

(Re)connecting and (Re)vitalizing: Métis Identity and Conceptualization of Self

by

Kennedy Williams
BCYC, University of Victoria, 2021

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Child and Youth Care

© Kennedy Williams, 2025
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/ Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

(Re)connecting and (Re)vitalizing: Métis Identity and Conceptualization of Self

by

Kennedy Williams
BCYC, University of Victoria, 2021

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Sandrina Carere, Supervisor
School of Child and Youth Care

Dr. Rob Hancock, Committee Member
Department of Anthropology

Abstract

This thesis explores the complex and deeply personal journey of (re)claiming and understanding Métis identity through genealogy, storytelling, and autoethnographic inquiry. In order to examine my lived experience as a white-passing, cisgender woman raised with stories of Métis ancestry but without tangible documentation, I investigated the nuances of identity politics, family silence, and cultural disconnection. Conducted in the MA program in child, youth, family and community studies at the University of Victoria, my research responds to both personal uncertainty and the broader systemic challenges faced by Métis youth navigating questions of identity, heritage, and belonging. My methodology consisted of critical family history and genealogy, adapted autoethnographic methods, and a kitchen table storytelling approach rooted in decolonial, intersectional, and critical race theories. With the support of family, a Métis Elder, and her husband who conducts Métis genealogy, I engaged in genealogical research and cultural reflection, and I documented my efforts to trace my lineage and examine the gaps, contradictions, and revelations in my family narratives.

Another important focus of this research was to respond to the challenges commonly faced by urban Indigenous youth who are disconnected from their communities. My findings offer recommendations for practitioners working with children, youth, and families to support young people in reconnecting with their roots and histories. By centering my personal narrative within broader sociopolitical contexts, my recommendations contribute to complexifying ongoing conversations around Métis identity, Indigenous resurgence, and the roles of practitioners in navigating these tensions.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Dedications	x
Territorial Acknowledgement.....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Researcher Positionality.....	3
CYC Praxis and Ethics.....	5
Thesis Overview	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	11
Métis Population Statistics.....	11
Métis History and Identity	13
Métis Definitions, Citizenship, and Governance	16
Urban Métis Youth	20
Identity Politics	23
Mental Health and Well-Being.....	27
Race Shifting.....	30
Pretendians.....	32
Chapter 3: Methodology	35
Research Question/Objectives	35
Theoretical Framework.....	37
Métis Studies.....	37
Decolonial Theory	39
Intersectionality.....	41
Critical Race Theory.....	42
Research Ethics.....	44
Researcher Qualifications	45
Research Involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People	46
Indigenous Engagement and Recruitment	47
Data Collection Methods	48
Story Analysis.....	49
Benefits, Inconveniences, and Risks of Harm to Participants	50

Benefits.....	50
Inconveniences.....	50
Risks of harm.....	51
Handshakes and Gifting.....	51
Free and Informed Consent.....	52
Anonymity and Confidentiality	53
Methods for Autoethnographic and Genealogical Research	54
Autoethnography.....	54
Genealogy	55
Kitchen Table Talks.....	56
Data Management	57
Self-Care	58
Summary	59
Chapter 4: Research and Findings	60
Engaging in Family Conversations.....	61
Applying for Citizenship and Completing Genealogical Research	62
Kitchen Table Talks.....	65
My Mother	65
Tracing heritage through family stories.....	66
Identity formation, belonging, and the journey home.....	68
Importance of cultural connections.....	68
Family complexities and conflicting narratives.....	70
Holding and sharing our stories with care.	71
Ethical considerations in a lifelong journey.....	71
Barb Hulme, Métis Elder	72
Métis identity, family connections, and belonging.....	73
Fostering Métis identity formation in children and youth.....	76
Exploring my family history within the Métis community.....	78
Navigating ancestry searches and genealogy work.....	79
Shared stories and community connections.....	81
Elder recommendations for future research.....	84
Elder support and encouragement.....	84
Reflections on Personal Findings.....	85
Healing Through Grief and Loss	85

