

# A Guide to Inter-Indigenous Co-Labbing

*Iapi debwewin aansaamb*

Our earliest meetings as a research team revolved around our readings of Robert Alexander Innes' *Elder Brother and the Law of the People* and Nicholas C. P. Vrooman's "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe': The Little Shell Tribe's America*."<sup>1</sup> Initially shy and somewhat awkward in our newfound state of relationality, we were immediately drawn into the act of processing these shared readings. The following reflections are nestled in transcribed notes from our first October and November 2022 gatherings:

- ♦ "Always told that we're 'Sioux,' as Nakoda, as Dakota; our tribal names are not used. . . . The term 'Sioux' does not even capture what the Seven Council Fire signifies. . . ."
- ♦ "The border doesn't exist; we were always in those in-between areas . . ."
- ♦ "You can see how actively women were removed; how one system trickles into others—colonialism, racial hierarchies, heteropatriarchy—like a rippling effect or a bomb. . . ."
- ♦ "Challenging colonial taxonomies through emphasis on relationality. . . ."
- ♦ "Kinship and landscape interconnections are so incredibly detailed; how are we to read these texts?"
- ♦ "Restorying and engaging with the texts; reading between the lines; and establishing ourselves as a lab. . . ."

We open with these half-sketched ideas to signal how these key concerns and themes, which recur across this article, were already present in our earliest conversations.

Our co-lab, *Iapi debwewin aansaamb* (IDA), engages in the study of existing Iron Alliance historiographies to carefully determine where community stories, more-than-human relations, and gendered voices have been silenced or missed. In our readings of these texts, we pause over anonymous names and lesser-known stories in an attempt to

amplify inter-Indigenous, more-than-human, and gender-diverse voices.<sup>2</sup> As we slow down the pace of our readings, we consider whether persistent diplomatic relations are occasionally glossed over or whether alternative community perspectives fail, at times, to be considered. In our efforts to develop reading methods that resist colonially imposed “socio-legal boundaries,” we seek to animate Northern Plains inter-Indigenous social relationships and knowledge systems that continue to sustain our communities.<sup>3</sup>

This paper outlines how our research team strives to activate expansive Iron Alliance kinship networks and gender-diverse ancestral knowledges through the reading methods we are developing and through the slow relationships we are building with one another.<sup>4</sup> We first outline our lateral co-labbing research process through efforts to establish shared values, to develop collaborative research methods within an inter-Indigenous, feminist theoretical framework, and by situating ourselves in place (i.e., Winnipeg). We then clarify the significance of the Iron Alliance by providing a brief overview of its emerging context as an economic and military confederacy politically active on the Northern Plains throughout the late seventeenth- to mid-nineteenth-century. We argue in this section that the application of colonial terms serve to misidentify Indigenous bands and nations in ways that erase our polykinetic densities, and seek to clarify the significant scholarly contribution we hope to make through our original use of the term *polykinetic*. We conclude with a few notes on processing transgenerational grief and reading cosmic border events as evidence of our co-lab’s attempt to expand and reimagine the theoretical significance of the Northern Plains borderlands in ways that could shift the focus beyond Indigenous peoples’ varied historical involvement in colonial border-making.

In the conclusion of their chapter contribution to *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge remind us that “thus far, little has been done to connect the history of [nineteenth century] Métis societies to a trans-border narrative of the Northern Plains within a framework of borderlands theory and methodology. The records exist to do this work; we just need to read them differently.”<sup>5</sup> Our research seeks to address Macdougall’s and St-Onge’s call to read these borderland stories differently in our efforts to access and amplify gendered, inter-Indigenous, and more-than-human voices. Our paper addresses settler anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians who continue to evade growing calls for renewed engagement in gender-diverse Indigenous knowledge and enduring evidence of inter-Indigenous relational governance across the Northern Plains. Yet we also seek to surpass the echo chambers of the university, and write primarily, then, with the intention to enliven and expand our inter-Indigenous networks.<sup>6</sup> In this process, we hope to initiate a dialogue with community members who share similar collaborative visions, or with those who insist on defining themselves in terms that emphasize their distinctness at the cost of denying or overlooking our interrelatedness.

## CO-LABBING

As a University of Manitoba collaborative research and reading team, funded since 2022 by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, we refer to ourselves as

a critical Indigenous studies *co-lab*, composed of five Indigenous women, gender-diverse professors, and graduate students with Métis, Anishinaabe, and Dakota community ties, whose transdisciplinary experiences collectively span the fields of classical music, contemporary literary studies, Indigenous data sovereignty, two-spirit aesthetics, and Indigenous diplomacies. As transdisciplinary readers and researchers, we push against the exclusionary idea that only scientists can conduct “lab work.” As research *co-lab*-orators, we know the importance of generating spaces where our voices are heard and validated, since there are limited sites where Indigenous women, queer, and gender-diverse peoples can come together to support one another in creative, transdisciplinary research work.

Our name, *Iapi debwewin aansaamb*, reflects our commitment to activating polykinetic presents as well as thriving inter-Indigenous futurities. *Iapi*, in Dakḥótiyapi, refers to speaking or, more broadly, to language; *debwewin* comes from the Anishinnaabemowin word for truth, or “the sound of the (my) heart,” as per elder Jim Dumont’s translation; *aansaamb* refers to the Southern Michif word for togetherness.<sup>7</sup> Our name translates to “we speak truth together” and comes from a deep respect for one another’s national and historical densities. The multilingual nature of our name speaks directly to our shared responsibility to speaking and sharing our truths while it also underlines a commitment to dismantling hierarchies that persist between First Nations and Métis as between university students and professors. In his doctoral thesis, Nēhiyaw scholar Matt Wildcat refers to Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson’s concept of “feeling citizenship,” which Wildcat paraphrases as the quotidian ways in which people come to recognize themselves in relation to political bodies and to each other.<sup>8</sup> By working through our everyday relationships in the face of unjust membership rules, Wildcat explains that we become alerted to “what actually should be.”<sup>9</sup> Our nuanced practices of gendered belonging are reflected in our core values, functioning as guiding *co-lab* principles.<sup>10</sup> These practices inform our study of the chosen materials, underscore our approach to mentorship as multigenerational, and invite us to extend our gendered understandings, felt conversations, and relational engagements across our everyday lives.

