

"MÉTIS"

**Race, Recognition, and the
Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood**

CHRIS ANDERSEN



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Contents

Foreword / ix

Paul Chartrand

Acknowledgments / xi

Introduction / 3

- 1** Mixed: The History and Evolution of an Administrative Concept / 26
- 2** Métis-as-Mixed: The Supreme Court of Canada and the Census / 59
- 3** The Métis Nation: A People, a Shared History / 91
- 4** Métis Nation and Peoplehood: A Critical Reading of the Supreme Court of Canada and the Census / 133
- 5** A Case of (Mis)recognition: The NunatuKavut Community Council / 168

Conclusion / 197

Notes / 211

Works Cited / 228

Index / 252

Foreword

Chris Andersen's work is unique. It resists the pull of inherited racist concepts of days gone by in dealing with the subject of Métis national identity. In this book, Andersen tackles and debunks the racist notions behind much of the scholarship and judicial decisions on Métis identity and does so in prose that keeps the reader alert.

The pervasive influence of imperial Britain's notions about human nature and "racial superiority" continues to be seen in the craft of the scholar and the judge in discussions and conclusions about "aboriginality" and "hybridity." This regrettable approach seems to be blind to the evidence of modern scientific achievements such as DNA, which demonstrate conclusively the falsity of the concept of race and its various manifestations concerning human nature and human identity.

Andersen exposes the blind spot to racism in the social science literature on the subject of Métis identity. In a sense he has set his face against much of the conventional thinking about Métis identity and in doing so exposes the weaknesses and misunderstandings that characterize most of the work on the subject. He does Métis people a favour by demonstrating, as the classic literary works of Maria Campbell have done, that Métis people are still viewed as "outcasts," not only by outsiders but also by ourselves.

Chris Andersen's book illuminates both history and social science. It is written with the ostensible goal of debunking social science analysis on the subject of Métis identity. That goal is achieved by using the specialized language of the craft of social science. Given the intensity of contemporary debate on the political and legal aspects of its subject matter, the book will

be of interest to readers from all the professions, and its lively prose and appealing imagery will ensure that it captures the interest of the general reader.

Throughout my reading of the manuscript, I kept hearing the words of the late Métis leader Angus Spence, who, like many others I have heard in community meetings, proclaimed, “We know who we are.” Chris Andersen’s analysis will encourage scholars to see the wisdom and practical merits of letting the people determine membership and not to be swayed or persuaded by the views of the political representative organizations and appointed judicial civil servants who now appear to be the ones who largely decide who will belong to a small but unique Indigenous nation born in the heart of the North American continent.

Paul Chartrand

Introduction



*Aen Ball Metif,
St. Paul's United Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan,
15 June 2013*

It's Saturday evening, the third and final day of the annual Native American and Indigenous Studies Association meetings, hosted this year by the Department of Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. NAISA meetings are a highlight of the academic year for many of us who attend them because they bring together nearly a thousand scholars, most of whom are Indigenous and all of whom are interested in a critical engagement with Indigenous issues. This particular conference is especially exciting for many, however, because – in addition to being held outside of the United States for the first time – Métis Elder and scholar Maria Campbell has put together a “Halfbreed Ball” (Aen Ball Metif), which includes a ten-course meal of modern riffs on traditional Métis food, as well as Métis singing, performing, and a fashion exhibition showcasing Métis material culture.

I grew up in Saskatchewan, where I lived in a small town and then a small city. Although we ate wild meat from time to time, my conversations about favourite meals did not normally extend to the intricacies of how best to prepare muskrat meat loaf or beaver tail, two of the delicacies on the Aen Ball Metif menu. In addition to sampling a wide variety of what most attendees likely saw as exotic foods, many of us enjoyed the event's musical, performative, spoken word, and singing interludes

by local Métis artists, some of whom are nationally renowned and all of whom were spectacular. As well, the event was emceed by two well-known personalities, one of whom was Sherry Farrell-Racette, a noted Indigenous material culture scholar and artist in her own right who, in addition to her emceeding duties, was heavily involved in the event's material culture portions. Following the supper, renowned Métis musician Donny Parenteau and his band had the crowd in a frenzied lather as attendees danced to the sounds of fiddle, mandolin, and guitar, letting loose after a long, intense, and intellectually invigorating conference.



