

Reclaiming the Rapids:
Evaluating the Reconciliatory and Decolonial Potential of Private Land
Return

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Canadian Studies

in

the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

In 2017, the Anglican diocese of Algoma transferred the land occupied by the St. John's Evangelist Anglican Church to the Métis Nation of Ontario. The land was once a burial ground for the local Métis community. As the present church decided to merge with another, the diocese decided, in the spirit of reconciliation, that the land and buildings should be returned to its original inhabitants. As the transfer is recent, the Métis Nation of Ontario's Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council is currently envisioning how this space can be useful for the Métis, and create dialogue and relationship between Métis and non-Métis people. This thesis explores the historical colonial logics which allowed for the initial dispossession of the Métis from their home territory, focussing on the themes of gender, race, and land. It will then discern how the land return challenges colonial rationales and offers reconciliatory and decolonial potential.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to say chi-miigwetch, thank you, to my co-supervisors, Dr. Heather Dorries and Dr. Kahente Horn-Miller for their immeasurable guidance throughout my research and writing process. Their support and expertise were foundational in envisioning and implementing a project which prioritized Indigenous methodologies while adhering to the expectations of the Western academy. I also wish to thank my colleagues and the faculty and staff in the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies for continually challenging and supporting me intellectually and providing encouragement during my time at Carleton. I could not have conducted this research without the approval and contributions of the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council and the Anglican diocese of Algoma: I have infinite gratitude to the research participants who invited me into their homes to discuss the topic at hand and for their ongoing work within the community. Thanks to my family and friends who helped me maintain a balance throughout the process of completing this dissertation, especially my nephew who provides much-needed baby therapy. Chi-miigwetch to my ancestors, to the lands and waters at Bawating, and to the future generations which guide my work.

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Colonial societies have had to invent themselves as new grouping of individuals with no organic link to one another, in settings that are often radically different from their places of origin. They have had to invent the social institutions that will then define them as a society-and they have to be capable of rationalizing or justifying their existence on other people's lands and the brutality through which their presence is maintained.

- Bonita Lawrence, 2004, 48

Prologue

In July of 2017, the Anglican diocese of Algoma, the district of Northeastern Ontario which surrounds Sault Ste Marie, transferred the land and buildings occupied by the St. John's Evangelist Anglican Church to the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). The land, once a burial ground for the local Métis community, was sold to the diocese by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1901 (Forget, 2017). Due to the decreasing number of parishioners, those at St. John's decided to merge with another Anglican church in the area. The diocese decided, in the spirit of reconciliation, that the land and buildings at St. John's should not be sold to commercial development or other potential buyers; they decided it should be returned to its occupants before the parish was in place (Forget, 2017). The transfer is very recent and the Métis Nation of Ontario Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council (HSSMMC) is currently in the process of determining and actualizing an alternate use of the space. This property is located in downtown Sault Ste Marie. Consequently, the local council is envisioning how this location can be a useful space for the Métis, as well as a space for creating dialogue and building relationships between Métis and non-Métis people. This is especially important as the Métis in Sault Ste Marie are a people who have been historically excluded from land negotiations and agreements with the Crown. Through this land return, the Métis of Sault Ste Marie finally have a place to call their own; they have a place to address the needs of their community.

Despite being born and raised in the environs of Sault Ste Marie, I had spent the majority of my professional and academic career focusing on international affairs. I lived and worked in the Dominican Republic, Uganda, and Tanzania, and it became increasingly evident to me as I moved to these places and worked with local changemakers that it was their work that I appreciated most. I saw many dollars spent by larger humanitarian aid organizations on frivolous

and fancy conferences and meetings; I saw expats working for these organizations who had little to no relationships with local populations – spending years in the country and still not learning the local languages, while demeaning local people as lazy and backwards. What I saw in this world of humanitarian aid and international development was neocolonialism – white people coming in from another place and claiming they knew what was best, disregarding local knowledge and power. Many issues the locals were facing were caused by foreign powers, the very same foreign powers attempting to “fix” them. I also saw a lot of well-intentioned people doing things that I felt were problematic.

The people I admired most while abroad were always the locals, the people who were from their own community, who had opportunities to go abroad but stayed to enhance the quality of life and rights of their own people. They had the local knowledge, the local language, the connection, the drive, and so importantly, support and guidance from other community members to ensure their work was relevant. I understood then that I needed to do this kind of work in my own community.

As a descendant of both Métis, Ojibwe, and settlers in the area of Sault Ste Marie, my existence is deeply embedded in historical processes which have determined the fate of the Métis in the Sault Ste Marie area. Having been raised in a small village just outside of Sault Ste Marie, on the eastern side of the Garden River First Nation, my current relations are bound to all three of these populations. Though I am a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario, I seek to honour all of these relations in my work, as well as my connections to the land and waters of Sault Ste Marie. As a Métis woman, I also honour my future children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, who will be inheritors to the lands and waters that my ancestors have passed on to me. I am a daughter of voyageurs who have moved through the waters, passing through Sault Ste

Marie for centuries, and their Ojibwe ancestors for millennia before them. The land, the waters, my ancestors, and the unborn generations of my people guide me in the work that I do. When I considered all of these relations, the direction of my study became clear. I was to focus my study on land return in order to understand what it meant and can mean for my community.

This work concentrates on this act of private land return and how it advances reconciliation and decolonization. Upon beginning this study, Mitch Case, the President of the Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council and Interim Director of the Development of the Métis Cultural Centre, took my mother and me to the church and grounds for a tour of the space (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018). It was in the early stages of renovation – the pews were still laid out in rows facing the pulpit, and photos of former ministers were still hanging on the walls. However, some changes were already evident. In the bowl where you would normally find holy water, I saw sage. Draping over the pulpit was a large moose hide, the first moose hide legally harvested after the Powley decision by an esteemed Knowledge Keeper¹ (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018). There were sketches and flow charts taped up to the walls with possibilities and plans for the future of the church space (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018).

Mitch took us to each of the three buildings and described to us a vision for the future. The church would become a cultural centre and living museum – a place to tell the history of the Métis in Sault Ste Marie, our connection to the larger Métis Nation, the history of the location, and its future (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018). It would act as a space for the community council to gather to make decisions. Moreover, it would also serve as a cultural space, available for activities – beading circles, jigging lessons, and any other kind of event for which the community

¹ Indigenous Knowledge Keepers are people who carry teachings and practices, and are recognized in their communities for their expertise. This expertise includes fluent language speakers and cultural practitioners such as teachers of song, dance, stories, art, and environmental stewardship (Allan et. al, 2018).

might need the gathering space. We then moved to the community hall, a much larger event space with a large kitchen and freezer – perfect, I was told, to store and prepare harvested meats for community feasts. There was plenty of room for feasts, dancing, celebrations, and any large gathering taking place. The rectory, I was told, would become an office space for the staff for those who offer service provision² to the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie and the surrounding area (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018).

Mitch expressed that this building was particularly exciting because the Métis Nation of Ontario's Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council has been renting out a space, which is a formidable expenditure each year (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018). With access to all of these buildings, not only could the council, service providers, and community members have a space to call their own, wherein they can be Métis and do Métis things without adhering to the rules set by landlords, but this space would be infinitely more affordable. With less money going toward renting a space, more money could go towards long-term goals and service provision. Most importantly, this space, though small (sitting on less than one acre) was a place our ancestors called home (Fieldnotes, July 25, 2018). Some are still buried there. Though their graves are unmarked, there is documentation providing some of the names of those buried on the grounds (see Appendix A). The space was now in our hands to decide how we would like to honour these ancestors in their resting place.

The potency and potential of the space was palpable. Even from outside of the buildings, imagining the Métis flag being raised on the flag pole, and a moose being butchered on the grounds by the community, all with the audience of downtown Sault Ste Marie, was incredibly

² The Métis Nation of Ontario's regional offices cater to the needs of Métis people in Ontario through programming and services that are focused on healing and wellness, education, labour market development, housing, Duty to Consult and Accommodate, community relations, traditional knowledge, intergovernmental relations, economic development, finance, communications, human resources, and information technology (MetisNation.org, 2019).

exciting. The Métis would once again be a visible presence in the core of Sault Ste Marie. It became clear to me why the story of this place, its return, and its reclamation needed to be told. This work will do exactly that – tell the story of the land at St. John’s, its relation to the Métis of Sault Ste Marie, and how the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie challenges the colonial narrative and reclaims their traditions through the return of the land.

Introduction

This imposition of colonial order forced Indigenous peoples to exist within a framework that was not their own. Colonization explicitly functions as a mechanism to disconnect Indigenous people from their land and ways of being (Lawrence, 2004; Lee, 2015; Palmater, 2011; Mackey, 2016). As this study continues, this disconnect and its contemporary manifestations are revealed in order to contextualize new forms of engaging with and confronting the colonial narrative. Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal outline this method in *Living on the Land: Indigenous women's understanding of place*:

The colonial inequalities of the past that continue on into the present become apparent in legal cases, cartographic approaches, and grievances about the loss of land... challenging and displacing hegemonic Western knowledge is required to enable other forms of literacy and knowledge to coexist. (2016, 11)

My research responds to Altamirano-Jiménez and Kermoal; its goal is to displace colonial logics in Sault Ste Marie by examining how the Métis community, both historical and contemporary, have challenged their dispossession.

This project will identify and challenge the ways that Western anthropocentric concepts of private property, gendered understandings of personhood and ownership, and racialized assumptions concerning citizenship and sovereignty have been mobilized in ways that contributed to the dispossession of the Sault Ste Marie Métis from their territory. Focussing on the case of private land return between the Anglican diocese and the Métis Nation of Ontario, this research seeks to reveal the potential for land return to subvert these colonial logics. This research will also evaluate the reconciliatory and decolonial potential of private land return.

Colonialism explicitly targets Indigenous people in order to facilitate land acquisition for the colonizers (Mackey, 2016). Settler colonial scholar, Patrick Wolfe, is often acknowledged for

the seminal statement, “settler invasion is a structure, not an event” (Wolfe, 1999, 163). Kanienkehaka/Mohawk scholar, Audra Simpson, builds on Wolfe’s statement, defining settler colonialism as “an ongoing structure of domination that targets Indigenous peoples for elimination” (Simpson, 2014, 74). This structure propagates the elimination of Indigenous peoples as a tactic to feed the settler demand for Indigenous land (Veracini, 2017, 7). Decolonization, therefore, is the process of “undoing settler colonialism as a mode of domination and its legacies” (Veracini, 2017, 7). There is a large body of literature that explores decolonization. In analyzing this literature, two major themes in defining decolonization emerge: First, decolonization must be made tangible by repatriating Indigenous land and challenging colonial ways of relating to land and Indigenous peoples; and second, that decolonization must center Indigenous ways of being and ways of knowing by affirming Indigenous identities, relationships, and realities.

The first theme is supported by Frantz Fanon, who is a primary thinker in decolonial theory. In his work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon analyzes how colonizers dehumanize Indigenous peoples, diminishing them to the status of evil and in opposition to the Christian good (32). He furthers this analysis by discussing what the implications of a decolonial social movement would be. Fanon contends that decolonization must be a revolutionary process which replaces colonial powers with that of the original inhabitants of the territory (1963). He adds that in embracing and invigorating their own national cultures, Indigenous peoples can find the roots of decolonization (Fanon, 157, 1963). In support of Fanon’s understanding of decolonization, Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang maintain that “decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (2012, 20). Tuck and Yang write that decolonization

requires a structural change in the order of the world – repatriating land, the abolition of slavery, and the dismantling of the imperial metropole (2012, 31).

Additionally, decolonial scholar, Walter Mignolo, focuses on how decolonization works to repair domination-based relationships by building global decolonial futures where humans and non-human actors are not exploited for the accumulation of wealth and power (2011). This aligns with the decolonization articulated by David Garneau, Métis artist and scholar. Garneau contends that decolonization is about unsettling settlers so they may become noncolonial persons within Indigenous spaces (Garneau, 2013, 15). These understandings of decolonization are linked two common objectives: they seek to return land to Indigenous people and to restructure the world so that colonial relationships no longer exist.

The second theme of decolonization focuses on cultural reclamation. This theme builds off Tuck and Yang's (2012) notion of repatriating Indigenous life, and Kenyan theorist, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's understanding of decolonizing the mind (1986). In his work *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Thiong'o furthers Fanon's theories of decolonization, adding that beyond structural political change, decolonization also requires the colonized to reject the cultural and linguistic patterns of the oppressor (Thiong'o, 1986). Garneau compliments this understanding of decolonization, emphasizing that it is also about Indigenous people becoming themselves not through assimilation, nor through "retreating to a reconstructed, anachronistic Indigenous cultural purity", but by making new ways of being Indigenous within the new complexity of the contemporary reality (2013, 15).

Reconciliation, alongside decolonization, is changing the landscape of Indigenous affairs in Canada (Asch et al., 2018). However, the purpose of reconciliation differentiates from "decolonization" (Borrows and Tully, 2018). Reconciliation focuses on ameliorating

relationships between disputing parties (Indigenous peoples and the Canadian settler-colonial state) (Tully and Borrows, 2018; Garneau, 2012), whereas decolonization refers to a process which reverses the processes of colonization. Namely, decolonization focuses on returning land stolen through colonial exploits, and honouring Indigenous ontologies once subjugated by colonial powers (Fanon, 1963; Garneau, 2013; Mignolo, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Thiong'o, 1986).

Reconciliation is a term that is increasingly shaping Canadian public discourse, especially after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report was completed in 2015. The term, however, has been used ambivalently by politicians as an effective tool to defer the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty (Nicoll, 2004, 17). Moreover, “reconciliation” is a contested in practice, policy, and the academy (Borrows and Tully, 2018, 3). Some scholars reject reconciliation and see it as a distraction from the real decolonial work that must be done. Scholars such as Coulthard (2014) and Simpson (2014) describe reconciliation as a tool used by the Canadian government to congratulate itself on how enlightened it is and to distract the public from continuing colonial action. However, other scholars suggest a more nuanced approach which sees the potential of reconciliation to be a transformative tool that fosters relationality (Tully and Borrows, 2018; Napoleon and Friedland, 2014; Mills, 2018). Thus, it is important to situate this work in my understanding of reconciliation.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines reconciliation as “the restoration of friendly relations” (2018). The term is also central to Anglican dogma, as Reconciliation is one of the seven sacraments, often known as Confession. In this context, reconciliation is a restoration and healing of one’s relationship with the Christian god after rupturing that relationship through sin (Diocèse Anglican Montréal, 2016). The emphasis on “healing” and “relationship” is present in

the Anglican Church's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The *Response of the churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* states this commitment to give "support for community-controlled initiatives in healing, language and cultural revitalization, education and relationship-building, and self-determination (Bisson et al., 2015, para 6). This is important to consider for my research as it reveals underlying motivations of reconciliation which led the Anglican diocese of Algoma to return land to the Métis in Sault Ste Marie.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report of Canada, however, asserts another vision of reconciliation:

[Reconciliation] requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered. (2015, vi).

Though there are most certainly decolonial undertones to the TRC's understanding of reconciliation, the emphasis is on building the relationship between settlers and Indigenous people, which is not necessarily the case with decolonization.

Etymologically speaking, the very root of this term implies that relations amongst Indigenous and settler populations were once amicable. It refers to the repair of a "previously existing harmonious relationship" (Garneau, 2012, 35). Thus, in using the term "reconciliation", Canadians accept that the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples was once harmonious. In response to this assumption, Garneau suggests an alternative: "conciliation" (2012, 35). "Conciliation" acknowledges the mediation between two disputing groups. As

Garneau brings attention to the reader, Oxford English Dictionary defines “[c]onciliation” as the “action of bringing into harmony.” It is an extrajudicial process that is a “conversion of a state of hostility or distrust”; “the promotion of good will by kind and considerate measures”; and “peaceable or friendly union”” (Garneau, 2012, 35). As such, it is a more appropriate term for the context of what is now defined as Canada. Unless the term “reconciliation” is used by one of my research participants, I will adhere to Garneau’s notion of conciliation throughout the remainder of my paper.

This work rejects forms of reconciliation and conciliation which do not disrupt unjust colonial relationships based on patriarchy, racism, and exploitation of lands. This is akin to Borrows’ and Tully’s notion of transformative reconciliation – it is a reconciliation which is empowered by robust practices of resurgence which operate in self-determining, self-sustaining, and inter-generational ways (2018, 5). Transformative reconciliation requires “careful attention to cultivate the positive and root out the negative in the totality of our relationships, with each other, Mother Earth, and our settler neighbours” (2018, 8). If (re)conciliation is to function at this level, then it can be a tool of decolonization.

With this understanding of conciliation in mind, this research focuses on three questions:

1. Does private land return reproduce racist, patriarchal, and anthropocentric assumptions embedded within settler-colonialism? If so, how are they evident?
2. Is private land return an act towards (re)conciliation between settler and Indigenous people? If so, how?
3. Is private land return a positive step towards decolonization? If so, how?