The Impact of Lost Documentation	88
Navigating Gaps and Discrepancies in Ancestral Documentation	90
Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge	93
Lifelong Commitment to Uncovering Family Ancestry	96
Chapter 5: Implications for Practice	98
Métis Survival, Knowledge, Connections, and Resilience in Colonial Contexts	98
Strategies of Survival	98
Cultural Continuity, Resistance, and Resilience	100
Community, Kinship, and Navigating Displacement	103
Confronting Colonial Disruption on Identity Formation	106
Stories Guiding Reconnection	109
Affirming Métis Identity and Validating Experiences	112
Complexities and Challenges in Métis Genealogical Research	115
Reflections on Genealogical Research in Academia	115
Systemic and Institutional Delays in Reconnection	117
The Challenge of Reconnecting in Urban Spaces	118
Colonial Inaccuracies in the Archives	120
Implications and Recommendations for Practice	122
Praxis Grounded in Relational and Ethical Care	122
Reflecting on Research as Reconnection	126
Recommendations for Supporting Youth in Practice	128
1. Affirm identity journeys.	128
2. Support genealogical research with respect and care.	129
3. Address systemic barriers.	129
4. Build relational practice	130
5. Promote restorative intergenerational and kinship practice	131
Recommendations for Youth	131
Love, care, and compassion.	132
Integrity, respect, and intention.	132
Origin, meaning, and value	132
Courage, connection, and belonging	132
Summary	133
Chapter 6: Conclusion	134
Reflections on Family History, Truth, and (Re)connection	135

Moving Forward in a Good Way	136
References.....	138
Appendix A: HRE Approval Certificate.....	155
Appendix B: TCPS 2: CORE Certificate.....	156
Appendix C: Recruitment Script.....	157
Appendix D: Kitchen Table Talk Questions.....	159
Appendix E: Consent Form	160

Acknowledgements

I could write a whole thesis expressing my gratitude for those who have walked alongside me during this journey.

I want to begin by extending my deepest thanks to Sandrina Carere and Rob Hancock, who have been nothing short of instrumental in this work. Sandrina, your consistent encouraging text messages, phone calls during my moments of panic, and expertise in child and youth care practice have been monumental. Rob, your dedication to Métis studies is truly inspiring. Thank you both for pushing me to write something I feel so proud of and for challenging my writing every step of the way.

I would also like to thank my family: my mother, father, stepmother, grandmother, brothers, in-laws, and everyone else who provided constant check-ins, comedic relief during tough times, and unwavering belief in me.

This thesis would not have been what it is without the knowledge and guidance of Métis Elder, Barb Hulme. Thank you for being a guiding light for Métis children, youth, families, and communities and for those like me who are looking to reconnect. I would also like to thank Stan Hulme for dedicating so much time and energy to my genealogical research.

To my best friend, Yvonne, thank you for listening to my rants, providing guidance, and holding space for conversations about Métis studies, identity politics, and the process of uncovering one's ancestry. You are one of the reasons why I wanted to begin reconnecting with my family stories.

Thank you to all the friends who have motivated me. I am grateful to everyone who has held space not only for my story but also for those who have felt comfortable sharing their own.

Thank you to those who have validated this work and experience and echoed it through their own stories.

Lastly, to my incredible husband, Hassan, I would not have made it through this without you. Your encouragement, patience, gentle care, and unconditional love throughout my MA program have propelled me toward the finish line, which at times felt so far away. Your belief in me never faltered, and for that, I am endlessly grateful.

Dedications

For my mother, my late grandmother, my late great-grandfather, and all those who came before:

Thank you for starting this work, and for allowing me to continue it.

For all those who will come after me.

And for the urban and disconnected youth who are looking to (re)connect and (re)vitalize.

Territorial Acknowledgement

I grew up on Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo) and Stz'uminus (Chemainus/Ladysmith) territories and moved to the unceded territories of the Coast Salish Nations, including the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees & Esquimalt) and WSÁNEĆ (Tsawout, Pauquachin, Tseycum, & Tsartlip) peoples, nine years ago to start my educational journey. I would like to acknowledge with respect the peoples whose historical relationship with the land continues to this day. I am eternally grateful to the original stewards of this land and am incredibly thankful that I am able to live, work, learn, and play on these beautiful territories.

I would also like to acknowledge the Métis homelands and, more specifically, Sainte Rose du Lac, Manitoba, where my great-grandfather was born and raised. Although I have never lived on nor visited the homelands, our family stories are held and protected by this land, and for that, I am grateful.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I would like to begin by introducing and locating myself prior to delving into my thesis. This will help to give clarity as to the methodologies and theoretical frameworks that I utilized for the purpose of my research. My name is Kennedy Williams. I am a cisgender, able-bodied, white-passing woman who is situated in the lower-middle class. I am a research trainee completing my master's degree in child, youth, family and community studies at the University of Victoria. I am Scottish, British, Ukrainian, and Irish on my paternal side, and grew up being told that I was of mixed European ancestry and Métis on my maternal side.