Since October 2022, we have continued to meet monthly at varying locations in Winnipeg, including Tallest Poppy (a now defunct local diner), Mamawipawin (an on-campus Indigenous community and research space), and our respective homes. Close study of online guides shared by Max Liboiron’s marine science lab CLEAR (Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research) led *IDA* members to formulate our own core values.<sup>11</sup> These three core values—balance, constant flow, and slow relationality—underscore a shared commitment to connection, accountability, nonmastery, nonhierarchy, respect, and flexibility. Our values attune us to gendered absences and relational gaps in existing historiographies. We believe that Indigenous feminisms have the capacity to weaken settler colonial structures that impede Indigenous lives.<sup>12</sup> By challenging power dynamics established through colonial domination, *IDA* invokes Indigenous feminist frameworks to enable laterally driven work as we strive to ensure that we each contribute to collaborative efforts, according to our day-to-day limitations and individual strengths, in a relational and fluid way. Accountability measures are

required in our research undertakings as we consistently check in and out to ensure that there is flexibility in meeting members' neurodivergent needs, that the voices of our two-spirit, trans, and gender-diverse relatives are amplified, and that our extended kin are centered in our conversations. While we refuse the often depersonalized and violent gloss that dominates historiographic research work, we are also weary of essentializing gendered relations among Northern Plains Indigenous nations and thus remain suspicious of universalizing tendencies to either idealize "maternal" or lament "matriarchal" Indigenous pasts.<sup>13</sup> To read in between romantic references of Métis "matriorganization" and "matrifocality," as proposed in Jennifer Brown's "Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities," is to remain sensitive to Nicki Ferland's insistence that these "rhetoric[s are] inconsistent with the male-centred narratives" that all too often define Métis peoplehood and "permeate Métis education and Métis research focused on land-based knowledges."<sup>14</sup>

On March 21, 2023, our research team participated in an ArcGIS StoryMaps workshop held in Tier 307 on the University of Manitoba Fort Garry campus. During this workshop, we came to realize that digital mapping could be used to story both personal and collaborative aspects of our research, as well as to disseminate broader data sets across our communities. We worked to conceptualize how we might map relevant place-based names across the Red River Settlement Zone and our own polykinetic relations to Winnipeg alongside stories of Indigenous international kinship and conflict. Our ArcGIS map functioned as a visual story aid that grounded our Native American and Indigenous Studies Association roundtable conference presentation in May 2023. The map allowed us to form a narrative of both lived connections to the texts we are reading and efforts to build an "understanding [of] ourselves in relationship to the place we are."<sup>15</sup>

On May 3, 2023, our team attended an Urban Land Walk with two-spirit Red River Métis researcher Nicki Ferland in central Winnipeg.<sup>16</sup> Ferland provided extensive detail of oral histories that are often overlooked or underdocumented in the city's history, such as the erasure of women's and two-spirit presence within restored prominent Métis homes, the loss of Indigenous place names at the hands of colonial diaspora, the presence of Anishinaabe and Métis alliances, purity narratives that affect the land, and so much more. As we walked with Ferland, we stood at the famous river intersection that jumped almost 8,000 years ago from near the La Salle River to its present-day location near downtown Winnipeg.<sup>17</sup> In 1873, Winnipeg was rather small, but the city's growth annexed nearby Métis communities with established river lots in St. Vital, St. Boniface, and St. Johns, among other contemporary neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup> In her MEd thesis, Ferland offers numerous examples of settler colonial attempts to stamp out enduring inter-Indigenous presence in the city. The University of Manitoba is located on a Métis river lot near Anishinaabeg horse trails and Pembina Highway, the nearest main transportation artery to the institution, which was itself carved by the trails of Red River carts. Although settlers tried to erase them by overlaying a concrete grid system, many of these cart trails are still visible today and are now major streets of Winnipeg. According to Ferland, settlers physically "laid a grid structure over Indigenous transportation routes and migrations paths, and literally chased Métis

and First Nations people out of the city through their own racist logic in an attempt to remake Winnipeg as a settler space.”<sup>19</sup> During our walk with Ferland, we stood in the settler-filled pond, also known as Horse Shoe Pond or Oxbow Lake, which “was drained [in the late 1800s] to enable the more efficient expansion of St-Boniface.”<sup>20</sup> Despite its attempted erasure, “evidence of the old oxbow is still visible today as contours in the urban landscape marking the former river banks.”<sup>21</sup> Another example of this ‘violent remaking of place’ took place in Winnipeg’s Grant Park neighborhood [known internally as Rooster Town or Pakan].”<sup>22</sup> As Ferland crucially reminds readers of her thesis, “Urban land is simply Indigenous land that includes both natural and built landscapes.”<sup>23</sup>

In remembering that “visiting a place is also a practice of visiting with the histories of resistance located there and resurfacing them if they too have been buried,” IDA actively strives to rekindle shared connections to Winnipeg’s local polykinetic communities and histories.<sup>24</sup> Through the Urban Land Walk and Ferland’s instruction, we received tangible opportunities to enact both storying and visiting methods as significant relational practices implicated in restorying histories and polykinetic kinscapes. Not only were we motivated to apply research frameworks centering oral histories and community engagement, we also took pains to expand our understandings of our own responsibilities to employ ethics of care and truthful representation moving forward.<sup>25</sup>

## SITUATING OURSELVES

The Red River Settlement Zone is a “site of coalescence” within the Iron Alliance homeland, whose geographic circumference spans “from the east, at Lake of the Woods, Minnesota, northwest to the mouth of the Red River at Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba, farther west to the confluence of the Souris with the Assiniboine River at today’s Brandon, Manitoba, south through the Turtle Mountains on the North Dakota–Manitoba border, southeast to the source of the Red River at Lake Traverse (where Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota meet), then northeast back to the Lake of the Woods, Pembina, in today’s North Dakota, at its center.”<sup>26</sup> While Pembina is considered its “symbolic heart,” Winnipeg is referenced as its capital city.<sup>27</sup> Whereas Macdougall and St-Onge argue that focusing on Pembina or Red River “obscures that they were simply one place within a series of nodes or periodic habitation sites where Plains Métis lived their lives,” we are interested in carefully reading these nodes as sites of “nested sovereignties.” As per Audra Simpson’s definition of the term in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*, we understand Winnipeg as such a site inasmuch as several “Indigenous political orders . . . prevail [in this place] within and apart from settler governance.”<sup>28</sup> In an effort to nuance St-Onge and Macdougall’s reading of Métis as “a people who moved frequently in pursuit of buffalo and then to trade the products of their hunts [such that. . .] it is the lines between the nodes that we need to focus on to understand how mobility impacted the construction and function of Métis nationalism,” we align ourselves politically with Wildcat, who warns against settler colonial structures and ideologies as they attempt to fix Indigenous peoples within “either/or” recesses.<sup>29</sup> To this end, we share Wildcat’s

concern “that settler society attempts to pit Indigenous mobility and rootedness to land against each other” and agree that “we must find ways to successfully theorize mobility without undercutting the importance of land and connection to territory.”<sup>30</sup>

Although Winnipeg “is a physical space that is embodied by our memories, stories, and experiences,” we too wish to “centre land, and acknowledge that the collective ‘we’ exists in relationship with land.”<sup>31</sup> Winnipeg, as we know it, is a porous prairie region, a floodplain through which waterways flow, intersect, and occasionally brim over, as well as an urban Indigenous center where enduring relational commitments to land and kin are continuously affirmed.<sup>32</sup> Winnipeg is also the place our research team calls home. The name Winnipeg, according to many interpretations in Anishinaabemowim and Ininimowin, conveys a relation to water. The name *Winnipeg*, or *Win-nipi*, is a Cree term that signifies dirty water, likely because of the rust-colored sediment which the Red River carries from one curvy bend to another.<sup>33</sup> Previously, Winnipeg was simply called Red River or *la Rivyer Roozh* in Michif. After settlers established the Red River Colony, they named this place Assiniboia. In Anishinaabemowin, *Assini* translates to “stone” while *bwan* is the term Anishinaabeg use to refer to Dakota-Nakota people. But as Ferland explains in her MEd thesis, “Long before it was called Assiniboia and then Winnipeg by successive regimes of settler governments, this region was first a seasonal settlement and then a permanent home to many First Nations and Métis Nation communities.”<sup>34</sup>