The Anglican diocese's return of land to the Métis serves as a case study for an emergent manifestation of conciliation. Preliminary research on the topic of land return illustrates that to understand the assumptions that exist in present day private land return, understanding the logics which forced the Métis to be expelled from their land is the point of departure. This research disrupts the normalized colonial narrative and asks, in the context of private land return, do we see the formation of a new narrative? In exploring this question, this work specifically writes the Métis of Sault Ste Marie back into the story of Sault Ste Marie, contrary to the colonial narrative which attempted to erase them.

Before delving into the intricacies of private land return, it is necessary to define Métis, as it is a key term in my analysis. In addition, a historical background of the site of land return is necessary to illustrate its significance to the Métis Nation and the Anglican diocese. In the final section, I will provide an overview the theories and methods which guide my work.

Definitions

Métis:

The definition of the term "Métis" has most certainly been a contentious issue. Though in French, the term merely refers to being mixed-race, its meaning also represents one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. As noted in section 35 (2) of the Constitution Act of 1982, "“aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada”. In this sense, the Métis are distinct peoples who arose from the ethnogenesis of half-European and half-First Nation people. Historically, this term referred specifically to this new people – neither French nor Ojibwe, Scottish nor Cree - they shared customs of both of their progenitors. This means that unique settlement patterns, languages, political and spiritual ceremonies, and artistic styles emerged from this population.

The Powley Decision (2003) is one of the key legal decisions defining who is Métis. The case defended two Métis men from Sault Ste Marie, Steve and Roddy Powley, who were exercising their right to hunt as Aboriginal people. In bringing their case to the Supreme Court, the Powley's asserted that because the Métis in Sault Ste Marie were excluded from the treaty-making process in 1850, they had ongoing title to harvest in the territory (*R. v Powley*, 2003).

In order to establish their Aboriginal harvesting rights, the Powley's first had to define what it meant to be Métis. As defined by the 2003 Powley Decision in *R. v Powley*, to be legally Métis, one must pass three major criteria. Primarily, one must identify as a Métis person. Secondly, one must be a member of a present-day Métis community. Lastly, one must have ties to a historic Métis community. The last criterion is further developed – this historic Métis community must a) have formed a 'distinctive' collective social identity; b) lived together in the same geographic area; and c) shared a common way of life (*R. v Powley*, 2003).

Since Powley, there has been a robust growth in people who self-identify as Métis. In the last decade, for example, there has been a 149 per cent increase of those self-identifying as Métis in Quebec and a 124 per cent increase in Nova Scotia (CBC Radio, 2017). As scholar, Daryl Leroux, exposes, these expanding Eastern Métis people and organizations often arise from racialized understandings of Métis-ness (Leroux, 2018). According to Leroux, these people are "self-indigenizing", claiming Indigenous identity for the benefits associated with being Indigenous – namely, to gain harvesting rights in their respective territories, often at the expense of their First Nations' neighbours (Leroux, 2018). These claims to Indigeneity are usually founded on a genealogical connection to a supposed First Nations woman from the 1600s (Leroux, 2018). Though none of the organizations or individuals have been able to meet the

criteria of Métis as outlined in *R. v Powley* (2003), their presence remains formidable and is expanding.

The phenomenon of the newly emerging “self-indigenized” Métis has caught the attention of many Métis leaders and scholars, who are concerned that this growth dilutes understandings of Métis-ness. The development encourages an understanding of Métis that relies on biological and racial bloodlines as opposed to understanding Métis as a political people. (Adese, 2016; Andersen, 2008, 2014; Gaudry, 2016; Macdougall, 2006; O’Toole, 2017). TallBear expands on how the two differ, stating that Indigenous peoples are “emerging *in relation with* particular lands and waters and their nonhuman actors” as opposed to genetic populations, which simply move “*upon or through* landscapes (TallBear, 2013, 6, emphasis in original). The vital difference between the two therefore is relationality. Indigenous peoplehood, and therefore, Métis peoplehood, relies on ongoing and complex relationships to territory. This notion of peoplehood directly undercuts the legitimacy of these emerging Métis peoples and organizations because it relies on Métis nationhood that is grounded in blood quantum as opposed to relationality.

In response to the phenomenon of the Eastern Métis, some Métis scholars argue for an understanding of Métis peoplehood which is rooted in the Métis Nation which formed in the Red River Valley in the nineteenth century, as Andersen (2008) explains:

Red River Métis collectively created, borrowed and combined elements to form a distinctive culture and lifestyle separate from both their Euro-Canadian and First Nations neighbours, including a new language, form of land tenure, laws, a distinctive form of dress, music, a national flag and, in 1869–70, distinctive political institutions. Indeed, by Canada’s formal establishment in 1867 the Métis constituted an indigenous nation of nearly 10,000 people possessing a history, culture, imagined territorial boundaries, national anthem and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of self-consciousness as Métis. (350)

The Métis Nation that Andersen refers to is the same Métis Nation of which Louis Riel was a citizen and leader. As such, evidence of a distinct Métis political consciousness in this region is indisputable.

So, where, then, is this border drawn between the Eastern Métis and the Western Red River Métis? Métis in Ontario (and thus, those in Sault Ste Marie) inherently become the buffer between these populations. As such, there has been unease about which communities in Ontario can actually claim Métis-ness, and which are simply falling into the trend of self-indigenization. In response to the dilution of Métis peoplehood, the Métis National Council (MNC) has recently (as of November 28, 2018), released a report and resolution which suspends the Métis Nation of Ontario from its seat within the Métis National Council. As such, the MNO is currently on probation until it adheres to the MNC's requests – namely, to revoke citizenship to all those Métis whose roots do not come from the Métis homeland (Métis Nation, December 2018, 3). The MNC represents Métis in the historic Métis homelands, which were defined at the same General Assembly that this report was released (view map below). The Métis homeland stretches into Ontario, but only extends to Fort Frances. These communities in northwestern Ontario have been included in the Métis homeland as it is “contiguous to Manitoba” (Métis Nation, December 2018, 3).



Figure 1: MAP OF MÉTIS HOMELAND AS DESIGNATED BY THE MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NOVEMBER 2018 (MONKMAN, 2018).

At the time of private land return, Sault Ste Marie was included in the Métis homeland (Gaudry, 2018, 186). As such, the Métis community of Sault Ste Marie and its citizens were all considered Métis citizens under the MNC’s governance structure and criteria. However, at the time of writing, this has come under question. It is still too early to know how the MNO will respond to the MNC’s request.

The Métis in Sault Ste Marie may soon no longer fall under MNC jurisdiction, despite remaining Métis according to the Supreme Court’s decision. This is the community that asserted itself against the Crown in *R. v Powley* (2003), which set the precedent for defining what in Canadian law is “Métis”, which is part of the definition that continues to be used by the MNC to define Métis (Métis Nation Citizenship, 2018). Moreover, it is this case that has been foundational in supporting other important court cases for Western and Red River Métis

(*Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada*, 2013; *Daniels v. Canada*, 2016). Therefore, this work asserts that the community with whom I engaged in Sault Ste Marie is indeed Métis and that it does not fall under the growing trend of self-indigenizing Eastern Métis. This assertion is supported by the Supreme Court, but more importantly, it is reinforced to some extent by the MNC's continual use of the Powley Decision to determine who is Métis. Moreover, as I will demonstrate, the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie has historically asserted itself politically and continues to do so today, all in relation to the lands and waters around Sault Ste Marie. Though it is unclear how the Sault Ste Marie Métis will relate to the MNC in the future, for the purpose of this paper, I will refer to the community in Sault Ste Marie as Métis.

The Site

This thesis is part of a broader discussion on land return and focuses specifically on the site of private land return at the location of what was once known as St. John's Evangelist Anglican Church, located at 136 John St, Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. In September of 2016, the Anglican diocese closed the St. John's parish and ceased to use the church and parish hall buildings for Church purposes (see Appendix B), after which it was returned to the Métis Nation of Ontario. The following section explains the historical significance of the land at St. John's and how it evolved from being Métis territory to being the site of an Anglican church, and in what conditions it will be returned to the Métis.

The Church gained title to the property in 1901 when the Hudson's Bay Company transferred the land to the Anglican diocese (see Appendix B). Prior to the Hudson's Bay Company's presence on the site, it was used by the X.Y. Company as a post (see Appendix A). It was then used by the North West Company, which organized in 1783 (see Appendix A) and was ultimately absorbed by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 (The North West Company, 2018).

The burial ground on the site was used continuously until the year 1865, specifically for the use of internment of the servants of the company (see Appendix A), who were often Métis (see Appendix B). An elderly French resident in Sault Ste Marie who used to work at the old XY Company's post declared indeed that the site is "full of graves" (see Appendix A). A fact of which the Reverend of the church, Canon Piercy, was at least moderately aware, as records of the church reveal him stating in 1906 that "a plot of ground just south of the rectory was used by the Hudson Bay Company as a burial ground and the plot extended from Fort Creek bank westerly to a line two feet beyond the street line" (see Appendix C).

Despite knowledge that the location had been used as a burial ground, in 1919, the Church built a Memorial Hall on the site honouring six men from Sault Ste Marie who fought and died in World War I (see Appendix D). Upon excavating the foundation of the hall, twenty-one bodies were discovered (see Appendix C). The majority of the coffins were not buried more than eighteen inches below the ground – only one was four feet below the surface (see Appendix C). Some of the clergymen who resided at the St. John's rectory complained of odours coming from the ground, which they believed was due to the shallow graves (see Appendix C).

It can be assumed that these graves were shallow due to the location of the site. In the late 1700s, prior to the building of the locks, the shoreline of the St. Mary's River, which connects Lake Huron and Lake Superior, used to flow closer to the site than it does today (Appendix B). Moreover, Fort Creek used to flow through the property, and was still present when the diocese first constructed the church (see Appendix C). As such, the water table was likely quite high and prone to flooding in the springtime. This flux of the water table interacting with the shallow graves also likely explains why odours were coming from the ground at the church (see Appendix C). Today, an underground aqueduct built and maintained by the city of Sault Ste

Marie encloses Fort Creek (see Appendix B). The following image demonstrates where the old creek was in relation to the church buildings, as well as where the placement of the aqueduct is (labelled “New Creek Channel”) (view Figure 2 below). The image illustrates that the site at St. John’s, which once had water access to the St. Mary’s River, is now landlocked.

A ground penetrating radar survey of the site provided evidence of four intact graves at the location. Figure 3 demonstrates where these four gravesites are today. When compared with the blueprints of the property, one can see that the graves lay between the Memorial Hall and the residence/rectory. It is the presence of these burial sites which motivated the action of land return, as will be explored further in this paper.

Figure 3 (right): ST. JOHN’S CHURCH PROPERTY, SHOWING THE CHANGE IN LOCATION OF FORT CREEK. (From the property records of the Anglican Diocese of Algoma, File 88, Document 8, 1934)

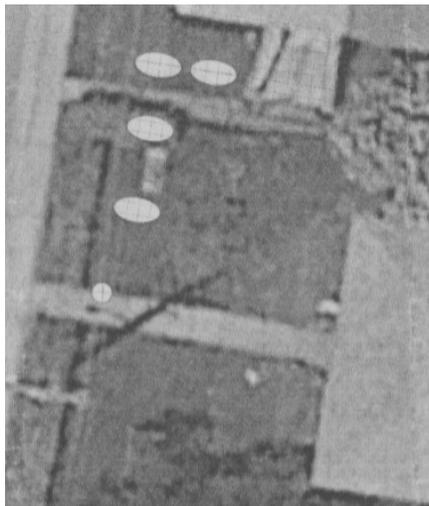
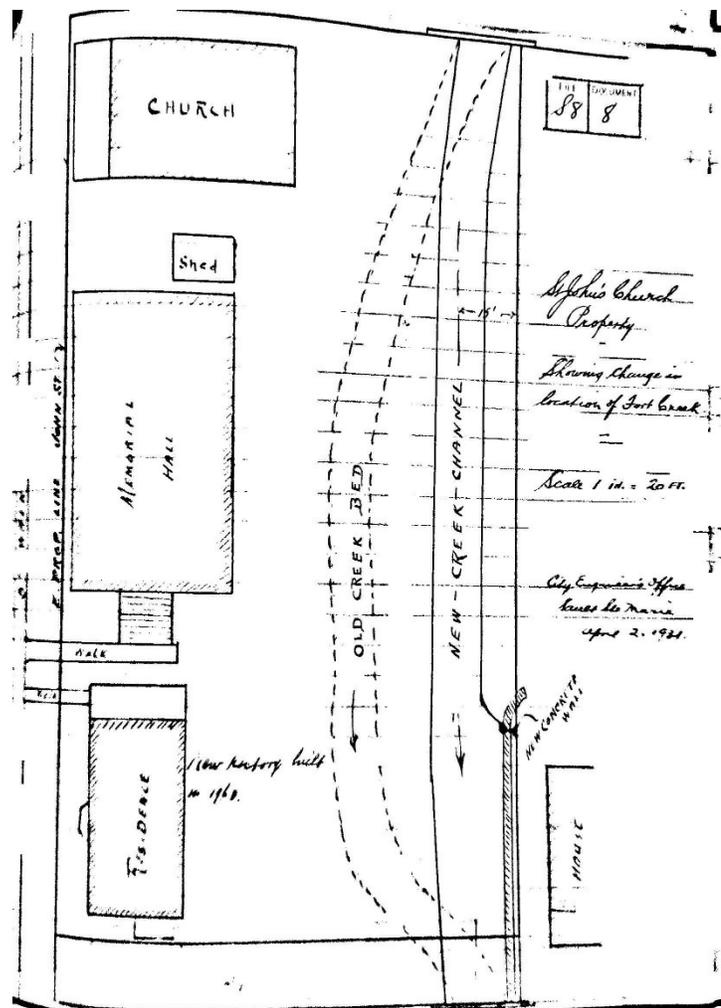


Figure 2 (above): FOUR INTACT GRAVESITES REVEALED THROUGH A GROUND PENETRATING RADAR SURVEY (From the personal records of Steve Gjos)



Methodology

This research employs a multimethod approach, or an approach which combines two or more qualitative research methods in one study (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 3). Methods chosen were content analysis of historic records, participant observation, and key-informant interviews. The content analysis is focused on journals and reports from Crown officials observing Sault Ste Marie and its environs, as well as correspondence of both the Métis and the Anishinaabe from Bawating to the British Crown. These primary records are from the time of treaty-making in Sault Ste Marie in the mid-1800s (Morris, 1880; McKenney, 1827 [1972]). Legal and academic historic writings also highlight the relation of the Métis and the Anishinaabe in Bawating to the British Crown (Benton-Banai, 2010; Chute, 1998; Heath, 1988; Hele, 2008; Holmes & Associates Inc., 1996; Lytwyn, 1998; Magnaghi, 2017; Surtees, 1986). These works illustrate the colonial logics which facilitated the initial expulsion of the Métis from their land.

As a participant observer in community meetings, I was able to study how the community planned for the adaptive reuse of the site. This included discussions concerning structural design, which encompass reimagining and recreating the space according to Métis ontologies. I also conducted key-informant interviews with six participants. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes to one hour and thirty minutes. Eight research questions guided the interviews (see Appendix E). The informants are community leaders, lay people, and committed volunteers. All agreed to waive their right to anonymity. Their relationship to the process of land return is illustrated in the following chart:

Name	Title	Role in Land Return
Anne Trudel	Education Officer for the Métis Nation of Ontario	Descendant of one of the deceased in burial ground
Dr. Harry Huskins	Executive Archdeacon for the Anglican Diocese of Algoma	Organizer of land return from the diocese to the MNO
Kim Powley	President of the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council (HSSMMC)	Represents HSSMMC in discussions with MNO
Mitch Case	President of the MNO Youth Council	Interim Director of the Development of the Métis Cultural Centre
Shirley Loubert	HSSMMC Women's Rep	Plans Events for Community Centre
Steve Gjos	Secretary for the HSSMMC	Grant writer for adaptive-reuse projects on the site; neighbours with Dr. Harry Huskins

Five are citizens of the Métis Nation of Ontario and Dr. Harry Huskins is a settler. Dr. Huskins was chosen as a key-informant as he initiated the land return from the diocese to the Métis and provides valuable insight on the process of land return from the Anglican perspective. Dr. Huskins is also well-versed in the history of Sault Ste Marie and the Anglican diocese' historical relation to Indigenous peoples in the area.

The majority of informants were Métis, yet further analysis including more Anglican and Anishinaabe perspectives on the subject matter would be productive. Through this project, it became clear that the voices of the Métis in this area have been historically silenced, and their voices should be heard. This research seeks to understand how the Métis in Sault Ste Marie relate to land, as well as (re)conciliation and decolonization through the land return. In considering this, further research from Anglican, settler, and Anishinaabe perspectives was not pursued.

This work explores how the act of private land return and adaptive reuse creates an environment for conciliation and decolonization. Specifically, my research method was influenced by the dialogic, community based, and reflexive approach outlined in the works of Māori researcher, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999); Saulteaux and Nêhiyaw scholar, Margaret Kovach (2009); and Opaskwayak Cree academic Shawn Wilson (2008). Kovach's "conversational method", which is a method of gathering knowledge through oral story telling and dialogic participation (2009, 40), was particularly useful in envisioning an interview process which was organic, relational, and which gave the informant more autonomy to lead the discussion. Wilson's work (2008) considers how the researcher's own reality is intricately connected to historical and contemporary political processes of the research setting.

Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) calls for decolonial scholars to "research back" (7) to understand the historic roots of Indigenous peoples' contemporary realities, and to challenge colonial ontologies by articulating Indigenous ways of knowing. Decolonial research, as outlined by Smith, is not an outright rejection of all Western knowledge, but rather a refocusing on actions which centre Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies (1999, 41). It is about seeking an Indigenous understanding of theory and research, and the application of such from Indigenous perspectives for Indigenous purposes (Smith, 1999, 41).

Leanne Simpson's *Dancing on our turtle's back* (2011), maps out the Anishinaabeg teaching of *biskaabiiyang*, which means "to look back" or to return to oneself as way to use traditional knowledge and ways of being and bring it forth in the contemporary research (49-50). *Biskaabiiyang* emphasizes the need to envision one's own relations as well as current Indigenous-state relations through Anishinaabeg political traditions (Simpson, 2011, 52). If we look to Smith's exploration of decolonial methodology, she also describes the importance of

“*coming to know the past*” in the critical pedagogy of decolonization, as it allows Indigenous people to access histories that do not adhere to that which was written by the colonial powers (1999, 36). The potency in these methodologies is that they allow Indigenous people to challenge colonized understandings of settler-colonial history. As Métis scholar Chris Andersen suggests, there is potency in the ways Indigenous knowledge of whiteness can disrupt claims to white normativity and universality (2009, 93). However, Smith’s methodology requires first that history be revisited, each site, “under Western eyes”, before using Indigenous methods to reclaim the past and tell stories from the Indigenous perspective (1999, 36). This process seeks to use research to challenge past injustices as well as dominant historical narratives which erase the existence of Indigenous people (Smith, 1999, 7). Thus, my methodology is critical, reflective, and action-oriented, and rooted in the concept of *biskaabiiyang*. As colonial assumptions are examined it can be determined how they are challenged in present occurrences of private land return.

There has been little research on the Great Lakes Métis community which extends beyond historical research (Peters, Rosenburg, & Halseth, 1991; Lytwyn, 1998; Hele, 2008; Peterson & Brown, 1985). Existing research does not branch into contemporary expressions of governance, territoriality, and pedagogy. Research undertaken by Métis scholar, Chantal Fiola, does however give some insight into past and present relations between Métis people and Anishinaabe spirituality. In her book, *Rekindling the sacred fire: Métis ancestry and Anishinaabe spirituality*, Fiola reveals Métis people historically interacted with both Christian and Anishinaabe spiritualities with fluidity (2015). She states as one example that “Louis Riel — arguably the most famous Métis leader, the Father of Manitoba and a devout Catholic—was, according to oral history, adopted by a Midewiwin [Anishinaabe Grand Medicine Society]

family and became Midewiwin himself” (2015, 2-3). Fiola furthers her research by highlighting the contemporary return of some Métis people to Anishinaabe spiritual traditions (2015). Thus, a historical and contemporary connection between Métis people and Anishinaabe spirituality and governance structures existed and continues to do so. Therefore, the worldviews of these two peoples, though different, are not necessarily conflicting. As a way to expand the methodology, and to acknowledge the pre-colonial laws in place at Sault Ste Marie, Anishinaabe approaches guide my research and analysis of the occurrence of land return.

In response to Smith’s “coming to know the past” (2009, 36), the remaining chapters examine primary sourced historical documents: the petitions, the memorials³, the commissions, the letters, and the journals written during the time of treaty-making in Sault Ste Marie. The documents illustrate how land-ownership, gender, and race are mobilized by the colonial regime to legitimize the removal of the Métis from their land. The analysis of these sources will demonstrate that anthropocentric, sexist, and racist logics work to delegitimize Indigenous sovereignty and to remove Métis people from their land in Sault Ste Marie for the benefit of colonial settlement and expansion.

Furthermore, I will emphasize the incompatibility of colonial and Indigenous ontologies that encountered each other during this period. These Indigenous ontologies contrast the colonial regime as they are land- and women-centric, and challenge racialized understandings of community belonging through notions of relational accountability.

Chapter one will discuss the history of the Métis in Sault Ste Marie. First, it outlines how the Métis arose in the area, illustrating their intimate relationship with the Ojibwe of the area and

³ A memorial, in the historical sense, is a statement of facts, particularly for the use as the basis of a petition (“Memorial”, n.d., para. 2).

to the land. This chapter demonstrates how the Métis in Sault Ste Marie resisted the Crown's attempts at colonial expansion alongside their Ojibwe kin. Furthermore, it reveals that despite these efforts, the Crown refused to negotiate with the Métis in treaty, and in doing so, it successfully forced the Métis from their lands in Sault Ste Marie.

Chapter two explores the competing logics of land. First, it discusses the relational lens of understanding land that is held by the Ojibwe, Métis, and other Indigenous peoples, especially as it is illustrated in the Ojibwe creation story. Next, I reveal Western ontologies of land, with focus given to the Doctrine of Discovery, *terra nullius*, and Lockean principles of private property. Through analysing declarations in both treaties and historical reports, I will demonstrate how these differing ontologies materialized during treaty-making times in Sault Ste Marie, and how the Crown used this difference as a means to legitimize colonial land theft. The final section will explore how the land return at St. John's enabled the Métis to re-establish Indigenous relations to land while simultaneously subverting colonial proprietary logics of land.

Chapter three analyses how gender-based exclusion has been used as a tool to facilitate colonial expansion. It first discusses how Ojibwe ontologies centralize women. Conversely, the chapter then focusses on how Western notions of gender operate to subordinate women to a place of powerlessness, focusing on how these logics are rooted in biblical understandings of women, and are manifested in Western political structures: namely, in Canadian law. The memorials and petitions of the Métis and Ojibwe while preparing for treaty negotiations clearly articulate that Indigenous understandings of womanhood support the Métis in their rights to land at Bawating. This chapter demonstrates how in demeaning women – especially Indigenous women in their own societies - the Crown is able to justify stealing Indigenous land. Furthermore, I will discuss how colonial patriarchal logics are expressed contemporarily.

Through analyzing my interviews, I will then reveal how land return can function to challenge colonial patriarchy by invigorating Indigenous traditions which honour the centrality of women in their societies.

Chapter four explores the logic of race. First, it discusses how race, through blood quantum, has been exercised by the colonial regime to diminish Indigenous sovereignty and claims to land, specifically through the Indian Act. I will then discuss Anishinaabe citizenship, or *daebinaewiziwin*, as well as other articulations of Indigenous citizenship, which focus on duty and obligation to community. Next, it will be revealed how these logics competed in Sault Ste Marie while negotiating the Robinson treaties, and how the forced categories of belonging enacted by the state operated to force the Métis from their territory in Sault Ste Marie. Furthermore, I will evaluate how the contemporary Métis community in Sault Ste Marie re-asserts Indigenous understandings of citizenship through land return.

The final chapter will explore how the land return at St. John's creates an environment wherein decolonization can occur. Primarily, this is done through articulating how through regaining title to their land, the Métis community is able to reclaim and foster traditional ways of being. Ultimately, the chapter will illustrate how the land return also facilitates (re)conciliation between the settler and Métis communities by focussing on its ability to build and mediate historically disputed relationships, and how land return provides a space to build a shared vision of a future Canada based on mutual respect.

Chapter 1: The History of Sault Ste Marie

Sault Ste Marie has been the hub of Indigenous gatherings for millennia (Heath, 1988, 16; Benton-Banai, 2010; Lytwyn, 2007). It is located at the rapids which connect Lake Huron and Lake Superior. These rapids inform the Anishinaabemowin⁴ name for the area, Bawating⁵, or the place of the rapids (Heath, 1988, 17). The Ojibwe⁶ settled in the area as the salmon and whitefish swam upstream in the late summer and early fall (Benton-Banai, 2010). As the

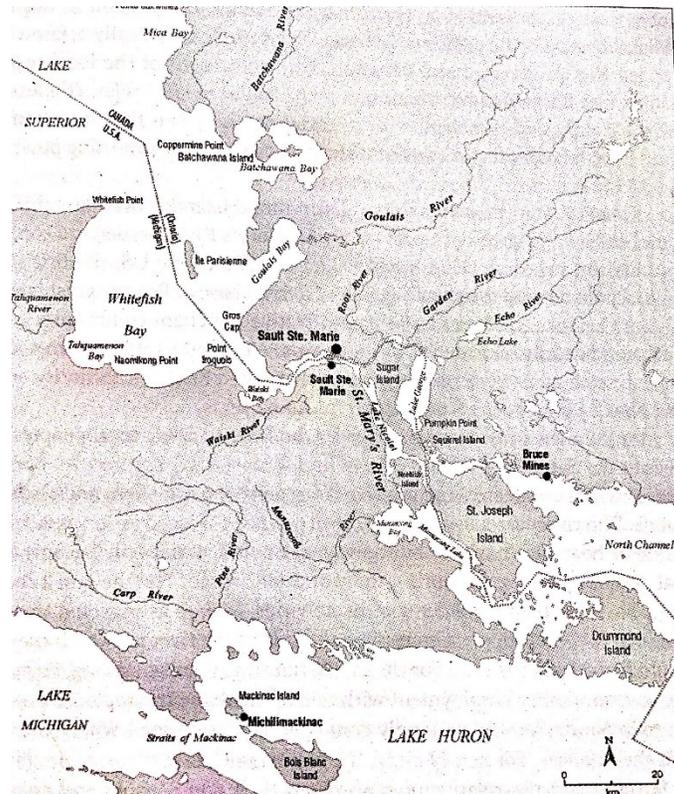


Figure 4: MAP OF SAULT STE MARIE AND SURROUNDING AREA, SHOWING ITS LOCATION BETWEEN LAKE HURON AND LAKE SUPERIOR (HELE, 2005, 69).

⁴ The term Anishinaabemowin refers to the language spoken by the Anishinaabe. Anishinaabeg refers to the people as a collective in Anishinaabemowin.

⁵ I will be using Bawating interchangeably with Sault Ste Marie in my work.

⁶ Throughout this paper, I will be referring to the Anishinaabe people of Great Lakes region. Different nations exist within the Anishinaabe, such as those within the Council of Three Fires (Niswi-mishkodewin). Niswi-mishkodewin consists of the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi (Magnaghi, 2017), of which the most prominent nation in the area of Bawating is the Ojibwe. As such, I will be using these terms interchangeably. To further clarify, all Ojibwe are Anishinaabe, but not all Anishinaabe are Ojibwe.

Europeans arrived and the fur trade proceeded along the waterways northwest, Bawating became an important intersection and focal point for European traders. As European traders appeared in the area, the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples grew (Chute, 1998; Hele 2007; Heath, 1988; Peters, Rosenberg, & Halseth, 1991). These relations were not only economic, but romantic as well. Half-Ojibwe and half-European children emerged, and through these “half-breeds”⁷, a new people developed – the Métis.

This highly simplified story of the Métis in the Bawating area is meant not as a history lesson on the ethnogenesis of the Métis, but a commentary on how the Métis people of Bawating are not only the products of, as the old adage says, “First Nation women and European men”, but they are products of the land and waterways. Mohawk and Anishinaabe scholar Vanessa Watts explores this concept through the notion of Indigenous PlaceThought, which is “based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (2013: 21). According to Watts, land and waters have a formative relationship with Indigenous peoples, as they guide the development of human settlement and polity (Watts, 2013). This bond was clearly articulated by the Métis at Bawating as they struggled against the forces of colonial land theft (Chute, 1998; Surtees, 1986).

Evidence of Métis in relation to the Ojibwe community of the area is plentiful. Both groups engaged in intermarriage, trade, and harvesting (Chute, 1998). This relationship was also highly political, especially as European colonial influence became more prominent. The tension

⁷ In this paper, I will be using the term “Halfbreed” interchangeably with “Métis”, as this was the term primarily used in English to describe the Métis during the time of treaty negotiations in the area (Holmes, 1996). This is not to simplify the Métis through notions of blood quantum, as the Métis/Halfbreeds manifested themselves as a separate political entity in relation to the Anishinaabe of the area (Holmes & Associates, 1996). To clarify, some mixed Indigenous-European people would identify politically as Halfbreeds, whereas others would identify as Ojibwe (Chute, 1998). Thus, in Indigenous understandings of nationhood, blood was not the sole definer of political affiliation.

between the Indigenous peoples of Bawating and the expanding settler colonial state as capitalist development grew in the area reached a pinnacle and resulted in the Mica Bay Incident of 1848. Mica Bay is approximately 100 kilometers north of Bawating. The dispute centers on an incident where a group of Métis, Anishinaabe, and one settler, commandeered a cannon from the Hudson's Bay Company and used it to threaten the Quebec Mining Company which had begun exploitations at Mica Bay without securing title to the land (Surtees, 1986). The threat was successful, and the company left the area. This act was a catalyst for the Canadian government to initiate into a treaty-making process, and within a year the Robinson Huron and Robinson Superior Treaties of 1850 were underway (Surtees, 1986).

William Benjamin Robinson, on behalf of the Queen, was sent to Bawating to make a treaty with the Ojibwe "Indians" in order to secure territorial control and resources for the Crown (Surtees, 1986). However, he refused to negotiate with the local Halfbreeds (*R. v Powley*, 2003, para 46), despite Chief Shingwaukonse, Chief Nebenaigoching, and other Ojibwe chiefs of the area supporting the Halfbreeds' claim. Consequently, the Métis were excluded from the treaty (Lytwyn 1998, 17). The Métis petitioned for their inclusion in the treaty-making processes (*R. v Powley*, 2003, para 41; Lytwyn, 1998, 30); however, in spite of the efforts by both the Métis and the Ojibwe of the area, the government ultimately evicted the Métis from their land along the river (Lytwyn 1998, 31). The government then subdivided the land into lots to be sold (Lytwyn, 1998, 31).

Ten years after the Treaty, only 57 of the 542 lots (about 10%) sold by the government in Sault Ste Marie were bought by the Métis (Lytwyn, 2007, 59). Accordingly, some Métis moved to the nearby reserves of Garden River First Nation and Batchewana First Nation. Eventually, the Canadian government forced them to move from the reserves as a way to both lessen the

population on the reserve and the government's responsibility (Chute, 1998, 211). Treaties were signed only with the Ojibwe, and any Halfbreeds who were receiving annuity payments were effectively cheating the system and were evicted (Lytwyn, 1998, 34). This pushed the Métis even further from the centre of Sault Ste Marie, their original home. The community dispersed, no longer having a centralized space, and moved to various small villages in the peripheries of Sault Ste Marie (Lytwyn, 1998, 33).

Chapter 2: Logics of Land Ownership

The encroachment of settlers of Métis lands, followed by public and private land policies, restrictions on hunting, attendance at residential schools, and the twin forces of urbanization and industrialization, have obviously conspired to undermine connections to the land and weaken Métis cultural continuity.

- Nathalie Kermoal, 2016, 130

Scholar Nathalie Kermoal, who specializes in Métis history (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016, 214), argues that colonial forces of urbanization and industrialization operate in a way which explicitly function to sever Métis connections to land, community, and ways of being (2016, 130). These connections to land are crucial to the maintenance of Métis ontologies, which are land-centric as opposed to anthropocentric. Should the relationship between the land and the Métis peoples be ruptured, the foundation of the Métis way of life is put under considerable stress, making maintenance of traditions and operating as a distinct people a challenging endeavour. In projecting anthropocentric Western understandings of land onto the Indigenous community at Sault Ste Marie, colonial authorities aimed to remove the Métis from their home at Bawating. By threatening Indigenous sovereignty in this territory, the Crown facilitated its own expansion. Therefore, by re-establishing Métis relations to land, the colonial regime is challenged.

Relational understandings of land are evident in the Anishinaabe creation story. As shared by Ojibwe author, Basil Johnston, Kitche Manitou (The Great Spirit) had a dream of the universe and of the Earth. Kitche Manitou saw mountains; flowers and vegetables; creatures flying, swimming, and crawling; heard songs and stories; felt wind and rain. Kitche Manitou felt great emotions of sadness, love, hate, courage, and joy (1976, 12). Upon meditating over this vision, the Great Spirit brought to existence all within the dream, breathing into each its own power,

which Johnston describes as “soul-spirit” (Johnston, 1976, 12). With this soul-spirit, each entity gained “a spirit of life, growth, healing and beauty”, placing each “where it would be the most beneficial, and lend to earth the greatest beauty and harmony and order” (Johnston, 1976, 13).

The Great Spirit made humans last. They were the weakest in bodily powers, however, they had the ability to dream (Johnston, 1976, 13). Kitchi Manitou then created the Great Laws of Nature so that all of this creation could exist in harmony and well-being (Johnston, 1976, 13). This creation story explicitly recognizes the value of each entity – everything within creation has a purpose to maintain harmony and well-being with the rest of creation (Johnston, 1976, 13). Each being has different power, and none is more powerful than another. The well-being of the plants is thus essential for the well-being of the animals, as is the well-being of the animals essential for the well-being of humans. Humans have the power to dream, and they must use this power to contribute to harmony and well-being for the plants, animals, and other entities (Johnston, 1976, 13). Thus, the Ojibwe creation story is one which obliges humans to use their intellectual capacities at the service of all other entities on Earth.

