

Prairie Families: Cree-Métis-Saulteux Materialities as  
Indigenous Feminist Materialist Record of Kinship-Based Selfhood

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**ABSTRACT****Prairie Families: Cree-Métis-Saulteux Materialities as Indigenous  
Feminist Materialist Record of Kinship-Based Selfhood**

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This thesis was inspired by Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation’s administrative and patrilineal Anishinabe designation, and its erasure of the mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteux communities that resulted in its formation. Tootinaowaziibeeng’s designation as an Anishinabe community is resultant of nationalistic historicizing that has created rigid boundaries between Cree, Métis, and Saulteux communities in the present, and an omitting of kinship webs that formed between the aforementioned communities in the nineteenth century. Kinship webs were the most important social and economic unit of plains Cree, Métis, and Saulteux communities throughout the 1800s, when a variety of Indigenous peoples were coming together in southern Manitoba to form singular camps, unified by shared teachings, common economies like the buffalo, and for mutual survivance. Cree-Métis-Saulteux *materialities*—such as quillwork and beading on garments—that were made and collected in the Canadian prairies during the 1800s are material records of kinship webs that understood Cree-Métis-Saulteux kinship as “fluid, flexible, and inclusive,” as Robert Alexander Innes has described. The use of the term materialities herein draws from Kim Tallbear’s research in the field of feminist, new materialisms, which considers the animacy of so-called objects that relate to Indigenous communities.

Applying methodologies for decolonial museology, kinship becomes a decolonial tool that animates nineteenth century Cree-Métis-Saulteux materialities housed in the Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Museum, once enlivened in proto-feminist spaces wherein Cree-Métis-Saulteux relationalities took form as materialities, asserting a new mixed aesthetics that represented how Cree-Métis-Saulteux peoples saw themselves. Drawing from the family histories of the author—stories passed on from their feminine relations, kohkoms, aunties, and cousins—and research with materialities in museum archives, this thesis applies Kim Anderson’s concepts around feminist selfhood to better understand Cree-Métis-Saulteux peoples outside of nationalistic and bureaucratic categorization. Feminine knowledges of matrilineal decent assist in making contemporary assertions of identity grounded in principles of rematriation—Indigenous selfhoods understood through kinship webs and social organization passed on through the knowledge of women’s communities.

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For Grandma Trudy (Gerty) who never let me forget that I was Cree-Métis, and for my fire-starter ways.

For all the kohkoms whose collective knowledges are more stable than any colonial document or archive.

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## Introduction

tansi nitotemitik—I hope I’m meeting you in good health, honoured friends. As is customary within my communities, I will begin my thesis by quickly introducing myself and situating my positionality within my research. I’m Cree-Métis-Saulteaux but my community Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation, previously Valley River Reserve, is widely considered to be either an Anishinabe, Saulteaux, or plains Ojibwa nation—depending on who you ask, with the elders of Tootinaowaziibeeng leaning towards Saulteaux and/or Ojibwa, and the younger generations Anishinabe—and certainly not considered to be a Métis or Cree nation.<sup>1</sup> Neal MacLeod has described a tribal specific nationalism emerging among Indigenous people in Canada, acknowledging a shift towards tribal specific organization meant to eclipse organizations seen as pan-Indian, such as the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.<sup>2</sup> However, as MacLeod argues, many Bands in Saskatchewan at one time identified as having “multi-layered genealogies”—often Cree, Saulteaux, and Assiniboine—which is erased by oversimplified tribal identities, and as the first person to consider this within an academic context, it is important to cite here as a precursor to this work.<sup>3</sup>

I feel my choice to cite MacLeod should be acknowledged given the feminist framework of this thesis. Neal MacLeod has garnered serious criticism in the field of Indigenous studies

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<sup>1</sup> Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation, previously Valley River First Nation, is a signatory of Treaty 4 and widely considered to be a nation comprised of Anishinabe peoples, the result of treaties between bands of Indigenous peoples partially comprised of the Ojibwa peoples who migrated into the Canadian prairies and integrated into local camps during the 1700s and 1800s (see: Dakota Ojibwa Tribal Council, “History of the DOTC,” DOTC, last accessed January 15, 2017, [http://www.dotc.mb.ca/History\\_of\\_DOTC.html](http://www.dotc.mb.ca/History_of_DOTC.html); Wikipedia, “Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation,” Wikipedia, last accessed January 15, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tootinaowaziibeeng\\_First\\_Nation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tootinaowaziibeeng_First_Nation); Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Neal McLead, “Plains Cree Identity: Borderlands, Ambiguous Genealogies, and Narrative Irony,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 2 (2000): 438.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

because of his history of domestic abuse.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, MacLeod’s research didn’t happen in a vacuum, as he was undoubtedly influenced by thinkers and community members who surround him and informed his research. I feel I have a responsibility as an Indigenous scholar to acknowledge those communities who were thinking through reductive tribal dynamics in the Canadian prairies before me. Further, I don’t think the answer to gendered violence and oppression in Indigenous communities is pushing out—more colloquially known as “cancelling”—problematic Indigenous male scholars. An example can be seen in a recent letter that circulated asking University of Regina Press to remove Neal McLeod from a publication because of his conviction for domestic abuse,<sup>5</sup> instead of initiating or attempting community-led healing, which my Cree, Metis, and Saulteaux teachings certainly dictate is an important facet of ethical relationality. In fact, I see the practice of “cancelling” community members as a facet of carceral feminism—characterized by narrowly defined accountability processes that rely on punishment, including excommunication, that mirror the prison industrial complex, and leave little room for those who have perpetuated harm to find their way back to community through mediation and repair.<sup>6</sup>

With the above in mind—and particularly out of respect for those who informed and have been informed by McLeod’s research—I still draw on McLeod’s research because it challenges what he has called the “tribal essentialism,” which undoubtedly bleeds into how materialities are perceived, and objectified, by museums and collectors. As I have learned through the oral histories of my family, Tootinaowaziibeeng is a mixed plains Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux community, despite the widespread assertion we are solely Saulteaux and/or Ojibwa. As this

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<sup>4</sup> Brandi Morin, “Indigenous authors pull works after anthology publisher keeps contributor with violent past,” *CBC*, October 13, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-authors-anthology-violence-1.4354587>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Alex Press, “#MeToo must avoid “carceral feminism,” *Vox*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2018/2/1/16952744/me-too-larry-nassar-judge-aquilina-feminism/>.

thesis will explore, defining myself as Cree-Métis-Saulteaux is an Indigenous feminist articulation of my identity because it aligns with what scholar Kim Anderson has called a "positive reclamation of Native femininity" that resists negative constructions of Indigenous selfhood through European epistemologies.<sup>7</sup> Aligning myself with multiple nations based in my family's oral history is an individual contestation of western categorization of, and legally legislated patrilineal classification of, Tootinaowaziibeeng and my identity, and a reclamation—a rematriation—of my identity by understanding myself through feminine kinship webs.

Using my own family history, this thesis considers archival documentation such as publically available birth, death, and census records, to make inferences about the mixed composition of Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation that are not represented in our patrilineal Anishinabe, Ojibwa, and/or Saulteaux status—itsself a facet of internalized patriarchy and the erasure of matrilineal lines of decent. My central and more expansive exploration expands on my family histories by observing a series of decolonial case studies animating Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux materialities found in the Fenimore art Museum's Thaw collection, through a lens of kinship and selfhood.

In this research, I draw from decolonial museologists before me, such as Heather Igloliorte and Sherry Farrell Racette, to intervene on ethnographic categorizations of plains Cree-Métis-Saulteaux "objects"<sup>8</sup> found in museum collections—such as beading, quillwork, and caribou tufting—integrating selfhoods and kinship into their understandings to reframe them as *materialities*. *Materialities* is a reference to the work of feminist, Indigenous new materialists such as Kim Tallbear who draw from Indigenous teachings to consider animacy and relatedness

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<sup>7</sup> Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Sophie Woodward, "Material Culture," *Oxford Bibliographies*, last accessed 28 Jan 2018, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0085.xml>.

of kin, including the materials used to comprise “objects” and “objects” themselves.<sup>9</sup> Indigenous feminist materialisms differ from anthropological definitions of material culture that rely on western epistemologies to define objects as they influence social relationships,<sup>10</sup> but ultimately perpetuate an othering image of Indigenous peoples in interpretations of Indigenous “objects.”<sup>11</sup>

In this thesis, I argue that the materialities I have selected are representative of how the mixing of nineteenth century Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux aesthetics from the Canadian prairies in part resulted from the mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux camps that were also forming in the Red River during this period. The formation of these mixed Nation communities had a tangible and lasting influence on the development of aesthetics of the time. As such, I call for a critical reimagining of how museums classify and categorize materialities exhibiting mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux aesthetics, while speaking to a much larger project yet to be undertaken—returning materialities to their rightful place in community, outside of object/human hierarchies and binaries. This thesis draws from my work with the materialities I’ve observed, to consider what they can teach me about evolving mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux identities and aesthetics, identities, and relationships in 1800s Manitoba.

The case studies I will undertake, my materiality-based research, and my interest in Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities in part emerges from research I undertook when I participated in the Otsego Institute for Native American Art History at the Fenimore Art Museum, in Cooperstown, New York in 2017, where I worked closely with the Thaw Collection to examine materialities variously categorized as Cree, Métis, or Saulteaux from southern Manitoba during

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<sup>9</sup> Kim TallBear, “Beyond the Life/Not Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking and the New Materialisms,” in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, edited by Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal (Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Sophie Woodward, “Material Culture,” *Oxford Bibliographies*, last accessed 28 Jan 2018, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0085.xml>.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012): 11.

the 1800s. In particular, I examined a materiality categorized as a Cree-Métis armband made circa 1840 in relation to other objects from the impressive Thaw Collection to make inferences about the evolution of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux aesthetics in the Canadian prairies.

The armband I worked with (Figure 1) represents a distinct grouping of peoples in a particular moment of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux kinship webs, when a variety of Indigenous communities were coming together in southern Manitoba, unified by shared teachings, common economies like the buffalo,<sup>12</sup> and mutual survivance<sup>13</sup>—a material manifestation of the merging of once distinct communities and the making of new mixed communities with an evolving understanding of identity. My research animates,<sup>14</sup> through kinship knowledges, materialities categorized as plains Cree, Métis, and/or Saulteaux from Manitoba during the 1800s, found within the Thaw collection. The armband is comprised of loom-woven quillwork—the quills having been dyed red, green, orange, blue, and yellow—sewn onto tanned hide to create geometric patterns that evoke both plains Cree and Saulteaux styles. The armband also includes tassels that feature glass beads and dyed hair—possibly horse hair. Given the role of women’s circles in the creation of materialities,<sup>15</sup> it’s important to note that this armband would have been made by women and, ergo, passed on the feminine knowledges held within those circles in the form of material record.

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<sup>12</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 22.

<sup>13</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manner: Narrative on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln, US: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> “Animation” refers to Jolene Rickard’s assertion that Indigenous peoples awaken knowledges encoded into Indigenous materialities through their engagement with them; a form of “early binary code” woven into the very beings of Indigenous peoples — Jolene Rickard, “Considering Traditional Practices of ‘Seeing’ as Future” (presentation, Initiative for 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Symposium for the Future Imaginary, Toronto, ON, October 16, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” (Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004).

Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities from the Canadian prairies that were enlivened in proto-feminist<sup>16</sup> spaces—wherein Cree-Métis-Saulteaux relationalities took shape as materialities<sup>17</sup>—are a material record of kinship bonds that understand Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhoods as “fluid, flexible, inclusive,” as Robert Alexander Innes describes in his seminal book *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (2013).<sup>18</sup> Centring kinship in understandings of Indigenous Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities activates them as manifestations of relational histories that adamantly assert mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux identity in nineteenth century Manitoba.

### **Feminist Materialisms**

The use of the term materialities herein draws from Kim Tallbear’s research in the field of feminist, new materialisms, considering the animacy of so-called objects that relate to Indigenous communities.<sup>19</sup> Some aunties and kohkoms<sup>20</sup> from older generations of my community who define their politics along the lines of womanism—seeing Indigenous men as an integral part of their resistance, identity, and anti-colonial strategies<sup>21</sup>—might not agree with the framing of my research around materialist feminisms because of its reliance on terminologies

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<sup>16</sup> Coined by the R.I.S.E art collective, proto-feminist refers to practices that might be viewed as Indigenous feminist or womanist in the contemporary, but have existed on Turtle Island before the onset of settler-colonialisms and western “feminism” — Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment, “Proto-Feminism,” Bury My Art Tumblr, last accessed: 28 Jan 2018, <http://burymyart.tumblr.com/post/91080967368/high-resolution-poster-of-an-apsaalooke-woman>.

<sup>17</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013): 7.

