction of Michif to a process of language mixing rather than a specific linguistic tradition, “New Métis” argue that the infinity flag represents “the French Canadians who are our fur-trading great grandfathers and their unions with Native American women.”<sup>69</sup> Given the important political capital associated with the flag, its use bestows a kind of legitimacy; however, its use also shows little respect for its long-term use by Métis communities to identify their people.

Alongside appropriating Métis linguistic institutions, “new Métis” also appropriate Métis terminology that evokes a culturally specific set of meanings unique to the Métis Nation. Métis in both living and historical communities identify strongly with the idea of self-ownership, which is often expressed in Cree as *otipemisiwak*, meaning “they are their own bosses,” “the independent ones,” or “they own themselves.” This term was specifically attributed to the free-trading Métis buffalo hunters of the nineteenth-century North-West who were their own bosses in both an economic and a political sense. The term remains popular today among members of living Métis communities who see it as demonstrative of the independent spirit of Métis people, as well as symbolic of our long-standing refusal to be governed by others. However, even in the presence of context-specific alternatives, like Muskrat French, James LaForest advocates the wholesale adoption of this term for “all Métis.” Like the conflation of Michif and Acadian French, the appropriation of this term is ironic, given that LaForest applies a Plains Cree word to places where there were no Plains Cree-speaking people.<sup>70</sup> LaForest’s claim of the term *otipemisiwak* involves a dismissal of Métis nationalism outright. He argues further that when Métis “limit” the use of a term like *otipemisiwak* to its (original) Plains Cree context, they are also establishing “a new hegemony” that “malign[s] and marginalize[s]” self-proclaimed Métis communities beyond western Canada.<sup>71</sup> LaForest argues that as the descendants of free and hardy voyageurs the Great Lakes “Métis” also own themselves and are therefore entitled to “apply this word to yourself or to your community,” even if it was never previously used, in order to strike “a blow to the hegemony” of Métis nationalism.<sup>72</sup>

The problem with these arguments is that there is no evidence that, until quite recently, the infinity flag and the term *otipemisiwak* were ever used by these southern Great Lakes “Métis” or anyone else outside of

Métis Nation communities. Ironically, these symbols are central to the “hegemonic” Métis nationalism that “new Métis” ideology claims to reject. So while “new Métis” argue that Métis nationalist discourse denies the existence of “other Métis,” they are nonetheless comfortable appropriating many of Métis nationalism’s most identifiable symbols—Métis-Canada conflicts, Michif, the infinity flag, *otipemisiwak*—to construct their own nonnationalist “new Métis” identity.

Appropriating these symbols, however, ignores the cultural propriety of living Métis communities. Like the New Age movement, “new Métis” treat Métis culture as if it exists in the public domain due to a presumed void of Metisness and is therefore owned by humanity as a whole, not as the collective purview of living and historically continuous Métis communities that maintain its integrity. Indeed, any attempt to limit its application to its original context by Métis is claimed to be “hegemonic” or a nationalist “policy of exclusion.”<sup>73</sup> Failing to effectively revive a positive culture by communing with their ancestors through their blood, and with little cultural substance drawn from their local context, “new Métis” narratives tend to appropriate Métis culture from the prairies to fill in their many gaps. The result is ill-fitting “new Métis” political institutions, symbolism, and even terminology that violate the cultural integrity of living Métis communities and deny the rights of Métis to collectively determine appropriate practice of Métis culture, politics, and identity.

#### CONCLUSION: THE FALLACY OF A LIVING “MÉTIS” CULTURE WITHOUT A LIVING MÉTIS PEOPLE

“New Métis” have attempted to form direct relationships with their ancestors in order to commune with their ancestors. Through genealogical searches, a large number of “new Métis” have discovered a long-lost Indian ancestor, allowing them to remake their identity in an attempt to secure the deep-seated social, cultural, and spiritual meaning retained in their Indian blood. In making this leap into Indigeneity, these individuals tend to adopt a “Métis” identity with little regard for what that name means for Métis communities that have used it for generations. Describing themselves as “the hidden Métis,” these now-unhidden individuals avoid still-living Métis communities in favor of coalescing into communities of people with common relationships to the long dead.