Furthermore, Johnston describes the Anishinaabe understandings of land as being rooted in a relationship comparable to that between a child and a mother (1976, 25). Similar to Ojibwe expectations of mothers, the earth is bountiful, generous, and sustaining. Beyond understandings of human motherhood, the earth is immutable in its life giving, thus a promise to the future and those yet to be born (Johnston, 1976, 25). Because the Anishinaabe conceptualize the earth as a mother, the ways in which the Ojibwe relate to the land are not through notions of ownership. As Johnston explains: “No man can possess his mother, no man can own the earth” (1976, 25). Furthermore, this relationship is about reciprocity. Johnston writes, “As beneficiaries of their mother’s care and love, children are obliged to look after their mother in her illness and

decrepitude” (1976, 25). As such, it is within the ontological framework of the Ojibwe to centralize land – land as mother, land as sustainer, land as eternal, and land as relational obligation.

This way of understanding land is not exclusive to the Anishinaabe. As Dene scholar, Glen Coulthard, explains, “Indigenous knowledge systems have developed over millennia and are grounded in living relational schemas. Relationships not only highlight the strong attachment Indigenous peoples have to their homelands, but also underline the ontological framework that land occupies in those relationships” (2010, 79). This worldview which functions through relationality and reciprocity is in direct contrast with that of Western ontologies.

Western understandings of land are grounded in notions of private property and land ownership, whose origins lie in the Doctrine of Discovery, *terra nullius*, and Lockean principles of private property. Though the origins of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* came into fruition long before Locke was even born, these three concepts are cornerstones to historical and contemporary Western land relations. Though they evolved in separate time periods and political environments, these principles coalesce during the early colonial period in North America as a means of dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their home territories.

The Doctrine of Discovery’s foundations lie in 15th Century Papal Bulls – formal Catholic decrees – that declared which lands were granted to Spanish sovereigns. It is correlated specifically to the bull *Inter caetera*, (Alexander VI., 1493 [2017]). This bull granted Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Castile the divine right to seize territories occupied by Indigenous peoples seen as “barbarous nations” in order to bring these residents to the Catholic god. In doing so, the Pope gave European sovereigns the god-given mandate to control territories and peoples who were not Christian (Alexander VI., 1493 [2017]).

These decrees were rooted in biblical notions that it was man's duty to multiply and rule over the earth, as seen in Genesis 1:28 (New International Version): "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."” These biblical instructions stand in contrast to those of the Anishinaabe creation story. Instead of acknowledging the power and responsibility of each entity as in the Anishinaabe creation story, the Christian creation story relegates the existence of all in creation to being merely the subjects for the use of the Christian man.

The Doctrine of Discovery was further based on *terra nullius*, which is Latin for “vacant land”. *Terra nullius* is a concept of public international law which colonizers have used to legitimize the theft of Indigenous lands. This is rooted in the Roman rule of “first possession”, which grants ownership to those who gain control of property before other potential claimants (Mackey, 2016, 44). Those who “discover” the land subsequently gain sovereignty over it (Mackey, 2016, 43). This framework is thus culturally specific, as it relies on assumptions of humans as outsiders to and conquerors of nature (Mackey, 2016, 46). Moreover, the notion *terra nullius* did not simply rely on land that was unoccupied, but land that was not possessed in cultural ways specific to Western traditions. If an individual or sovereign power did not possess the land through Christian rule and cultivation, the lands were not considered to be occupied by European standards (Mackey, 2016, 47). As earlier exhibited, this framework differentiates from relational understandings of land held by Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, manifestations of *terra nullius* were amplified by Lockean concepts of private property. John Locke was an English philosopher and a highly influential Enlightenment thinker whose theories are often considered the foundations of liberalism (Rogers, 2018, para. 1).

Locke's labour theory of property holds that one can have ownership over the natural world through exerting physical labour over it (Locke, 1689 [2017]). This theory evidently influenced Western property law, as seen in the colonial notion of "planting colonies" (Mackey, 2016, 80). These planting colonies were a culturally specific way for the British to claim ownership of land through making "improvements" to the land – often done through planting a garden or fencing. These "improvements" secured property rights. Thus, those who failed to partake in "improving labour" did not have sovereignty over land – a belief colonial entities used to justify the dispossession of Indigenous people of the land upon which they relied (Mackey, 2016, 80). According to Locke, it was only those who established private property who developed incentives to industriousness, and thus occupied the space of rationality (this applied to both individuals or societies) (Mackey, 2016, 53). Those without private property were thus considered irrational. The union of the Doctrine of Discovery, *terra nullius*, and Lockean understandings of private property thus demeaned Indigenous land-relations and sovereignty, and in doing so, Western colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands was legitimized.

Western understandings of land-ownership were projected onto Indigenous people at Bawating. For example, the 1826 Treaty with the Chippewas⁸ (otherwise known as the Fond du Lac Treaty) between the United States and the Chippewas at the Fond du Lac stipulated that the Métis should adhere to these norms. Article 4 of the treaty states that, "... the half-breeds, scattered through this extensive country, should be stimulated to exertion and improvement by the possession of permanent property and fixed residences" (Holmes & Associates Inc., 1996, 10). Furthermore, Indian Superintendent Captain T.G. Anderson – who explicitly aimed to dispossess the Métis from their land in Sault Ste Marie (Lytwyn, 2007, 53) – clearly articulates

⁸ Chippewa is another term to for the Ojibwe ("Ojibwa", 2016)

the Lockean notion that industriousness can only occur within the confines of the private property regime. He states in his 1835 report that “[the Halfbreeds] are very poor and live almost entirely on fish *without any prospect of ever doing better for themselves or their families – I do not believe any one of them have 10 acres under cultivation and many of them not one...*” (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 13) (emphasis mine). Anderson assumed that because the Métis did not extensively cultivate private land that they were unindustrious. Both the Fond du Lac Treaty and Anderson’s report suggest that according to the Western authorities, only those who cultivate the land are deserving of its title.

This logic was clearly understood by the Halfbreeds and Ojibwe during the time of treaty-making in Sault Ste Marie:

[The Halfbreeds’] livelihood is obtained by fishing, shooting, the cultivation of a small garden, daily labor, and any little job work they can get... not one individual on the British side (with the sole exception of the Hudson’s Bay Company) own one foot of soil or land. *[The Métis] houses are built and their little gardens planted under the fear that they may be ordered off at any moment and lose all – No title deeds can be got as the Indians here claim the land, and the Government I am told has not yet admitted their claim to it... The present occupants therefore have no interest in the soil...*

– 1845 Royal Navy Lieutenant James Harper (Holmes & Associates Inc., 1996, 16) (emphasis mine)

It is evident, then, that the Métis in the area were privy to Western notions of the Doctrine of Discovery, *terra nullius*, planting colonies, and sovereignty based in the rationale of property ownership and cultivation. As such, they aimed to “improve” their land in a manner which was acceptable to British colonists in hopes that they would prove that they indeed “have an interest in the soil” and would thus not be evicted from their territory.

This logic of private property was used by colonial entities as a means to sever Indigenous peoples from their relations to the land. Through signing treaties, which from the colonial perspective were embedded in Western assumptions of private property, colonial powers

assumed that Indigenous peoples ceded land to the Crown under terms of ownership. This is incompatible with Indigenous understandings of treaties, which are intended to negotiate sharing (Mackey, 2016, 65). Blood scholar, Leroy Little Bear, describes this contrast, stating that according to Indigenous people's law that "land is not transferable and therefore inalienable" (Little Bear, 1986, 243). Because of this, he asserts that land and benefits contrived from the land were to be shared with others, expressed in the form of treaties. The context of the treaty was therefore not about "the alienation of land but the sharing of land" (Little Bear, 1986, 243). Evidently, land, through an Indigenous understanding, should not be owned and traded, but shared between those who need to rely upon it. It was during the signing of treaties that the incompatibility of these two ontologies confronted one another. Indigenous relations to land entailed obligation, sharing and inclusion of the Métis; whereas colonial mentalities relied on excluding the Métis by deeming Indigenous ways of life as barbarous, unindustrious, and thus unworthy of legitimate sovereignty.

Sharing and the principle of equal entitlement were present long before notions of private property were present in Bawating. According to Ojibwe relations to land, the unborn are equally entitled to the bounty and generosity of the land as those who are currently living. During the span of a person's life, they are a trustee of the land which is meant to be passed on to their children. This land is inherited from the person's mother (Johnston, 1976, 25). Relation and responsibility to land is a crucial ontological underpinning to Ojibwe presence in Bawating. Moreover, the role of motherhood, both for the earth and humans, plays an important role in determining Indigenous inheritance to land. The following portion of this chapter will explore how the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie challenges colonial proprietary logics of land through the process of land return and adaptive reuse of the site.

Contemporary Expressions of Relationship to Land

The interviews revealed themes illustrating the significance land had to participants. These themes align with Indigenous understandings of land highlighted in the historical analysis. Indigenous ways of relating to land are predicated upon notions of obligation, reciprocity, and responsibility. Land has its own autonomy and holds significant spiritual value. Moreover, the responsibility one has for land is also understood as an obligation to future generations – humans must protect, heal, and live well in their respective territories as their future generations are to inherit these spaces as well. These logics juxtapose colonial understandings of territory which assume humans can subjugate non-human entities as mere resources. Land is limited to the title of resources: it no longer has its own agency, nor a value beyond its physical presence. Consequently, Indigenous relations to land and claims to territory become degraded through colonial logics. The following section reveals how the Métis of Sault Ste Marie are able to re-establish relationships to land which are founded upon traditional understandings of obligation and reciprocity as a result of the Anglican diocese returning the land.

All participants expressed that the land at St. John's holds value beyond merely being property. Primarily, it was suggested that this specific location of land return is potent for the community because of its geographical location, which is historically significant to the Sault Ste Marie Métis community. The historic Métis community in Sault Ste Marie built homes on the St. Mary's riverfront. By 1826, more than 80 homes had been built by the community on the north bank of the river (McKenney, 1827 [1972], 158). The main priority for families was to build homes with access to the river (Lytwyn, 2007, 50). This settlement extended for two miles, all the way to the mouth of Fort Creek (McKenney, 1827 [1972], 158), where the burial ground is

located. This was the territory for which the Métis petitioned during treaty negotiations in Sault Ste Marie.

The interviewees shared that this site of land return was particularly important because St. John's was part of this historic territory of the Métis. This is demonstrated by Mitch Case when he shared that he had long heard stories in the community about the location of St. John's: "...it was sort of situated right in the heart of that part of the old Métis community, right near French Town. And right at the edge of the river lots" (October 6, 2018). Mitch stated that the significance of the location was articulated by the community, along with stories of the Métis cemetery at the site (October 6, 2018). This suggests that had the diocese made a similar offer in a location with which the local Métis community did not have historic ties, the act would not have been as powerful.

Because the Métis community has an ancestral connection to this land, it holds particular value. As stated by both the Métis and the Ojibwe in their petitions to the Crown, the Métis inherited this land from those who came before them (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 30). There is a reverence and appreciation of past generations articulated in this understanding. Honouring the ancestors continues to be present in the contemporary Métis community. Each Métis participant acknowledges that the council and community had the obligation to take this property back in order to honour and respect the ancestors buried on the site. Steve Gjos, demonstrates this when he shared that there was a moment in time when it seemed that the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council may not acquire the land: "that would have been the worst, because I think we have an obligation to our ancestors, those ones that are buried there. We have an obligation to them – to take care of them" (October 5, 2016). As Gjos shares, the return of this land goes beyond owning property. Should the council not have been able to acquire the land, it would

have meant a loss of resources, certainly. However, what was most concerning to Gjos is that it would have meant failing to care for his ancestors.

These sentiments of obligation and responsibility are further applied to the land. All interviewees acknowledged the importance of respecting and caring for the land, be it through cleaning up the site of land return; having ceremony at the site; or expressing remorse for how the land was mis-used prior to the return of land. Interviewee, Anne Trudel, exemplifies this intersection between ancestral obligation and responsibility towards land:

The way that that property is now? You can't see the creek. It's under the pavement. That house is probably on it partly... I don't think our ancestors would be in tune with all these changes. I don't know if they've realized the mistakes [and] what's happening for our environment... people are often more worried and concerned about work and living than about the environment... I think people are finally at the point where we've realized, we've got to take care of the land. (October 22, 2018)

This sentiment was common among the Métis the participants – participants saw that through caring for the land, they were able to honour their ancestors and those buried at the site.

The purpose of tending to the land and the ancestors is not founded in self-interest, but in further obligation to future generations - a traditional notion which Johnston describes as “a promise to the future, to those yet to be born” (1976, 25). Participants emphasized that through the return of this space, and through caring for it and the ancestors buried there, a space for youth to explore their culture and reconnect to the land would be actualized. Anne Trudel expresses this desire for the youth to reclaim this relationship. She says, “I believe we need more of the youth, the children learning about the local plants and survival and why they're important - what they do for the land” (October 22, 2018). Trudel shows that this need for the youth to be reconnected is about more than simply knowledge acquisition but is premised on Métis obligations to care for the land. She expresses that she wants youth and children to not only learn

plants for the survival of humans, but also for understanding how these plants exist in relation to the other parts of the land. If the Métis are indeed responsible for and in relationship to the land, it is crucial for them to understand how plants, waters, and winds interact so that they do not upset those relationships. It is the Métis community's responsibility to know these elements of life to help maintain balance.

The overarching theme identified by participants that ultimately challenges colonial assumptions about land is that land is valued beyond resources because it is a place where the Métis have told and can tell their stories. As Mitch states, "In telling our stories, I think [St. John's is] the most perfect location... I think it's probably the best place to handle challenges from" (October 6, 2018). The location of St. John's rests in a place that was historically of great value to the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie. It is at the mouth of Fort Creek, a prominent location along the rapids where the Métis community traces its origins. It is beside the river-lots for which the Métis fought during treaty-making times. It is also where the Métis buried their family members and loved ones who passed away. Upon its return, the land will serve as a place to continue this story of the Métis in Sault Ste Marie. It is a place to relearn the stories and ways of ancestors, to honour those who came before, and a place for which to care and preserve for those to come.

It is evident that this occurrence of land return is potent in its ability to subvert colonial logics of land and to make this location Métis once again in a territorial, cultural, and spiritual sense. In returning this land to the Métis, the Anglican diocese relinquished its control over the territory. This act allowed the traditional relations between the land and its original inhabitants to be restored. These inhabitants have explicitly stated their desires and responsibilities to care for the land and ancestors buried there. Furthermore, in reviving this relationship, the land provides

the Métis a place to explore their stories past and present. Obligation and reciprocity are precisely the antithesis to colonial anthropocentric proprietary relationships to land. As such, the land provides a space for decolonial work to be actualized.

Proprietary logics of land functioned alongside sexist understandings political participation and land ownership as a means to dispossess the Métis of their home. The following chapter will explore how Western notions of gender and personhood served to remove Indigenous people from their land to make room for colonial expansion in Sault Ste Marie. Moreover, it will demonstrate how the land return at St. John's allows the contemporary Métis community to challenge these colonial ontologies and fortify their own.

Chapter 3: Logics of Gender

It has been the children of Native mothers and white, non-status Indian or Métis fathers who have been forced to become urban Indians and who, in their Native communities of origin, are currently being regarded as outsiders because they have been labeled as "not Indian." Gender has thus been crucial in determining not only who has been able to stay in Native communities but who has been called mixed-blood and externalized as such. In this respect, gender discrimination in the Indian Act has shaped what we think about who is Native who is mixed-blood, and who is entitled to access to Indian land.

- Bonita Lawrence, 2004, 61

Gender-based exclusion has been used as a tool to minimize those who are entitled to “Indian” or reserve lands. The degradation of women’s centrality in Indigenous cultures is a central aspect of colonization. Anishinaabeg and Métis notions of womanhood value women as equal participants within society. As Lawrence (2004) notes, by decentralizing women’s role in Anishinaabeg and Métis societies, colonial authorities ruptured Indigenous governance structures, communities, and relations to land. Anishinaabeg understandings of womanhood and their contrast with Western understandings of womanhood reveal how colonial logics worked to demean Indigenous women. The manifestation of this degradation of women functioned as a means to remove the Métis of Sault Ste Marie from the treaty-making process in order to facilitate colonial land theft. Consequently, the act of land return at St. John’s challenges these gendered understandings of personhood and power through centering Métis ontologies.