<sup>19</sup> Kim TallBear, “Beyond the Life/Not Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking and the New Materialisms,” in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, edited by Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal (Cambridge, US: MIT Press, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> A colloquial ways of referring to older generation feminine kin, often who have a mentorship or kin relationship with those who refer to them as such.

<sup>21</sup> Kathryn D. Mauelito, “Womanism to Indigenism: Identities and Experiences,” *Work and Days* 24, no 1 & 2 (2006).

that derive from white feminisms. Further, Indigenous womanists have critiqued white, Western feminisms as exclusionary to the goals and needs of Indigenous women and their communities, and thereby not a project that is inclusive to Indigenous women.<sup>22</sup> My grandma might argue that my strong sense of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhoods is an obvious facet of my teachings, passed down by her, and derived from having come from a long line of strong Cree-Métis women, making it more of an Indigenous facet of myself as opposed to a feminist value I learned through white American and Canadian first, second, and third wave feminists. But I believe we are saying similar things though, just generations apart.

Indigenous feminist materialisms may bear resemblance to object-oriented feminisms<sup>23</sup> or feminist ethics of care<sup>24</sup>—both of which consider the relationships at the center of cultural production, with the former paying considerable focus to object-oriented ontologies as a facet of social relations and the latter accounting for the intimate feminine spaces that influence the circulation of objects. Similarly, Indigenous materialist feminisms share a title with materialist feminism of the late 1990s that sought to improve the lives of women by socially transforming capitalism’s universally adverse impact on women, through consciousness raising around women’s material conditions.<sup>25</sup> But feminist theories and methodologies that emerge from a western tradition of knowledge production are not rigorous enough to contend with Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities because of their white feminist universality that relies on an erasure of

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<sup>22</sup> Kathryn D. Muelito, “Womanism to Indigenism: Identities and Experiences,” *Work and Days* 24, no 1 & 2 (2006).

<sup>23</sup> Katherine Behar, *Object-Oriented Feminism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Claudia Card, “Caring and Evil,” *Hypathia* 5, no. 1 (1990): 100-107; Carol Gilligan, “Resisting Injustice: A Feminist Ethic of Care,” in *Joining the Resistance*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2011): 164-180; Marilyn Friedman, “Liberating Care,” in *What are Friends For* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1993): 142-184.

<sup>25</sup> Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham, introduction to *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives* (New York: Routledge. 1997): 3.

Black and Indigenous relationalities.<sup>26</sup> Western object- and relationship-oriented feminisms fail to account for the complexity of social relations that influence Indigenous life by reinforcing a binary between human and nonhuman, and a colonial hierarchy that values human life over all other life. If a materialist feminism is to be Indigenous, it must contest a sole focus of human-to-human relationalities.

Kim Tallbear has thought through the importance of integrating materialist considerations within Indigenous scholarship, frequently evoking an Indigenous, material feminist theory that accounts for the animacy of non-human beings. Says Tallbear:

Indigenous peoples have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape humans lives. In addition, for many indigenous peoples, their nonhuman others may not be understood in even critical Western frameworks as living. “Objects” and “forces” such as stones, thunder, or stars are known within our ontologies to be sentient and knowing persons.<sup>27</sup>

Tallbear has worked extensively with feminist materialist methodologies in order to “repair the non-Indigenous binary concepts of life and death, human and non-human, that plague research around Indigenous peoples.”<sup>28</sup>

Some art historians might not support my decision to cite Kim Tallbear as her work derives primarily from Indigenous studies and, therefore, might be mistaken for solely engaging with creatures, natural forces, and elements, and not with object of human creation. Ergo, it could be argued that I am stretching Tallbear’s theory. While Tallbear does not include museum pieces, specifically, in her discussion, I am using her lens to explore the personhood of the materialities I

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<sup>26</sup> Hazel V. Carby “White women listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood,” in *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Heidi Safia Mirza (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

<sup>28</sup> Kim Tallbear, "Disrupting Life/Not Life," DOPE 2015, Keynote Address, August 5, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iE-gaDG-kLQ>.



institutions, such as museums, without a lens of colonial trade, collections, and hoarding present.<sup>31</sup> My research thus far, by necessity, happens within museums and is required to engage with a lineage of scholarship around decolonial museology. But my research should not be totally claimed by the field of museum studies, and should be seen as the confluence of multiple disciplines—a reflection of my attempt to understand Indigenous materialities while feeling limited by the rigidity and boundaries of Western academic disciplines.

In line with Indigenous feminist materialisms, rocks, shells, and other materials used to create Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities—that which we often relegate as ambiguous “other” or “nonhuman”—require new methodologies to theorize with specificity their relationships to all life. While not all objects are animate and/or ceremonial, and feminist materialist frameworks are but one application to a diverse range of materialities and so-called objects, it is important to this thesis to consider that, no matter what, the various worldviews and ideologies that go into producing Cree-Métis-Saulteaux knowledge cannot be accommodated within the confines of ethnographic museum practices and, ergo, in accounts of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities.

### **Decolonial Museology**

Indigenous knowledges emerge in all kinds of ways that may be considered unorthodox for integration within the museum, such as assertions that knowledge came from above in a dream, or praying materialized as an intellectual spark.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, securing access to Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities for Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux museologists, or at the very least integrating Indigenous knowledges into museological interpretations of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux

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<sup>31</sup> David Garneau, “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation,” *West Coast Line* 46, no. 2, Summer 2012: 28-39.

<sup>32</sup> Shawn Wilson, “Relationality” and “Relational Accountability,” in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008): 111

materialities, is urgent in the present, because it so often differs from, and is contradicted by, Western museological traditions.

Shawn Wilson has described Indigenous knowledges integrated within colonial institutions as Indigenous method and methodologies, and ones that we should not be afraid to integrate as alternative, decolonial knowledge within the museum.

Because of our epistemology, our methods need to be extra-intellectual. That is, our data, our knowledge and relationships are based upon empirical data that is observable by the other forms of non-empirical data. We are in research ceremony. We gain knowledge and power from the universe around us in various ways<sup>33</sup>.

Wilson argues that the western intellectual tradition “teaches us to separate our head from our spirit,” and settler thought, including ethnographic museology, can be antithetical to reciprocity with nonhuman entities, including material cultures that are relational manifestations and records of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhood.<sup>34</sup> Thus, there is a critical need for the intervention of Indigenous knowledges within museum archives to adequately, sensitively, and thoroughly engage with Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities.

Drawing from postcolonial studies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that imperialism must be contested within colonial institutions that contribute to western knowledge production, including museums, and the “(re)creation of an ‘Other’.”<sup>35</sup> Tuhiwai Smith proposes a decolonizing methodology reliant on the empirical validity of Indigenous knowledges as a form of counter resistant epistemological production.<sup>36</sup> Grounding Indigenous knowledges in museum collecting, archiving, and producing practices disrupts western production and the totalitarian universal

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 119-120.

<sup>35</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2012): 334-335, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 2.

Western historical chronology that becomes ascribed to Indigenous materialities when they are objectified within museums.<sup>37</sup> In the academic tradition of Tuhiwai Smith's proposed decolonizing methodologies, I base this research in a tradition of decolonial museological scholarship to better understand Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities in the context of emerging selfhoods in nineteenth century Manitoba.

There is an expansive scholarly tradition of decolonial museologies upon which to model the integration of Indigenous knowledges within museums. For instance, Tuscarora art historian Jolene Rickard has argued arts administrators within museums should not produce "the Other" from postmodern cultural criticism when analyzing Indigenous materialities, and should instead read material cultures as "documentation of [Indigenous] sovereignty."<sup>38</sup>

At the 2016 *Teachings* symposium at Concordia University in Montreal, during a question period following a presentation by Rickard on this same topic, Steven Loft raised a critique about Rickard's use of the concept of "visual sovereignty," arguing that if Rickard defines Indigenous art through sovereignty, as a colonial legal concept, she perhaps fails her project of empowering Indigenous knowledges.<sup>39</sup> Rickard countered that her use of "sovereignty" should not be reduced to its Western counterpart because she is attempting to describe Tuscarora lifeways while contending with the limitations of an imposed colonial language.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Jolene Rickard, "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand." *Aperture* 139, Summer (1995): 54; *Teachings: Theories and Methodologies for Indigenous Art History in North America*, November 11-12, 2016, Concordia University, Montreal, <http://www.teachingsymposium.ca/schedule.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Mentioned in Lindsay Nixon, "Art in 2017: A View from Turtle Island," *Canadian Art*, December 28, 2017, <https://canadianart.ca/features/art-in-2017-carrying-forward/>.

Eurocentric conceptions of sovereignty can manifest as a mirroring of the colonial “heteropatriarchal . . . model associated with the state-form.”<sup>40</sup> Drawing from Anishinabeg stories, Leanne Simpson has similarly argued that self-determination and sovereignty are things that begin at home, within one’s relationships to themselves, their family, and their community.<sup>41</sup> Indigenous feminist thought has exposed the need for rigor when attending to terms thought to define Indigenous theory, such as sovereignty. As I have argued elsewhere, Indigenous scholars have the responsibility to seek nuance around terminologies that Indigenous peoples use.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in the past I’ve witnessed some Elders talking about “reconciliation,” when in my opinion they were instead describing values similar to kinship, but were limited by colonial languages to fully articulate Indigenous concepts.<sup>43</sup>

The English language, a colonial noun-based language that claims and names, is an inadequate tool for addressing the complexity of the largely verb-based concepts contained within Indigenous languages that describe, in particular, Indigenous relationships to other physical forces and beings.<sup>44</sup> Drawing from Tuscarora knowledges, when Rickard uses “sovereignty,” she does so to describe how material cultures provide a space wherein Indigenous peoples can assert their epistemologies;<sup>45</sup> where the relational, the affective, the material, and the discursive interact and reveal the manifest formations of Indigenous materialities and communities.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Andrea Smith, “Against the Law: Indigenous Feminism and the Nation-State,” *Affinities: A Journal on Radical Theory* 5, no 1 (2007): 65.

<sup>41</sup> Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back* (Winnipeg: Arp Books, 2011): 144, 243.

<sup>42</sup> Lindsay Nixon, Visual Cultures of Indigenous Feminism, *Otherwise Worlds*, Duke University Press, in print; originally published on GUTS. <http://gutsmagazine.ca/visual-cultures/>.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Linda Besner, “In Their Own Words,” *The Walrus*, March 25, 2016, <https://thewalrus.ca/in-their-own-words/>.

<sup>45</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand.” *Aperture* 139, Summer (1995): 54.

<sup>46</sup> David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 196.

Material sovereignty within the museum as a decolonial tool is disruptive of colonial hierarchies that value western museology over Indigenous knowledge. But asserting material sovereignty within the museum has long been a contentious point of negotiation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous museologists. In his seminal book *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, James Clifford draws from Mary Louise Pratt's notion of contact zones—the assertion that "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."<sup>47</sup> Clifford argues that museums, too, constitute a contact zone wherein Indigenous peoples are constantly struggling to gain autonomy and agency, the result of colonial histories that still permeate their lives, and particularly in regard to the management of their materialities within museums.<sup>48</sup>

Infantilizing discourses about the perceived inferiority of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges within museums has resulted in profound spiritual violence committed against Indigenous communities. One particular example could be taken from recent controversy about Effigy Mounds National Park, when it was discovered that the remains of 41 Indigenous peoples had been removed from the park's archive and museum displays.<sup>49</sup> A previous superintendent, Thomas Munson, pled guilty to one count embezzlement of government property and was sentenced to 10 consecutive weekends in prison, 1 year of house arrest, and 100 hours of community service, and ordered to pay \$108,000 in restitution, after the removed remains were found in his home.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992, 2008): 8.

<sup>48</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): 192.