My wife, who is not an academic, is often exasperated by my apparent inability to turn off my brain and just enjoy things. Like many scholars, I find it incredibly difficult to be mindful – that is, to simply lose myself in the moment of an event, movie, TV show, newscast, or even conversation with friends, without thinking about the structural or discursive contexts within which it or they occur, especially when they have something to do with my research interests. That night was no different, and although I immensely enjoyed the entertainment, I found myself grumbling internally about what I saw as an overly racialized narrative that connected Métis nationhood to fur trade society (since Métis nationhood arguably represents a turn *away* from the Great Lakes fur trade and *into* the Plains buffalo economy).¹ On the other hand, the Halfbreed Ball was fun: the expertise of the performers, the detail of the servers' historical dress, and the variety of foods were complemented masterfully by the emcee's humour, good cheer, and, above all, extensive knowledge about the material culture on display.

Nonetheless, for me, the most interesting “scholarly” moments of the evening came later, when a number of Indigenous academic colleagues relayed to me after the event that they finally “got” why I always seemed so annoyed when people wrote about the concept of Métis in ways that emphasized “mixedness.” Their point was not that they hadn't understood the issue intellectually prior to the ball. Rather, this was the first time many of them had seen “Métis culture” first-hand (even if, in this case, it came in the form of condensed celebratory snippets). And although conventional scholarship often dismisses the importance of personal experience in research, experiences like this event can nonetheless offer immensely

powerful emotional placeholders for truths that we otherwise understand only intellectually. For some attendees, Aen Ball Metif did as much to unsettle their thoughts about Métis culture and society (not to mention unsettling what they thought about indigeneity more generally) as four decades of reading about Métis nationalism ever could.

Sadly, events such as the Halfbreed Ball no longer occur with the regularity they once did – especially on the scale and in the style displayed at the NAISA conference. The loss of the complexity of Métis cuisine and pageantry is bad enough, but the rarity of such events is all the more unfortunate because they offer a vision of Métis society that elides the simplistic tropes of mixedness and hybridity that seem to fascinate so many scholars who write of Métis histories, literatures, and politics. Not a vision that seeks to deny our mixedness but rather a vision premised on the notion that *all* Indigenous peoples are mixed² and that Métis hybridity is no different from the hybridity that characterizes other Indigenous peoples, especially those on the northern Plains of what is now western Canada, where the Métis rose to prominence in the nineteenth century. Aen Ball Metif thus offers a fitting intellectual footprint for this book. Understanding Métis nationhood or peoplehood can never begin or end with a discussion of hybridity, because hybridity is neither an empirical nor a philosophical fact. It is instead but one of many lenses through which scholars interpret the social world around us, and it is no more obvious a lens to observe *any* Indigenous society – Métis or otherwise – than one that emphasizes the dense complexity of our nationhood and peoplehood.

Contrast the rich material complexity of Métis society performed and consumed at Aen Ball Metif with John Ralston Saul's declaration in his 2008 bestseller, *A Fair Country*, that Canada is a "métis civilization." The use of lower-case "métis" notwithstanding, his words appear to offer a similarly spirited defence of Métis nationhood. A closer inspection, however, reveals little that emphasizes Métis people's territory, events, history, or culture. Despite Saul's scattering of references to various Métis national icons, swept up like so many autumn leaves into his larger narrative, the author's phrasing instead defines Canada's political history as hybrid and thus marks, perhaps, its – and his own – indigeneity (see Gaudry 2013). The problem, as Métis historian Brenda Macdougall (2012, 511) explains, is that even presumably well-intended statements such as Saul's "instantly

negate the stories of [Métis] families, the histories of our communities, and the authenticity of our aboriginality, reducing us to an in-between, incomplete, ‘not-quite-people’ who are stuck somewhere on the outside of the discourse.” From my perspective, whether or not an Indigenous individual or community self-identifies as Métis today, and whether or not the Indigenous community is “older” than Red River, if the individual or group lacks a connection to the historical core in the Red River region, it is not Métis.

Narratives such as Saul’s are part of a larger myth of cultural ambivalence (Macdougall 2012) with which the term “Métis” has been saddled. I would frame Macdougall’s sentiments slightly differently and say that Saul’s construction of Canada as a métis civilization is an example of the Métis being *misrecognized* as a hybrid off-shoot of two races – “Indian” and “white” – rather than as an *Indigenous people*. One of the central issues I wish to explore is what makes it so easy for Saul – and most Canadians – to racialize Métis in terms of our apparently obvious hybridity or mixedness. Saul’s renown likely makes his misrecognition memorable, but his logic is depressingly unremarkable. In an important sense, this misrecognized racialization sits at the core of Canada’s colonial claims to legitimacy as a nation-state. It not only conceals the historical and ongoing physical and symbolic violence that makes such claims appear logical, it also dismisses complex discussions about the epistemological gap between historical Indigenous self-identification and existing official classifications such as “First Nations,” “Métis,” and “Inuit” (see Andersen 2013b; Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Brubaker and Cooper 2004).