I was told that I was Métis by my mother and grandmother, who had been told the same by my great-grandfather. I did not self-identify as Métis for the first twenty-one years of my life, and when I finally decided to reconnect with and revitalize the culture I had heard about throughout my adolescent years, I began to question and explore my heritage further. The first few years of my identification were spent decolonizing myself, connecting with the community, and discovering more about who the Métis people are and what it means to be Métis. I then decided I wanted to complete genealogical and ancestral research in order to apply for my citizenship through the Métis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC). This proved to be a challenging process, as my family has very little documentation linking us back to the Métis Nation. Some family members are no longer with us to verify information, and other relatives do not want to discuss our potential ancestry. Additionally, when I did find documentation, there were discrepancies that led me to question where our family stories originated and whether our ancestry is, in fact, Métis.

The roadblocks and distinct challenges I faced inspired my MA thesis topic, which is focused on exploring my lineage. My thesis involved a process of exploring my roots and asking

whether I am in fact Métis like my family has stated. It focused on genealogy, inspired by my experiences as a child and youth care (CYC) practitioner working with Métis youth who, like me, have been uncertain about how to begin exploring their ancestral roots, where to find resources, and how to navigate the research process. I conducted my research as part of the MA program in child, youth, family and community studies (CYFC) at the School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC), University of Victoria. The CYFC program requirement for MA research focuses on text-based research that does not involve human subjects; therefore, my research is focused on my own experience and genealogy, as well as on an analysis of literature on this topic to support a more streamlined research process. Using adapted ethnographic methods, I drew upon my own experiences as I politicized the conversations that were had, and not had, within my family about our Métis ancestry, while exploring my own genealogical research alongside a Métis Elder. I utilized a modified approach to autoethnography, critical family history, genealogical research, and interviews (kitchen table talks) to create a methodology rooted in decolonial, intersectional, and critical race theories, in order to explore my own experiences of growing up with stories of Métis ancestry.

In addition, my thesis offers recommendations for practitioners working with Métis youth and identifies ways in which Métis youth who want to reconnect with their Indigenous histories or identities can begin to engage in genealogical research. Through conducting this research, I was able to document community challenges while creating meaningful conversations regarding identity politics. My hope was to outline my experiences in order to propose concrete strategies for practitioners working with children and youth. Echoing the sentiments expressed by Brown (2019), my “journey is motivated by my sense of disconnection and a desire for better outcomes, not only for myself but for all Indigenous children and families and future generations” (p. 30). It

is important to note that in future research I would like to involve youth directly as participants to explore these topics further.

A note on terminology: In speaking about Métis young people who may not know about their culture and background, I am using key words and concepts such as disconnected, urban, reconnecting, revitalizing, discovering, uncovering, and youth seeking to (re)connect. While I recognize that these terms may not resonate with all individuals, I offer them as an entry point into the central themes of my research. These themes include genealogical and family history research, reconnecting and revitalizing Métis identity while living away from the homelands, conceptualizations of self and of urban Indigenous identity, and the role of frontline practitioners in supporting Métis youth as they navigate identity politics and the complexities of their journey toward self-discovery. Utilizing these terms allows me to better situate my research questions within the broader scope of literature I have accessed for this thesis, while acknowledging the nuances that may emerge when bridging academic discourse with the lived realities of youth.

I would also like to address the use of questions throughout my thesis. When exploring the literature and my research questions, I occasionally raise questions not as rhetorical devices but rather to deepen my analysis and further my process of critical inquiry. Posing questions has become essential to my research process, allowing me to highlight gaps and issues that may not have been fully considered. I view these questions as starting points for further exploration and critical reflection.