<sup>49</sup> Phoebe Judge and Lauren Spohrer, Episode 72: Bears, Birds, and Bones, Criminal, podcast audio, August 4, 2017, <https://thisiscriminal.com/episode-72-bears-birds-and-bones-7-3-2017/>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

The Department of Justice released a statement saying that Muston took the remains because he was interested in “preserving and protecting the sacred site.”<sup>51</sup> But Albert M LeBeau, a current Choctaw employee of the park, feels Munson “didn’t want those goddamn Indians to take away his stuff .... That was the mentality of [the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act] in the 1990s. People who had amazing collections were afraid that Native Americans were going to come in and repatriate everything.”<sup>52</sup> While an extreme example, the removal of Indigenous remains from Effigy Mounds National Park by the non-Indigenous employee who was entrusted with their care reveals the lingering roots of colonial archival and museum practices, which were built upon the premise that Indigenous knowledges are not rigorous, ergo Indigenous communities require intervention from Western museums in order to safely archive and keep Indigenous materialities. Such an attitude casts Indigenous materialities as “property” and “resource,”<sup>53</sup> and thereby perpetuates a colonial logic of domination that sees Indigenous epistemologies as archaic, unmodern, static, and/or inanimate, reminiscent of Edward Curtis’s imaginary Indian.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, non-Indigenous museologists who limit their understanding of Indigenous materialities to pre-existing ethnographic museology frameworks risk casting traditional Indigenous knowledges as not rigorous enough to be integrated within, or to fully eclipse, Western museological scholarship. As Mique’l Dangeli (nee Asken) has argued, there is a fundamental failure within the Western museological framework, in that it understands Indigenous materialities through settler academic, national, and popular discourses that

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 2.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012).

voyeuristically romanticize and de-animate Indigenous objects and cultures. Dangeli draws an example from Tsimshian masks that community members “breath life into” through ceremonial care such as dance, making them “ceremonial beings.”<sup>55</sup> However, the erasure of Tsimshian knowledge from within museums has resulted in a marginalization of protocols that enliven Tsimshian masks into ceremonial beings. Dangeli argues that dance has been marginalized within material cultures studies and museology, spaces that favour a Western, ethnographic, and objectifying lens in their research about Tsimshian masks. Ergo, traditional Tsimishian relationships between dance, ceremony, and masks are erased in museums, and Tsimishian masks are placed in a material hierarchy above Tsimishian dance, though they are inherently linked in protocol, ceremony, and traditional Tsimishian knowledges.<sup>56</sup> This is just one example of how museology frameworks, such as classic connoisseurship, which judge the aesthetic value, worth, and subsequent hierarchy of Indigenous objects, can be used to disregard Indigenous worldviews.<sup>57</sup>

But “decolonial museology” in the form of simplistic acknowledgment of imperialist discourses ascribed to Indigenous materialities by Western epistemologies doesn’t terminate Indigenous objectification, either.<sup>58</sup> Though the language of decolonization is increasingly being taken up by settler institutions such as museums, it can be in superficial and depoliticized ways<sup>59</sup> that mirror a politic of recognition and make no effort to integrate Indigenous peoples and knowledges within museological research and methodologies. Uncritically drawing from

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<sup>55</sup> Mique’l Askren, “Dancing Our Stone Make Out of Confinement: Twenty-first-Century Tsimshian Epistemology,” in *Objects of Exchange: Social and Material Transformation on the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*, ed. Aaron Glass (Hudson: Bard Center, 2011), 37-47.

<sup>56</sup> Mique’l Dangeli, “Dancing Sovereignty: Protocol and Politics in Northwest Coast First Nations Dance,” PhD Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2015.

<sup>57</sup> David Ebitz, “Connoisseurship as Practice,” *Artibus et Historiae* 9, no. 18 (1988): 207-212.

<sup>58</sup> David Garneau, “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation,” *West Coast Line* 46, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>59</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 2.

decolonial museology while propagating ideologies of dominance within museological research about Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities falls under what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have called settler moves to innocence: a settler strategy meant to “reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity.”<sup>60</sup> Settler moves to innocence and the museums that contain such rhetoric cannot be removed from an overall project of settler-colonialism contingent on the ongoing removal of Indigenous peoples from vast territories of land in order to legitimize ongoing settlement.<sup>61</sup> As Tuck and Yang have argued, decolonization is not a metaphor: it requires concrete, institutional change.<sup>62</sup>

Indigenous scholars have already begun theorizing with specificity what true integrations of Indigenous worldviews within museums might entail, a variety of methodologies as diverse as Indigenous communities themselves. Heather Igloliorte, Canada’s preeminent scholar in Inuit art histories and curatorial practice, has recognized a gap within Inuit art histories and contemporary Inuit art criticism, arguing that institutional knowledge production about Inuit art has been predominantly monopolized by Qallunaat (non-Inuit).<sup>63</sup> Scholarship about Inuit art within museums and academe exposes a troubling inequity in the fields of museology and art history, and points to hierarchical social differentiation between those who produce theory as agential researchers, and those who are produced as subjects of theory.<sup>64</sup> Igloliorte outlines a relational, curatorial, art, and research methodology that comes from Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, often translated into “Inuit traditional knowledge;” but as Igloliorte argues, “can be more accurately understood to encompass the complex matrix of Inuit environmental knowledge, societal values,

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<sup>60</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-40.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Heather Igloliorte, “Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Qallunaat Art Museum,” *Art Journal*, Summer (2017): 100-113.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

cosmology, worldviews, and language.”<sup>65</sup> Igloliorte proposes the application of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit within museology—a methodology that integrates Inuit values, knowledges, and language into material research to increase critical, animated, and Indigenous understandings of Indigenous materialities.<sup>66</sup>

In the tradition of formidable decolonial scholars and/or museologists before me, such as Heather Igloliorte and Jolene Rickard, in this research I apply the framework of decolonial museology, specifically material sovereignty, to consider what materialisms derived from what is known as present-day Manitoba in the 1800s, formed within complex kinship webs, reveal about the emergence of mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux identities. Feminine histories outside of patrilineal band membership and what now exists in colonial records have been lost in all but oral tradition and, in some instances, materialities. Beyond their creation within proto-feminist spaces, materialities evoke feminist affect<sup>67</sup> as record of kinship webs between Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux communities, kinship webs that were based in the authority of women’s social organization.<sup>68</sup>

### **Kinship**

Kinship teachings provide the epistemologies required for decolonial interventions on Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities. Kinship, or the Law of the People, among mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux communities in the Canadian prairies refers to an observance of traditional

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 103.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid: 100-113.

<sup>67</sup> David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Kim Anderson, *Life Stages of Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011).

wîsashkêcâhk (Elder Brother) stories and the kinship teachings found within them.<sup>69</sup>

Contemporary kinship continues to observe the Law of the People, and its tradition of membership that is “fluid, flexible, and inclusive.”<sup>70</sup> Cree-Métis-Saulteaux kinship, like many other Indigenous philosophies grounded in relatedness, is a relational ethic, a philosophy, a worldview, a stable ontology, and a system of relational governance that is maintained by a complex set of responsibilities to community and kin.<sup>71</sup> Kinship teachings provide Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux communities with political, social, and cultural frameworks that reveal to them their responsibilities to be in reciprocity with all creation, including human and non-human entities alike, and the materialities they create.

During the nineteenth century a variety of Indigenous peoples were coming together in southern Manitoba—and Saskatchewan, but the focus of this thesis is on the region now known as Manitoba, and closer to my own community—to form singular camps, unified by shared teachings, common economies like the buffalo, and for mutual survivance.<sup>72</sup> The most important social and economic unit to Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples on the Canadian prairies during the 1800s was the extended family, upon which the individual centered their experience and identity more than any other facet of plains life.<sup>73</sup> The extended family informed social, political, and cultural life in an all-encompassing way that cannot be described through the limited framework of nationhood and must be understood as a complex web of kinship existing beyond the limits of place, space, and territory. The Saulteaux, for instance, organized themselves into patrilineal

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013): 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid: 7.

<sup>71</sup> Shawn Wilson, “Relationality” and “Relational Accountability,” in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008): 84-91.

<sup>72</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manner: Narrative on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln, US: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

<sup>73</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 22.

clans, each clan named after a correlating animal that would call distant relatives into close relation with local camps, considering their populations to extend well beyond the peoples present.<sup>74</sup>

Mixed bands emerged during the 1800s in the Canadian prairies that created vast kinship webs amongst Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis peoples—not surprising given that Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis peoples in 1800s Manitoba shared hunting migration routes centered around the buffalo that extended into Saskatchewan and Missouri and were connected by river networks.<sup>75</sup> There was a peaceful period among bands in Manitoba between 1837 and 1857 that Peers refers to as the “oppressive calm before the storm of White settlement, the demise of the bison, and the beginning of the reserve era.”<sup>76</sup> The prairie bands were ravaged and decimated by an epidemic of disease, and their numbers had greatly decreased, resulting in the formation of multi-ethnic bands to address issues such as labour, bison hunting, and defense, also providing camaraderie and new kin during a time of great loss.<sup>77</sup> Peers argues that changing contexts and realities in the Canadian prairies “ushered in a new political order” bringing Cree, Saulteaux, and Métis peoples together.<sup>78</sup> It should be noted that not all mixed Bands have come to develop a reductive, tribal-specific identity, and some still honour their shared ancestry—such as the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

Indigenous materialities that relate to Cree-Métis-Saulteaux communities on the Canadian prairies cannot be limited to notions of cultural hybridity found within globalized

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>75</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 143.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid: 141.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid: 141-142.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid: 142.

postcolonial studies,<sup>79</sup> having come to life within complex kinship webs that existed pre-colonization,<sup>80</sup> and finding continuance among Indigenous peoples who exist in a continued settler-colonial state, perpetually marked for removal within their own territories.<sup>81</sup> As Farrell Racette has expressed:

An understanding of the fluidity of creative potential of the spaces and places where people from vastly different backgrounds sought to interact can help us understand the emergence of cultural expressions that integrated elements into new linguistic, aesthetic and social forms. The development of interconnected communities who claimed both territory and nationhood demand that we look beyond bi-racial and bi-cultural elements of Métis and Half Breed identity.<sup>82</sup>

My assertion that Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples from Tootinawaziibeeng have mixed identities, as opposed to the singularly Anishnabe identities that have been ascribed to us in the present, is not intended to reinforce colonial values that claim mixed-raced Indigenous identities as “Métis” in the contemporary. Instead, the confluence of identity in the Canadian prairies amongst mixed camps and communities should be understood on a continuum, rather than as a binary or as mutually exclusive categories, that maintains connection to and honours parent cultures, while simultaneously generating new cultures, norms, practices, and identities.<sup>83</sup> The making of Halfbreed, Métis and/or mixed communities, such as Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples, should not

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<sup>79</sup> Joel Juoritti and Jopi Nyman, “Introduction: Hybridity Today,” in *Reconstructing Hybridity: Postcolonial Studies in Transition* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2007).

<sup>80</sup> Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>82</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” (Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004): 11-12.

<sup>83</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 152.

be envisioned as a linear process but “as overlapping circles of interaction or complex river systems with many tributaries, quiet pools and swirling movement.”<sup>84</sup>

For plains Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples from the Canadian prairies, kinship encompasses the knowledges, worldviews, and epistemologies that comprise Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples. Kinship is the framework needed to account for the mixedness, and simultaneous unity, of mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux communities who lived in communal bands in Manitoba during the 1800s, creating mixed offspring, kinship webs, and descendants, but whose materialities are often still treated within museums as having distinct and rigorously defined boundaries in terms of styles. Multicultural bands that formed on the Canadian prairies during the 1800s evolved mixed identities instead of maintaining distinct boundaries, problematizing colonial legal ways of categorizing Indigenous communities on the Canadian prairies, and their materialities, in terms of heteropatriarchal band registration, despite the “artificiality of these imposed boundaries,”<sup>85</sup> as academic Robert Alexander Innes describes.

Materialities offer a fertile ground of analysis for Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples, as the original form through which Indigenous peoples’ recorded, preserved and disseminated knowledge: the material. The material and the visual should not be conflated, however. As I argue herein, for Indigenous peoples “the material” encompasses both the visual and important elements of knowledge production rooted in Indigenous materialities, which are often erased by museums’ over-reliance on the visual.<sup>86</sup> For mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux communities in the Canadian prairies, identity and community was recorded in materialities—not just objects, but material representations and records of kinships that hold profound social, political, and

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<sup>84</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004): 14.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013): 7.

<sup>86</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand,” *Aperture* 139, Summer (1995): 51-60.

economic life within community. Relationships took physical form within the proto-feminist spaces of care that Cree-Métis-Saultaux materialities come to life within, weaved, beaded, and sewn together by aunties and kohkoms,<sup>87</sup> made into material artifacts of embodied relationality that follow maternal kinship webs rather than paternal lines.

### **Cree-Métis-Saulteaux Selfhoods**

Like Indigenous feminist thinkers, creators, makers, and doers before me, I reject colonial legalistic methods of understanding myself as a Cree-Métis-Saulteaux person, and in recognizing other Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples, echoing the teachings of my feminine kin before me. My feminine kin held the stories that we are Cree-Métis long after the imposition of colonial legalistic measures meant to decimate our communities by waging war on our bodies.<sup>88</sup> The proto-feminist spaces that Cree-Métis-Saulteaux communities came alive, passing on Cree-Métis-Saulteaux identities to the next generations, facilitated the creation of materialities that were enlivened by kinship, providing a record of the relationships, communities, and intimacies that led to said Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples and contest colonial legalistic understandings for Indigenous communities.

My mother grew up in Saskatchewan, which borders Manitoba to the west, in a town called Prince Albert. She is a residential school survivor, and so is my grandma, and our Indian status on my mother's side faded away long before me. Though knowledge of my mother's bloodlines may seem severed and lost, I honor her assertion that we are Métis because, in ways that mirror the loss of Cree-Métis subjectivities from within Tootinaowaziibeeng, my mother and grandmother have been the victims of colonial legislative policies intended to sever our

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<sup>87</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity," Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 2003).

bloodlines and kinship webs. And this is only one complicated mess of relations of my mother's side before I have even delved into the complexities of my father's kinship webs on Tootinaowaziibeeng.