The Anishinaabeg understand the earth as a mother, and the sun as a father (Johnston, 1976, 23). Though both the sun and the earth exist in a mutual interdependence to generate life, Mother Earth is most cherished and honoured (Johnston, 1976, 23). This same respect that is accorded to Mother Earth is extended to all mothers. Through prayer, chant, dance, and ceremony, the Anishinaabeg exhibit their dependence on the earth and their veneration for the primacy of womanhood (Johnston, 1976, 24). Thus, Anishinaabeg society holds women in high

regard. The inter-dependency and reverence of women means that women occupy spaces of central authority in Anishinaabeg societies. Women's knowledge and contributions are thus as foundational to Anishinaabeg epistemologies and legal orders as the knowledge and contributions of men. Therefore, women would have influence in diplomatic affairs pertaining to land and territory.

In contrast, Western notions of gender operate to subordinate women, placing them in a lesser status than men. Feminist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir, in her seminal work, *the Second Sex* (1949 [2009]), outlines the historical oppression of women in Western society, including an analysis of ancient Greek, British, and Christian understandings of women. She argues that men are considered the default, and because of this, women are only understood and defined in relation to men (de Beauvoir, 1949 [2009]). In Canada, for instance, women did not have "personhood" status according to the British North America Act of 1867 (Status of Women Canada, 2018). Women were viewed as the belongings of their fathers and their husbands. As such, they were not able to vote or hold property (Canadian Heritage, 2017). These Western notions of women as subordinate and as property are deeply embedded in Christian values. As clearly articulated in Exodus 20:17, one of the Ten Commandments states that "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox..." (King James Version). Thus, the status of women is equated to other property owned by a man – no different than his ox. Moreover, as Leviticus 22: 12-13 demonstrates, a woman is not autonomous over her own religious beliefs. If a priest's daughter marries a non-believer, despite her own beliefs, she may not partake in her own religious ceremonies; she is excluded as she takes on the religion of her husband. The only way she can return to her own religious ceremonies is if she is widowed or divorced and returns to the house

of her father. Thus, according to these societal norms, women were not afforded political capacity nor authority over their own religious and cultural expressions.

These colonial perceptions of womanhood infiltrated Indigenous communities. Indigenous women were a target of colonial policies because they represented multiple threats to imposing colonial powers. Namely, Indigenous women assure the continuance of their people through childbirth (Hernandez-Avila, 1993, 386). Moreover, Indigenous women hold roles as leaders within their egalitarian cultures and therefore threaten the stability of the patriarchy upon which Western societies are founded (Smith, 2003, 76). These two factors jeopardize the ease with which colonizing nations can steal land. Because the continuity of Indigenous nationhood relies on future generations of Indigenous people, Indigenous women are targeted. Should there be no Indians left, then the Canadian government would no longer be obligated to participate in treaties, and lands would be readily available for extraction, exploitation, and settlement for those deemed acceptable by the government (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 12; Palmater, 2011, 47). Furthermore, by operating in accordance to egalitarian Indigenous laws, Indigenous women hold equal say in matters regarding land use and therefore ownership. As such, they challenge the supposed infallibility of colonial societies, as patriarchy ceases to be the *modus operandi*. If the assumption of patriarchy becomes questionable, other foundational notions of western society, such as land ownership and domination, also become subject to debate. By trivializing the traditional roles of women, colonizers attempted to erase the centrality of women in Indigenous governance structures. In doing so, they were able to dispossess women and their children from the land and expedite the process of land theft.

The results of this subordination manifest themselves in patriarchal colonial laws which render Indigenous women powerless in decisions regarding lands. In 1876, the Indian Act

dictated that Indigenous women could not vote in decisions regarding the surrender of reserve lands. In doing so, it reduced barriers to land theft by the colonial government (Lawrence, 2004, 51). Moreover, through the legal workings of the Indian Act, Indigenous women were made property of their husbands. As such, if they married a non-Indigenous man, their Indigenous status and right to reserve lands, and that of their children, was erased through a process of enfranchisement (Simpson, 2016, 4). As Kermoal notes, one must be able to participate politically in order to access procedures which allocate and control resources (2016, 114). By subordinating Indigenous women, colonial ontologies inhibit Indigenous women from having autonomy over their own bodies, in their nations, and on their land, thereby effectively fixing them in a space which is landless and domestic (Van Woudenberg, 2004, 82).

This patriarchal logic was reflected in treaty negotiations at Bawating. The Crown excluded the Métis from treaties, despite both the Métis and Ojibwe expressing that the Métis should be included due to their matrilineal relationships with the Ojibwe (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 30). In 1850, the Métis formulated a petition to be sent to the Earl of Elgin, the then Governor General to British North America, stating that they inherited the land from their mothers:

That Your Excellency's Petitioners, with the exception of some five or six, are all of mixed Indian Blood and have been born upon the soil that Each of them has held, occupied and cultivated the land, wherein they now reside for very many years, *most of them having inherited their possessions from their mothers*, and the residue having purchased from half-breeds or Indians. (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 30) (emphasis mine)

This petition demonstrates that according to Indigenous law at Bawating, the Métis had legitimate title to the territory through their mothers. The underlying logic expressed in this law would have been so indisputable to the Métis that it was strategically used to confront encroaching colonial powers. However, due to their own proprietary logics of womanhood, the

Crown denied these claims. It would be inconceivable according to Western logics that the Métis could inherit land from their mothers – how could one inherit property from women if women are the property of men?

This incompatibility of logics is further demonstrated in a memorial undersigned by the Chiefs of the Ojibwas, also sent to the Governor General:

...whereon several parties had settled and cultivated, several of them for upwards of forty years by and with the consent of ourselves and people, and with scarce one exception, all have married Indian women, and by them have families, with these exceptions the whole of the inhabitants of the Sault are what are termed “half breeds” very many of them, the *children of the sisters and the daughters of your memorialists* [the Chiefs of the Ojibwas]. Thus *having an inheritance in the country equal to our own*, and bound to it by as strong and heartfelt ties as we ourselves, we being apprehensive that the Government after having purchased this land of which *these people also are equally the rightfully and just owners*, it would exact from them a purchase money far beyond that which the Government has paid to us, to participate in which the half breeds are not permitted by the Government ... (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 32) (emphasis mine)

It becomes evident in both the petition and this memorial that both the Ojibwe and the Métis understood the Métis to be equal inheritors to the land at Bawating because of their relation to their *mothers*, as seen in the memorial when the Chiefs of the Ojibwas state “...the very many of them, the children of the sisters and daughters of your memorialists... thus having an inheritance in the country equal to our own” (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 32). Because of this relation to the sisters and daughters of the Ojibwe of the area, the Chiefs understood that the Métis should also be participants within treaty negotiations regarding the land at Bawating.

The land was not owned by the Métis nor the Ojibwe but inherited through their mothers. Although land ownership was a foreign concept, the Métis and Ojibwe did gain territorial rights matrilineally. Thus, when being forced into a proprietary relationship with the land, the Indigenous people in Sault Ste Marie positioned the Métis as the rightful and just owners of that territory through the matriline. However, because Western law only allows men to own and pass

on property, and positions women as property of men, the Métis were excluded from land negotiations. According to colonial logic, the Halfbreeds were the offspring of inconsequential Ojibwe women, so there was no possibility that they would have rights to the territory. This gendered logic legitimized the exclusion of the Métis in Sault Ste Marie from treaty-making processes. In doing so, the Crown lessened barriers to its own land acquisition and facilitated the theft of Indigenous lands. What follows is a contemporary analysis of how the people of the Métis community subvert these gendered colonial rationales through restoring their relationship to the land of their ancestors at St. John's.

Contemporary Practices of Gender Inclusivity

The status of settler women has improved since the 1850s. Since 1884, married women in Ontario have had the same legal rights as men in making legal agreements and buying property (Canadian Heritage, 2017). Moreover, since 1922, settler women have had the ability to vote in Canada (except for Quebecois women who gained the right in 1940) (Stoddart, 2017). However, things have not improved as dramatically for Indigenous women: the sexist logics of the Crown continue to limit the political authority of Indigenous women.

Sections within the Indian Act have been repealed to challenge sexist logics: in 1985, it was amended by the passage of Bill C-31, which sought to remove sex-discrimination from the Indian Act in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982. This amendment acknowledged that Indigenous women who marry non-Indigenous men will no longer lose their status (Mccue, 2018). Additionally, it gave an opportunity for those women (and subsequently their children) who lost their status to appeal to regain their status (Mccue, 2018). However, by the time the Canadian government enacted Bill C-31, the damage had been

done: Between 1876 and 1985, approximately 25 000 Indians lost status and were forced to leave their communities (Holmes, 1987, 8). The major cause of this displacement was the gender discrimination inherent within the Indian Act (Lawrence, 2004, 9). This statistic does not include the countless Indigenous women and their children (First Nations or Métis) who were excluded from land negotiations and their communities prior to 1876 due to the patriarchal mentality that was the precursor to the Indian Act: one estimate suggests that this number is well into the millions (Lawrence, 2004, 56).

Furthermore, in January 2019, The United Nations Human Rights Committee released a decision acknowledging that the Indian Act, despite the revisions made by Bill C-31, continues to discriminate against First Nations women (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 2010). Sharon McIvor, whose mother was First Nations but father was Dutch, was born without Indian status. After the 1985 amendments, McIvor and her brother became eligible for status. However, despite having the same father and mother, McIvor's brother was given full status (otherwise known as a 6(1) Indian status), meaning he could transmit status to his children and grandchildren. Conversely, being labeled a 6(2) Indian, Sharon McIvor could not (Deer, 2019). This phenomenon, referred to as "siblings discrimination" relies on the distinction between 6(1) Indians and 6(2) Indians: illegitimate male Indians were often entitled to section 6(1)(a) status whereas illegitimate female Indians were only given section 6(2) status (Palmater, 2011, 43). Amendments were made to the act (Bill C-3 in 2011 and Bill S-3 in 2017) addressing siblings discrimination, but McIvor filed a human rights complaint with the United Nations because she asserted that a patriarchal hierarchy remains (Deer, 2019).

The findings from the United Nations Human Rights Committee indeed found that the sex-based discrimination in the Indian Act continues. Furthermore, it asserts that the Canadian

state must give full reparations to individuals whose rights have been violated (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 2010, 17). This requires the Canadian government to ensure that the Indian Act no longer gives preferential treatment to Indian men born prior to 1985 as well as their descendants (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 2010, 17). Moreover, it impels the state “to take steps to address residual discrimination within First Nations communities arising from the legal discrimination based on sex in the Indian Act. Additionally, the State party is under the obligation to take steps to avoid similar violations in the future” (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 2010, 18). The United Nations Human Rights Committee’s decision thus reaffirms that sexism continues to flourish within Canadian Indian policy.

Knowing that patriarchal and racialized colonial logics of Indianness continue to flourish today, the question becomes, are these logics active in this case of land return? Are patriarchal logics of citizenship, property, and participation in community sustained through this act of land return? If not, how are they challenged? What follows reveals that this act of land return enables the Métis of Sault Ste Marie to enact Métis understandings of citizenship and political participation in ways that do not relegate women and their children to spaces of powerlessness.

Historical interpretations of Métis women and their political roles in Sault Ste Marie are few. Participant, Dr. Harry Huskins, however, offers an intriguing perspective that he has developed through his own archival research of Sault Ste Marie. He explains that the Métis were crucial to the fur-trade economy, as they acted as couriers for the forts between Montreal and the Red River country. Sault Ste Marie was an important location along the fur-trade route, as this was where furs from the Northwest would be packed into larger canoes then transported to Montreal, and *vice versa*. This meant that Métis men in Sault Ste Marie were often gone for long periods of time (November 22, 2018). Dr. Huskins continues by sharing that “the factors [in

Sault Ste Marie] at the fort would say the only men among the Métis were the old, the crippled, [and] the lazy” because the fort was always short of able and willing fur-packers (November 22, 2018).

This assertion reveals something important about the role of Métis women in historic Sault Ste Marie:

It's evident that many of the families of couriers were residents of Sault Ste Marie, but the men weren't. So, who were running the families? Three generations of the grandmothers and mothers and the daughters were the ones who were here [in Sault Ste Marie] year-round, bringing up the children, doing everything, doing the trading, farming to some degree, I suppose doing some minor trapping and hunting and things like that. And, just running the area in general. (Harry Huskins, November 22, 2018)

This interpretation recognizes that when the Métis men of Sault Ste Marie were paddling for the fur trade, someone had to be home taking care of the community. It is evident that Métis and First Nations women were crucial to the operation of the fur trade, often transforming raw materials provided by men (Racette, 2012, 152). Moreover, women’s labour was paramount to the survival of traders through their production of food, shelter, and clothing (Racette, 2012, 152). However, Dr. Huskin’s suggestion points towards more centralized roles of Métis women in the historic Sault Ste Marie Métis community. Notwithstanding, further research in this area would be valuable. That being said, it is not surprising that the Métis women in Sault Ste Marie would have been written out of this story, as it follows a common trend in Western historical writing which writes women out of history (Lerner, 1979). This lack of writing on the subject is in accord with the very sexist logics which removed the Métis from their land in the first place.

Contemporary Métis women in Sault Ste Marie have power within their community. Kim Powley, one of the interviewees, is the President of the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council. Another informant, Shirley Loubert, sits on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for

Corrections, and also is the Women's Representative for the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council. They, along with other women, have all been part of the negotiating process of land return, as well as the process of reimagining the space, especially through projects incorporating culture revitalization (Mitch Case, October 6, 2019). Unlike during the treaty negotiations in Sault Ste Marie, women are being acknowledged and have an active voice during the process of land return and adaptive reuse.

Moreover, those who have access to this space are not regulated through strict patrilineal rules of belonging. Certain interviewees acknowledged their relation to the space through their patrilineal line, whereas others through the family matriarch. Additionally, upon speaking of the fate of their children and grandchildren, participants unequivocally stated that their children and grandchildren would be part of the Métis Nation, unless, of course, their children chose otherwise for themselves. This implies that notions of patriarchal lineage and access to political representation are not active throughout this process of land return.

Further research could be performed in order to discern whether or not patriarchal logics operate in the grander structure of the Métis Nation of Ontario and Métis National Council. However, this research did not explicitly focus on how patriarchy operates within the Métis Nation in general. What is important to recognize for the purpose of this research is that women are involved in the political processes of land return, and that their children will not be excluded from access to the space at St. John's, regardless of who their fathers are. As such, this act of land return does not reproduce the patriarchal colonial logics that inhibit women's political participation and connection to land.

By regaining access and autonomy over the site at St. John's, the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie is able to confront the Crown's anthropocentric and sexist reasonings that shaped

the original dispossession. The next chapter illustrates how race is another tool which colonial powers manipulated in order to gain access to Indigenous lands. Moreover, it will reveal how the present-day Métis community in Sault Ste Marie does not adhere to these logics throughout their process of reclaiming the land at St. John's.

Chapter 4: Logics of Race

By one estimate, millions of people have been removed from belonging with their nations because of an overemphasis on blood quantum and patrilineal descent (Lawrence, 2004, p. 56). In that sense, citizenship orders, band membership regimes etc. that do not include adoption as grounds for fully belonging with Indigenous peoples today obscure the full range sui generis legal orders that can be used to “re-member” our families, communities and nations.

- Damien Lee, 2015, 88

Damien Lee is an Anishinaabe scholar who was adopted into Fort William First Nation, though his biological parents are not Indigenous. His ties to the community are not through blood, but through traditional practices of family-making according to Anishinaabeg law (Lee, 2015, 88). He reveals through his own experience, and through the support of scholars such as Lawrence (2004), that the concept of blood quantum has been used to degrade Indigenous legal orders of defining citizenship. Further, blood quantum, or Indigenous blood purity, has served as a mechanism to sever millions of people from participating as citizens within their Indigenous nations on their respective territories. As this chapter will demonstrate, colonial notions of Indigenous citizenship (or rather, Indian-ness), which are rooted in racialized logics of blood purity, stand in direct contrast to traditional Indigenous legal orders of citizenship, which are predicated on duty and responsibility.

Blood quantum is a racialized logic used by the Crown to determine who is legally considered Indian (Lawrence, 2004; Palmater, 2011). This logic quantifies the amount of “Indian blood” or “Indigenous ancestry” one has. The more “Indian blood” one has, the more purely and authentically Indian they are seen to be. This is incredibly problematic on many levels, but for the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on how this logic of racial purity became a mechanism to dispossess the Métis of Sault Ste Marie from their land.

This logic was present long before Canada's Confederation, but was cemented through the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869. This Act required that only those who had at least one-quarter Indian blood could be considered Indian (Dickason, 1992, 251; Lawrence, 2004, 9). The act also determined that any Indian woman who married a white man would lose her Indian status and right to band membership, and as such, was forced to leave her community (Lawrence, 2004, 7-8). As colonial expansion extended to the Western regions of what is now known as Canada, these policies became more stringent in the Indian Act of 1876, which states:

... no half-breed head of a family (except the widow of an Indian, or a half-breed who has already been admitted into a treaty) shall... be accounted an Indian, or entitled to be admitted into any Indian treaty. (Canada, Indian Act, Section 3, 1876. R.S.C., 1951, quoted in Waldram, 1986, 281)

The Indian Act thus relegated those who could not prove their Indigenous ancestry through the male line, or those who were quantifiably "too mixed", as non-Indians. This forced many to become outsiders to their communities. Not being pure enough to assume legal Indian identity, non-status Indians, mixed-Indigenous people, and the Métis (who were also referred to as half-breeds) were excluded from any nation-to-nation relationship with the Crown, and were then forced out of their communities and off of their land (Lawrence, 2004, 6).