Saul’s proclamation – and my deliberate substitution of his “small ‘m’ métis” with a “big ‘m’ Métis” – raises a number of additional but equally important issues. Who has understood “Métis” as mixed, and why? What alternative understandings of the term are conceptually available to us, and how have they fared in relation to more dominant understandings? How does painting Métis as mixed rely on and reproduce the racialization central to Canada’s colonialism, and in what ways have other Indigenous communities invested themselves in such racial logics? And what does Saul’s ability to define “Métis” in the ways he does tell us about the kinds of relationships that settlers are able to have – able to choose – with Indigenous peoples in colonial countries such as Canada? This last question is particularly important because – make no mistake – consciously or not

Saul's decision to use "métis" as a conceptual placeholder for mixedness both relies on and reproduces a racialized hierarchy of indigeneity premised on a chain of logic that includes two elements: (1) if Métis are mixed, then First Nations and Inuit must not be (because, if we were all mixed, the term would lose its distinguishing power); and (2) if Métis are mixed and First Nations and Inuit are not, then, *ipso facto*, Métis must be less Indigenous.

This book traces this racialization and its diminishing effects on Métis peoplehood in two sites that powerfully shape official classifications of what is usually referred to as "Métis identity": the Supreme Court of Canada and the National Household Survey (NHS) that recently replaced Canada's national census.³ Pairing the two in this way may seem odd initially, as they appear to have little in common. Each makes little use of the knowledge generated by the other;⁴ the conditions under which the information in each is compiled require substantially different kinds of training on the part of information collectors; and the public regard for and prestige accorded them are likewise dissimilar (for example, though lawyer jokes seem ubiquitous, statistician jokes spring much less readily to mind). All of this is to say that the information collected and the knowledge generated in each site are relatively autonomous. These differences notwithstanding, both sites have relied upon startlingly similar racialized depictions of Métis and thus reproduce, in ways distinctive to their field, logics that have come to be widely deployed in other arenas of Canadian social life.⁵

Both the courts and the census rely heavily on the public's confidence in their fairness and objectivity. The courts are often positioned as a bulwark in the separation of law and politics, rhetorically crucial to the legitimacy of liberal societies. In a federal system such as Canada, courts play a crucial role in adjudicating over rights and jurisdictions between legal protagonists (see Macklem 2001). They do more than this, however: courts also possess a broader cultural power to structure the social relations they claim to merely preside over. Indeed, scholars suggest that the courts fundamentally shape how "ordinary citizens" think according to juridical logics.⁶ The situation is not so simple, however, both because there is no such single analytical thing as "law" and because court decisions are better positioned as indirectly "generative" than as directly "constitutive." Nonetheless, we must note the power of court-generated definitions to shape self-understandings in non-judicial arenas of social life – including

those of the Métis – to the extent that we accept the legitimacy of juridical and statistical logics.

Statistics and the census play an equally powerful role in painting the “empirical picture” of the nation, a major technology of modern state making and nation building.⁷ However, emphasizing only statistics’ constitutive power tends to erase an entire universe of struggle in which various “census field agents,” including Aboriginal policy actors, come to engage in an intense and complex set of classification battles to produce and use categories and the data they create (see Andersen 2013b). Statistics are certainly constitutive effects of broader struggles. But to analyze only their effects – usually the limit of constitutive analyses – is to marginalize the forms of Indigenous investment and agency that produce them.

The courts and the census are analytically important, then, for their constitutive powers of racialization and their contestative powers as arenas of Indigenous agency. In the past decade in particular, Statistics Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada have initiated a groundswell of public debate about the meaning of the term “Métis.” In 2003, for example, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a decision in *R. v. Powley*, the first s. 35 Métis hunting rights case to be decided at that level. Although ostensibly about the right to hunt in and around the small upper Great Lakes community of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, the case was more widely regarded as a litmus test for the broader place of Métis Aboriginality in Canadian society today: Were Métis people Aboriginal independently of First Nations ancestry or because of First Nations ancestry? Although the Supreme Court of Canada pronounced the Métis “fully Aboriginal,” the Canadian media nonetheless positioned the decision as an example of the court’s recognition of a “mixed-ancestry” Aboriginal people.⁸

Earlier that year, Statistics Canada had released its 2001 data pertaining to the Aboriginal population. Most startlingly, Statistics Canada revealed that the so-called Métis population had skyrocketed by 43 percent since the previous census (in 1996), a five-year increase that strained demographers’ ability to make statistical sense of it. Among the many responses recorded by the national media was a press release put out by the Métis National Council (MNC), declaring that the new statistics “demonstrated what [it] had always known,” that the Métis population was not being fully recorded and that the federal government needed to put more resources in place to deal with the “new reality” of the Métis Nation. Five years

later, in the 2006 census, these numbers roughly doubled again, producing an equally perplexing overall increase of nearly 100 percent in only a decade.⁹