Researcher Positionality

The research I completed is heavily reliant on my personal and family history, as it explores my journey of navigating identity politics through ethnographic and genealogical research. While I grew up being told that I was Métis, I never really understood what that meant,

and I largely identified with whiteness until my early twenties. My grandmother and mother would mention our suspected ancestry here and there but would never discuss it further than that. My late great-grandfather was the last in our family to identify as Métis, and throughout conversations with my family, he was working towards obtaining his citizenship. Despite my great-grandfather working to apply for his citizenship and supporting my family in doing the same, we do not have any documentation outlining such, which has always left me feeling as if my Métis identity is in a state of uncertainty. My grandmother would speak about us being Métis, but I do not believe I ever heard her self-identify, nor did she actively engage with Métis culture. This resulted in a significant disconnect within our family lineage. Although my mother self-identifies as Métis, she does not participate in cultural practices due to a lack of community connections and knowledge about such traditions. Despite being informed of my Métis heritage during my upbringing, this aspect of my identity seemed largely overlooked. I recall asking my late grandmother whether my great-grandfather had ever discussed his Métis identity; she confirmed that he had. However, it appears that much of the associated cultural knowledge and storytelling has been lost over subsequent generations. My grandmother, unfortunately, did not provide much more information, other than stating that my great-grandfather had discussed his Métis heritage with her. That being said, my late grandmother was supportive of my desire to identify more closely with my ancestry, and she wanted to assist me throughout this journey.

During the course of my research for this thesis, I encountered a set of family traditions associated with our family name. Initially, these traditions were regarded as unique to our family, deeply cherished and integral to our identity. However, as I delved deeper into the subject matter and engaged in meaningful discussions with Métis relatives, I began to recognize a broader cultural significance. This additional research illuminated the realization that the traditions we

held dear were not merely familial artifacts; rather, they were manifestations of Métis culture and heritage. This insight highlighted a profound connection between my family's practices and the wider Métis community, even though we had not explicitly labeled these traditions as such. Consequently, this discovery prompted a re-evaluation of the ways in which cultural identity and tradition are understood and expressed within both my family and the larger Métis context.

I struggle with imposter syndrome in relation to identity, which I believe is in part due to the colour of my skin, as well as my general disconnection from my family's history, community, and language. This was an emotion that I had to navigate throughout the duration of my research, as I am white-passing, disconnected, urban, and do not have Métis documentation. Growing up with this identity heavily influences how I show up in the field of CYC, as well as in academics. Due to the colour of my skin, I do not experience exclusion to the degree that visibly racialized people do. These aspects heavily impacted my research approach, as I had to rely on those surrounding me such as family members and Elders to guide the research. While I attended to the realities of being white-passing, I am also very mindful that of course Métis identity exists beyond skin colour, and beyond only government documentation. I wanted to ensure that my research implications spoke to a diversity of Indigenous youth seeking to reconnect with their cultures who do experience intersections of daily racism and colonialism.

CYC Praxis and Ethics

I started my undergraduate degree in child and youth care in September of 2017. Since then, I have been working to align my practice with my own values and ethics to ensure I am being accountable to not only those I am working alongside, but myself as well. Although my praxis continues to evolve and adapts dependent on context, there are key values that help to guide my practice as a CYC practitioner.

I have worked in many different settings since beginning my undergraduate degree, including education, counselling, and health authorities. In each of these practice settings, I encountered children, youth, and families who were disconnected from community and their family history, had stories similar to mine, and were unsure of their ancestry and where to begin their process of reclaiming identity. I tried my best to support them through this, but it was challenging to do so when I had not completed the process myself. Although my practice settings have changed, one thing has always remained true, I am committed to ongoing learning and working towards decolonizing myself and the systems I work in to support Indigenous children and youth in a meaningful way. I advocate for them and strive to ensure that my practice allows them to feel heard, seen, and supported, while acknowledging that I operate within systems that have historically exhibited colonial ideologies and policies.

There are other Indigenous academics and frontline practitioners who have echoed their own disconnect, therefore reinforcing that this is not an isolated experience, especially while being of a specific generation, residing in urban areas, navigating mixed-ancestry, and having white privilege (Brown, 2019; Coon, 2020; Louie, 2024). Although the experiences of these individuals differ from mine due to various factors, such as belonging to different nations, varying levels of connection to their communities, different understandings of their family stories, and possessing status or the ability to register, I draw upon their work to situate my research within the broader context of frontline practitioners navigating experiences similar to mine. I aim to continue the conversation with specific reference to Métis identity.