The contemporary results of such legislation are quite stark: "By 1985 there were twice as many non-status Indians and Métis as status Indians in Canada (Holmes 1987, 13). In essence, by 1985, legislation ensconced in the Indian Act had rendered two-thirds of all Native people in Canada landless" (Lawrence, 2004, 6). In degrading Indian status to mere notions of blood quantum, the colonial legal order is therefore able to remove barriers to land acquisition – fewer Indigenous people equates to fewer people with whom to form a treaty and thus fewer people to whom annuity payments and gifts must be made. Most pertinent, however, is that if that colonial powers managed to diminish Indigeneity to only blood quantum, hypothetically, blood purity

would eventually dilute enough so that no Indians would be left – there would be no need for treaties because no rights-bearing people would remain. The land would at last be in the absolute possession of the Canadian state.

This goal was clearly present during land negotiations in Sault Ste Marie, as articulated by the Progressive Conservative politician Alexander Morris, who served on the cabinet of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald: “In consequence of the discovery of minerals, on the shores of Lake Huron and Superior, the Government of the late Province of Canada, deemed it desirable, to extinguish Indian title...” (Morris, 1880, 16). Despite Ojibwe and Métis understandings of citizenship, through colonial racialized notions of legitimate Indigeneity (which to the Crown meant Indian-ness), the Métis in Sault Ste Marie became a direct target in the extinguishment of Indian title to land. By excluding the Métis from treaty negotiations, the Crown codified the use of blood quantum as a means to dispossess Indigenous people from their territory.

Anishinaabe understandings of citizenship differ significantly from colonial racialized understandings of Indian-ness. *Daebinaewiziwin* is a concept which underlies Anishinaabeg understandings of citizenship. *Daebinaewiziwin* is an Anishinaabe person’s duty and rights to their community which exist to maintain balance (Borrows, 2011, 79). According to *daebinaewiziwin*, one is Anishinaabe because they adhere to community obligations and expectations (understanding that one’s community extends to non-human actors as well). This means that Anishinaabe citizenship is not determined by notions of blood, but by notions of responsibility. As suggested by Mi’kmaq lawyer and scholar, Pam Palmater, “discerning belonging in this sense emphasizes connection rather than a conception of Indian identity based on the arbitrariness of bloodlines, and thereby open possibilities for imagining citizenships through the “totality of our connections”” (Palmater, 2011, 189).

Western racialized notions of understanding Indigeneity through pureness of blood as opposed to nationhood and citizenship serve many functions which benefit colonial expansion. First, these logics seek to remove sovereignty from Indigenous communities – they no longer have autonomy to define membership within their nations nor on their lands. Second, by removing Indigenous understandings of citizenship, and defining Indian status purely through blood, belonging becomes defined along ever-thinning lines of Indian blood (Vizenor, 1999, 189). In contrast to the one drop rule for Blackness, which assumes a person is Black should they have one Black ancestor, colonial logics of blood quantum define Indigeneity according to a subtractive calculus. The less “pure” of Indigenous ancestors one has, the less authentic one is as an Indigenous person (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 12). This process leads to what Palmater refers to as “legislative extinction”, or the reducing of Indigenous peoples recognized in the Canadian legal framework so eventually, there are no “Indians” remaining (Lee, 2015, 90; Palmater, 2011, 189).

By quantifying Indian-ness through blood purity, colonial law undermines Indigenous authority over citizenship. Should the Crown determine who has membership, it would also control who has access to land. Blood quantum is a logic which manifests itself in the Indian Act; however, the logic was present decades before during treaty-making times in Sault Ste Marie, as is very clearly articulated in Indian Superintendent Captain T.G. Anderson’s 1845 report. This report was a response to Royal Navy Lieutenant James Harper’s report on the conditions of the inhabitants of Sault Ste Marie:

The poor Canadians and half breed settlers... may be termed squatters, as many of them located themselves without other authority than a permission from the Natives, who, notwithstanding the territory is said to be theirs, cannot sell or give a title to any but the British Government. (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 17)

The assumption here is that the Halfbreeds, whose blood is not pure enough to be considered legitimately Indigenous, cannot possibly hold legitimate title to the land and are thus “squatters”.

Moreover, the “Natives”, being the Ojibwe of the area, were only able to sell or give title to the British Government because of rules of land ownership designated by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Through the Royal Proclamation, Britain claimed the territory the French had taken from Indigenous people. It reserved a large area of the interior of North America for the use of Indigenous peoples, notably for protection of their hunting grounds (Monchalin, 2016, 83). Although this proclamation claims to protect Indigenous rights, it also assigns to the Crown the right to control land sales and purchases, and thus precludes Indigenous peoples from selling lands directly to whomever they so choose (Monchalin, 2016, 83). As such, the Royal Proclamation prohibited the Ojibwe of the area to grant permission to the Métis (who were, along lines of blood quantum, not seen as legitimately Indian by the Crown) to live in the territory. Thus, through racialized logics of citizenship, the Crown legitimized evicting the Métis from their territory, and also restricted the Anishinaabe’s ability to include their Métis kin in their own understanding of citizenship. By delegitimizing Indigenous ontologies of citizenship and rights to land, and undermining Indigenous authority over land, Crown representatives in Sault Ste Marie were more easily able to actualize their goal of exploiting the lands of the area.

The colonial government has readily used this tactic against the Métis in other circumstances. Take for example the early twentieth century Métis community at Ste-Madeleine, in western Manitoba. In 1935, the Canadian government passed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act as a means of encouraging white, drought-stricken farmers to stay in the prairies during the time of the Depression. The Act promoted strategies such as on-farm dugouts for the conservation of water for livestock; strip farming and tree-planting projects to prevent soil

erosion; and seeding abandoned land for community pastures (Gilson, 2013). The very government that established the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act did not aid the Métis at Ste-Madeleine but perceived them as simple “squatters” and forced them to relocate. Their community was burned to make room for white settlers (Kermoal, 2016, 116). Because these people were Métis, and not “pure-blood” Indians, they became vulnerable to racialized understandings of Indigenous sovereignty and citizenship. The Crown did not see the community at Ste-Madeleine as Status Indians so it did not have a duty to adhere to nation-to-nation negotiations with this community. However, the Crown still racialized the Métis where they were not viewed as white and deserving of federal aid. This unveils the power of colonial logics of race: through the dilution of Indian-ness, the government rids itself of legal obligation to deal with any possibility of sovereignty that the Halfbreeds may have in their respective territories. The Canadian government can simply label them as squatters, burn their houses, and hope that problem will go away.

These racialized logics are inherently in opposition to Indigenous understandings of citizenship and rights to land in Sault Ste Marie, as clearly displayed in the memorial undersigned by the Chiefs of the Ojibwas mentioned earlier. The memorial expresses that the Métis are rightful owners of the land at Bawating because they are bound to the land with “strong and heartfelt ties” equivalent to those of the Anishinaabe. Moreover, the Métis were settled in Bawating for upwards to forty years, working on the territory with the consent of the Anishinaabe (Holmes & Associates, 1996, 32). This memorial unequivocally demonstrates that *daebinaewiziwin* grounded Indigenous notions of citizenship and entitlement in Sault Ste Marie. The Ojibwe Chiefs claimed the Métis as equal proprietors because of the responsibility and relationship that the Métis exhibited towards the land and their fellow Indigenous people in the

area. The Métis fulfilled duties that were determined by the community in Bawating, therefore they acted in accordance with *daebinaewiziwin*. Indigenous notions of citizenship are predicated on responsibility to community. Through reducing Indigenous citizenship to Indian Status, race became a tool for the colonial powers at the time to rationalize land theft.

The effects of these logics persist today. However, the contemporary Métis community in Sault Ste Marie challenges these racist understandings of belonging. The section to follow demonstrates the various manners in which the Sault Ste Marie Métis realize their own interpretations of community inclusion at the site of land return.

Contemporary Approaches to Belonging

When Robinson was negotiating the treaty in Sault Ste Marie in 1850, Chief Shingwaukonse requested the annuities and 100 acres of land for each of the Métis (Lytwyn, 2007, 58). However, in response, Robinson explicitly excluded the Métis because they were not seen as Indian enough, as Robinson stated that he “had nothing to do with any body but the Indians” (Lytwyn, 2007, 58). Alternatively, because the Métis were not White enough, they did not have access to the same land grants that the White settlers did for relocating to Sault Ste Marie (Lytwyn, 2007, 59). Returning the land to the Métis and bringing the Métis to the negotiating table could be interpreted as the contemporary Anglican diocese’ acknowledgement of these injustices and their recognition of Métis sovereignty and connection to territory. The following section discerns how returning the land at St. John’s challenges the racialized citizenship logics that the Crown originally used to dispossess the Métis from their home in Sault Ste Marie.

Themes emerged which suggest that this act of land return does indeed emphasize a more nuanced understanding of Métis citizenship that does not rely on race alone. All Métis participants have an ancestral connection to the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie, but their connection to the community does not stop there. They acknowledged that their experience as Métis people integrates respect for ancestors in addition to responsibility to the contemporary community and the land. Moreover, four of the five Métis interviewees have roles within the Métis governance structure. These roles require them to work with other governments, both First Nation and settler. Thus, those involved in the land return understand themselves as Métis beyond mere notions of blood, and assert this understanding of Métis-ness during the process of land return and adaptive reuse

Ways in which participants expressed their connection to Métis-ness was primarily through obligation to their community. Four of the five Métis participants are acting members within the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council, part of the Métis Nation of Ontario's governance structure. The fifth participant acts as a service provider for the Métis Nation, alongside doing other volunteer work for the community. As such, all participants acknowledge Métis ways of governance, and align themselves to notions of self-determination. As suggested by Mitch Case, it is this belief in Métis nationhood and this obligation to the community which ties Métis people together:

I think about our history and our stories as the Métis Nation and we owe a sort of... we have a responsibility not only to our community now but to our children and to our ancestors who are gone. I think we owe it to them to do everything we can to protect what they fought to protect and to preserve what they preserved for us. And I think the thing that created the Métis Nation and bound the Métis Nation together was a belief in our right to self-determination. (October 6, 2018)

The return of this space responds to a need within the Métis community to have a space to enact self-governance. The hall, as mentioned previously, is being used to host council meetings.

Mitch Case hopes it can also be a space to respond to other aspects of self-determination, namely as a centre to host political activities for the Métis in Sault Ste Marie (October 6, 2018).

That being said, it is not only their involvement in formal Métis governance structures which allow these interviewees to enact to their community obligations. Each participant revealed that in having this space, they aim to respond to other community necessities. Shirley, Anne, and Mitch partake in cultural revitalization projects within the community. This includes dance groups and beading circles. The three also reveal that they intend for the space to respond to spiritual and emotional needs of the community.

All participants acknowledge that having the rectory to host office space for service providers is crucial. In doing so, this site will act as a space for citizens to gather as a political, spiritual, and cultural beings. Equally as important, it provides a location so that those who are serving the needs within the Métis community (people working within education, employment, and health and well-being) can do so from a space of their own. Thus, the space will act as a cultural centre, community centre, and a “hub for services and things that our citizens need” (Mitch Case, October 6, 2019).

Mitch elaborates further on the potential of the site, particularly in its ability to build community. He details that the people who are involved in cultural revitalization in the community are not the same people who are using the programs and services offered by the MNO. Mitch hopes that in having everyone on one site, that these populations will become better integrated – he foresees that it will bridge social and political gaps that are a current reality in the community (October 6, 2019).

Mitch's observation exemplifies the holistic nature of the research participants' understanding of community and citizenship, and how the space at St. John's responds to this grander picture. The Métis Nation is not merely a service provider, as Mitch says, "We're not the fucking Lion's Club" (October 6, 2019); it is a political nation. However, if Métis nationhood in Sault Ste Marie is indeed predicated on *daebinaewiziwin* and relational notions of citizenship, as demonstrated earlier, then political representation is no more important than responding to needs within the community. Subsequently, this space responds holistically to citizens' needs while encouraging bridge-building from within the Métis community. Ultimately, by having a shared space for both governance and service provision, shared history, stories, culture, and values can allow the Métis community to flourish together. These findings reveal that this land return encourages the Métis community to act in accordance with the same notions of *daebinaewiziwin* which were present in Bawating prior to the time of treaty-making. All Métis participants acknowledged their duty towards ancestors, land, future generations, and the wider Métis community, both in Sault Ste Marie and across the Métis homeland, all of which *daebinaewiziwin* encompasses.

Moreover, participants shared the holistic nature of their connections to this space which made it significant to them and other Métis people. All participants acknowledged that their ancestral and historical connection to this space made this specific site of land return important. The site holds value because this place has a story which connects the Sault Ste Marie Métis community. This contributes to nation-building that does not rely upon race, but upon shared territory, history, culture, and experiences of people. These responses correspond with Palmater's reflection, which emphasizes the arbitrariness of bloodlines in understanding

Indigenous identity. Instead, Palmater suggests it is the “the totality of our connections” which makes us Indigenous (Palmater, 2011, 189).

These assertions do not dismiss the relevance of blood-ties, as blood-ties denote a connection to ancestors. Steve Gjos articulates the importance of ancestral connections:

My ancestor, her name was Marie Louise Riel...and she was a healer, a medicine woman... I refer to my life as I'm walking the red road. That's the terminology that we use as traditional people, that probably came from her blood to me. If you know anything about healers and medicine people, it's that you are born with it, it's in your blood. Most healers, and all that I know of actually have that blood. (October 6, 2018)

However, this blood is not the only thing that makes Steve Métis. Additionally, Steve responds to the other duties and obligations which are outlined in *daebinaewiziwin*, such as his spiritual duty and duty to land by participating in ceremony. He responds to his community by writing grants, performing community outreach, and participating in Métis governance structures in the local community council. Steve acknowledges that Métis citizens also have a duty to be in good relations with other Nations; he collaborates with both Ojibwe and settler governments often (October 6, 2018). Certainly, Steve's ancestral and blood connections are important to him, but it is the continued effort to maintain his other connections and uphold his duties which make him a Métis citizen, not just a person with Métis ancestry.

There is a discord between Indigenous and colonial understandings of land, gender, and race. The way these logics conflicted facilitated the Crown to steal land during treaty-making in Bawating. Though these anthropocentric, patriarchal, and racialized rationales kept the Métis from accessing their home and territory for well over a century, the return of the land by the Anglican diocese changes the equation. Now, the Métis people in Sault Ste Marie are able to redefine and actualize their own ontologies in the place of their ancestors by honouring the land, centralizing women, and promoting community obligations. The land return has value beyond

this as well. The chapter to follow discusses how the site of land return engages both Métis and settler people in Sault Ste Marie in reconciliation, conciliation, and decolonial action.

Chapter 5: Discussion on Reconciliation and Decolonization

My goal in distinguishing decolonization from (re)conciliation is to emphasize the distinction between the two in order to understand their manifestations through the return of land. It is also to understand how these two practices can operate together in a transformative manner. To summarize the definitions of the two which I highlighted in my introduction, decolonization is an act which counters the goals of colonization – it returns land to Indigenous people and returns autonomy to Indigenous people to act according to their own ontologies. (Re)conciliation, conversely, is about ameliorating the relationship between Indigenous and settler people as well as all individual's relationship with the land. All interview participants described the land return as an act of reconciliation. However, there was an inconsistency in the way informants used the term. Interviewees all emphasized the importance of reconciliation, but also articulated other expectations for the land return which were more akin to decolonization. In highlighting and analyzing both of these terms, I am able to distinguish how this act of land return can be a case of both (re)conciliation and decolonization, and how it uses the two to build a model for improving Indigenous lives, the relationship between Indigenous and settler people, and relations to land.

Land Return as Decolonization

Tuck and Yang assert that decolonization requires tangible actions – one of which includes return of land (2012, 20). Of course, returning the site of St. John's to the Métis in Sault Ste Marie adheres to this definition, but in what specific ways is this instance of land return decolonial? First, I will demonstrate how this land return responds to tangible articulations of decolonization outlined by Tuck and Yang (2012), Fanon (1963), Garneau (2013) and Mignolo (2012). In short, it must repatriate Indigenous land and challenge colonial structures, land

relations, and ways settlers relate to Indigenous people. Next, it must adhere to cultural decolonization articulated by Garneau (2013) and Thiong'o (1986) by centering Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Furthermore, it must provide room for Indigenous reconstructions of their identities, relationships, and realities. I will further elaborate on how this site gives room for Indigenous self-reconstructions by analyzing it through Garneau's concept of spaces of irreconcilable Aboriginality (Garneau, 2012, 33).

As mentioned earlier, "reconciliation" was often used by interviewees in a way which does not necessarily correspond to the definition of reconciliation. This is no doubt an indication of how reconciliation is used in the vernacular. However, through my analysis, I reveal that my informants' articulations of reconciliation often align with the goals of decolonization. My intention in dissecting "(re)conciliation" and "decolonization" is to understand how these terms consist of different objectives which have been deemed important for the Métis in Sault Ste Marie. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how both are being addressed in this act of land return.