It isn't surprising that the Métis National Council has used the 2003 *Powley* decision and the recent increases in the census numbers to make various public claims to recognition and appeals for resources. The courts and the census are two major avenues through which Aboriginal organizations attempt to make these kinds of claims. They have the potential to produce powerful discourses of legitimation, which can and do translate into increased funding, increased resources, and even broader legitimacy in the public eye. We should ask, however, not only what is being recognized through such efforts but also how the meanings of classifications themselves are in fact produced through the recognition process itself. When considering the distinctive power of the census and the courts to legitimize racialized meanings of "Métis," I make three claims.

First, both the courts and the census are fields of knowledge production that imbue Métis administrative categories with meanings that, once "translated" out of that field, are redeployed in other arenas of social life. The Canadian courts and the census are two specific instances of social fields (Bourdieu 1984, 1991; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Importantly, characterizing them as such requires that we understand the practices and investments that produced the *Powley* decision and the census not as *reflecting* internal logics (like precedential case law or technical data analysis) or larger structural imperatives (such as patriarchy, heteronormativity, or, in our case, colonialism).¹⁰ Instead, logics are in an important sense *refracted* upon their entry into – and translation out of – the fields in which they are located. In other words, there is something specific about the terrain in which they produce meanings of "Métis" that merits investigation.

Second, while agents of any social field fashion arguments in colonialism's adversarial contexts, they do so – in fact, they can only do so – by "agree[ing] to play the game" (Bourdieu 1987, 831). In a colonial country such as Canada, this agreement has collectively encouraged a racialized misrecognition of the Métis. In the *Powley* decision, this misrecognition took the form of basing recognition on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, historical separateness from adjacent "Indian" communities, and contemporary self-identification as Métis, rather than on political

self-consciousness and attachment to the Métis people. Canada's National Household Survey is equally racialized in its assumption that self-identifying as Métis on the survey form trumps any other form of power involved in the making of a "Métis population." Thus, while many friends and colleagues have viewed the *Powley* decision and the addition of "Métis" to Canada's census as powerful instances of recognition, I argue that they have also led to a profoundly racialized and thus deeply diminishing form of misrecognition.

Third, I argue that these two social fields' current configuration – that is, the Canadian courts' and the national census's distinctively racialized production – makes it nearly impossible to recognize a *single* Métis people. While section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, identifies three Aboriginal "peoples," the collective entities through which Métis litigants can claim s. 35 protection for hunting or fishing rights have since been largely narrowed to settlements (see Andersen 2012; *R. v. Powley* 2003).¹¹ This denies juridical recognition of geographically broader and more explicitly political claims. Similarly, Canadian census officials continue to endorse Métis population data that rely on the idea that checking off "Métis" on the NHS survey form means more or less the same thing to everyone. But in a colonial context where Métis self-identification means different – and in many cases, opposing – things to different people (see SSCAP 2013), Statistics Canada's endorsement effectively conflates different forms of self-understanding into a single population in the face of its own institutional "pre-testing" evidence that no such thing exists.

In conversation with academic colleagues and policy actors, I am often asked why I (or anyone else) should care so much that Métis are so widely understood as mixed. Have not fur trade historians, literary scholars, and others already extensively documented numerous instances of Métis mixedness? More plainly, don't many/most Métis just look more mixed? And haven't many Métis community members and even leaders also emphasized our mixedness? What's the big deal? The big deal – and why other Indigenous peoples and communities in particular should care – is that the racialization of the Métis has never begun nor ended with us. Indeed, despite its specific impacts on our communities and our peoplehood, racialization has never particularly been about us. Instead, it has been part of a larger set of colonial projects through which administrators have

attempted to usurp all the Indigenous territories upon which colonial nation-states such as Canada have been produced and legitimated and Indigenous peoples displaced and dispossessed.

To continue to understand the Métis in terms of some apparently innate mixedness is thus to reproduce the same racist depictions through which less critical commentators – among them scholars – recognize indigeneity. Doing so emphasizes narrowly construed strands of pre- or early-contact origins rooted in biology rather than more formal political relationships (such as treaties), and it reduces the complexity of that indigeneity to these biologically based origins. Although issues of biology are always political, I will explore how understanding “Métis” in political terms of historical, peoplehood-based relationships – rather than in post-colonizing (Moreton-Robinson 2003) terms of mixedness – should profoundly alter how we understand the use of biological mixedness rather than peoplehood as a basis for Métis claims to recognition.