As we engage in the work of rebuilding relations across and beyond our Winnipeg-based research community, we heed Val Napoleon’s suggestion to “start looking at what we can do now; stop looking to the state to save us.”<sup>35</sup> Two of our members exercise the immense privilege of being able to retrace relations to the Little Shell Tribe and Turtle Mountain through family stories, historical texts, and genealogical records. Ashley is related to Little Shell III’s successor, Kakanowash, through her great-great-grandfather, Louis Esquash. Raised in Turtle Mountain, Louis maintained relations and membership to Swan Lake First Nation, where he and his wife, Sophie Walker of White Earth, raised their family. Geneviève Delorme and André Beauchemin—himself a French Métis politician who served in Louis Riel’s *Comité National des Métis* during the Red River Resistance of 1869–70 and who was later elected as St. Vital delegate to the first Manitoba legislature—are Mylène Yannick Gamache’s maternal great-grandparents (times three).<sup>36</sup> Vrooman surprisingly identifies our André Beauchemin in an 1874 photo among other Little Shell Tribe leaders.<sup>37</sup> In an earlier chapter, he lists his father, André Millet *dit* Beauchemin, as an ancestor of today’s Little Shell community.<sup>38</sup> While Vrooman argues that Iron Alliance kinscapes were missed by scholars, including “anthropologists, historians and linguists well into the contemporary era,” contemporary efforts to read these constellated networks require care and caution.<sup>39</sup> Simpson reminds us in *Mohawk Interruptus* that colonial techniques of seeing and knowing, which subtend academic disciplines, all too often render Indigenous voices “imperceptible, unknowable, . . . unimportant, or . . . sieve [them] through analytics or narrative forms that interpret their aspirations in ways that were not their own and/or were unrecognizable.”<sup>40</sup> As Tasha Hubbard similarly explains in her doctoral thesis “The Call of the Buffalo,” “Anthropologists and other

academics often imposed their own moral codes and Western-influenced interpretations on the stories” shared by Indigenous peoples, yet she argues that these same stories can be reused “as a starting point for engaging Indigenous ways of knowing.”<sup>41</sup> Vrooman’s identification of André suggests that renewed understandings of extensive Métis and First Nation kinscapes, as well as readings that extend consideration of predecessors’ political priorities beyond the Red River resistance of 1869–70, are urgently needed.

Vrooman underlines the point that images reproduced throughout his book “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe’*” are limited to families and community members who had the resources and capacity to generate such photographic records.<sup>42</sup> Yet, for some of us, familial stories can only be partially gleaned, if at all, from newspaper clippings. If, according to Vrooman, “identity is found in the experiential biography of each individual,” and if “families and shared experience create groups of people, not external parties who have no intimate knowledge of a people,” then part of our work as a co-lab involves both theorizing our shared community experiences as well as harnessing our related densities.<sup>43</sup> In efforts to grapple with the density of our place-based relations, we are reminded of the Cree concept *tapwewin*, paraphrased in Jessica Kolopenuk’s article “Miskâsowin: Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society” as a process whereby multiple, equally valued, and simultaneously held truths are shared in ways that move beyond “our immediate field of vision [to] generate energy and movement.”<sup>44</sup> The deep work of truth-telling also guides us to actively grapple with Wildcat’s pluralist definition of “community.” In his doctoral thesis, Wildcat invites a move away from centralized Indigenous authority, where the state recognizes and sanctions a government with political authority that is separate from the people it represents, toward a decentralized political order, where ad hoc Indigenous governing bodies respond to community needs in ways that require “rather . . . strong connections across communities.”<sup>45</sup> We are called, then, to consider how we, as individual team members and citizens of our own Indigenous nations, might activate transformation across and between our sovereign communities.

Chris Andersen’s article “Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference to Density” also reminds us that “indigeneity” is more nuanced than simply emphasizing our individual “differences.”<sup>46</sup> As Macdougall and St-Onge explain in “Métis in the Borderlands of the Northern Plains in the Nineteenth Century,” “one of the most significant borderlands created by the forty-ninth parallel was the legal and racial construction of the space between the categories of Indian and Métis.”<sup>47</sup> We acknowledge the import of these racialized discourses and refuse the continued emphasis on cultural or racialized differences, as these tactics only serve to strategically isolate Indigenous peoples and usurp our Indigenous land titles.<sup>48</sup> Settler colonial policy and legislation implement racist discourses and representations of “indigeneity” for the purpose of relegating Indigenous peoples to an idealized past that, in turn, prompts us to question our self-worth and legitimacy as Indigenous peoples.<sup>49</sup> In “Critical Indigenous Studies,” Andersen emphasizes Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s efforts to archive how whiteness structures dominant representations of “authentic” indigeneity at the expense of our own knowledge production.<sup>50</sup> In Moreton-Robinson’s 2006 article

"Towards a New Research Agenda? Foucault, Whiteness and Indigenous Sovereignty," whiteness is retraced as the standardized metric through which Indigenous identity and representation are measured, while racist discourses and knowledges continue to circulate in ways that actively delimit Indigenous sovereignties.<sup>51</sup> Through her theory of white possession, as expanded in *Whitening Race: Essay in Social and Cultural Criticism*, Moreton-Robinson recognizes Indigenous people as intimate "knowers" of the white-settler apparatus rather than as racialized objects who can only ever be "known."<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Kolopenuk's article "Miskâsowin" critiques from an Ininiw perspective how Euro-Western science enduringly frames us as objects of scientific curiosity or as experimental material rather than as producers of our own knowledges.<sup>53</sup> Our work, then, partly involves confronting the vicissitudes of memory, which, as Anh Hua reminds us in part three of *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, "is defined by a faculty that is engendered, appropriated, politicized, nationalized, medicalized, and aestheticized," while critiquing both colonial and nationalist rhetorics which continuously threaten to inhibit emergent understandings of our own shared densities and relationalities.<sup>54</sup>

## THEORIES AND METHODS

Our co-lab consistently returns to foundational theories based in Indigenous feminist critiques, as these deeply inform the work we do. According to Tk'emlupsemc scholar Sarah Nickel, Indigenous feminisms play an integral part in exposing and challenging hegemonic heteropatriarchal structures and gender roles that perpetuate Indigenous disempowerment through the rejection of our vast kinscapes, relationality, and gender-diversity.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Indigenous feminisms "maintain a beneficial lens and set of experiences that can challenge assumptions about colonialism, sexism, identity, the gender binary, normative sexualities, and time and space."<sup>56</sup> Returning to these theories and concepts drive our urgency to centralize women's, two-spirit, trans, and queer Indigenous voices that have fallen through the cracks of ethnographic research, and to recalibrate hierarchical systems that continue to be imposed as a colonial tactic of subordination.