It was the contemporary cultures on Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation, my reservation, that inspired this research. Tootinaowaziibeeng is about a 5-minute drive north of Manitoba Trunk Highway 5, between Grandview and Roblin. However, what is now considered Tootinaowaziibeeng is only one portion of two parts that comprise its traditional territory. The communities that comprised Tootinaowaziibeeng would seasonally migrate between the lower camp where the First Nation is now, legislated when the community signed Treaty 4,<sup>89</sup> and what is now Duck Mountain provincial park.<sup>90</sup> But my research is a conscious movement away from colonial ideologies like Treaty, and my reasoning for employing such a framework extends well beyond the Canadian government's misallocation of our territories.

My intention is not to delegitimize those First Nations peoples who continue to experience insurmountable socioeconomic disparity and engage Treaty as an attempt to hold the Canadian government accountable to its responsibilities to Indigenous peoples, hoping, praying, that using the government's agreements will result in change for their communities.<sup>91</sup> But I have long experienced the effects of broken treaty which permeates my whole life and, as a result, my research aligns itself with refusal ideologies—a resistance to accommodation and assimilation under the Canadian state by asserting one's Indigenous politics and relations.<sup>92</sup> My research is grounded in the refusal of sole focus on treaty relations to define the future of my First Nation,

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<sup>89</sup> Treaty No. 4 between Her Majesty the Queen and the Cree and Saulteaux Tribes of Indians at the Qu'Appelle and Fort Ellice. P.C. No. 944, P.C. No. 1332. 15–25 September, 1874.

<sup>90</sup> Stewart Dickson, *Hey Monias* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> Idle No More. "Visions and Goals" Press Release, January 10, 2013, document.

<sup>92</sup> Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

which still struggles with housing, income support, educational funding, and fair distribution of resources despite being “Treaty people.”

While there have been several successful feminist interventions upon legislative bodies attempting to undo colonial legalistic ways of managing band registration,<sup>93</sup> pro-treaty agendas continue to infringe on the rights of some Indigenous women, queer, trans, and gender non-conforming citizens who remain unable to pass status onto their descendants unless they parent with a cisgender Indigenous man.<sup>94</sup> It should also be noted that the misogynist underpinnings of Treaty are the direct result of Christian values, learned through generations of mercantilism and Roman Catholic infiltration, imposed on Indigenous communities to subjugate Indigenous women under colonial rule.<sup>95</sup> Treaty and colonial legislation have continuously been misappropriated to prop-up masculinist and patrilineal understandings of Tootinaowaziibeeng that now pervade within the community, resulting in contemporary administrative violence perpetuated against women and queer members.<sup>96</sup> Canada and its provincial governments have spent billions of dollars fighting to deny Indigenous peoples their Treaty rights,<sup>97</sup> naturally contributing to a feeling amongst some Indigenous peoples that the Treaties are not being respected and honored by the Canadian government.<sup>98</sup> The dire situation on many of Canada’s

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<sup>93</sup> Bill C-31, document.

<sup>94</sup> Sharon McIvor, Pamela Palmater, Shelagh Day, “Bill S-3 is designed to address the longstanding discrimination against women in the Indian Act. But once again the needed changes are being delayed,” *Policy Options*, December 5, 2017, <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/december-2017/equality-delayed-is-equality-denied-for-indigenous-women/>.

<sup>95</sup> Stevenson, Winona. "Colonialism and first nations women in Canada." *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1999): 49-80.

<sup>96</sup> Joanne Barker, “Gender, Sovereignty, Rights: Native Women’s Activism against Social Inequality and Violence in Canada,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008), 259-266.

<sup>97</sup> *Calder et al. v. B.C. attorney general* (1973), *R. v. Sparrow* (1990), *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997), *R. v. Marshall* (1999), *Corbiere v. Canada* (1999), *McIvor v. Canada* (2009), *Shiner v. Canada* (2017).

<sup>98</sup> Christopher Majka, “Pam Palmater: Honour the treaties, keep the promises,” February 12, 2016, Rabble, <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/christophermajka/2016/02/pam-palmater-honour-treaties-keep-promises>.

reservations<sup>99</sup> proves that Canada desperately needs to begin imaging futures emancipated from colonial management of Indigenous resources.<sup>100</sup>

Further, I am hesitant to place sole focus on Treaty when defining Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhood as it relates to Tootinaowaziibeeng, considering that my ancestors were likely starved into signing treaties, as James Daschuk has thoroughly revealed in his research.<sup>101</sup> Extractive and carceral policies and practices perpetuated towards Indigenous communities within the Canadian prairies derives from a legacy of histories associated with the project of settler-colonialism—a process that removes Indigenous life from land to make way for Euro-Canadian settlers.<sup>102</sup> Colonial expansion, economies, and administration led the intentional decimation of Indigenous communities in the Canadian prairies.<sup>103</sup> A legacy of settler-colonial traumas still reverberates amongst contemporary Indigenous peoples in the region, whose ancestors were brought under the reserve system, or died due to widespread infection, intentional withholding of rations by colonial administrators to induce starvation, the distribution of contaminated food by federal agents, and, finally, the implementation of the reserve system.<sup>104</sup> Given the brutal histories that surround treaty and treaty negotiations with the Crown, my Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux ancestors' agency is certainly called into question.

My registration under Tootinaowaziibeeng is through my father's status and it is complex to unravel. Tootinaowaziibeeng is widely considered to be an Anishinabe, Saulteaux, and/or

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<sup>99</sup> Water crisis, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/bad-water-third-world-conditions-on-first-nations-in-canada-1.3269500>; Attawapiskat suicide crisis, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3373928/1-year-after-suicide-crisis-attawapiskat-still-lacking-mental-health-resources/>

<sup>100</sup> Erica Violet Lee, "Reconciling in the Apocolypse," Policy Alternatives, March 1, 2016, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/reconciling-apocalypse>.

<sup>101</sup> James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

<sup>102</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>103</sup> James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

Ojibwa nation.<sup>105</sup> The interchange of Anishinabe, Ojibwa, and Saulteaux to describe Tootinaowaziibeeng’s identity is the result of changing contexts in and around its territories, and dynamic discourses about and understandings of our shifting identities. In early interactions with the fur trade and Canadian census agents, my ancestors were identified as French when asked about their tribal origins,<sup>106</sup> and when they signed onto Treaty 4 were still considered Saulteaux (the French way of describing their tribal affiliation).<sup>107</sup> “Saulteurs” was the way French peoples who encountered my communities described us, which would then evolve into Saulteaux, and French settlers would often homogenously refer to them as such even if they were Outchibouec (Ojibwa)—further distinguished still as “plains” if they were farther west.<sup>108</sup> Given the complexity of these identities and the intermarrying that resulted from the fur trade, over time, Tootinaowaziibeeng’s ancestors evolved into the English and more contemporary way of describing composition and identity as Ojibwa or Anishinabe.<sup>109</sup> But even during the 1800s Saulteaux peoples were often considered a part of the larger plains Ojibwa collective, both in kinship with local camps and by settler traders.<sup>110</sup> I use Saulteaux throughout this paper to honour that my grandmother still uses this word to describe our family and its histories, and similarly honour that she does so to refer to the larger Ojibwa/Anishinabe/Saulteaux collective that formed, and continue to form, Tootinaowaziibeeng’s identity.

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<sup>105</sup> Dakota Ojibiway Tribal Council, “Hisotry of the DOTC,” DOTC, last accessed January 15, 2017, [http://www.dotc.mb.ca/History\\_of\\_DOTC.html](http://www.dotc.mb.ca/History_of_DOTC.html);

Wikipedia, “Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation,” Wikipedia, last accessed January 15, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tootinaowaziibeeng\\_First\\_Nation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tootinaowaziibeeng_First_Nation).

<sup>106</sup> Figure 7

<sup>107</sup> Treaty 4, The Canadian Encyclopedia, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-4/>.

<sup>108</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): xvi.

<sup>109</sup> Stewart Dickson, *Hey Monias* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2005); Wikipedia, “Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation,” Wikipedia, last accessed January 15, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tootinaowaziibeeng\\_First\\_Nation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tootinaowaziibeeng_First_Nation); Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): xvi.

<sup>110</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): x; Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004: 4.

While Tootinaowaziibeeng is widely considered to be an Anishinabe, Saulteaux, and/or Ojibwa nation, materialities, oral histories, and archives suggest that Tootinaowaziibeeng had Cree and Métis ancestors who contributed to its formation, as well. My grandma Gertrude (Trudy) Ash (née: Morgan, Demeria) taught me an early skepticism of the Anishinabe status of our community, often reminding me that we were Cree and “Halfbreed,” as well.<sup>111</sup> As I’ve been slowly able to decipher the oral histories of my family against the archive, I realize now that when my grandmother said we were Cree-Metis, she was describing our matrilineal bloodlines that were erased by masculinist Saulteaux ideologies on Tootinaowaziibeeng that designate our community and identities as Anishinabe.

My father Ted Morgan still resides on Tootinaowaziibeeng. Though my grandma Trudy changed her name after wedding her second husband, John Cecil Morgan, we are actually Ironstands, the head of our family being our grandfather, and my father’s father, Henry John Ironstand. Grandma Trudy grew up on Tootinaowaziibeeng, born to my great grandfather Henry Thomas Demeria, who was a Saulteaux from Tootinaowaziibeeng, and my great grandma Verna MacKenzie who was Cree-Métis from Cote First Nation in Saskatchewan. My great grandma Verna wasn’t the only woman in my feminine lines on my matrilineal side from Cote who would marry into and relocate to Tootinaowaziibeeng taking on a Saulteaux status. My grandpa Henry’s father, and my great grandfather, Colin Demeria was Saulteaux and married my great grandma Annie Clair, who was from Cote; and family oral history says that my second great grandma Annie Rattlesnake’s mother, Mary Jane Rattlesnake, was from Cote and married my third great grandpa Henry Rattlesnake from Valley River Reservation (a previous name for Tootinaowaziibeeng), marrying into patrilineal Saulteaux clans and committing our Cree-Métis identities to oral record. Raphael Ironstand from Tootinaowaziibeeng noted in interviews that

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<sup>111</sup> Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Halifax: Goodread Biography, 1983).

would come to comprise a book about his life that there was a high prevalence of Métis women who married Ojibwa men from Tootinaowaziibeeng and integrated into the community thereafter.<sup>112</sup>

According to his birth certificate, my second great grandfather Adolphus McKenzie, my grandmother's grandfather, was born in 1896, and the only person listed on his birth certificate is his mother Constance Mariceau.<sup>113</sup> On the 1916 census, the head of the household Alexander (Allen) McKenzie—who is always listed as the head of the household and husband to Constance, but never listed on the birth certificates for Constance's children—and the family are described as Cree speaking Indians, and in fact that their mother tongues are Cree.<sup>114</sup> Adolphe's father, my third great grandfather, Alexander MacKenzie registered a Métis scrip in 1863 at Fort Ellice, having previously resided at the Red River settlement, and listed his parents Kenneth MacKenzie and Lalouise Nabis as Métis as well.<sup>115</sup> My second great grandmother Louisa Genaille married Adolphe McKenzie<sup>116</sup> and by the 1921 census they had taken on the name McRenyer and identified as French<sup>117</sup>—perhaps influenced by pervasive anti- Métis racism of the time and attempting to hide in plain sight.<sup>118</sup>

In trying to trace my family's history in the archive, I've learned that colonial records aren't a stable way to define Indigenous communities from the Canadian prairies during the onset of colonial census practices in Manitoba—the earliest my Saulteaux ancestors show up is in Trader Peter Fidler's "1815 census of Red River Indians"<sup>119</sup>—because these records cannot

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<sup>112</sup> Stewart Dickson, *Hey Monias* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2005).

<sup>113</sup> Figure 2.

<sup>114</sup> Figure 3.

<sup>115</sup> Figure 6-10.

<sup>116</sup> Figure 4.

<sup>117</sup> Figure 7.

<sup>118</sup> Adam Gaudry, "Métis," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last accessed July 21, 2018, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis/>.

<sup>119</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 97.

contain the complex relationalities of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux households within their parameters. Early census documents were recording the composition of families who, at times, were even jamming and altering documentation—as was the case with my McKenzie/McRenyer kin.

Within four generations of my family, I'm able to trace my kinship webs, kinship webs associated with Tootinaowaziibeeng, a Nation considered to be Anishinabe, to Métis and Cree bloodlines. So why the erasure of non-Saulteaux bloodlines from the identity and peoplehood of Tootinaowaziibeeng? I argue that understanding ourselves through principles of individualism, propped up by a project of nationalism and nationhood, is precisely what led to the masculinist erasure of our Métis-Cree kinship webs, a rhetoric I will trace in the remainder of this section with a brief literature review of contemporary Métis scholarship.