Given the deep entrenchment of racialized Aboriginal/Canadian politics and policy, building a less racialized politics is not necessarily possible or even, for that matter, desirable. Nonetheless, exposing the hierarchy of an Aboriginal policy apparatus that depends upon and reinforces racialization demands that we use a different political “pitch” (Denis 1997, 15) in our political conversations about Indigenous-settler relationships. In my more optimistic moments, my hope is that this discussion will play a role in changing the trajectory of these conversations (among academic scholars, policy actors, and even the wider public) about how to recognize and classify the Métis more respectfully in administrative and broader popular contexts.

On another level, my vilification of racialization could be perceived by some as a clarion call for the dismissal of racial consciousness, which would presumably result in a regression back to practices of so-called race neutrality. Various authors have noted the power and social importance of “race-conscious” thinking in the juridical struggle for social justice and, in certain cases, to overcome the burdens of discriminatory social conditions (in the United States, see Crenshaw et al. 1995; Peller 2011; in Canada, see Alyward 1999). Yet such race-conscious ontologies would have less damaging effects on the indigeneity of Métis in particular if academic scholars, politicians, policy makers, journalists, public intellectuals, artists,

poets, and novelists spoke and wrote about other Indigenous peoples in similar terms. This is rarely the case. In fact, given Canadians' predilection for understanding Indigenous authenticity in terms of a largely mythologized, pre-contact past, speaking about the Métis in race-conscious idioms means almost always speaking in terms of our mixedness – and thus to the relative absence of this pre-contact element. In other words, to speak of our mixedness is to speak of our comparative *inauthenticity*.

Following Foucault (1983, 231-32), my point is thus not that racialized discourses of Métis mixedness or hybridity are innately “bad” or “wrong” (or, for that matter, “good”) but rather that they are dangerous because, as I noted above, they foreclose on conversations that put Métis on more equal political footing with the Canadian state and with other Indigenous peoples, in Canada and internationally. In fact, racialized discourses do more than this: when the term “Métis” is discussed in a context other than nationhood, it often becomes a gateway classification through which Indigenous individuals and communities with internalized racialized understandings of some classification of Aboriginality make demands for political and constitutional recognition. The extent to which the politics of recognition scholarship continues to position identity in terms that dismiss the power of this racialization also marginalizes the Métis' claim to nationhood because the administrative category of “Métis” is left conceptually open for others to use it to further their own ends. Chapter 5 explores the contours of the NunatuKavut's use of “Métis” as a means to get their foot in Canada's “constitutional door.”

This book explores tensions between racialized and national¹² discourses about (the) Métis. In Chapter 1, I document how the administrative category of “Métis” has been positioned in terms of mixedness. Historically, what did it mean to be mixed (and what does it mean today)? And what can Canada's history teach us about the effects of using such terminology and implicating policies in their logic? I include a discussion of the literature on Métis origins as “Indigenous but historically separate from First Nations,” explored most extensively in a strand of long-standing fur trade literature and in a broader literature defending a similar positioning. Such logics also serve, not wholly serendipitously, to reproduce the authenticity or legitimacy of “First Nations” and “Inuit” peoples at the expense of Métis authenticity or legitimacy. The fact that such racial rationalities actually

diminish all Indigenous peoplehoods is rarely followed through to its logical conclusion.

Chapter 2 offers two empirical examples of the public recognition of Métis-as-mixed: the Supreme Court of Canada and Statistics Canada's 2006 long-form census. Re-examining some of the academic literature on the social and political power of the courts, I analyze the first s. 35 Métis rights court case to come before the Supreme Court of Canada: *R. v. Powley* (2003). I trace how the case defined and positioned the juridical category of "Métis" precisely in terms of its mixedness. I then explore the *Powley* decision's effects on government policy making and on upper Great Lakes ethnohistory. Engaging the existing literature on the social power of statistics, I then consider how the inability of Statistics Canada's "census questionnaire" to differentiate between racialized and national meanings of "Métis" effectively reproduces the legitimacy of the former at the expense of the latter.

In Chapter 3, I juxtapose the racialized positioning of "Métis" with a nationhood or peoplehood positioning of the term. To do this, the term must first be understood not as part of a discourse of hybridity but instead through its connection to a "national core" historically located in Red River and in the shared memories of the territory, leaders, events, and culture that sustain the Métis people today. I situate my argument in the literature on Indigenous nationalism, emphasizing the tension between Indigenous nationhood and colonial nation-state building. In doing so, I embed the meaning of "Métis" in an alternative, nationalist framework that dismisses mixedness in favour of a shared "horizon of legitimate political action" (O'Toole 2010, 41), recalling links with the pre-existing webs of kinship that marked the nineteenth-century Indigenous social world of the northern Plains.