With the mobilization of Indigenous feminisms comes a surge of resistance against these deeply political movements. Indigenous feminisms have historically been met with disdain. Challenging heteropatriarchal oppression within Indigenous communities was considered a threat and betrayal to Indigenous sovereignty, causing more division through an overemphasized "angry" rhetoric.<sup>57</sup> However, this anger acts as a legitimate response to past, present, and future ruptures across Indigenous lives. In Hubbard's doctoral thesis, she equates the mass buffalo slaughter of the nineteenth century to genocide in nature while making connections to Indigenous genocide at the hands of Eurocentric supremacist tactics.<sup>58</sup> *IDA* acknowledges the rumination of grief as an Indigenous feminist practice through which polykinetic kinscapes and inter-Indigenous alliances can be rebuilt as a direct response to centuries of enduring settler colonial violence. In this way, grief colors the importance of our multidimensional and deeply somatic work.

Leeyq'sun feminist scholar Rachel Flowers explains in her text "Refusal to Forgive: Indigenous Women's Love and Rage" that Indigenous women's love and rage may be considered synonymous, yet both remain justifiable reactions to settler colonial systems of oppression. She states that "Indigenous women's love is not a given; it is the result of a tremendous desire to survive, to carry our teachings forward so that our ancestors recognize us and so that we become good ancestors."<sup>59</sup> For Flowers, refusal not only acts as a methodological approach that disrupts forms of colonial violence and domination, it is also a profoundly political practice that determines settler access to information and resources, thus affirming Indigenous data sovereignties.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in her book *Mohawk Interruptus*, political anthropologist Audra Simpson posits *refusal* as a tangible means of achieving Indigenous sovereignty by rejecting Eurocentric ethnographic authority and regaining control of her community's data. Simpson's notion of refusal "articulates a mode of sovereign authority over the presentation of ethnographic data, and so does not present 'everything.'"<sup>61</sup> In doing so, she argues that its purpose is to protect the "concerns of the community. Refusal acknowledges the asymmetrical power relations that inform the research and writing about Native lives and politics, and it does not *presume* that they are on equal footing with anyone."<sup>62</sup> Guided by Flowers' and Simpson's productive concepts of refusal and rage, *IDA* interrogates power imbalances between Indigenous communities and settler colonial supremacy and analyzes the overarching dynamics between hegemonic heteropatriarchy and Indigenous women and gender-diverse peoples. Therefore, our research team invokes Indigenous feminist theories, which ground our core values and our relational practices within our work.

Our reading methodology is informed by Innes' editorial contributions to the 2010 issue of *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, in which he explains that Indigenous studies scholars have a responsibility to access and to convey Indigenous perspectives, to employ Indigenous methods, and to generate research that, first and foremost, economically and politically benefits community.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Margaret Kovach warns that if we are to resist "the disciplinary objective of Western scholarship [that] use[s] story as a means of collecting data," Indigenous epistemologies must then be linked to "story as Indigenous method."<sup>64</sup> We therefore use both Indigenous storytelling and visiting methods in our approach with one another as they are creative in orientation and inspire "careful listening at [their] core."<sup>65</sup> Akin to how scholars Tuck, Haliehana, Baulne-Stuebing, and Billows approach visiting as an Indigenous feminist practice deeply "informed by the cosmologies of our communities," we similarly refuse to frame it as a "research practice, or a distinct pedagogy" and instead understand visiting as "at the heart of . . . how we make relation [with one another] within our research."<sup>66</sup>

Our research both heeds and seeks to address the following two key challenges that Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice identifies as plaguing the field of Indigenous literary nationalism: namely, the dominance of male-centered perspectives and "the lack of attention to or substantive engagement with the nationhood and peoplehood specificities of urban . . . or multitribal literary traditions and writers."<sup>67</sup> As such, our polykinetic reading methodology is informed by scholar Kai Pyle's notion

of transtemporal kinship; Janice Cindy Gaudet's emphasis on the ways in which the patriarchal altar is internalized by Métis communities as well as reproduced in historiographies that erase Métis persistence; Waziyatawin Angela Wilson's commitment to contextualizing Dakota stories within Dakota past and future knowledges; and Innes' insistence that kinship is of primary importance to the polykinetic members of the Cowessess First Nation.<sup>68</sup>

In developing inter-Indigenous research methods, *IDA* analyzes colonial historical modalities by "reading between the lines." This practice exposes gendered absences and community voices that may have fallen through the cracks. In January 2023, our co-lab sifted through footnotes in Vrooman's "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe'*" that overlooked grounded Indigenous histories, creating pertinent opportunities to enact restorying methods while revealing gender biases from a heteropatriarchal Eurocentric standpoint. In doing so, we delved into records that recognize particular modes of Indigenous relational practices that contradict the emerging nation-state's Christian "monogamous ideal of marriage," and support instead the expansion of polykinetic connections.<sup>69</sup> Contributing to growing interrelational ties within the Red River Settlement Zone, "polyethnic intermarriage" generated alliances and familial connections across various Indigenous groups over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>70</sup> The prominence of polygamous practices benefited the expansion of polykinetic networks across these territories, resulting in intricate generational affiliations.<sup>71</sup> According to American anthropologist Alfred Irving Hallowell, polygynous marriages (where one man has multiple wives) was a common practice among the "Cree and Saulteaux bands of the Lake Winnipeg region" until the late nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> It was not unusual for men to have multiple wives across various bands, spurring "dual citizenship" arrangements between groups.<sup>73</sup>

The historiographic tendency to underdocument polygamy works to perpetuate colonial narratives that dispel Indigenous accounts of relational ties. By 1876, polygamous marriages disappear from treaty records, at a time when this common Indigenous relational practice was actively being deterred by the mounting moral pressure felt from Jesuit missionaries' assimilatory tactics and hostile attitudes.<sup>74</sup> In her formative chapter "Making Love and Relations beyond Settler Sex and Family," Sisseton–Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim TallBear describes the onslaught of secularized Christian, heterosexual, monogamous marriages as a genocidal tactic designed to eliminate Indigenous relational structures.<sup>75</sup> As merging power structures, the settler Canadian state and the institution of Christianity propelled a nationalist agenda that imposed monogamous, heterosexual marriages through morality discourse to ensure the steady growth of white settler populations.<sup>76</sup> This not only enforced the assimilation of Indigenous peoples, it also targeted Indigenous kinship structures by specifically rejecting all sexualities that sit outside of dominant heteronormative, heteropatriarchal, and cisgender ontologies.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the overemphasis on polygyny completely erases Indigenous women's presence, as polyandry (a woman with multiple husbands) remains an undocumented tradition.<sup>78</sup> The tendency in a number of earlier historiographies to center and glorify the husband's position further perpetuates the erasure of Indigenous wives, who are reduced to a statistical number among treaty records and

other anthropological sources. Two-spirit and gender-diverse relationships are entirely unaccounted for, reproducing a stark heteropatriarchal and heteronormative rhetoric that reduces dynamic Indigenous interrelational and polykinetic ontologies to affirm shallow Eurocentric fables. By interrogating colonial historical documentation through the practice of sifting through the proverbial cracks, *Iapi debwewin aansaamb* cultivates a tangible inter-Indigenous research method that supports our ongoing dedication to restoring Indigenous histories in honor of those who remain underrepresented in the archives.