Considering the goal of colonial expansion was to secure ownership of Indigenous territory, the reclamation of land is a powerful decolonial method as it directly opposes the colonial agenda. Each informant recognized the potency of this gesture. Steve speaks on the original motivations of the land return, stating that turning the property over to the Métis "wasn't a venture to make money for [the Anglican diocese]. They could have sold that property for a lot of money. And had apartments built or whatever" (October 5, 2018). Despite the financial potential of selling the land, the diocese sought to honour that it was Métis land by returning it to the community (Steve Gjos, October 5, 2018).

As Steve recognized, returning actively inhibits the diocese from attaining resources, both the land and monies that could be associated with its sale. However, the people of the

diocese recognized the importance of this land return, as demonstrated by Harry: “The church in particular... is given to do a lot talking and sometimes not a lot of doing. Well, this is what I would call tangible reconciliation” (November 22, 2018). Dr. Huskins emphasizes concrete forms of reconciliation, similar to how Tuck and Yang highlight that decolonization entails tangible acts such as land return (2012). Despite the possibility of acquiring financial gain, the diocese recognized that the Métis were the inheritors to the land and in response, returned it. Though the Anglican motivations were reconciliatory, the result was nonetheless a tangible form of decolonization – lands were removed from colonial forces and returned to Indigenous peoples.

Decolonization also challenges colonial structures, ontologies, and epistemologies. Garneau specifically articulates that this means challenging settler narratives of Indigenous people (2013). As demonstrated earlier, the settler narrative of the Métis in Sault Ste Marie evolves through time. Primarily, the narrative is that the Métis are not “Indian” enough, and because of this they have no legitimate sovereignty over the lands where they are living. This discourse existed alongside narratives which labeled the Métis as lazy, as squatters, and as half-castes. The settler story of the Métis eventually changed as the government dispossessed the Métis of their territory – they were pushed onto the reserves and then off the reserves. Being forced to the fringes of society, they seemed to cease existing; they did not occupy a space in the settler imagination. Throughout contemporary Métis political resurgence, the Métis continue to be seen as half-castes – they are often not understood by outsiders for their political or cultural distinctiveness, only for the quantum of their blood. This is evident through the increase of self-identifying Métis in Quebec and eastern Canada. Therefore, in order to be a decolonial act, according to Garneau (2013), this land return must engage settlers to challenge their own understandings of Métis-ness.

All Métis informants acknowledge the potential of this space to teach non-Métis people who the Métis are; this was emphasized often throughout the interviews. Shirley and Anne share sentiments that non-Métis students are an important target audience for re-teaching the Métis story – these students can come to the cultural centre and to community events and learn about the Métis (Shirley Loubert, October 22, 2018; Anne Trudel, October 21, 2018). Mitch hopes the space will become a place for the “mainstream Sault Ste Marie community” and Canadians in general to “see the presence of the Métis community” and to learn about “the history of not just the Métis Nation, but specifically to the Ontario and Sault Ste Marie community” (October 6, 2018). This educational aspect is especially important for recognition.

Dene scholar, Glen Coulthard, critiques this notion of “recognition” within his work, *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition* (2014). He asserts that this term is often used in the discourse of “reconciliation” or “decolonization”, but rarely amounts to tangible results – namely, self-governance or land rights for Indigenous people (Coulthard, 2014). Although Coulthard’s critiques are valid, interviewees acknowledge that recognition may reaffirm or be a step towards more tangible forms of decolonization.

Participant, Anne Trudel, elaborates on the importance of recognition, suggesting that:

I think it's hard quite often for outsiders that are not part the Métis community to understand who we are or that we exist but when you have actual physical geographical land, to me that that does make a difference because I know we have a community, but now they actually see it. (October 21, 2019)

Anne suggests that because the Métis, especially those in Ontario, do not have a formal land-base, it is difficult for outsiders to understand who they are. All participants addressed that they seek this understanding, and hope that the space will rectify the issue of identity. Thus, education, recognition, and the tangible act of land return work in conjunction to challenge

colonial structures and discourses in the area of Bawating. As such, returning the land was indeed an act of decolonization.

Kim sees the potential of this space to engage officials of settler governments on all levels in relearning who the Métis are. She states that “it would be an opportunity again for our citizens to have a place that again, we can call our own” and to get “history out to the general public, whether it's to our mayor or our MPs or whoever ... It will show case - this is who we are... that we were here prior, that we're still here today... It's going to be a space that anyone can learn from...” (October 21, 2019). It is not only important that the general settler population understand who the Métis are, but for governments to recognize the Métis through a political national lens, rather than a racialized lens. If a settler re-education on the Métis is actualized at this site of land return, then it challenges patriarchal and racist settler structures which attempt to dilute Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty. This is a direct response to the call for decolonial restructuring by Tuck and Yang (2012), Fanon (1963), Mignolo (2012) and Garneau (2013).

Another element to decolonization is the repatriation of Indigenous ways of life (Garneau, 2013; Thiong'o, 1986; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Through having land again, the Métis in Sault Ste Marie are able to revitalize Métis ways of being and knowing. Steve elaborated on the many ways this space will be used by the local Métis community, highlighting that the hall can be used for feasts, gatherings, and programming for children and youth. “We can do finger weaving. We can teach people how to skin a deer, how to prepare a deer and wild game, and we can meet, get together” (October 5, 2018). He continues by sharing that the cultural centre, which was once the church, will become a museum to display the history of the Métis, as well as a place for people grow spiritually by connecting to their ancestors (Steve Gjos, October 5, 2018). All of these activities are traditional to the Métis. This space will allow the Métis

community to do these things in a public space, making them accessible to the wider community in ways that they were not before.

Moreover, the space could be a location to host wider community events that used to be more prevalent. Mitch elaborates by expressing that he hopes the space will help New Years become a community celebration again:

I want to see us bring back some of those traditions that maybe have gone by the wayside over the years... all of the old stories, all the old records talk about [how] Christmas was a pretty quiet affair, but New Years was a huge celebration. To have a place on December 31st, get a fiddle player, whatever else, and to have a place that's a Métis place and to slowly bringing those things back... Because you know, you hear old people, "Oh I remember New Years, it was a big to-do." In 80 years, I want people going, "Oh, I remember when New Years was a big thing". (October 6, 2019)

Both Steve and Mitch's contributions emphasize that there is a desire and feasible possibility to reinvigorate Métis traditions - some artistic, some spiritual, some social, and some subsistence. Having access to this space, and engaging in and centering Métis activities within it, creates an environment where the Métis can begin to decolonize.

Garneau also suggests that decolonization has to happen within Indigenous communities; Indigenous people must reconstruct who they are and how they are without limiting notions of "Indigenous purity" or the settler gaze (Garneau, 2013, 15). He theorizes about spaces of "irreconcilable Aboriginality" as sites where this kind of reconstruction can occur (Garneau, 2012, 33). There was an abundant reference to this space being a "Métis space", "a space of our own", or "a safe place" within interviews. Shirley believes that having a space like this will allow more Métis people to access Senators and Elders within the Métis community for comfort and guidance (October 22, 2018). Anne emphasizes that the site will be a place for the community to tell Métis stories: to learn from and connect with other Métis people (October 21, 2018). Mitch shares a similar sentiment to Anne, adding that not only Métis stories can be shared

at St. John's, but also items which have value to the Métis community, such as the Métis flag that Tony Belcourt, first president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, placed over the casket at Steve Powley's funeral (October 6, 2018). To Mitch, these items and these stories belong to the community, and now there is a permanent space to share them.

Mitch also adds that having a Métis-specific place will allow the community in Sault Ste Marie to have difficult and political discussions amongst themselves, as well as a place "to plan for the next big fight, whatever it is. And to have a place from which to defend the Nation. In some ways, this is "home base" (October 6, 2018). Consequently, having this Métis space, a space of irreconcilable Métis-ness, the community will be able to tell Métis stories, to share Métis values, to connect to each other, and to have difficult political conversations without any distractions and inhibitions coming from non-Métis people.

This space will facilitate precisely the decolonial "reconstruction" for which Garneau (2013) and Thiong'o (1986) call, in the sense that it provides a space to revitalize Indigenous ways of life. Mitch aspires to have this place to tell Métis stories from the unique perspective of the community. He anticipates that the Métis community will host school tours with both settler and Indigenous children at the cultural centre, teaching them a narrative and "not fitting it into somebody else's [version] of our history, but really and truly putting it into our own Métis way..." (Mitch Case, October 6, 2019). He also hopes to create a space for story-tellers to share knowledge within the community, perhaps through monthly story-telling sessions or similar activities (Mitch Case, October 6, 2019).

Steve, however, reveals a more spiritual goal in reconstructing the Métis community, "We've got a lot of healing to do. And a lot to learn about ourselves and who we were, who we

are, and who we're gonna be" (Steve Gjos, October 5, 2018). The connecting factor, however, is that this space serves as a location for the Métis community to explore these ontological questions: who were the Métis in Sault Ste Marie, who are they now, who are they going to be, what were their relations, and what will these relations become? Furthermore, it provides the Métis in Sault Ste Marie with a site to engage in these questions in a traditional manner. Garneau (2013), Tuck and Yang (2012), and Thiong'o (1986) all emphasize that Indigenous communities must honour and strengthen cultural traditions and knowledges in order for decolonization to occur. In accordance with this assertion, the repatriation of the land at St John's has given the Métis an opportunity to prioritize and invigorate Métis ways of being and knowing. Therefore, this land return offers the Métis an opportunity to reconstruct themselves in the decolonial manner.

The land return at St. John's is a decolonial undertaking in many respects. Primarily, it responds to calls for land return: repatriation of Indigenous land and the challenging of settler narratives and structures. Ultimately, it is a site for cultural decolonization. For the Métis in Sault Ste Marie, this site serves as a safe place for the Sault Ste Marie Métis community to have difficult conversations, to remember who they are as a people, and to recreate themselves in the contemporary realm. It offers a place of self-determination that cannot be interrupted by settlers nor is privy to the settler gaze. For these reasons, returning the land to the Métis has allowed and will continue to encourage the process of decolonization.

Land Return as Reconciliation

The following section will demonstrate how the act of land return at St. John's is an act which encourages reconciliation and conciliation. The first part of the chapter will determine how this act of land return either correlates with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report's definition of reconciliation, or with Garneau's understanding of "conciliation". The second part of this section will discuss how in corresponding to the two definitions, that the (re)conciliation that takes place at St. John's is an example of the transformative reconciliation for which Borrows and Tully advocate (2018).

To categorically align with the TRC's understanding of reconciliation, the act must bring about a "new vision based on mutual respect" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 2015, vi), and it must work to change the ways settler Canadians understand and interact with Indigenous peoples. This means that respect should underly these interactions. As stated by the TRC Report, "It also requires an understanding that... the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 2015, vi). In response to recognizing that indeed, reconciliation is a Canadian problem, the act also requires an admission of failures, and an effort to remedy these failures. In order to coalesce with Garneau's understanding of conciliation (2012), the act must respond to the following statements: It must mediate or create harmony between two disputing groups, and, it must become a process that encourages a peaceable or friendly union. More simply, it must work to encourage relationship building between communities.

In reference to "reconciliation", participants all agreed that returning the land at St. John's to the Métis encourages a new vision shared between the parties, one which is based on

mutual respect. Steve Gjos articulates this vision: “[The church will be] almost a museum, with pictures and Métis artifacts – we’ll make that into a cultural centre. It’s still a church. They still have their altar. They have some of their old parishioners; they’ll have a ceremony once a year there, and we’re okay with that” (October 5, 2018).⁹ This is precisely what a new vision based on mutual respect entails. Of course, the HSSMMC must determine how the space will meet the Métis community’s needs, but they also recognize that this space has value to the parishioners, and the HSSMMC seeks to respect that.

This act of land return corresponds with the TRC’s understanding of reconciliation. First, the Anglican diocese has acknowledged their faults; and second, measures have been made to remedy these failures. Steve Gjos illustrates these wrongs and how important returning the land is to remedy them:

That’s a Métis burial ground, that’s sacred land. That’s Métis land, being turned over from the church, the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church, you know they persecuted Indigenous people. They were a part of the Residential Schools. They took the land, Métis land. They built on those graves. Like what the hell is that? Like to me, you put a church on a grave site? You dug up all those graves? They say to me that [the bodies] may have gone back up the river, or maybe they’re part of the foundation. How disrespectful is that of the Métis people? (October 5, 2018)

The gesture then responds to this call of acknowledging and remedying historic wrongdoings, and it has been done so out of respect towards Indigenous peoples.

Mitch Case acknowledges the respect that he experienced throughout the process of land return: “I can’t think of another scenario that would be better. That somebody [was] coming to us acknowledging that the way that they acquired this land was not proper, [and] that they want to make it right. They acted in good faith throughout that entire process” (October 6, 2018).

⁹ Steve is referring to an agreement made between the parishioners of the diocese and the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council. The HSSMMC has agreed to let the parishioners who used to attend St. John’s to use the space for service once a year (Steve Gjos, October 5, 2018).

Furthermore, Gjos acknowledges how the process was respectful by emphasizing that the land could have been sold for money, but it was not because the diocese knew the history of the property and its meaning to the Métis (October 5, 2018).

Interviewee, Dr. Harry Huskins, summarizes how all of these aspects function together as reconciliation:

Reconciliation is about the future not the past. It's not about the past, but it's about saying what's wrong and what was done that was wrong and rooting it in truth and values. What is it that we value in this, and then building the future in terms of what are the values that are even stronger for everybody. So, it's that looking ahead that reconciliation is about. (November 22, 2018)

Through the space becoming Métis again, a shared vision between two peoples came into view. The diocese recognized its historic failures to the Métis Nation and returned the land to the Métis, whose ancestors are buried there. Upon returning the land, the two groups agreed on a space that was to be Métis, but also allows Anglican parishioners to access the site in a way that is meaningful. This new vision aligns with Dr. Harry Huskins' definition of reconciliation – it is about building a future rooted in values that are important for everybody. For these two groups, it was a shared value of the sacredness of this site upon which this reconciliatory act was founded.

The act also corresponded with Garneau's notions of conciliation. All research participants acknowledged that a relationship is being either built or strengthened, and that they hope this space will allow for those relations to grow. Anne hopes that through returning the land, the bond between the diocese and the Métis Nation will be strengthened (October 21, 2018). Steve, on the other hand, has different intentions. He acknowledges that relationships must be built between not only the diocese and the Métis, but also the local First Nations, the City of Sault Ste Marie, and the district of Algoma: "We have to build those relationships,

because we're not going anywhere" (Steve Gjos, October 5, 2018). This vision imagines the space as a conduit for the Métis Nation to strengthen its relationship with other communities in the area of Bawating. Through this relationship-building, a more harmonious existence might develop between Indigenous and settler populations.

Interviewees agreed that in having the space, mediation between disputing groups can occur. Mitch, for example, suggests that returning the space to Métis care benefits the City of Sault Ste Marie as well because "nobody wants to see downtown fall apart, nobody wants to see old buildings torn down" (October 6, 2018). Anne expresses the same sentiment towards the Anglican diocese: parishioners who care about the church and the church grounds can be assured that the site will be taken care of (October 21, 2018). As such, the site at St. John's has provided a unique occasion to build partnerships and harmony in places where they did not always exist. In creating these connections with the broader population of Sault Ste Marie, a new opportunity exists for inter-community dialogue. It is through honest communication that these relations will grow and solidify. Therefore, it appears that these notions – relationship-building, mediation, and harmony – rely on one another to continually develop. Consequently, the return of St. John's to the Métis is conciliation, as it facilitates the building and mediation of relationships.

It is through this transformative relationship building that further decolonial acts can occur. Just as relationship-building, mediation, and harmony operate in a cyclical manner, as can (re)conciliation and decolonization. This is the type of transformative reconciliation that Borrows and Tully encourage (2018). Conciliation that creates reciprocal and responsible relationships also actively creates space for and allies with whom decolonial work can be done. This act of land return would likely not have occurred if there were no relationships between members of the Anglican diocese and the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council. Land return provides room

for these historically contentious relations to become ongoing and reciprocal relationships. Through the formation of more reciprocal relationships, there are more environments for actions which encourage the repatriation of Indigenous land and life to grow. Even though the intentions behind decolonization and (re)conciliation differ, when coinciding, they offer potent opportunities for an ongoing transformation of the colonial world.

That being said, it is important to consider some of the limitations of land return. Although it certainly is a fruitful venture, this land return still exists within the context of the private property regime. The Métis Nation of Ontario and the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council must still pay provincial and federal taxes on the property. First, this reinforces the colonial rationale that land is indeed property, as opposed to an ongoing relation. Second, this upholds an oppressive relationship with the colonial government, wherein Métis people are obligated to pay taxes to a foreign state on land which is their own. Although the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie is able to re-establish its relation to this land, this relation must exist within the confines of state regulations; therefore, self-determination is limited.