Indigenous nationhood, like that of the Métis, is inherently in tension with settler claims to nationhood, and it offers a political logic that differs qualitatively from racialized claims. However, some scholars and political claims makers have argued that, since not all those historically affiliated with the Métis would have self-identified as Métis, the fact that there is no history of Métis self-identification cannot therefore be used to delegitimize "new" claims to Métis self-identification made today, even if these claims are made in the absence of a link to the Métis people (see Hele 2007; Lawrence 2004). I position nationhood/peoplehood in terms of its

distinctive historical ability to produce – and have respected – what legal scholar Jeremy Webber (1995a and 1995b) calls intersocietal norms.¹³ It is these intersocietal norms and the eras in which they were produced, I argue, that separate peoplehood-based claims from the ensconced racialization of more recent claims of Métis self-identification.

Chapter 4 explores Métis peoplehood in the Supreme Court of Canada and the census. How might the Supreme Court of Canada have fashioned a decision respectful of Métis nationhood, equal to the one it did produce in terms of inherent logic and evidence submitted to the court? Likewise, what would a National Household Survey question on the Métis look like if it were to anchor the Métis Nation's legitimacy in the same way it does for the Canadian state? Equally important, what dynamics would precipitate these changes? That is, what would need to happen within the Aboriginal census and Aboriginal policy fields more broadly to bring these changes about?

In Chapter 5, I demonstrate that one of the key issues in the continued misrecognition of the Métis is the undertheorization of identity sitting at the heart of scholarship on the Canadian politics of recognition. I take up Charles Taylor's (1994) "politics of recognition" discussion, arguing that his use of the term "identity" in effect conceals a tension between "situated self-understanding" and "official classification" (see Brubaker and Cooper 2004; Jenkins 1997). Tracing the dynamics between the two in the evolution of the Labrador Metis Nation – now the NunatuKavut Community Council – from Métis to Inuit, I emphasize two methodological shortcomings of Taylor's narrow use of identity: first, that it marginalizes discussion of the extent to which the process of public recognition itself may prove constitutive to the claims of collective identity; second, that in positioning misrecognition as an external force, it overlooks how it also shapes the internal claims of the group. I conclude by offering alternative means of understanding, analyzing, and writing about the Métis, options that do not require or make use of the racialized idioms that currently characterize political and social discourse today.

Conceptual Signposts

This book deals with a number of core concepts. Five in particular are central to my argument: race and racialization; indigeneity and being "Indigenous"; nationhood; peoplehood; and (mis)recognition.

Race and Racialization

“Race” is used in this book to refer to the socially constituted and distinctly modern processes through which certain physical and cultural features of individuals and groups are emphasized, elevated, and distinguished in the context of producing and sustaining social hierarchies of dominance and inequality.¹⁴ These social relations establish forms of *difference* through which evaluations between humans are drawn (and, indeed, determinations are made regarding what “counts” as human). Despite the tendency of certain scholarly traditions to imbue race with its own agency (see Wacquant 1997),¹⁵ the term is positioned here as both a stake in and an effect of various classification struggles that have marked the past several centuries of global colonialism as manifested in Indigenous territories claimed by various imperial powers as their own.

“Racialization” encompasses the hierarchical processes through which races are produced and legitimized. This understanding is consistent with French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s broader view of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991, chap. 7), defined as the ability to impose upon the social world legitimate representations of itself. Symbolic power “works,” in this sense, because we don’t see it as a form of power at all but rather as “just the way things are,” an apparent reality that results from our investment in a series of seemingly natural yet nonetheless historically rooted material and symbolic conditions. Racial configurations retain their legitimacy to the extent that we emphasize biological origins and misrecognize the political, economic, and cultural contexts within which certain physical and cultural features come to be seen and acted on as markers of race. Likewise, these configurations also produce a misrecognition of the material consequences of imbuing these features with social and legal significance.

Indigeneity and “Indigenous”

Jose R. Martinez Cobo’s (1987, x) characterization of “Indigenous” individuals, which is used by others as a general definition of Indigenous peoples, includes three basic elements: a pre-colonial presence; “non-dominance” within their traditional territories; and the endurance to “preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.”¹⁶ I wish to draw the reader’s attention to

the fact that this definition emphasizes historical continuity with pre-colonial or pre-settler societies – not continuity with a pre-contact presence, occupation, or ownership. Readers will recognize the obvious importance of this emphasis for Métis indigeneity while recognizing that it is also a constitutive fact of the indigeneity of numerous Indigenous peoples around the world whose origins are post-contact.