### “THE WHOLE COUNTRY WAS . . . ‘ONE ROBE’”

As described in both Vrooman’s *The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’* where the polykinetic history of the Little Shell Tribe in Montana is recounted, and in Innes’ *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, which illustrates how Cowessess First Nation history in Saskatchewan is “interwoven with the creation” of the Iron Confederacy, Iron Alliance homelands extend across the Northern Plains as “One Robe” and encompass “the whole of today’s Anglo North American borderlands from Lake of the Woods in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west.”<sup>79</sup> As scholar Michel Hogue explains in *Métis and the Medicine Line*, using the borderlands as an analytical framework invites an understanding of Indigenous place in terms of “multiple, layered, and conflicting claims to territory.”<sup>80</sup> In considering how we might actively transform relations with one another and with the subjects of our shared readings, our research team initially understood the importance of theorizing the borderlands, in part because Iron Alliance histories, in Vrooman’s own words, are “unified within and transcend the nation-state border region.”<sup>81</sup> And yet, centuries prior to the negotiation, surveying, and establishment of the “Canada-US border” in which Indigenous peoples were variously implicated, whenever “it suited their own purposes,” evidence of Nêhiyaw and Nakoda interrelations in the “Lake of the Woods–Pembina–Red River–Turtle Mountain–Lake Winnipeg region” endured at least prior to 1350, were well-established by the late sixteenth century, and expanded to include Great Lakes Anishinaabe in the 1650s.<sup>82</sup> Following the devastating effects of a plague in 1780–82, Vrooman recounts how Anishinaabe formalized their alliance with Iron Confederacy members and were invited “after smoking and feasting for two or three days [to] dwell on the Plains” with Nakoda Oyadebi and Nêhiyaw relations “full-time,” and in Chief Peguis’ own words, “to eat out of the same dish, to warm ourselves at the same fire, and to make common cause with them against their enemies, the Sioux.”<sup>83</sup>

Crucially, in our research, we strive to nuance the trope of “Sioux” as stereotypical foe prevalent across Iron Alliance historiographies. While Little Shell Tribe ancestors made treaty and engaged in diplomacy with Northern Plains Indigenous peoples prior to 1871, Vrooman critically emphasizes their “strong historical and contemporary ties” to A’aninin (Gros Ventre), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), to Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda), and to Ktunaxa (Kootenai), among other “Columbia River tribes in the US today.”<sup>84</sup> Both Vrooman and Innes describe the Red River Valley as a “buffer zone” or a “boundary” between Woodland Anishinaabe and Dakota bands at the end

of eighteenth century, thereby amplifying what were then contested and overlapping Indigenous territorial jurisdictions.<sup>85</sup> As Vrooman expands, “The Red River Valley region lay in between the woodland Ojibwa and bands of the Dakota, who by 1789 were hunting the prairies on horseback between the Red and upper Missouri Rivers at least as far north as the Sheyenne River, where it enters the Red from the west a few miles north of Fargo, North Dakota.”<sup>86</sup> In between the lines of cited references to John Tanner, who mentions “Sioux war-parties” frequenting “the mouth of the Assineboin” by the mid-1790s, or Vrooman, who insists that “Ojibwa bands were worried that Dakota Sioux bands who contested hunting and trapping territory also claimed by Ojibwa would attack them if they ventured too far south and west,” we also consider how the vague application of “Sioux” throughout these records only further obscures ambiguities in naming and identification.<sup>87</sup>

We acknowledge that the varied terms used to identify diverse Northern Plains Indigenous groups throughout this paper may, at times, lack specificity or else risk maintaining erroneous distinctions, partly as a consequence of having to reference twentieth-century historical analyses where persistent “tribal” terminologies continue to be imposed and applied.<sup>88</sup> Innes’ critical analysis of an anthropological Plains Cree Western migration theory, first recorded by Northwest Company fur trader Sir Alexander Mackenzie, illustrates how colonial agents and ethnographers assign names and hypotheses to Indigenous peoples in ways that eschew historical accuracy to reify their own imperialist narratives and nationalistic discourses.<sup>89</sup> That Vrooman’s own text occasionally distinguishes “Dakota” from “Sioux” and, at other times, references both interchangeably suggests a lack of serious insight into Oceti Sakowin in general and a persistent erasure of Lakota-Dakota relations within the Iron Alliance more specifically.<sup>90</sup> As Waziyatawin Angela Wilson explains in *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, “Historians, as well as most Americans, have typically used the term Sioux to describe the Dakota as well as the Nakota and Lakota.”<sup>91</sup> Despite the consensus among scholars that “the Assiniboine were originally a part of the Yanktonai Sioux [and, by extension, the Oceti Sakowin] but broke away at some point and later established close relations with the Cree,” Innes remarks that ethnohistorical researchers continue to prefer to emphasize Cree-Nakota distinctions rather than to grapple with inter-Indigenous relations.<sup>92</sup>

In his chapter “A Historical View of the Iron Alliance,” Innes cites records kept by Northwest Company fur trader John McDonnell in which a late 1790s battle was noted to have taken place along the southern shore of Lake Winnipeg, “where the Sioux are said to have massacred a large camp of Cree, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux.”<sup>93</sup> We insist, however, that more nuanced stories emerge from other accounts:

- the letters sent and exchanged between “Sioux” Chiefs La Terre qui Brule, The Thunder that Rings, The Black Bull, The Sun, and Red River Métis representative Cuthbert James Grant in 1844;<sup>94</sup>
- Voth’s suggestion that intersecting lands and waterways in Red River initiated peace negotiations in 1860 among “Sioux,” Saulteaux, and Métis at Fort Garry, Winnipeg, where evidence of shared respect for territorial jurisdictions and

cultural traditions was reflected in the use of peace pipe diplomacy and communal dancing;<sup>95</sup>

- ♦ the Sweet Corn Treaty of 1825, through which “the Chippewa and Dakota set the boundaries of their respective homelands” that was later reaffirmed in 1858 following the 1851 Battle of Grand Coteau;<sup>96</sup>
- ♦ when considering how “Michifs assisted Dakota to escape to Canada . . . after the Minnesota Dakota Resistance of 1862,”<sup>97</sup> or when Father de Smet reported in 1864 that “these Half-breeds . . . on the most friendly terms with the Sioux, who respect their flag,” were among members of the *Nêhiyaw Pwat* who supplied “the Sioux with weapons to maintain the insurrection against American hegemony.”<sup>98</sup>

According to Innes and Vrooman, settler historians, linguists, and anthropologists continue to underemphasize the economic and political alliances that existed and still endure among Northern Plains *Nêhiyaw*, Anishinaabe, Métis, and Dakota-Nakoda peoples.<sup>99</sup> As Vrooman argues in “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” these inter-Indigenous relationships were missed because “the realities of polyethnicity, coresidential, and mixed-culture societies” failed to reify the nineteenth- and twentieth-century social Darwinist notion of pure races.<sup>100</sup> Our research team agrees with this argument, but notes that Vrooman’s use of the term *polyethnic* is outdated and at risk of reaffirming difference-based understandings of Indigenous peoples.<sup>101</sup> Violent colonial legislative and jurisdictional interventions have affected First Nation and Métis kinscapes.<sup>102</sup> As colonial boundaries became increasingly carceral, American and Canadian settler statecraft sought to “regulate . . . Indian populations through ‘state classifications’ imposed in treaty negotiations and status definitions imposed in legislative acts,” and to discipline through “general cross-border trade [via] the collection of tariffs.”<sup>103</sup> The strategy of severing ties in the name of distinct nationhoods both reinscribes the post-1885 racialized fabrication of “pure bands” and negates Indigenous experiences of shared “territories, kinscapes, and histories” as part of a broader colonial strategy to claim sovereign ownership of Indigenous lands.<sup>104</sup> Because of this, IDA’s proposed and ongoing work involves fostering inter-Indigenous partnerships and creative research methods that reflect our local and regional relationalities. Across the texts we read, we understand Indigenous *relationality* as encompassing a broad spectrum of complex and sophisticated interactions among human and more-than-human kin that include peace-making, alliance-building, conflict management, adaptation, collaboration, and everything in between. Our use of the term *polykinetic*, then, seeks to amplify cross-temporal Dakota–Nakoda–Anishinaabe–*Nêhiyaw*–Métis relationalities, as it crucially includes nonhuman and more-than-human kin.