Defining Métis and Halfbreed identities has become increasingly contentious, and rightfully so. As Adam Gaudry and Daryl Leroux have argued, Métis peoples have had their identities appropriated for white settler fantasy and projects of settler-colonialism at an alarming rate.<sup>120</sup> Gaudry has adamantly asserted that Métis is a people, and should not be reduced to the concept of “mixing” between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the Canadian prairies and elsewhere.<sup>121</sup> Chris Andersen has also done extensive work juxtaposing a racialized positioning of “Métis” with a nationhood or selfhood positioning of the term,<sup>122</sup> refusing a discourse of “hybridity” in favor of Métis peoplehood and connection to a “national core historically located

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<sup>120</sup> Adam Gaudry and Daryl Leroux, “White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: The Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 116-142.

<sup>121</sup> Adam Gaudry, “Métis Are a People, Not a Historical Process,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last accessed July 21, 2018, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-are-a-people-not-a-historical-process/>.

<sup>122</sup> Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

in Red River and in the shared memories of the territory, leaders, events, and culture that sustain the Métis people today.”<sup>123</sup>

Andersen uses “Métis” 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 [Canadian] 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.”<sup>124</sup> Borrowing from legal scholar Jeremy Webber,<sup>125</sup> Andersen describes Métis peoplehood/selfhood in terms of “its distinctive historical ability to produce—and have respected—inter-societal norms.”<sup>126</sup> Inter-societal norms are created by the interaction of various societies through time, and Andersen argues that Métis peoplehood emerged through the negotiation of relationships between the communities that would come to share Métis peoplehood.<sup>127</sup> Andersen looks to “inter-societal relationships,” rightfully addressing relationalities in the Canadian prairies that would define Métis peoplehood.

But Métis peoples in the 1800s absolutely saw themselves as part of mixed race communities who had flexible connections with parent cultures, wherein they often honored the origin cultures, ideologies, and other knowledges alongside Métis selfhood.<sup>128</sup> The erasure of mixed-race identities and a sole focus on nationalism to define how Métis peoples evolved in Manitoba during the 1800s is a conscious nationalist-masculinist and colonial-legalistic

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<sup>123</sup> Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015): 13.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*: 24.

<sup>125</sup> Jeremy Webber, “The Jurisprudence of Regret: The search for Standards of Justice in Mabo,” *Sydney Law Review* 17: 5-28; Jeremy Webber, “Relations of Force and Relations of Justice: The Emergence of Normative Community Between Colonists and Aboriginal peoples,” *Osgoode Law Journal* 33: 623-60.

<sup>126</sup> Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015): 105.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*: 105.

<sup>128</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004.

foundation for understanding the Métis, and a marginalization of women's knowledges and kinships webs.

In Andersen's reading, "Métis" becomes a nationalist framework that "dismisses mixedness in favor of a shared horizon of legitimate political action"—a definition of Métis peoplehood that finds its place within literatures focused on the tension between Indigenous nationhood and colonial nation-state building.<sup>129</sup> While Andersen is rightfully attempting to disrupt colonial documents such as census that see Métis peoples as racialized categories,<sup>130</sup> a labour that is urgent and necessary for Métis sovereignty, he does so in a way that appeals to Canadian legalese, Euro-Canadian archival records, and legal scholarship drawn from Western imperialistic logics to define the parameters of Métis peoplehood.<sup>131</sup> Andersen's definition of Métis peoplehood requires further balancing with feminine communities and knowledges, including kinship as ethical relationality, which I argue are the foundation for Métis selfhoods.<sup>132</sup>

Andersen correctly combats assertions of Métis selfhood and nationhood that simplifies itself to conversations of hybridity but defines Métis nationhood by relying on principles of Indigenous nationalism, playing into a longstanding trope of nationalist-masculinist conceptions of Métis peoplehood. Jolene Rickard has been critical of Indigenous studies' sole focus on legal arguments, nationalism, and governance to define Indigenous thought, and its simultaneous self-acclimation as being at the apex of Indigenous knowledge production. Says Rickard, "one of my biggest issues with Indigenous studies is the focus on legal and governance structures without really understanding the critical site of creativity and the arts as essential to our future as

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<sup>129</sup> Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015): 13.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid: chapter 2 and 4.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid: 13.

<sup>132</sup> Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2001).

Indigenous peoples.”<sup>133</sup> What nationalistic visions of Métis peoplehood lack are truly nuanced accounts of kinship webs and teachings, born in proto-feminist spaces, enlivened through kinship teachings and Indigenous feminist materialisms, and recorded in mixed materialities.

When considering the downfalls of Métis nationalism, Amy Malbeuf’s performance *Ravel* (2014-15) comes to mind. Indigenous art has long held a rigorous body of Métis feminist cultural and material productions contesting masculinist representations of Métis peoplehood.<sup>134</sup> Art historian Carla Taunton witnessed the performance, describing it as follows:

[Ravel] begins with the artist tied to a permanent large wooden sculptural installation on the front lawn of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Her body is wrapped in a long piece of canvas. She slowly attempts to unravel herself from the canvas and in so doing moves through the gallery’s public space. She ravel and unravels her body and struggles to free herself from the off-white material and its sculptural anchor. With graceful yet strained movement she detaches and breaks free from the wooden installation and the canvas cloth, but the act of unraveling her body from the canvas reveals that she is further bound by a Métis sash. The sash is braided into the canvas and is also braided into Malbeuf’s hair. She sits on a rock to unraid the canvas and the sash, freeing the two materials from each other. She folds the sash and sits for a moment of pause, with the sash folded and held with open hands. Malbeuf stands and walks away from the performance site.<sup>135</sup>

Of the performance, Malbeuf explicates,

This work is an illustration of the lack of representation of Indigenous women in the documentation, writings, and understandings of Indigenous histories, in particular Métis

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<sup>133</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Considering Traditional Practices of ‘Seeing’ as Future” (presentation, Initiative for 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Symposium for the Future Imaginary, Toronto, ON, October 16, 2015).

<sup>134</sup> See: Sherry Farrell Racette, Rosalie Favell, Cheryl L’Hirondelle.

<sup>135</sup> Carla Taunton, “Performing Resistance/Negotiating Sovereignty: Indigenous Women’s Performance Art in Canada,” Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University, 2011: 47.

history. Much of academic and artistic work on/about/for/with/by Métis peoples is centered around the lives and actions of men. The most obvious examples: Louis Riel is undoubtedly an incredibly important person to our cultural heritage and identity; however, it seems that he is the only history of our people, that Métis people themselves and non-Métis people make reference to. So much of our history and identity in all aspects is owed to the lives and work of Métis women.<sup>136</sup>

Malbeuf continues, “This performance is in honor of all the Indigenous women, Métis women, whose histories and contributions have been forgotten.”<sup>137</sup>

As Malbeuf succinctly describes, Métis masculinism is perhaps at its apex in images of Louis Riel and militarized, tactical, nationalist, and anarcho-revolutionary readings of the Red River Resistance, regurgitated again and again to define Métis peoples. Métis feminist artists have long asked of nationalist Métis theory and art, what constitutes “legitimate and shared political action?”<sup>138</sup> Legitimate to whom? Who are the feminine peoples erased by patriarchal values of a nationhood/peoplehood model? Why are we refusing and forgetting our grandmothers, as Métis scholars? I contend that Métis nationhood models have failed to fully recognize kinship webs and feminine knowledges within their understandings of Métis peoplehood, an erasure deeply coded in misogyny, though misogynist registration and management of Indigenous peoples and their resources was the reason that Métis peoples came into being in 1800s Manitoba, to begin with.

Something that stood out to me about my family’s genealogical records was the Scottish bloodlines that led to our Métis scrips. Given that my Métis family carries the McKenzie name

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid: 47-48.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid: 48.

<sup>138</sup> Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015): 13.

(Figures 6-10), and the oral histories of our family say that the McKenzies were Scottish and had red hair, we may well be the descendants of the Scottish farmers, traders, and clerks who made their way to the Red River in the early 1800s and had children with Indigenous women in the area.<sup>139</sup> Further, given that my fourth great grandfather bears his name,<sup>140</sup> that the years of his death and birth align with my families' records,<sup>141</sup> and the years he was in the Red River,<sup>142</sup> I have speculated that my fifth great grandfather might have been the Scottish fur trader Kenneth McKenzie. These distinctions, and the fact that some of my Métis bloodlines may have had nothing to do with French genealogies, have made apparent to me the difference between Métis and Halfbreed identities,<sup>143</sup> the latter of which is the result of the mixing of various parent groups that aren't direct French or Cree bloodlines, though the two terms are consistently homogenized now within Métis theory in the contemporary.<sup>144</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette has described the difference between Halfbreed and Métis, of course accounting for how such categorizations erase fluid ways of understanding selfhood as related to kinships, as English and French "breed" mixed Indigenous.<sup>145</sup> The idea of "breed" here is a conscious reclamation of mixed-Indigenous identities during the emergence of Halfbreed and Métis peoples, as colonial administrators who objectify, racialize, and diminish our selfhoods by describing us as "English" or "French" bred Indians on early censuses.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Government of Canada, "Métis Nation," last accessed July 22, 2018, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/metis/Pages/introduction.aspx>.

<sup>140</sup> Figure 6-10.

<sup>141</sup> Kenneth McKenzie death certificate, Missouri, Death Records, 1834-1910, 2008, Provo, UT, USA.

<sup>142</sup> Wikipedia, "Kenneth McKenzie," last accessed July 22, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth\\_McKenzie\\_\(fur\\_trader\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_McKenzie_(fur_trader)).

<sup>143</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity," Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004.

<sup>144</sup> Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

<sup>145</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity," Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004: 28-29.

<sup>146</sup> Library and Archives Canada, "1901 Census," last accessed July 22, 2018, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/about-census.aspx>.

In my family, the creation of so-called Halfbreed bloodlines was an intensely gendered and racialized process. I'm struck by how little detail there is in the records and archives about the women in my kinship webs, as compared to the men. For example, historians continually refer to Kenneth McKenzie's Red River wife only as an "Indian woman," who McKenzie left when the fur trade commenced, and with whom he fathered children.<sup>147</sup> Some Métis women and/or Indigenous women with Halfbreed children were able to remarry into other Nations, accessing support and status for their decedents—as was the instance for Cree-Métis women who married into Tootinaowaziibeeng.<sup>148</sup> But, at times, Métis scrip was the result of mixed-race offspring who were too racialized to be considered white, but who nonetheless experienced a misogynistic pushing out from the patrilineal Indigenous communities from where those mothers were from. Halfbreed decedents would come to appeal to scrip as a result of their marginalized caste and status, as was the case for my third great grandfather Alexander MacKenzie.<sup>149</sup>

I want to be very careful here not to play into a trope of defining Métis peoplehood as a process mutual/dual rejection—in essence, being caught between two worlds. Countless scholars such as Chris Anderson, Adam Gaudry, and Sherry Farrell Racette have traced the proud, assertive, and strong roots of Métis peoplehood. I have no doubt that my Métis relations were proud and confident of the community they claimed. But honoring the stories told by my women kin orally and through the archive, I feel it is important to not erase the histories of gendered oppression exhibited within my matrilineal line in the name of a nationhood model. Pride and dispossession can exist in one body, all at once.

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<sup>147</sup> David J. Wishart, "Kenneth McKenzie," *The Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, last accessed July 22, 2018, <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.ind.037>.

<sup>148</sup> Stewart Dickson, *Hey Monias* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2005).

<sup>149</sup> Figure 6-10.

Further, nationhood models don't address the explicit gendered violence that created mixed bloodlines on the Canadian prairies, including histories of slavery in New France, where it was identified that 921 Indigenous women bore children while occupying the social status of slave.<sup>150</sup> To erase the gendered, and at times violent, processes of racialization that led to so many Métis bloodlines is to erase the gendered violence that occurred in the process of making a Métis peoples and its lasting legacies within Métis communities.

Selfhood is a relational ethic that understands Indigenous identity and community-making as ultimately tied to one's kinship teachings: being in responsible relation and reciprocity with all creation<sup>151</sup> such as blood relations or kin.<sup>152</sup> My Métis status wasn't known to me through records or archives, it was granted to me by my women kin—my grandma, aunties, and cousins—who passed on these knowledges to one another over tea, beading, and gossip around kitchen tables, and led me to seek out more nuanced understandings of my indigeneity outside of our Indian status, and secondarily our Métis scrip. Métis identity and governance are encoded in kinship teachings and are deeply connected to responsibility to kin and community—ethical relationality within Indigenous communities—herein described as Indigenous feminist selfhoods.<sup>153</sup>

Métis selfhoods should always be understood and animated in the spaces where our values are lived through kinship teachings, reciprocal relationalities with all creation, and, yes, in

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<sup>150</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity," Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004: 32.

<sup>151</sup> Shawn Wilson, "Relationality" and "Relational Accountability," in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008): 80-96, 97-125.