Does properly defining “indigeneity” require deeper and more specific discussion? Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005, 609) offer several core features of indigeneity that point to the importance of maintaining relationships: “Clearly, it is the need to maintain respectful relationships that guides all interactions and experiences with community, clans, families, individuals, homelands, plants, animals etc. in the Indigenous cultural ideal.” While I am sympathetic to this view, I believe that laundry lists are dangerous for many of the same reasons that they are beneficial. While they provide touchstones with which we can deliberate about the contours of our individual and collective selves, they nonetheless expose us to non-critical observers who attempt to make use of these touchstones to measure the entirety of our indigeneity, as though that goal were desirable or even possible. For reasons that I explore in more detail later on, I suggest that we look to the pre-colonial era for principles of contemporary negotiation with the Crown and other Indigenous peoples, although I stop short of offering normative suggestions for what these principles should look like.

Finally, although I use the term “Indigenous” more or less interchangeably with “Aboriginal,” I will flag here what I see as an important difference between the two. Namely, in a Canadian constitutional context, the term “Aboriginal” is almost always broken down into the long-standing administrative silos of “Indian,” “Inuit,” and “Métis.” One of the points I make in this book is that these terms have helped to further the widespread misrecognition of the gap between Indigenous collective self-awareness and Indigenous peoples’ administrative recognition and the fact that, at least in certain contexts, Indigenous communities appear to be misrecognizing in which administrative “slot” they best fit (if they must be slotted at all). Moreover, the official categories contained in “Aboriginal” – historically and today – operate as the primary lens through which pre-colonial indigeneity was and is made legible to state intervention (see Andersen 2013b). It seems to me that the term “indigeneity” carries less

of this conceptual baggage. Hence, I write about the Métis largely as an Indigenous rather than Aboriginal people, though of course they have come to be both.

Nationhood

A nation is often positioned as an embodiment of collective cultural and political sentiment anchored in perceptions of common roots and territory (Anderson 2006), while “nationalism” encapsulates the associated cultural and political symbols, discourses, traditions, and myths that anchor and (re)produce these perceptions of origins and commonality (see Gellner 1983; Hall 1995a; Hobsbawm 1990). Such theories link nationhood or nationalism to modernity and industrialization; by doing so, they situate it exclusively within the confines of modern liberal state building and legitimation.¹⁷ Scholars have, however, also explored the collective political self-consciousness, history, and territorial boundaries of North American Indigenous nations, which long predate the colonial projects of Europeans.¹⁸

If nations *are* imagined (Anderson 2006), however, not all are imagined equally. Like most nation-state building (see Marx 2003), colonial nation-state building was and remains overtly anchored in imaginings that require(d) and thus precipitate(d) the attempted dispossession of Indigenous nations and *our* pre-existing forms of collective association and citizenship.¹⁹ Insofar as Indigenous nations live – are forced to live – inside the boundaries of their “captor nations” (Chartrand 1991b), such national articulations are always implicated in memories of invasion, attempted conquest, and (re)settlement (Simpson 2000, 116). Thus, the seemingly natural discursive linking of “nation” with “state” (that is, “one nation = one state”)²⁰ is belied by the physical and symbolic violence that anchored its legitimacy (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 112; Corrigan and Sayer 1985, 15). One such example of violence, detailed later, is the Canadian state’s invasion of the Métis in the late nineteenth-century territory now largely referred to as western Canada.

Like First Nations, the Métis Nation today is shaped profoundly by colonialism. The Métis National Council and its provincial affiliates in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia imperfectly and incompletely represent the Métis Nation politically.²¹ The internecine battles within and between these organizations are long-standing, the result of more than a century of competing claims to representation

and overlapping constituencies with other organizations, First Nations organizations included (see Sawchuk 1978, 1998, 2001). Nonetheless, these organizations represent “the Métis Nation” today, despite their evolving and, in many cases, still deeply racialized membership systems and despite their necessary acquiescence to provincially based regulatory regimes. In a very real sense, they speak politically on behalf of the Métis people.

Why is it important to make this point? Partly because it has become fashionable to scorn what has been termed “Red River myopia” – the idea that one can be Métis only if one or one’s ancestors are “from” Red River.²² However, claiming to be a “Red River Métis” does not necessarily require that one produce Indigenous ancestors who physically lived in or, even, had ever been to Red River. Via enduring kinship networks, (those who would become) the Métis people circulated far beyond that geographical core to inhabit the geographies of a pre-established subarctic fur trade that reached east from the upper Great Lakes west into what is now eastern British Columbia, and north from the northern United States to what is now the Northwest Territories (NWT). Certainly, broad historical kinship links exist between Red River and the geographies marked by provincial affiliates,²³ many of whose historical members never lived in or even saw Red River; the Métis provincial organizations represent these varied geographies.