## REIMAGINING BORDERLAND STUDIES

The Northern Plains Indigenous borderlands are defined in Hogue’s *Métis and the Medicine Line* as a “complex and shifting set of Indigenous homelands” historically subject to varying competing imperial and settler colonial claims.<sup>105</sup> Hogue (2015), Vrooman (2012), and McCrady (1998) argue that local Indigenous peoples tactfully exploited colonial jurisdictional boundaries to suit their own sovereign economic

interests.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Macdougall and St-Onge argue that the “liminality and ambiguity of that [borderland] space” meant Métis families could economically and socially thrive until the beginning of twentieth century.<sup>107</sup> By 1875, as “nation-states claim[ed] exclusive dominion over all territories within their borders,” Indigenous peoples “lost the ability to play off rivalries; they could no longer take advantage of occupying the lands ‘in between.’”<sup>108</sup> McCrady (2009) argues that more scholarly attention to the Indigenous borderlands as the “heartland” of Plains Indigenous nations is broadly needed, yet evidence of Indigenous women as diplomatic and peace negotiators is seldom, if at all, referenced throughout McCrady’s historical treatise.<sup>109,110</sup> While we strive in both present and future archival research work to amplify gender-diverse contributions to inter-Indigenous diplomacies across the borderlands (as in the cases of the naked women of the Battle of Grand Coteau or the LaFramboise sisters of the Trotter brigade), we focus briefly in this concluding section on the buffalo as a “teacher of good governance” and a polykinetic guide who reminds borderland peoples that our kinship relations “includ[e] the web of responsibilities to those with whom we share this land.”<sup>111</sup>

In her doctoral thesis, Hubbard writes of an “interest in the complex interrelationship between the buffalo and plains Indigenous peoples.”<sup>112</sup> Within this framework,” she continues, “I find myself seeking an understanding of my relationships to self, family, community and nation that is both inclusionary and *transformative*.”<sup>113</sup> In their 2021 article “Awakening Buffalo Consciousness,” Ryan Crosschild, Gina Starblanket, Daniel Voth, Tasha Hubbard, and Leroy Little Bear remind us that the Buffalo Treaty—whose signatories continue to multiply since 2014—is transformative at its core, as it is “simultaneously about returning buffalo as a keystone species to the prairies as well as returning the buffalo as a keystone within prairie political thought and practices.”<sup>114</sup> In our efforts to attune ourselves to the power of transformative polykinetic relationalities, future research calls on us to analyze the implications of the Buffalo Treaty, not only as evidence of enduring inter-Indigenous relational governance across the Northern Plains, but also as an instructional “portal for learning and relearning governance in the presence of diverse and disparate groups (human and buffalo).”<sup>115</sup>

Our readings of Hubbard’s PhD thesis and Elmer Ghostkeeper’s *Spirit Gifting: The Concept of Spiritual Exchange* lead us to speculate that the borderlands can extend *across*, if not occasionally *beyond*, Indigenous nations’ strategic negotiations with colonial boundaries, toward an understanding of the kinds of border spaces that also transverse spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and embodied existential planes. Ghostkeeper’s Paddle Lake Métis cosmology, for instance, crucially reminds us that “the activities of sacrifice and ritual are [also] performed in a border region, which overlaps and joins the different worlds.”<sup>116</sup> We argue that an extended borderlands framework calls us in to collectively mourn the overwhelming transgenerational loss of buffalo kin, whose violent extermination on the Northern Plains was precipitated by nineteenth-century settler statecraft’s “unwritten official army policy,” as by “the coming of the railroad and the introduction of bovine disease by the Texas herds of cattle just then entering the Northern Plains.”<sup>117</sup> The genocide of thirty-seventy million buffalo who were reduced to a mere few hundreds by 1883 was catastrophic:

“Their world died,” as Vrooman arrestingly writes.<sup>118</sup> Through her reading of Marilyn Dumont’s poetic line from “Les Animaux”—“the brothers that have left us / they have moved to another plain”—Hubbard invites us to “consider the connection of family with the buffalo, before moving into the spatial loss described by ‘another plain,’ thus honouring an oral tradition according to which Indigenous peoples, unable to fathom that the seemingly limitless buffalo could be reduced to a handful, instead thought the buffalo had moved into a different space.”<sup>119</sup>

Hubbard reminds us a few pages later that Louise Erdrich’s novel, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, begins with “a parody of a solar eclipse during which the sun becomes hidden behind hordes of buzzing flies, and ends with a horrible sound made by the remaining buffalo.”<sup>120</sup> Scholars Émile Pigeon and Carolyn Prodruchny recall that an eclipse predicted by Father Louis-François Richer Lafèche, the priest accompanying the smaller Métis brigade during the 1851 Battle of Grand Coteau, “darkened the prairie sky” the eve prior to the battle, and that it “was remembered in Métis oral history because it foreshadowed a calamity: it was an “omen of impending doom.”<sup>121</sup> Whereas references to “heavy fog” persist in missionary accounts of the Battle of Grand Coteau, references to women’s “active and diverse” diplomacies do not.<sup>122</sup> And yet, Pigeon and Prodruchny’s reference to a letter, allegedly written and left after the battle for Dakota “denounc[ing] the Métis’ use of violence and describ[ing] their victory as repugnant,” reaffirms broader nineteenth-century histories of formal peace treaties and informal agreements negotiated between Métis and Dakota.<sup>123</sup> In our readings of Pigeon and Prodruchny’s 2019 analysis of the Battle of Grand Coteau, the suggestion that nineteenth-century Métis brigades were frequently accompanied by a Catholic priest or a missionary incited us to wonder whether Métis also prayed to the buffalo.<sup>124</sup> We need more readings grounded within polykinetic Indigenous cosmologies that assess the future implications of related cosmic occurrences. As we extend the proverbial borderlands across and beyond our studies of colonial carceral logics, these examples are simply a few of the felt immediacies and persistent priorities that we are continuously working to both process and animate.