These necrocommunities, which perceive their “new Métis” identity as robust and full of meaning, nonetheless have trouble articulating a substantive culture. Because the common culture among “new Métis” is primarily negative, based as it is on hiding and cultural loss, these individuals tend to have difficulty in creating the meaningful culture they are seeking. The recourse to cultural revival from hidden histories that figures so prominently in “new Métis” rhetoric tends to be insufficient to produce a positive culture in place of their negative definitions of “Metisness.” As a result, much of their culture is appropriated wholesale from Métis history, even if it is difficult to fit to local contexts. The result is that “new Métis” attempt to transform Métis culture, identity, and history so that they can fit in it, with little regard for living Métis communities who define their membership differently.

If left unchecked, “new Métis” may be successful at redefining Métis identity and culture, displacing the living Métis communities that have safeguarded the culture they are now appropriating. Whatever their original intent, “new Métis” have begun an assault on contemporary Métis existence. Unlike the many thousands of Métis who have been displaced from their families and communities by the many tentacles of Canadian colonialism, “new Métis” don’t seek repatriation. They are not attempting to return to their people; they are creating communities that lack the kind of cultural commonality that still-living Métis communities have protected for generations. Already undermined by decades of colonial incursion, Métis identity, culture, and politics find themselves assaulted from a new angle, the descendants of long-ago Indigenous ancestors. Métis identity is being redefined by these groups in the name of inclusivity and in an attempt to find themselves a meaningful cultural home. However, as Chris Andersen argues, “Individuals can find that they have Indigenous ancestry and simply stop there.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, the discovery of a distant Indigenous ancestor need not transform one’s life. For Métis displaced by Canadian adoption policies and other colonial interventions, a path of repatriation remains open to them. Others may find a home in the communities where their ancestors actually came from, if of course those communities will accept them. But many will also need to be content with being “descendants of,” as many Indigenous peoples’ citizenship would not include them—as it is the collective right of Indigenous peoples to do so. Whatever the case, individuals with Indigenous ancestors looking to connect with Indigenous commu-

nities should always proceed in ways that respect the cultural integrity of Métis people and the self-determination of the Métis Nation.

Somewhere in the “new Métis” attempt to become their ancestors they forgot that practicing lived kinship obligations is a central part of the Métis of life, the keystone of our culture. Nothing is more demonstrative of the profoundly non-Métis approach to “new Métis” identity “revival” than forsaking notions of lived kinship in favor of a communion with the dead that lacks cultural authenticity and substance. What “new Métis” are actually proposing is the discursive appropriation of living communities, and the organizations they’ve created, to empower their communities comprised of common relatives to the dead. This, however, isn’t how Indigenous nations are reviving their cultures and political authority; this trend is not part of some Indigenous liberation struggle. It is antithetical to the reempowerment of Indigenous political communities whose most foundational right is the ability to determine their own community. This will inevitably exclude people, as any membership code will, but what is important is the perpetuation of the Métis political community, and making it infinitely open to outsiders will not achieve that goal. Totally open membership to all self-identified Métis would irreparably alter the Métis Nation, undermining the work done by our ancestors, elders, and contemporary leaders in allowing us to survive decades of genocidal policies. The Métis Nation can be open and inclusive, encouraging repatriation, while at the same time keeping membership connected to long-standing values of kinship and cultural practice based in historically continuous communities. Kinship as, Garrouette argues, goes beyond genealogy. To be a relative, “one must also *act* like one.”<sup>75</sup> If “new Métis” were sincere about actually reconnecting with their ancestors, they would be connecting as good relatives with their present-day relations (and in most cases these aren’t Métis but other Indigenous peoples). By building their own necrocommunities, organizations whose behavior hardly respects still-living Métis communities, “new Métis” act as poor relatives, violating the most foundational Métis cultural value in the process and almost certainly ensuring they remain on the outside.

---

ADAM GAUDRY is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Native Studies and Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. He is Métis, and his family is from the Lake-of-the-Woods in northwestern Ontario.



## NOTES

An early version of this article was presented at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association annual meetings, June 4–6, 2015, in Washington, DC. I am indebted to a number of gifted intellectuals who provided feedback on my ideas and early drafts of this article. A long-standing dialogue on this topic has expanded my understanding of this phenomenon and allowed me to keep on top of its rapidly shifting discourse. Special mention here goes out to Chris Andersen, Darryl Leroux, Jennifer Adese, Chelsea Vowel, Zoe Todd, Darren O’Toole, Rob Innes, Daniel Voth, and others who attended the 2015 Métis Studies Workshop in Washington, DC.

1. Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010), 160.

2. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*.