An example of such a limitation could emerge from the current relationship between the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Métis National Council. Because private land return must adhere to Canadian property laws, the land could not be exchanged directly to the local Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council as they are not a corporation. Due to this limitation, the land was first sold to the Métis Nation of Ontario, which is legally considered a corporation. The Métis Nation of Ontario then relegated the property under the care of the Historic Sault Ste Marie Métis Council. Should the MNO cease to serve Ontario Métis communities, as the MNC has ordered, it becomes unclear what would happen to the site at St. John's. If, however, land could be exchanged outside of the context of the private property regime, for example, through treaty,

more localized solutions could be implemented. Therefore, though proprietary logics of land are challenged, they are ultimately maintained within this structure of land return as a consequence of operating within the bounds of Canadian property law.

Moreover, this occurrence of land return does not offer to the Métis any reparations for money gained through the ownership and exploitation of the land, nor any losses the Métis could have made by maintaining sovereignty over the territory since their dispossession. Although the Anglican diocese likely did not make significant profit from St. John's, the trading companies that occupied the territory beforehand certainly did. This brings to question the potency of land return in its ability to make all facilitators of land theft responsible for their actions, as opposed to merely the party willing to return the land. Therefore, the act of land return should be accompanied by reparations as well as statements of apology by the Anglican diocese, the Crown, and the Hudson's Bay Company, in order to further the objectives of (re)conciliation and decolonization. However, this type of reparation is challenged by the presence of a capitalistic state whose existence relies on the illegitimate theft of Indigenous lands. Should the Hudson's Bay Company and the Crown give these reparations of this nature in Sault Ste Marie, they would also have to acknowledge and compensate every other nation who was dispossessed. This would effectively leave the state, and corporations which rely on the legitimacy of the state, landless and broke. Therefore, land return may facilitate new relations between local settler and Indigenous nations as well as the land on which they interact; however, it does not change the grander political, economic, and legal structures which define relations between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state.

Conclusion

The residents of Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, will soon be confronted with something they likely rarely see, something older than the city of Sault Ste. Marie itself – the presence of a robust and centralized Métis community. In contemporary downtown Sault Ste Marie, the old church, community hall, and rectory of the St. John's parish now belong to the Métis community of Sault Ste Marie. Though the Crown effectively evicted the Métis from their territory when the Robinson Huron and Robinson Superior treaties were negotiated, the Métis continue to express their relationship to the land today. This land return is a substantial act through which the Anglican diocese of Algoma has righted some colonial historic wrongs by returning land that was illegitimately stolen and mending an important relationship with the Métis. Moreover, the land return has provided an opportunity for the Métis community to restore and strengthen their relationship with the territory, as well as their own governance structures, traditions, and values.

As demonstrated through the analysing of historical documents during the time of treaty-making in Sault Ste Marie, a multitude of colonial, sexist, and racist logics were present during this process. These understandings existed in blatant opposition to the worldviews presented by both the Métis and the Ojibwe of the area. Indigenous ontologies are grounded in relationship and responsibility to land, in the centrality of women in governance and inheritance of land, and in citizenship as duty and obligation to land and nation. In opposition to these Indigenous ontologies stands the colonial worldview. The colonial ontology is anthropocentric – simplifying land as mere property to be owned and exploited; It is gendered – dehumanizing women and forcing them and their children out of positions of power and membership in their own communities; It is racist – demeaning Indigenous citizenship and nationhood to notions of blood purity. The potency of these colonial foundations is that they ultimately existed and continue to

exist as a means to eliminate Indigenous people from their territory and nations, thus facilitating land theft for resource exploitation and extraction. The colonial regime's anthropocentric, sexist, and racist rationales therefore function to resolve the "Indian Problem".¹⁰

Through first understanding the presence of anthropocentric, gendered, and racialized logics which underpinned colonial actions during the era of treaty-making in Bawating, I was able to identify through my research how these rationales are subverted in the case at St. John's. This thesis determines that the Métis community challenges patriarchy, racism, and anthropocentric relations towards land through this land return. First, the community demonstrated that it relates to the land at St. John's through obligation, responsibility, and reciprocity, as opposed to exploitation and abuse. Second, the Métis in Sault Ste Marie do not exclude women from the political sphere, nor do they limit community access to those who are Métis through their paternal lineage. Finally, concerning citizenship, the Métis community did not adhere to notions of blood quantum, but exhibited traditional practices of belonging which are grounded in obligation and duty to the wider community.

Furthermore, I demonstrated how the act of land return encouraged both (re)conciliation and decolonization. In regard to decolonization, the act of land return responds to models of decolonization which call for the challenging of colonial structures through repatriating Indigenous land and ways of being. The diocese returned the land to the Métis, and in response, the Métis are making the space into one which resists colonial ontologies and articulates their own understandings of land, the role of women, and citizenship. Furthermore, this act of land

¹⁰ Duncan Campbell Scott, Canadian bureaucrat during the early 1900s, is known to have said, "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department..." (Treaties and Historical Research Centre, 1978, 115).

return is (re)conciliatory because it facilitates harmonious relationship-building between the Indigenous and settler community in Sault Ste Marie. As modeled by this occurrence of land return, (re)conciliation and decolonization can function concurrently – they can encourage a cyclical process, a positive feedback loop, which emboldens both (re)conciliation and decolonization to grow and transform.

The instance of private land return between the Anglican Church in Sault Ste Marie and the Métis Nation of Ontario is distinct, but not the only of its nature. The approach of private land return will likely be replicated as efforts to decolonize Canada or (re)concile the relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples become more common. Thus, it is crucial that land return be understood through a theoretical and practical lens. My work sought to reveal colonial logics, their sources, and how they work to dispossess Indigenous people from their communities, both human and non-human. Through understanding in this way, the foundations of colonialism can be weakened, and its manifestations challenged. In writing this thesis, I aim to encourage my community, and others who may walk a similar path, to reflect on the opportunity at hand. How can settler-to-Indigenous land return foster life and good relations between Indigenous peoples, settlers, and the land and waters? In Canada's current complex and controversial environmental, political, social, and economic climate, it is everyone's responsibility to consider how these relations can be formed. What other relationship-building opportunities exist for other communities? Considering land return is a fruitful place to begin.

Epilogue

In ways that I could never foresee, this act of land return has allowed me to partake in decolonization as well – the cultural and personal decolonization of which Garneau (2013) and Thiong'o speak (1986).

I began this degree seeking to reconnect to the land and to the Métis community in Ontario. I hoped to learn about the ways we Métis relate to the land, and use this knowledge to challenge the exploitative relationship colonialism has with the land. My original plan was to spend some time on the trap-line with some Métis Knowledge Keepers, but the topic of land return seemed to have fallen into my lap.

Throughout the research process, I was able to connect to Métis individuals, some of whom I had never met but had long been in relation to my family. These individuals welcomed me into their homes and gave me the opportunity to reflect on the land, my community, my ancestors, and myself as a Métis person. Their passion and commitment not only gave me the drive to complete this research, but also to continue learning about who I am in relation to this space and community.

One afternoon, when procrastinating from writing this thesis, I began to research further into my ancestry. I had known my entire life that I was a descendant of Métis people who travelled the Great Lakes, frequenting Sault Ste Marie and the surrounding areas. I knew I was a descendant of voyageurs, of interpreters during the War of 1812, and interpreters of the Robinson-Huron Treaty. What I did not know, however, was that my great-grandmother was born in Garden River First Nation. I knew before this research that at the age of ten that she lived in Penetanguishene, a prominent Métis community on the north-eastern shore of Lake Huron.

When I discovered that my great-grandmother was actually born in Garden River, but before the age of ten had relocated to Penetanguishene, I saw how this time-frame would have corresponded with the time-period when the Crown was targeting and evicting Halfbreeds on reserves.

The Crown made constant efforts to remove my family and community from our home territories, to disrupt and sever this relationship we had to land. However, we endured. We sought kin and communal support networks to survive. We maintained our relationship to the land and to community. I am a product of these processes – not only of the destruction of colonial forces, but the strength and endurance of my ancestors. This research allowed me to look back, to see what forces created my reality so that I may challenge them and honour my ancestors better. It has also fortified my relationships with other Métis people so that I have community and support to do so. When I write of the transformative potential of land return, the course of my life is a potent example of that which land return can become. No one's priority in returning the land was to give a master's student a thesis topic; however, it did. And it just so happened that this master's student was able to develop more than a thesis through this process, but relationships to her ancestors, her territory, and her community. It is too soon to see where else this may develop, but what is certain is that the possibilities will be rooted in all of my relations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to St. John's Parsonage Regarding Grave Yard, 1919

C o p y

131 Bruce St.,

Sault Ste. Marie,

July 1st 1919.

Rev. Mr. Bull,

St. John's Parsonage.

Dear Sir:

I was requested by Mr. Lake to tell you anything I knew about the grave yard which is being disturbed owing to the excavation for the basement of the Memorial Hall.

The grave yard in question belonged to the old North West Fur Company, and was originally used only by them for the interment of the servants &c of the Company, but was used as a cemetery for the burial of all Protestants who happened to die in Sault Ste. Marie before the old Town Cemetery was opened.

It, the North West Co's. grave yard, was in continuous use up to the year 1865, the last person to be buried there being an old acquaintance of mine, a Mrs. Burnett, whose son Peter I met a while ago and who works in some camp up the A. C. R. The others who were buried there before her were a man by name Stonehouse and his wife.

In talking to an old French resident here (since dead) and who worked at the old X. Y. Company's post on the east side of the Fort Creek, I happened to mention that I did not think many were buried there, but he told me that it was simply full of graves, which however as far back as I can remember 1863 I could not find much trace of except on a marble tombstone to the memory of Margaret Cameron.

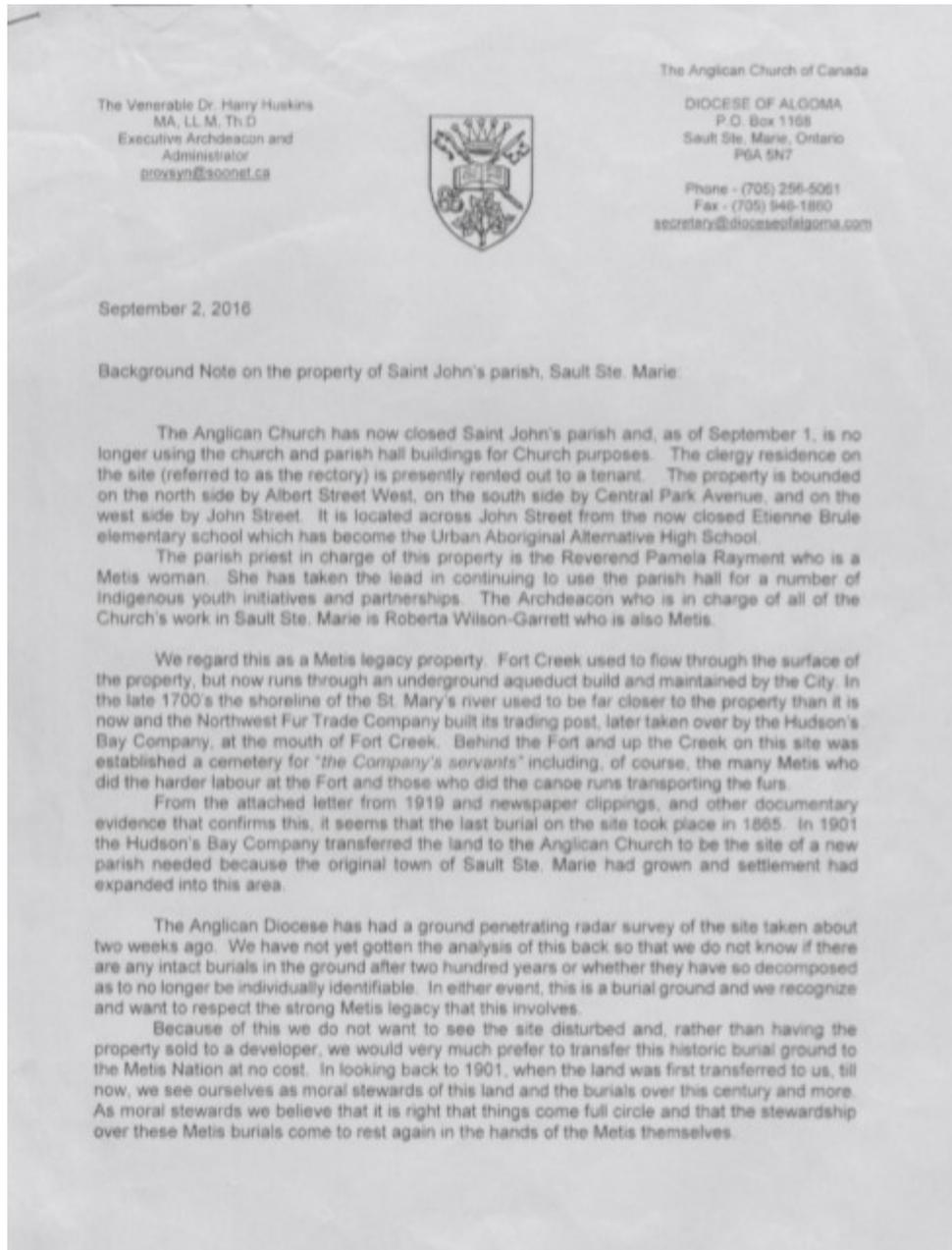
So you see that the old grave yard must have been used for 80 years and perhaps more. At that time this section of the country was an unorganized district, and I suppose no record was kept of births & deaths unless such may be found in the records of the Hudson Bay Co's. Surely some record must be extant of the deaths of their employes. The North West Company was organized in 1783.

Yours truly,

F. J. FALKNER.

It would be interesting to hunt up these burials. Rev. Mr. Capp's Annals of Sault Ste. Marie is very misleading in this respect.

Appendix B: Background Note on the Property at Saint John's Parish, Sault Ste Marie, 2016



Appendix C: Sault Daily Star Article, 1919 –
Old Burial Ground Found at Site of New Memorial Hall

OLD BURIAL GROUND
FOUND AT SITE OF
NEW MEMORIAL HALL

Belonged to North West Com-
pany—Hall is Up-to-
date One

(The Sault Daily Star
July 9th, 1919)

Twenty-one bodies were discovered while workmen were excavating for the foundation of the new Memorial Hall of St. John's church on John street. Apparently the site was an old grave yard used by the old North West Trading Company about eighty years ago when Sault Ste. Marie was in its embryo stage.

Nothing had been left, when the ground was deeded over to the Anglican Church, to show that there was a cemetery in existence there. The property was taken over by the Hudson Bay Company when it absorbed the North West Trading Company which was organized in 1783 and the servants of the Hudson Bay Company were also buried there, the last to be interred at that spot, Mr. F. J. Falkner, one of the oldest residents of the Sault said, was a Mrs. Bennett. Previous to that a Mr. and Mrs. Stonehouse was buried there. Although Mr. Falkner remembers them he does not remember their initials, and there seems to be no record in existence of any of the burials.

An item in the records of St. John's Church made by Rev. Canon Piercy in 1906 mentions the fact that "a plot of ground just south of the rectory was used by the Hudson Bay Company as a burial ground and the plot extended from Port Creek bank westerly to a line two feet beyond the street line." The only thing left to indicate that such was the case was a broken tablet, on which no writing was discernable.

A remarkable feature of the old cemetery was that the greater number of the coffins were not more than eighteen inches below the ground, only one was found to be

four feet below the surface. This, Rev. Percy Bull, the present Rector of St. John's Church, gives as the reason why recent clergymen residing there have been troubled so much with throat affection, and say at times there were odors coming from the ground which he believed was from the cause of the bodies not being buried sufficiently deep.

Appendix D: Sault Star Article, 2008 – A Piece of Sault History Could be Lost Forever

The Sault Star

Title: *A Piece of Sault History Could be Lost Forever* [Wednesday, December 24, 2008]

On the banks of Fort Creek here in the Sault stands a building which was originally named St. John's Chapel of Ease.

The land belonged to the Northwest Fur Trade Company and, unbeknownst to the people who purchased it, most of the property was an old graveyard. The wooden grave markers had long since disintegrated and the bodies were not discovered until 1919, when the Memorial Hall was being built in memory of six men who had died in the Great War.

Some of the remains were of soldiers from the War of 1812, when this city was burned to the ground by the Americans. Others were employees of the Northwest Fur Trade Company, many of these were Indians, and later others were local townspeople.

Appendix E: Interview Questions

The participants were primarily be asked to state their name, where they are from, and their affiliation or role regarding the process of land return and adaptive reuse. The interview was be semi-structured, but guided by the following questions:

1. What meaning did this space hold for you prior to the exchange of land? How has this changed?
2. Why did you become involved in the process of land return and adaptive reuse?
3. What has surprised you throughout your involvement of this process?
4. What are the reactions of people when you talk to them about this process?
5. What are some of the most significant lessons you have learned throughout the process of land return and adaptive reuse?
6. In what ways do you think this new space will affect the Métis community in Sault Ste Marie and the surrounding area?