Guided by Indigenous relational methods, *IDA* acknowledges long colonial histories that have marred understanding of Indigenous ontologies, especially through the colonial implementation of gendered and racialized markers of differentiation. Often, this work is undervalued within academic discourses, further reflecting our determination to honor gender-diverse and more-than-human voices across temporal borderland planes. Our methods demonstrate some of the ways we aspire to remain accountable to one another and to relatives who remain overshadowed in the archives or underheard in their deeply situated ancestral narratives. As our co-lab sifts and wades through historical Iron Alliance documentation, we also seek to deepen our studies of the Northern Plains borderlands in ways that hopefully inspire others to realize their own polykinetic practices and collaborative research methods. While the inter-Indigenous responsibilities we are cultivating have never ceased to exist, our objective is to revive them in our everyday community engagements. Our co-lab is constantly reconfiguring our trajectories and goals to honor the fluid nature of our ever-evolving, antiauthoritarian, heart-driven work. Over the next five years, our

co-lab will be working to create and edit an in-print, multimedia publication that will solicit submissions from Indigenous astronomers, musicologists, philosophers, and mathematicians, among others, who may be similarly living, animating, and thinking through inter-Indigenous approaches to relationality, gendered diplomacy, governance, cosmology, and futurity from Ininew, Nêhiyaw, Nakoda, Dakota, Anishinini, Anishinaabe, Saulteaux, Niitsitapi, or Métis perspectives. We mention this in closing with the genuine hope that the creation and dissemination of this work will stimulate ongoing collaborations and networking opportunities among Indigenous content creators and world-builders across the Northern Plains.

## NOTES

1. Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013); Nicholas P. Vrooman, "The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe': The Little Shell Tribe's America (Great Falls: Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana with Drumlummon Institute, 2012).

2. Vrooman, "The Whole Country. . ." xiv. In the foreword to his book, Vrooman identifies a need to further research and understand the storied contributions of the following women: the naked women of the Battle of Grand Coteau, Madame Deschamps, the sisters Magdalene Wilkie Dumont and Judith Wilkie, Marguerite Monette *dit* Bellehumeur, Isabel Smallbody, the Laframboise sisters of the Trotter brigade, Clemence Gourneau, Elizabeth Swan, and Louise Lafournaise Schneider, among "many others who made significant contributions to our history."

3. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Gina Starblanket and Heidi Kiiwentinepinesiik Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm—Four Points for Consideration: Knowledge, Gender, Land, and Modernity," in *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings*, ed. Michael Asch, James Tully, and John Borrows (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 5.

4. Kai Pyle, "Folks Like Us: Anishinaabe Two-Spirit Kinship and Memory across Time and Space" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2021), 7, 68.

5. Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge, "Métis in the Borderlands of the Northern Plains in the Nineteenth Century," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Andersen and Jean M. O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2017), 263.

6. Matthew Wildcat, "Weaving Our Authority Together: Transforming the Prairie Indigenous Political Order" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2020), 83–84.

7. For Dumont's translation, see Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on the Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arp Books, 2011), 59; Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 2001): "Truth is that which hurries on the break-up of the colonialist regime; it is that which promotes the emergence of the nation; it is all that protects the natives, and ruins the foreigner" (39).

8. Wildcat, "Weaving Our Authority Together," 117.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research, "Choosing Lab Values," *CLEAR Lab Book: A Living Manual of Our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols* (Volume Three) (St. John's: Memorial University Press, 2021).

12. Sarah Nickel and Amanda Fehr, *In Good Relation: History, Gender, and Kinship in Indigenous Feminisms* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 3.
13. Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, xvii; Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3, no. 1 (1983): 42; Nicki A. Ferland, "'We're Still Here': Teaching and Learning about Métis Women's and Two-Spirit People's Relationships with Land in Winnipeg" (Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2022), 19.
14. Ferland, "'We're Still Here,'" 19.
15. Starblanket and Stark, "Towards a Relational Paradigm," 190.
16. Winnipeg's drinking water comes from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in Treaty 3 territory, and the city derives its electricity source from the use of Northern Manitoba hydro dams in Treaty 5 territory.
17. Ferland, "'We're Still Here,'" 25.
18. *Ibid.*, 27–28.
19. *Ibid.*, 25.
20. *Ibid.*, 25, 36–37.
21. *Ibid.*, 25.
22. *Ibid.*, 30.
23. *Ibid.*, 26.
24. Eve Tuck, Haliehana Stepetin, Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing, and Jo Billows, "Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice," *Gender and Education* 35, no. 2 (2002): 147.
25. Tuck et al., "Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice," 144; Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 100.
26. Vrooman, "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'*" 19.
27. *Ibid.*, 234, 2.
28. Macdougall and St-Onge, "Métis in the Borderlands," 261; Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press: United States, 2014), 10–11.
29. Macdougall and St-Onge, "Métis in the Borderlands," 261; Wildcat, "Weaving Our Authority Together," 143, 154.
30. Wildcat, "Weaving Our Authority Together," 143.
31. Ferland, "'We're Still Here,'" 36–7; Megan Bang et al., "Muskrat Theories, Tobacco in the Streets, and Living Chicago as Indigenous Land," *Environmental Education Research* 20, no. 1 (2014): 44–45.
32. Daniel Voth, "Invitations from the Land and Waters: Lessons from the Peace of Fort Garry," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 29, no. 1 (2020): 95; Sandra Styres (Kanien'kehá:ka), "Literacies of Land: Decolonizing Narratives, Storying, and Literature," in *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education*, ed. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang (New York: Routledge 2019), 28.
33. Ferland, "'We're Still Here,'" 25.
34. *Ibid.*, 26.
35. Rauna Kuokkanen, *Restructuring Relations: Indigenous Self-Determination, Governance, and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 203.
36. Vrooman, "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'*" 160; Lawrence J. Barkwell, "Beauchemin, André," *Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2013), <https://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/14133>.
37. André's son, Léon, was married to Marguerite Poitras; both Léon and Marguerite are grandparents to Mylène Yannick Gamache's maternal grandmother, Lucile Carrière (née Beauchemin).

The names of Marguerite's parents, Madeleine Fisher and Francois Poitras, are also affiliated with the Cypress Hills Métis Hunting Brigade Petition of 1878, which advocated for the creation of a Métis reserve that would extend to "the Turtle Mountain reservation north" of the Medicine Line. Their participation in this "serious petition" also suggests that they were likely among those seasonally inhabiting the "ethnically mixed region" that Vrooman repeatedly refers to as the "Milk River/Wood Mountains/Poplar River corridor." Vrooman explains that "The Lac Qu'Appelle Métis [petition signatories] were predominantly from the Red River Settlement Zone and made up a large proportion of the buffalo-hunting convoys traveling west and south of the Cypress Hills and wintering at Rivière Blanche (Frenchman's Creek) in Montana"; Vrooman, *The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'* 160, 181, 196, 172, 227; Lawrence Barkwell, *Cypress Hills Métis Hunting Brigade Petition of 1878 for a Métis Reserve* (Louis Riel Institute, 2015), <https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/12533.Cypress%20Hills%20Metis%20Hunting%20Brigade%20August%202017.pdf>.