<sup>152</sup> Robin Wall Kimmerer author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge* (Milkweed Editions, 2015) on the *On Being* Podcast describes gender neutral pronouns for referring to animated life such as foliage, animals, and even rocks: "kiy" for singular or "kin" as plural — Krista Tippett, interview with Robin Wall Kimmerer, *On Being*, podcast audio, February 24, 2016, <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-in-all-kinds-of-life/>.

<sup>153</sup> Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2001).

fluid, flexible, and reflexive ways, not in exclusionary terms.<sup>154</sup> Métis histories and theories are desperately in need of rematriation,<sup>155</sup> and a reclamation of the vast kinship webs that extended far beyond the local camps in the Red River which would come to influence and form Métis selfhoods.<sup>156</sup> I engage with Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities as a means of rematriating my understanding of selfhood and identity in Manitoba during the 1800s, that resulted in the contemporary identity of Tootinawaziibeeng.

Observance of patrilineal clans on Tootinawaziibeeng has led to the marginalization of feminine kinship webs.<sup>157</sup> Colonial bureaucratic ways of managing band membership, that sought to eradicate Indigeneity in Canada vis-a-vis Indigenous women's bloodlines,<sup>158</sup> have resulted in a loss of feminine knowledge in defining mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux selfhood. For Tootinaowaziibeeng, masculinist, bureaucratic conceptions of Indigenous nationhood reinforce colonial legalistic ways of managing Indigenous communities and manifest as a severing of its Cree-Métis roots. Cultures of Cree and Métis matrilineal erasure on Tootinaowaziibeeng have mutated into violent subjugation of feminized bodies in the contemporary,<sup>159</sup> particularly in the form of heteropatriarchal band registration.<sup>160</sup> Settler museologists risk perpetuating the same ideologies that lead to feminized violence towards Indigenous peoples by erasing kinship webs in their work with Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities.

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<sup>154</sup> Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

<sup>155</sup> A reference to the art collective "ReMatriate."

<sup>156</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994).

<sup>157</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 22.

<sup>158</sup> Winona Stevenson, "Colonialism and First Nations Women in Canada," in *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought*, ed. E. Dua and A. Robertson (Toronto: Women's Press, 1999).

<sup>159</sup> Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Brooklyn: South End Press, 2005).

<sup>160</sup> Sharon McIvor, Pamela Palmater, and Shelagh Day, "Equality Delayed is Equality Denied for Indigenous Women," *Policy Options*, last accessed 28 Jan 2018, <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/december-2017/equality-delayed-is-equality-denied-for-indigenous-women/>.

### **Activation of Materialities**

Activation is, in essence, what Kim Tallbear has argued occurs when Indigenous peoples animate and enliven objects through interaction with their Indigenous worldviews and relational practices. Tallbear cites her Dakota relationships to bloodstone. When Dakota peoples work with bloodstone, it denotes a relationship with the stone that considers the rocks to be living and related to the Dakota peoples and, thus, requiring ceremonial handlings.<sup>161</sup> The bloodstone is, in essence, an alive entity when brought into ceremony with the Dakota peoples, and treated with the same protocol human blood would be in Dakota ceremony.<sup>162</sup>

Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities can be animated because they hold considerable power to “evoke, to connect and trigger,” and serve as “both instrument and collective remembrances” of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhoods.<sup>163</sup> Material record of feminine knowledges, and the kinship webs they’ve recorded, are activated through their engagements with the contemporary Cree, Métis, and Anishinabe peoples they relate to, and the story medicine and subsequent ancestral knowledge they hold.<sup>164</sup>

As I previously argued in this thesis, while feminine kinship embedded in the production of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities can be erased by settler museologists, activation of said materialities by Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples facilitates further cultural production by

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<sup>161</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, Jinhana Haritaworn, Myra Hird, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Jasbir K. Puar, Eileen Joy, Uri McMillan, Susan Stryker, Kim TallBear, Jami Weinstein, and Jack Halberstam, "Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>163</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity,” Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004): 14.

<sup>164</sup> Kim Anderson, *Life Stages of Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011).

sparkling a cyclical process of activation.<sup>165</sup> When Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples interact with Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities held in the museum, it can lead to them creating relationships with said materialities, and emulation of the traditional knowledges those materialities hold within their aesthetics. It's a process of activating the ancestral knowledges that Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples hold within themselves, through their own production of said aesthetics and knowledges in the present.<sup>166</sup> By activating the knowledges recorded within Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities, Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples further pass on those knowledge to future generations. Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities activate feminine knowledges within Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples.

Activating mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities in museum spaces through engagement with traditional Indigenous knowledges, such as kinship, subverts object/life binaries perpetuated by ethnographic museology that portray Indigenous materialities as inanimate and lifeless objects—the primary value of which being their aesthetic quality, according to classic Western forms of connoisseurship<sup>167</sup>—and disrupts the western Cartesian divide by integrating intuitive and embodied ways of knowing within spaces that produce knowledge.

Mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities had, and have, a whole social life within community, where they are a part of ceremony, can convey kinship, and are even, at times, described as alive within the language of the Indigenous communities to which they relate. Contradicting nationalistic visions of peoplehood, Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities are the

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<sup>165</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance:’ Writing Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” in *Rethinking Professionalism*, ed. Kristina Huneault (Montreal: McGill Queens Press, 2012), 285-326.

<sup>166</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, “‘I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance:’ Writing Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880-1970,” in *Rethinking Professionalism*, ed. Kristina Huneault (Montreal: McGill Queens Press, 2012), 290.

<sup>167</sup> David Ebitz, “Connoisseurship as Practice,” *Artibus et Historiae* 9, no. 18 (1988): 207-212.

composition of visual, iconographic, and aesthetic repertoires of confluent, fluid, and mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux selfhood from the Canadian prairies. Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities from 1800s Manitoba comprise a material record of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhoods emerging at the time that, when activated, problematize their anthropological and ethnographic categorizations as singular-nation identified objects.

### **Cree-Métis-Saulteaux Materialities**

I am aware that this section is the most susceptible to criticism. As scholar and artist Sherry Farrell Racette noted in an early read of this thesis, *we know very little about these beautiful relatives*. As scholars working with materialities, many of us are forced to rely on speculative claiming. The objects I will activate through kinship herein are open to multiple interpretations. For instance, Farrell Racette, who was a faculty member at the Fenimore residency, and is someone whose research I deeply respect and look up to, understood many of these same objects differently than I do. Farrell Racette saw them as Métis. That said, I am animating these materialities based in knowledges of my own family history—both in oral history and in archival records. While I do rely on settler scholars to help hash out my argument, such as Peers, Fognell, Vincent, Brydon, and Coe, I do so because the histories traced within their work match what little I do know about mine and my families claims to territory, our identities, and our ancestors. That said, I recognize that I am likely trying to see myself in these objects—just as I think most Indigenous material culture scholars do.

References to ornamentation, adornment, and the appearance of design within this section should not be read passively. Instead, making of materialities should always be understood as a facet of Indigenous feminist selfhood, and as entrenched in the kinship, love, and knowledges

present within Indigenous women's communities. It was women, active agents and producers of cultural knowledges, who were weaving and stitching designs on garments that would become material record of the kinship webs women's communities fostered.

In the Canadian prairies during the 1800s, the way Indigenous peoples dressed was a political and social act, and one that was facilitated by women's communities in their loving production of materialities. Academic and artist Sherry Farrell Racette has described forms of dress as a "secondary surface pointer reflective of the deeper structures of ethnicity which allowed members of the group to recognize each other."<sup>168</sup> The production of clothing for trade and survival, by Indigenous women, in the areas around the Red River colony, brought Europeans and Indigenous peoples together and, through shared activity and the exchange of objects, facilitated an interactive space grounded in feminine knowledges—a dialectical spark<sup>169</sup>—wherein sewing techniques and materials evolved and were exchanged.<sup>170</sup> Manitoba was a space wherein different women decorators and decorative elements interacted, leading to the creation of new aesthetics that recorded feminine understandings of relationships and kinship between Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples. Farrell Racette proposes that activating the materialities of mixed parent groups from the Canadian prairies is one way of "replacing the construct of frontier and boundaries with fluid zones of contact and interaction formed by cross-cutting social networks that became the interactive space in which people were transformed and new cultural constructs created."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid: 14.

<sup>169</sup> Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007).

<sup>170</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and The Expression of Métis and Half Breed Identity," Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004: 69.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid: 29.

Saulteaux shirts—adorned with dreams, powers, and marks of status by the women who made them, who deeply loved the peoples they manifested said shirts for—were an early representation of cultural continuum, which can be found vividly displayed in the aesthetics of a shirt in the Haffenreffer Museum’s collection categorized as Plains Cree<sup>172</sup> (Figure 11). Says Laura Peers of the shirt,

While its sleeve and shoulder strips, beaded in a diamond pattern, and the rosettes on its chest and sleeves, conform to essential painted rib-like striping, other aspects of the shirt’s decoration reflect a Great Lakes heritage. Its neck and cuffs are beaded in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including bands of small diamond and straight-line design, similar to the Ojibwa otter-tail pattern. These designs are worked in white on the cuffs, reminiscent of the lace and braid trim on European military coats and, perhaps, on the coats given to trading chiefs ... The shirt provides a most interesting example of the movement of design styles from East to West with the movement of peoples, and of strong cultural continuity in the carry-over of certain favored design motifs, coexistent with a ready acceptance of new design ideas.<sup>173</sup>

Saulteaux shirts being comprised of mixed cultural aesthetics are reflective of mixed identities on the prairies, Indigenous identities understood through Indigenous feminist selfhoods, and the creation of new aesthetics and cultures that still honoured parent cultures. Though by the mid-1800s Saulteaux had joined mixed bands, Saulteaux women continued to ornament their materialities with Great Lakes signifiers and, as Laura Peers argues, “[feminine kinship webs

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<sup>172</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 191-192.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*: 191.

were] the metaphorical stitch that held the regionally disparate pieces of this cultural garment together linking several heritages and ecological zones.”<sup>174</sup>

Dress was signifier of an Indigenous person’s identity and (Indigenous feminist) selfhood, but a racializing indicator as well—traders often positioned Saulteaux dress as a “rejection of civilization.”<sup>175</sup> The Saulteaux women who produced materialities in the nineteenth century rejected symbols and ties to the fur trade, donning “decorated bison roves, northern-plains leather shirts, garments of bison, and elk hide.”<sup>176</sup> One of the holdout “heathen” bands who missionaries described as still “tenting on the banks of the River,”<sup>177</sup> the Saulteaux held onto their Great Lakes ceremonies, rituals, and cosmologies that defined their identities as Saulteaux peoples. Saulteaux observance of Great Lakes culture would ultimately define the aesthetic of mixed Cree- Métis-Saulteaux materialities that Indigenous women honoured in their materialities.<sup>178</sup>

While working with the Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Art Museum in the summer of 2017—a part of their Otsego Residency program—I was happy to find that the institution was open to interpretations of materialities that accounted for evolving Indigenous identities and communities in the Canadian prairies during the 1800s, as understood through feminine kinship webs and Indigenous feminist selfhoods. I recognized a similar respect towards the evolving aesthetic styles that emerged in women’s communities and cultural production from the area during this period. In their work on the catalogue for the Thaw Collection, Eva Fognell (second edition), and Gilberta T. Vincent, Sherry Brydon, and Ralph T. Coe (first edition), noted the

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid: 191-192.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid: 161.

<sup>176</sup> Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994): 148.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid: 163.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid: 149-150.

emergence of mixed styles in what they classify in their collection as the Northern Plains region.<sup>179</sup> The northern plains region is seen to encompass present-day Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Ontario, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin,<sup>180</sup> wherein an evolving shared, and yet distinct, styles were emerging amongst the plains Indigenous women who were producing materialities.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s emerging “Plains” aesthetics produced by Indigenous women in the Canadian prairies consisted partially of geometric patterns painted on hides, reminiscent of the Boreal forest traditions of Great Lakes Ojibwa.<sup>181</sup> A Red River Ojibwa panel bag (Figure 12) housed in the Thaw Collection, consisting of sinew sewn buffalo hide, and painted in red pigment with a series of horizontally parallel bands and small design units, alongside the pony beads woven with sinew thread on red-ochred leather stings, is an example of this early emergence of Plains style among women producers that drew heavily from Great Lakes aesthetics.<sup>182</sup> The construction of the Red River Ojibwa panel bag is derived from a painted and quill-worked style known to have been collected from the Great Lakes area in the 1720s—yet it was collected from southern Manitoba. As such, the Red River Ojibwa panel bag is documentation of a transition from a Great Lakes aesthetic and tradition, into a distinct culture and aesthetic in the Canadian prairies, and constitutes a material record of kinship webs known to the Indigenous women who produced said panel bag.

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<sup>179</sup> Eva Fognell, and Gilbert T. Vincent, Sherry Brydon, and Ralph T. Coe, *Art of the North American Indians: The Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Art Museum*, The Fenimore Art Museum, (Cooperstown, New York, 2000, 2016): 184.