3. “Bring Alberta oil via pipelines to Nova Scotia creating jobs building refineries WITHOUT UNIONS!!” Unama’ki Voyageur Métis Nation, “Governments in Nova Scotia Have Kept This Province in the Dark Ages,” [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=577885278913898&id=575266769175749](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=577885278913898&id=575266769175749) (accessed May 2015).

4. See Darren O’Toole, “From Entity to Identity to Nation: The Ethnogenesis of the *Wiisakodewiniwag*,” in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*, ed. Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl, and Ian Peach (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013).

5. Chris Andersen, “*Metis*”: *Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 9–10.

6. See, for example, Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge, “Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo-Hunting Brigades,” *Manitoba History* 71 (2013).

7. Métis National Council, “Métis Governments,” <http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis/governments> (accessed July 25, 2015).

8. Metis National Council, “Citizenship,” <http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis/citizenship>.

9. The MNC’s identity criteria include Métis communities as far east as Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

10. See John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Edmonton: Fifth House, 2007). While the Daniels decision has now recognized that Métis and nonstatus Indians fall under federal jurisdiction as of 2016, what this looks like in practice remains to be seen.

11. Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 7–8.

12. See Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

13. Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 129, emphasis added.

14. Garroutte, *Real Indians*, 118.

15. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, introduction to *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 6; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, “Chapter 5—Métis Perspectives, Section 3—the Other Métis,” in *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1996); and Andersen, “Métis,” 35–36.

16. Chris Andersen, “‘I’m Métis, What’s Your Excuse?’: On the Optics and the Ethics of Misrecognition of Métis in Canada,” *aboriginal policy studies* 1 (2011): 161.

17. Andersen, “Métis”; Larry Chartrand, “Métis Identity and Citizenship,” *Windsor Review of Social and Legal Issues* 12, no. 5 (2001).

18. Adam Gaudry, “Respecting Métis Nationhood and Self-Determination in Matters of Métis Identity,” in *Oxford Reader in Aboriginal History*, ed. Geoff Read and Kristin Burnett (Toronto: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Nor is mixedness unique to Métis, as Chris Andersen has pointed out. Many other Indigenous families are mixed yet still considered to be Cree, Saulteaux, Mohawk, and so on. Andersen, “Métis,” 38–39.

19. Andersen, “Métis,” 83–84.

20. Jacqueline Peterson, “Red River Redux: Métis Ethnogenesis and the Great Lakes Region,” in *Contours of the People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 30.

21. Peterson, “Red River Redux,” 28.

22. There was an increase of Métis self-identification in the Canada census of nearly 900 percent in Nova Scotia and 450 percent in New Brunswick, neither of which had a historical Métis community. See Andersen, “Métis,” 83–84. American Indian self-identification grew by 647 percent between 1960 and 2000. See Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 5.

23. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 39.

24. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 39.

25. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 72.

26. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 42.

27. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 50.

28. Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, 18–19.

29. Métis Federation of Canada, “Definitions,” <http://www.metisfederationofcanada.ca/definitions—e.html> (accessed November 1, 2014). The site has since been updated to read: “The Métis People in North America are historically descendants of the unions of First Nations women to European men during the fur trade and colonisation era” (accessed May 19, 2015).

30. Canadian Métis Council, “Qualifying as a Métis,” <http://www.canadianmetis.com/Qualifying.htm> (accessed November 24, 2014).