38. Vrooman, *The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'* 40.
39. *Ibid.*, 200.
40. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 100–101.
41. Tasha Hubbard, "The Call of the Buffalo: Exploring Kinship with the Buffalo in Indigenous Creative Expression" (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2016) 23.
42. Vrooman, *The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'* 10.
43. *Ibid.*, 200.
44. Jessica Kolopenuk, "Miskasowin: Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society," *Genealogy* 4, no. 1 (2020): 8–9.
45. Wildcat, "Weaving Our Authority," 83–84, 107, 113.
46. Chris Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies: From Difference to Density," *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 88–89.
47. Macdougall and St-Onge, "Métis in the Borderlands," 261.
48. Chris Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 88–89.
49. Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies," 92.
50. *Ibid.*, 92–93.
51. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Towards a New Research Agenda? Foucault, Whiteness, and Indigenous Sovereignty," *Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 4 (June 2006): 387.
52. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Whiteness, Epistemology, and Indigenous Representation," in *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 75.
53. Kolopenuk, "Miskasowin," 2.
54. Anh Hua, "Diaspora and Cultural Memory," in *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, ed. Agnew Vijay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 197.
55. Nickel and Fehr, *In Good Relation*, 3.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Verna St. Denis, "Feminism Is for Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism, and Diversity," *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Second Edition) (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 50.
58. Hubbard, "The Call of the Buffalo," 51.
59. Rachel Flowers, "Refusal to Forgive: Indigenous Women's Love and Rage," *Decolonizing Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 4, no. 2 (2015): 40.
60. *Ibid.*, 33.
61. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 105.
62. *Ibid.*

63. Robert Alexander Innes, "Elder Brother, the Law of the People, and Contemporary Kinship Practices of Cowessess First Nation Members: Reconceptualizing Kinship in American Indian Studies Research," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 34, no. 2 (2010): 4–5.
64. Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 101.
65. Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 99; Tuck et al., "Visiting as an Indigenous Feminist Practice," 145.
66. Tuck et al., 144, 154.
67. Kristina Fagan et al., "Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism? Critical Approaches in Canadian Indigenous Contexts—A Collaborative Interlogue," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 29, nos. 1–2 (2009): 26.
68. Pyle, "Folks Like Us," 6; Janice Cindy Gaudet, "Dismantling the Patriarchal Altar from Within," *AlterNative* 10, no. 1 (2014): 63; Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 12; Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, 42–43.
69. Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2008), 29.
70. Vrooman, "The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'" 120.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Alfred I. Hallowell, "The Incidence Character and Decline of Polygyny among the Lake Winnipeg Cree and Sauteaux," *American Anthropologist, New Series* 40, no. 2 (1983): 236.
73. Vrooman, "The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'" 120.
74. Hallowell, "The Incidence Character," 253–54, 256.
75. Kim TallBear, "Making Love and Relations beyond Settler Sex and Family," in *Making Kin not Population*, ed. Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018), 146.
76. *Ibid.*
77. *Ibid.*, 153.
78. Hallowell, "The Incidence Character," 235.
79. Vrooman, "The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'" 43.
80. Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 5.
81. Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 8–9; Benjamin Hoy, *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the Canada–United States Border across Indigenous Lands* (London: Oxford University Press, 2021), 7.
82. Vrooman, "The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'" 22.
83. *Ibid.*, 25.
84. *Ibid.*, 108–9, 115, 165, 15.
85. Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, 49.
86. Vrooman, "The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'" 30.
87. *Ibid.*, 28, 30.
88. Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, 43, 46.
89. *Ibid.*, 46, 50–51. While scholars such as Adolph Greenberg and James Morrison similarly "argued that the term Ojibwa, not the people, moved west with Europeans, who applied it to several different groups," others, namely Charles A. Bishop, suggested that Anishinaabe oral history "should at least be compared with the historical accounts" insofar as Anishinaabe informants confirmed the migration theory during "extensive fieldwork" conducted by twentieth-century ethnologists Skinner, Speck, and Hallowell.
90. Wilson, *Remember This!* As Wilson clarifies, "Dakota is a term meaning 'the friends or allies.' This is the term we use to identify ourselves" (4).
91. *Ibid.*

92. Ibid., 5. Wilson insists that “all of these groups [Dakota, Lakota, Nakota] are members of the original Oceti Sakowin, or the Seven Council Fires”; Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, 47.
93. Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People*, 60.
94. Warren Cariou and Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, *Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water* (Winnipeg: HighWater Press, 2012), 20–25; see Adam Gaudry, “Kaa-tipey-imishoyaahk—‘We Are Those Who Own Ourselves’: A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830–1870” (Phd diss., University of Victoria, 2014), 152–66, for more information on the Métis-Dakota diplomatic process.
95. Voth, “Invitations from the Land and Waters,” 100–101.
96. Vrooman, “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” 178.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid., 178, 172.
99. Ibid., 200.
100. Matthew Wildcat and Daniel Voth, “Indigenous Relationality: Definitions and Methods,” *AlterNative* 19, no. 2 (2023): 475–83; Vrooman, “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” 5, 200.
101. Chris Andersen, “More Than the Sum of Our Rebellions: Métis Histories beyond Batoche,” *Ethnohistory* 61, no. 4 (2014): 619–33; Andersen, “Critical Indigenous Studies,” 80–100.
102. Vrooman, “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” 19.
103. Ibid., 197.
104. Chelsea Vowel, “Where No Michif Has Gone Before: The Form and Function of Métis Futurisms” (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2020), 28, 4; Rob Innes, “Challenging a Racist Fiction,” in *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies*, ed. Jennifer Adese and Chris Andersen (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021), 92–114.
105. Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 1–5.
106. David G. McCrady, *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 3–6; Vrooman, “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” 197.
107. Macdougall and St-Onge, “Métis in the Borderlands,” 258.
108. Vrooman, “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” 17.
109. McCrady, *Living with Strangers*, 5.
110. Carolyn Prodruchny and Émilie Pigeon, “The Mobile Village: Metis Women, Bison Brigades, and Social Order on the Nineteenth-Century Plains,” in *Violence, Order, and Unrest: A History of British North America, 1749–1876*, ed. Elizabeth Mancke et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 246. As Pigeon and Prodruchny here remind us, “In the rest, we have to listen carefully to the active and diverse roles of women in diplomacy.”
111. Vrooman, “*The Whole Country Was . . . ‘One Robe,’*” xiv; Hubbard, “The Call of the Buffalo,” 13, 16.
112. Ibid., 3.
113. Ibid.
114. Ryan Crosschild, Gina Starblanket, Daniel Voth, Tasha Hubbard, and Leroy Little Bear, “Awakening Buffalo Consciousness: Lessons, Theory, and Practice from the Buffalo Treaty,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 38, no. 1 (2021): 7.
115. Crosschild et al, “Awakening Buffalo Consciousness,” 15.
116. Elmer Ghostkeeper, *Spirit Gifting: The Concept of Spiritual Exchange* (Raymond: Writing on Stone Press, 2007), 7–8.
117. Hubbard, “The Call of the Buffalo,” 50, 52. According to Hubbard, the genocide of thirty to seventy million buffalo was orchestrated by General Phillip Sheridan, perpetrated by white sport

hunters, and precipitated by other factors including drought and the introduction of half a million cattle to the region; Vrooman, "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'*" 219. The last buffalo herds were sighted in Judith Basin, Montana, in 1880; Vrooman, "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'*" 214.

118. Vrooman, "*The Whole Country Was . . . 'One Robe,'*" 214.

119. Hubbard, "*The Call of the Buffalo,*" 74.

120. *Ibid.*, 79.

121. Prodruchny and Pigeon, "*The Mobile Village,*" 246, 248.

122. *Ibid.*, 246.

123. *Ibid.*, 245.

124. *Ibid.*, 240.