<sup>180</sup> “Great Plains,” *Wikipedia*, last accessed July 22, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Plains#Northern\\_Great\\_Plains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Plains#Northern_Great_Plains).

<sup>181</sup> Eva Fognell, and Gilbert T. Vincent, Sherry Brydon, and Ralph T. Coe, *Art of the North American Indians: The Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Art Museum*, The Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, 2000, 2016, 184.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

What is distinctly Red River about the Red River Ojibwa panel bag (Figure 12) is its geometric pattern woven, by the woman or women who produced it, into the bottom panel. “This design—a rectangle in the center, smaller rectangles in the four corners, and triangles between the corners—remained very popular for many decades to come,” write Fognell, Vincent, Brydon, and Coe, “an amalgamation of Cree and Ojibwa styles that were the root of a distinct Red River style.”<sup>183</sup> It should be noted, however, that the materialities Indigenous women produced in the Red River during the 1800s were also born from significant Cree influence, and emerged from said women’s recognition of close intertribal relations between Cree, Saukteaux, and Métis peoples on the Canadian prairies. With the integration of needles, Indigenous women makers could use seed beads in place of quills, adopting the popular spot-stich beading technique of the Cree, but continuing to emulate the style of Saukteaux quill loom work—a truly OjiCree hybrid style.<sup>184</sup>

Métis women were particularly successful at blending prairie styles into new, hybrid forms of creation and materialism—using the spot stich to create elaborate embroidery and curvilinear floral patterns that honored their Cree and Saukteaux relations, as well as their unique, burgeoning aesthetics.<sup>185</sup> Throughout the 1800s, Métis women would develop their own distinct takes on loom-woven quillwork and woven beadwork, and progress into increased use of floral patterns that would define Métis aesthetics. A Red River Métis panel bag (Figure 13) housed in the Thaw collection is a prime example of the distinct Métis aesthetics women produced as record of their shifting identities and kinship webs, showing an early case of a stitched rosette pattern, alongside Saukteaux geometric patterning. It should be noted, however, that before Métis

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 184.

<sup>185</sup> Eva Fognell, and Gilbert T. Vincent, Sherry Brydon, and Ralph T. Coe, *Art of the North American Indians: The Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Art Museum*, The Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York, 2000, 2016, 184.

women perfected their floral patterning, their styles began by honoring the quillwork compositions, consisting of rectangles and triangles, of their Ojibwa relations, but modernizing the technique using woven pony-bead panels (Figure 14).<sup>186</sup>

But by the mid-1800s, Métis women had fully developed their distinct, intricate, and beautifully designed floral patterns, as exhibited on a Red River Métis octopus bag (Figure 15). Little is known about how this style became prevalent amongst Red River Métis women, as it was a distinct departure from the panel bags that also developed around the same time.<sup>187</sup> But what is apparent, and made clear by Métis aesthetics that observed feminine kinship webs—at least in the 1800s before the onset of the reserve system, treaty, and Western colonialism—is that Métis women saw the Saulteaux and Cree peoples as their relations and ancestors, bonds that they closely honoured in their worldviews and subsequent materialities. Further, the frequent honouring of Saulteaux styles and aesthetics in materialities produced by Métis women denotes a particularly close relationship between Saulteaux and Métis communities; ergo, a similar understanding of the importance of dress and the materialities Indigenous women made to adorn their bodies and the bodies of their kin.

During my time at the Fenimore Art Museum, I also attempted to activate an object categorized as an armband (Figure 1) that the museum had labeled as “possibly plains Cree-Métis”<sup>188</sup> from southern Manitoba, using my feminine-taught stories and teachings about kinship. The materials used to construct this armband include glass beads, porcupine quills, and dyed hair (possibly horsehair). This armband features quill loom work that was trimmed and sewn onto tanned leather. The maker has drilled holes in the bottom of the leather, then dangled

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>188</sup> Eva Fognell and Alexander Brier Marr. *Art of the North American Indians: The Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Art Museum* (Cooperstown, Fenimore Art Museum, NY: 2016): vii.

strands of beading and suede from the newly made holes. The colors used are blue, yellow, red, green, and orange.

The armband I observed was described as unique because of its use of blue dye circa 1847 in a Cree and/or Métis style because, as Otsego Faculty Council member and Native American art dealer Jonathan Holstein pointed out, blue dyes are often attributed as belonging solely to Indigenous peoples in the Southwest of present-day America. The timeframe of the armband's origin is known because it changed hands from the private collection of Thomas Heaven to the Mingei International Museum in San Diego, California in 1847. The assured timeframe of this object, alongside new research about Indigenous dye types in the Canadian prairies,<sup>189</sup> dispels misconceptions that Cree and Métis women did not have blue dyes in the early 1800s to use in their cultural productions.

Another interesting feature is the armband's geometric visuals that flow into one another in a unified design, which Faculty Council member Evan Maurer advised me is often attributed to Woodlands style. Said Maurer, Cree geometric patterning is often characterized by standalone geometric shapes that contribute to an overall patterning, but the shapes don't flow into one another, touch one another, or engage with one another's designs (except being organized in an overall composition, of course). The armband's contradictory symbols makes for an interesting case study indeed, and one that exposes the fluidity of Indigenous identity in the Canadian prairies during the 1800s, as evidenced in knowledge about kinship webs observed by women's communities, disrupting what is known within museums about strict ethnographic categorizations of Saulteaux, Plains Cree, and Métis objects.

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<sup>189</sup> Roland Bohr, "'Dyeing Commodities whether in Roote or floure': Reconstructing Aboriginal Dye Techniques from Documentary and Museum Sources," *Material Cultures Journal* 69 (2009), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/MCR/article/view/18145/19520>.

While kinship is deeply complex, itself spawning a field of theory and research that cannot be summarized in this thesis, I argue that the armband I observed in the Thaw Collection is representative of a brief period in southern Manitoba during the 1800s that saw the emergence of hybrid-objects among women producers. As such, a hybrid aesthetics also emerged between mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux communities, which observed complex kinship webs understood through Indigenous feminist selfhoods, as opposed to colonially imposed records and documents.

Sterile ethnographic understandings of cultural hybridity cannot fully encompass the knowledges and kinship networks present in a materiality like the armband discussed in this section. By employing an Indigenous and critical museological lens, and considering the histories of Manitoba during the 1800s, including how relational philosophies like kinship and women's communities contributed to mixed-Indigenous feminist selfhoods, we can begin to understand the role that kinship ceremony and relational treaty played in the creation of the armband I observed herein. The armband housed in the Thaw Collection represents an observance amongst plains Indigenous women of emerging mixed Cree, Métis and Saulteaux materialities from the Canadian prairies in the 1800s, who always remained connected to their Great Lakes parent groups—mixing Cree and Saulteaux aesthetics. The armband observed disrupts adherence to rigid ethnographic categorizations with its very being—by expressing the fluid, reflexive and inclusive identity formation observed within feminine kinship webs and Indigenous women's communities without explanation.

## **Conclusion**

Inspired by the patrilineal, nationalist, and colonially legislated Anishinabe identity of Tootinaowaziibeeng Nation, my First Nation, in this thesis I traced the mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux (feminine) kinship webs that emerged in the nineteenth century in what is now the Canadian prairies. These kinship webs were considered through my own family histories, gifted to me by my feminine relations, and through observance of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities. Understanding Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples through principles of individualism and/or nationhood, what led to the patriarchal erasure of Métis-Cree kinship webs on Tootinaowaziibeeng, and a marginalization of women's knowledges and kinships webs, generally.

For plains Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux peoples from the Canadian prairies during the nineteenth century, kinship encompassed the knowledges, worldviews, and epistemologies that comprise Cree-Métis-Saulteaux selfhoods. Relationships took, and continue to take, physical form within the proto-feminist spaces of care that Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities come to life within, weaved, beaded, and sewn together by aunties and kohkoms, made into material artifacts of embodied relationality that follow maternal kinship webs rather than paternal lines.

In this thesis I contextualized Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities in the context of the kinship webs that influenced their making. I considered what materialisms derived from what is known as present-day Manitoba in the 1800s, and formed within complex kinship webs, reveal about the emergence of mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux identities. I worked in particular with materialities collected from the Canadian prairies during the 1800s, which enabled me to understand these forms as material record of the Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux relationships that

resulted in mixed communities, empowering understandings of kinship webs as opposed to patrilineal lines of descent.

Understanding kinship webs that influenced the birth of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities necessitates an application of decolonial museology, in the academic tradition of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonizing methodologies. Mobilizing kinship within the museum constitutes Indigenous knowledge production and the disruption of colonial museological understandings of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities. Kinship becomes a decolonial tool that animates nineteenth century Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities, once enlivened in proto-feminist spaces wherein Cree-Métis-Saulteaux relationalities took form as said materialities, asserting new mixed aesthetics that represented how Cree-Métis-Saulteaux peoples saw themselves. The engagement between Indigenous materialities, Indigenous knowledges such as kinship, and Indigenous peoples is one of activation. Activation occurs when Indigenous peoples animate and enliven objects through interaction with their Indigenous worldviews and relational practices.

I selected several materialities from the Thaw Collection at the Fenimore Museum to observe the evolution of Cree-Métis-Saulteaux aesthetics. The Red River Ojibwa panel bag (Figure 11) showed that styles thought to be distinctly Great Lakes or Woodlands Ojibway were creeping into western territories in the eighteenth century and beginning to integrate with prairie styles of the time. Two additional panel bags (Figure 12 and 13) exhibited the emergence of a distinct Métis aesthetics, but one that showed deep connection to Saulteaux communities, and the mixing of Saulteaux and Métis styles, and communities. And a final panel bag (Figure 14) displayed how Métis, Saulteaux, and Cree were beginning to see one another as relations in the prairies by the nineteenth century, honoring these relationships in style and aesthetic—dress being one of the most political markers of the period. Finally, an armband from the collection

provided a case study for an aesthetics representative of a brief period in southern Manitoba during the 1800s that saw the emergence of hybrid-objects, and hybrid aesthetics, between mixed Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux communities

Materialities provide a space of application for Kim Anderson's concepts around feminist selfhood. Selfhood is a relational ethic that understands Indigenous identity and community-making as ultimately tied to one's kinship teachings: being in responsible relation and reciprocity with all creation such as blood relations. But selfhood was also enacted herein as a means of rematriating Indigenous identity, social organization, and governance. Feminine knowledges of matrilineal descent assist in making contemporary assertions of identity grounded in principles of rematriation. Privileging the productions of feminine community members and feminine understandings of selfhood as recorded in materialities further provides a method for understanding mixed Cree-Métis-Saulteaux communities outside of colonial legislation that has marginalized women's knowledges within Tootinaowaziibeeng—through kinship webs, instead of through colonial legislation

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I have always been told I have to choose a side. If I'm a status Indian, like my father who I have no relationship with, then I am not Métis—though my mother and grandmothers on both sides, whose love shaped my Indigenous identity, identify as such. This is how patriarchy contradicts Indigenous, relational ways of understanding family and selfhood. I refuse to say that I am not Cree-Métis; I refuse to erase my kohkoms, anymore. The stories of my grandma and my kinship teachings, when applied to the Cree-Métis-Saulteaux materialities, have revealed to me how truly related Cree, Métis, and Saulteaux communities are, if not through shared bloodlines, certainly through kinship. Those relations extend far beyond the reservation borders and colonial scrips we

were designated by the Canadian government. We are all related. niwâhkomâkanak ôki. These are my relations.

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**Figures**

Figure 1: Armband. C. 1840. Southern Manitoba. Thaw Collection, The Fenimore Museum, Cooperstown. Last accessed 23 May 2017.



Figure 2: Birth Registration Number 1899-001678. Vital Statistics. Manitoba Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Accessed 23 January 2018.

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**DETAILED BIRTH INFORMATION**

**REGISTRATION NUMBER: 1899-001678**

**CHILD'S DETAILS**

Last Name: MCKENZIE	
Given Names: ADOLPHES	
Sex: MALE	Date of Birth: 12/02/1896

**PLACE OF BIRTH DETAILS**

Name of Hospital:
Place of Birth: R.M. OF DAUPHIN

**USUAL RESIDENCE OF MOTHER**

Address:	
City, Town, Village, Rural:	
Province:	Country:

**MAILING ADDRESS OF MOTHER (IF DIFFERENT FROM RESIDENCE OF MOTHER)**

Address:	
City, Town, Village, Rural:	
Province:	Country:

**OTHER PARTICULARS**

Duration of Pregnancy: wks	Number Liveborn Including This Birth:	Number Stillbirths:
Birth Weight: grams	Parents Married: YES	Mother's Marital Status: MARRIED

**FATHER'S DETAILS**

Last Name:	Given Names:
Place of Birth:	Date of Birth:
	Age:

**MOTHER'S DETAILS**

Maiden Last Name: MARICEAU	Given Names: CONSTANCE
Place of Birth:	Date of Birth:
	Age:

Date of Registration:



Figure 4: Birth Registration Number 1917-022039. Vital Statistics. Manitoba Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Accessed 23 January 2017.