31. Unama'ki Voyageurs Métis Nation, "Bylaws," <http://unamakivoyageurs.org/law.htm> (accessed November 1, 2014).
32. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, "Status," [http://www.voyageurmetis.org/status/status\\_e.htm](http://www.voyageurmetis.org/status/status_e.htm) (accessed October 27, 2014).
33. Andersen, personal communication, stemming from an unpublished talk in Sydney, NSW.
34. Métis Nation of Canada, "Founders," <http://metisnationofcanada.org/founder/> (accessed November 24, 2014).
35. Métis Federation of Canada, "Métis Identity and Citizenship," <http://www.metisfederationofcanada.ca/pc---m-tis-identity-citizenship.html> (accessed November 1, 2014).
36. Unama'ki Voyageur Métis Nation, "Main Page," <http://unamakivoyageurs.org> (accessed November 1, 2014).
37. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, "Home," <http://voyageurmetis.org/index.htm> (accessed October 27, 2014).
38. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, "What Is Self-Identified?," [http://www.voyageurmetis.org/self/self\\_e.htm](http://www.voyageurmetis.org/self/self_e.htm) (accessed October 27, 2014).
39. Lisa Aldred, "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sundances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality," *American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2000): 329, 339.
40. Aldred, "Plastic Shamans," 346; Laura E. Donaldson, "On White Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native American and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Cultural Feminism," *Signs* 24, no. 3 (1999): 680; Michael York, "New Age Commodification and Appropriation of Spirituality," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16, no. 3 (2001): 370.
41. Aldred, "Plastic Shamans," 330, 339.
42. Aldred, "Plastic Shamans," 330.
43. York, "New Age Commodification," 363.
44. Aldred, "Plastic Shamans," 329.
45. Aldred, "Plastic Shamans," 340.
46. See Chelsea Vowel, "The Mythology of Métissage: Settler Moves to Innocence," <http://apihtawikosisan.com/2015/03/the-mythology-of-metissage-settler-moves-to-innocence/> (accessed May 19, 2015). The MNC has also published a statement rejecting the existence of these "so-called National Métis organizations" in Métis National Council, "Message from the President, Jan/Feb 2015," [www.metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Newsletter-JanFeb-2015.pdf](http://www.metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Newsletter-JanFeb-2015.pdf) (accessed May 8, 2015).
47. York, "New Age Commodification," 363.
48. York, "New Age Commodification," 364.
49. York, "New Age Commodification," 366.
50. Métis Federation of Canada, "Definitions," emphasis added.

51. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, “What Is Self-Identified?”
52. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, “Status.”
53. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, “Benefits of a Metis Card,” <https://www.facebook.com/CommunitiesoftheVoyageurMetis/posts/350809148418693> (accessed May 20, 2015), emphasis added.
54. Communities of the Voyageur Metis, “A Metis Student Who Recently Needed to Prove His Ancestry,” <https://www.facebook.com/CommunitiesoftheVoyageurMetis/posts/350172591815682> (accessed May 20, 2015).
55. Communities of the Voyageur Metis, “A Metis Student.”
56. James LaForest, “How Do You Say *Otipemisiwak* in French? Metis Identity Outside the Red River,” <http://muskratmagazine.com/how-do-you-say-otipemisiwak-in-french-metis-identity-outside-the-red-river/> (accessed February 17, 2015).
57. LaForest, “How Do You Say.”
58. York, “New Age Commodification,” 368.
59. Christopher Ronwanién:te Jocks, “Spirituality for Sale: Sacred Knowledge in the Consumer Age,” *American Indian Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1996): 418.
60. Chantal Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).
61. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, “Our Historic Communities,” [http://www.voyageurmetis.org/community/community\\_e.htm](http://www.voyageurmetis.org/community/community_e.htm) (accessed October 27, 2014).
62. Quoted in Tony Belcourt, “Jim Sinclair Tribute,” <http://tonybelcourt.com/2012/11/jim-sinclair-tribute/> (accessed May 20, 2015).
63. See, for example, Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View*, rev. ed. (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1989).
64. Unama’ki Voyageur Métis Nation, “Main Page.”
65. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, “Home.”
66. Unama’ki Voyageur Métis Nation, “Open Letter to Clem Chartier, President of the Métis National Council,” [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=688181934550898&id=575266769175749](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=688181934550898&id=575266769175749) (accessed November 1, 2014).
67. Patricia Balcom, Louis Beaulieu, Gary R. Butler, Wladyslaw Cichocki, and Ruth King, “Introduction: The Linguistic Study of Acadian French,” *Journal of Canadian Linguistic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2008).
68. Peter Bakker, *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis*, rev. ed., Oxford Studies in Anthropological Linguistics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12.
69. Communities of the Voyageur Métis, “Mandate,” [http://www.voyageurmetis.org/mandate/mandate\\_e.htm](http://www.voyageurmetis.org/mandate/mandate_e.htm) (accessed October 27, 2014).
70. LaForest, “How Do You Say.”
71. LaForest, “How Do You Say.”

72. LaForest, "How Do You Say?"
73. LaForest, "How Do You Say"; Métis Federation of Canada, "Métis Identity and the Harry Daniels Case," <http://nebula.wsimg.com/e9e876fd38f0cc0611854805a3b4aa71?AccessKeyId=337611AAA4489314E7FF&disposition=0&alloworigin=1> (accessed May 20, 2015).
74. Chris Andersen, "'Recovered' Identities: Ethnic Fraud and the (White) Possession of Métis Identity," conference paper, Native American and Indigenous Studies Annual Meetings, 2016, Honolulu, Hawai'i.
75. Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 134.

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner.  
Further reproduction prohibited without permission.