As I explain further in Chapter 4, the Red River region can be thought of in terms of the power of its gravitational “pull” on national Métis collective self-identification, especially in the years leading up to and following the so-called Riel Rebellion in 1869-70. This region represented an emergent social and political form of organization that fit only imperfectly with pre-existing kinship ontologies. Given the imprecision with which scholars have explored power and Indigenous collectivity in Red River, how do we account analytically for the comparatively multifaceted identities of Indigenous communities living on the far reaches of this gravitational field (for example, in what is now Yukon and NWT or the northern parts of what are now provinces), without dismissing Red River as the “power container”²⁴ (Giddens 1987) it became? This book touches upon the relationship between kinship and nationhood in this context, though there are no neat or definitive answers to this question.

One might legitimately ask, though, why a focus on nationhood is preferable to the current tendency toward racialization. This seems especially important not only given the extent to which the Métis National Council and other Indigenous collectives in Canada base their political claims in terms of nationhood but also given the extent to which nationhood has become an organizing grammar for Indigenous politics more globally. Being recognized in terms of our nationhood demands political and policy conversations that position us as political partners to be engaged with rather than as social problems to be ameliorated (see Chow 2002). That is, social problems (which racialized depictions tend to focus on the need for resolving) are those “for whom the government creates special social programmes aimed at individuals in order to facilitate their economic and social integration – and assimilation – into ‘whitestream’ society,” while peoples are “to be negotiated with collectively to redistribute political power” (O’Toole 2010, 37, emphasis removed).

Peoplehood

Liberal philosopher James Tully (2008, chap. 7) divides the history of Indigenous-settler relations on Indigenous territories now also claimed by Canada into two broad eras: the nation-to-nation era in the decades immediately following various points of contact with so-called imperial powers, and the subsequent era of colonialism marked by the imposition of legislation absent of formal discussion or negotiation. Tully (2008, 226) refers to the first era as being characterized by a treaty relationship in which “Aboriginal peoples and newcomer Canadians recognize each other as equal, coexisting and self-governing nations and govern their relationships with each other by negotiations, based on the procedures of reciprocity and consent, that lead to agreements that are then recorded in treaties or treaty-like accords.” If this book can be critiqued for an essentialism, it is one tethered in the peoplehood of pre-colonial eras rather than the racializations linked to the colonialism of subsequent social relations and the claims to recognition that emanate from them and their logics.²⁵

“Peoplehood” is used here to encapsulate the fragile social relations produced in the first era: the processes through which peoples co-produced intersocietal norms that allowed them to interact in ways other than through force or imposition (see Olthuis 2009; Promislow 2010; Webber 1995a, 1995b, 2010).²⁶ Further, I use “peoplehood” as a political entity to

distinguish it from the more typical, locally based geographical use of the term “community” (see Andersen 2012). In particular, the ability of peoples to produce formal political relationships with other peoples both distinguishes and elevates peoplehood above other kinds of community. Moreover, it is rooted in principles that predate the racializations concomitant with the rise of colonialism(s) and the claims rooted in those post-colonizing origins.

At the heart of my argument for Métis peoplehood, then, rests the requirement of “prior presence.” Various scholars have criticized the problematic and exclusionary character of claims to prior presence (that is, “firstness”), both in terms of the (apparent) uncertainty of that prior presence (see Flanagan 2000) and in the context of the global flows of migrants from “developing” to “developed” countries and the hierarchies of citizenship that ensue as a result of the inequality of that relationship (see, for example, Shachar and Hirschl 2007). Nonetheless, to highlight the importance of Indigenous prior presence is also to acknowledge its relationship to place (see TallBear 2013) and to a historical and ongoing exercise of Indigenous sovereignty that belies official Canadian claims to innocence, through which, for example, Prime Minister Stephen Harper can give an international speech that includes the comment (relayed, we presume, with a straight face) that Canada possesses no colonial history. History is thus a crucial resource in Indigenous claims to peoplehood, as it is for all Indigenous claims, because it challenges dominant colonial national/historical narratives that marginalize or attempt to altogether erase our prior presence. It is to these early eras of intersocietal-norm production that we must look for normative principles of contemporary engagement.

(Mis)recognition

I make use of the concept of (mis)recognition in two senses. First, in keeping with my own Bourdieuvian tendencies, I use it to mean the processes through which (in this case, racialized) categories of power, rooted in colonial structures and practices, are seen and understood as natural and are thus unconsciously invested in as such. In his typically formal style, Bourdieu defines recognition as “the set of fundamental, pre-reflexive assumptions that social agents engage in by the mere fact of taking the