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**DETAILED MARRIAGE INFORMATION**

**REGISTRATION NUMBER:** 1917-022039

**MARRIAGE DETAILS**

Place of Marriage: TOUTES AIDES	
Date of Marriage: 17/04/1917	

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

GROOM	BRIDE
Last Name: MCKENZIE	Last Name: GENAILLE
Given Names: ADOLPHE	Given Names: LOUISE
Marital Status: SINGLE	Marital Status: SINGLE
Religion:	Religion:
Date of Birth:	Date of Birth:
Age: 21	Age: 20
Place of Birth: STE. ROSE DU LAC	Place of Birth: DUCK MOUNTAIN

**RESIDENCE BEFORE MARRIAGE**

GROOM	BRIDE
City/Province/Country:	City/Province/Country:

**FATHER'S DETAILS**

GROOM	BRIDE
Last Name: MCKENZIE	Last Name: GENAILLE
Given Names: ALEXANDRE	Given Names: LOUIS
Place of Birth: NOT STATED	Place of Birth: NOT STATED

**MOTHER'S DETAILS**

GROOM	BRIDE
Maiden Last Name: MORICEAU	Maiden Last Name: COROQUETTE
Given Names: CONSTANCE	Given Names: MARIE LOUSIE
Place of Birth: NOT STATED	Place of Birth: NOT STATED

**OFFICIANT DETAILS**

Officiant's Number:
Officiant:
Officiant Address:
Denomination:
Date of Registration: 24/04/1917



Figure 6: "MacKenzie, Alexander - Concerning his claim as a child." Métis Scrip. Library and Archives Canada. MIKAN No. 1498146. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Accessed: 23 January, 2017.

Alexander MacKenzie within named,  
make oath (or declare) and say that the within answers given by me are true in every particular.  
So help me God.

Sworn (or declared) before me, at Fort  
St. Appollin this 19  
day of August A.D. 1885  
having been first read over and explained in the  
English language to the deponent, who  
seemed perfectly to understand the same, and in  
my presence made his mark  
W. R. Small  
Commissioner

Mr. A. B. MacKenzie within named,  
make oath (or declare) and say that the within answers given by me are true in every particular.  
So help me God.

Sworn (or declared) before me, at Fort  
St. Appollin this 19  
day of Aug A.D. 1885  
having been first read over and explained in the  
English language to the deponent, who  
seemed perfectly to understand the same, and in  
my presence signed  
W. R. Small  
Commissioner

Sworn (or declared) before me, at \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_\_  
day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. 188\_\_\_\_  
having been first read over and explained in the  
\_\_\_\_\_ language to the deponent, who  
seemed perfectly to understand the same, and in  
my presence \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 7: "MacKenzie, Alexander - Concerning his claim as a child." Métis Scrip. Library and Archives Canada. MIKAN No. 1498146. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Accessed: 23 January, 2017.

No. 954 Form J.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, CANADA.

**NORTH WEST HALF-BREED COMMISSION.**

*Int. 6th April 1924 1805*  
**This is to Certify** *as Alexander MacKenzie*  
 a Half-Breed, has proved to the satisfaction of the Commission that he was residing in the North West Territories previous to the 14th day of July, 1877, and under the status of (Name) of the Dominion Lands Act, 1881, and the Order in Council of the 30th March, 1904, is entitled as this date to Scrip to the amount of *240* dollars.

The Scrip called for by this Certificate, amounting to *240* dollars, will be payable to bearer, will specify the name of the person in whose favour it is granted, and will be delivered to the person producing this Certificate. Said Scrip will be accepted as per its payment of Dominion Lands.

*W. A. Hall*  
 Chairman of the Commission.

Figure 8: "MacKenzie, Alexander - Concerning his claim as a child." Métis Scrip. Library and Archives Canada. MIKAN No. 1498146. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Accessed: 23 January, 2017.

Alexander MacKenzie within named,  
 make oath (or declare) and say that the within answers given by me are true in every particular.  
 So help me God.

Sworn (or declared) before me, at Fort  
St. Charles this 19  
 day of August A.D. 1885 his  
 having been first read over and explained in the Alexander MacKenzie  
English language to the deponent, who was  
 seemed perfectly to understand the same, and in  
 my presence. made his mark  
W. R. Hunt  
Commissioner

We Richard McDonald John MacKenzie Fort St. Charles  
 make oath (or declare) and say that I know Alexander MacKenzie, who has  
 made oath to the correctness of the within answers, and so far as his answers to questions numbered  
one to seven are concerned, I know them  
 to be correct, and so far as the remainder are concerned, I believe them to be true and correct in  
 every particular.

Sworn (or declared) before me, at Fort  
St. Charles this 19  
 day of Aug A.D. 1885 John MacKenzie  
 having been first read over and explained in the English  
 language to the deponent, who was  
 seemed perfectly to understand the same, and in  
 my presence. signed it Richard McDonald  
W. R. Hunt  
Commissioner

I \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
 make oath (or declare) and say that I know \_\_\_\_\_ who has  
 made oath to the correctness of the within answers, and so far as his answers to questions numbered  
 \_\_\_\_\_ are concerned, I know them  
 to be correct, and so far as the remainder are concerned, I believe them to be true and correct in  
 every particular.

Sworn (or declared) before me, at \_\_\_\_\_  
 this \_\_\_\_\_  
 day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. 188 \_\_\_\_\_  
 having been first read over and explained in the \_\_\_\_\_  
 language to the deponent, who  
 seemed perfectly to understand the same, and in  
 my presence.

Figure 9: "MacKenzie, Alexander - Concerning his claim as a child." Métis Scrip. Library and Archives Canada. MIKAN No. 1498146. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Accessed: 23 January, 2017.

13. Can you produce baptismal certificates of the birth of your children? If so, produce them, if not, state reasons?  Yes

14. Can you produce burial certificates? If so, please produce them, if not, state why not?  Yes

15. Have you ever had a homestead entry?  Yes

16. If so, what homestead? *I have it now*

17. Have you ever had any land claims in Manitoba or the North-West? If so, state nature of claim, when and how acquired and, what claims did you make of them? *None except as above*

18. What do you consider the value of all your property, land, implements, building, horses, cattle, etc.?  Yes

19. Did you ever receive land or scrip in Manitoba in commutation of the Half-Breed right? *No*

20. Mention the names by which you have been called, other than your name given above? *I am sometimes called McMillan*

21. Do you recognize any family as 4th Indian, or do any other persons in your family? *never*

22. Have you ever been in any way connected with the rebellion? *never*

*I have lived here since 18 March last and have taken no part in the rebellion*

*his*  
*Alexander MacKenzie*  
*mak*



Figure 10: "MacKenzie, Alexander - Concerning his claim as a child." Métis Scrip. Library and Archives Canada. MIKAN No. 1498146. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Accessed: 23 January, 2017.

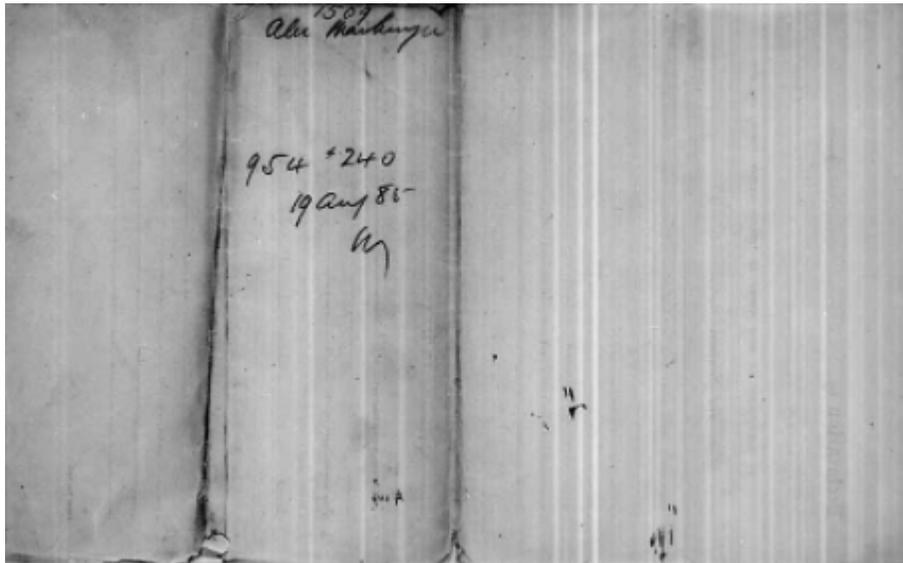


Figure 11: "Plains Cree" shirt (courtesy of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University HMA 77-171). From *Ojibwa of Western Canada* by Laura Peers.

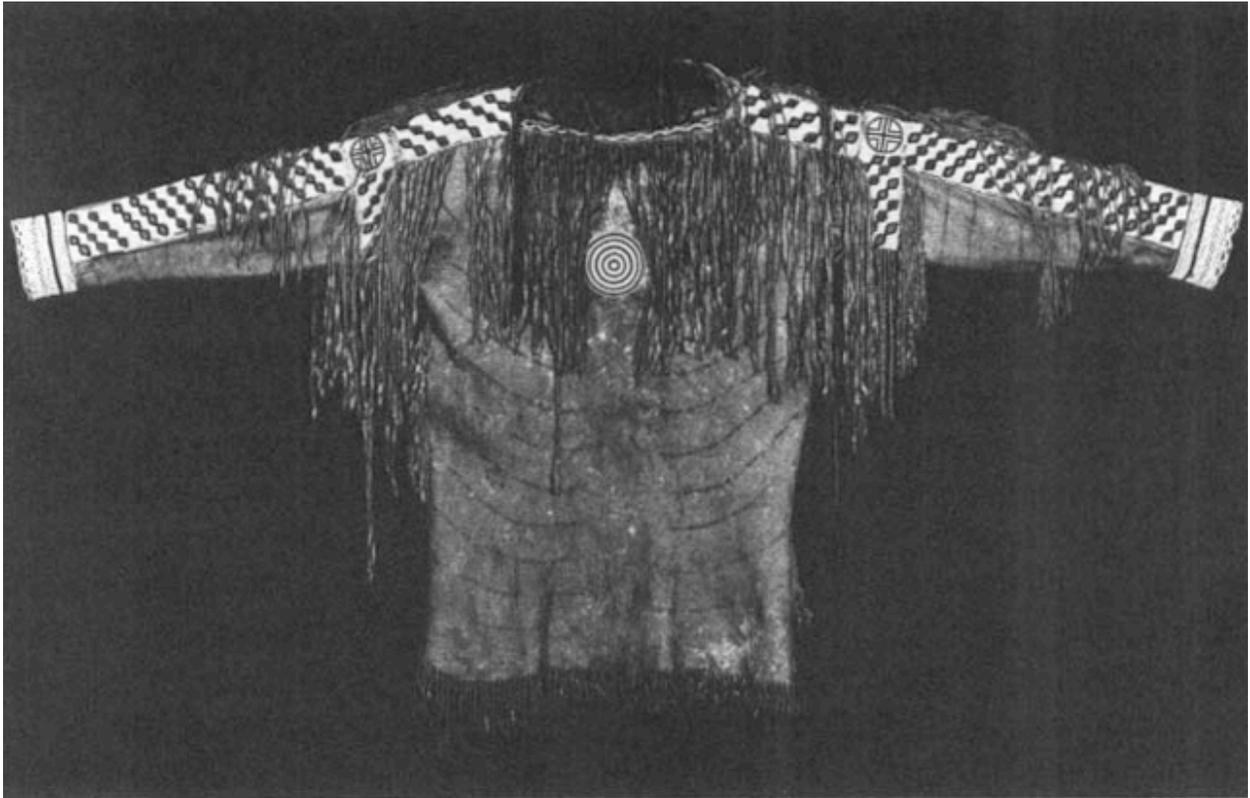


Figure 12: Anishinabe (Red River Ojibwa) panel bag. Ca. 1790. Southern Manitoba. Thaw Collection, The Fenimore Museum, Cooperstown. Last accessed 29 Jan 2018.



Figure 13: Red River Métis panel bag. Ca. 1820. Southern Manitoba. Thaw Collection, The Fenimore Museum, Cooperstown. Last accessed 29 Jan 2018.



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Figure 14: Red River Métis panel bag. Ca. 1800. Southern Manitoba. Thaw Collection, The Fenimore Museum, Cooperstown. Last accessed 29 Jan 2018.



Figure 15: Red River Métis octopus bag. Ca. 1840. Southern Manitoba. Thaw Collection, The Fenimore Museum, Cooperstown. Last accessed 29 Jan 2018.