It is important to recognize and acknowledge my own power and privilege while working alongside children, youth, families, and communities in this field. While working to discover more about my Métis ancestry and heritage, I am also mindful that I occupy intersections that

must be addressed. Although I have been told that I have Indigenous ancestry, I am also a settler. Michaela Louie (2024) states it is important to not overlook the other parts of oneself, “including the white power and privilege that [we] hold as part of [our] mixed-race identity” (p. 2).

McIntosh (2019) speaks to white privilege being somewhat like “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (p. 29), as it is something that white people are “carefully taught not to recognize” (p. 29). Whiteness has operated in subtle and unmarked ways by presenting itself as neutral or without color, therefore constructing a sense of otherness wherein everyone else is “marked” (Rodriguez, 2000, p. 1). The unquestioned and dominant status of whiteness has emphasized the “structural advantages associated with whiteness as a social identity and location” (Bonds & Inwood, 2016, p. 717), consequently comparing and measuring racialized bodies and categorizing them against whiteness. Rodriguez (2000) shares that “race is not a natural, fixed phenomenon but rather a social construct whose one constant or guarantee is its changing significance and effects given its evolving historical interaction and intersection with the political” (p. 5). While discussing white privilege in the context of being a practitioner in the CYC field, Coon (2020) shares that “it is [our] responsibility to carry this privilege, acknowledge it, and work to dismantle the structures that whiteness and settler colonialism uphold” (p. 6). Although whiteness often seems unacknowledged yet prevalent, I aim to name it, as well as the unearned privileges and dominance that those who have proximity to whiteness may experience.

While being accountable to my settler identity, it is important that I speak to my journey of (re)connecting and (re)vitalizing. Although I may feel as if I walk in two different worlds now, it was not always that way. I spent the first twenty-one years of my life not acknowledging or resonating with my suspected Métis ancestry. This was influenced by many different

components such as my skin colour, my lack of knowledge surrounding my ancestry and what it meant to be Métis, and my own internalized racism as someone who was living in a very white, colonial, and racist small town. It was not until I attended university and had an opportunity to work alongside Indigenous youth that I began to realize that my story was not unlike others. It was because of this experience that I wanted to further my knowledge regarding my ancestry, reconnect and revitalize with culture and community, and discover the ways in which I could support children and youth on their own journeys of genealogical research, citizenship applications, and discovering what it means to be Métis. Over the past seven years, I have been engaged in a process of learning and unlearning, challenging and decolonizing, reconnecting and revitalizing, discovering and unpacking, all while working to conceptualize myself as I step into the field as a CYC practitioner.

Thesis Overview

My thesis includes six chapters. In addition to this introduction/rationale, there is a literature review in Chapter 2, an outline of my methodology in Chapter 3, and my own personal findings regarding my family in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of my research for practice with children, youth, and families, translating my personal research findings into a summary of recommendations related to my field of study and practice as a frontline CYC practitioner. A final chapter (6) includes reflections and thoughts on moving forward and my conclusion.

In the following chapter (Chapter 2), I review the literature relating to Métis identity, urban Indigenous youth, reconnecting and revitalizing culture, and identity politics. This chapter identifies key themes and gaps in the existing research, particularly concerning youth aged 13–25. The literature review includes academic sources, grey literature, and policy documents,

providing context for my research and highlighting the need for further inquiry into Métis youth looking to reconnect with their identity, culture, and community.

In Chapter 3, I outline the transdisciplinary methodology utilized for my research and discuss my research questions, theoretical frameworks, research ethics, and methods of data collection and analysis. My methodology combines genealogical research, adapted autoethnographic methods, and storytelling interviews in the form of kitchen table talks, laying the groundwork for the personal research shared in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 details my personal journey of genealogical and identity-based research. I describe the research process, which consists of family discussions, document reviews, the completion of applications, and kitchen table talks. I complete the chapter with reflexive practice pertaining to the learning that occurred throughout the research process. This chapter represents a deeply personal exploration that grounds my broader inquiry in lived experience and guides the recommendations discussed in Chapter 5, where I offer suggestions for practice.

Chapter 5 builds on my findings, translating personal insights into practice-based recommendations for frontline practitioners working with children, youth, and families. It highlights ways practitioners can support youth on their journey of reconnection through culturally responsive, strengths-based approaches grounded in respect and relationality. I also offer recommendations for youth who are beginning the process of engaging with genealogical research, identity inquiries, and conceptualization of self.

My final chapter offers a summary of my research, reflections on my learning journey, and concluding thoughts on how to move forward. Chapter 6 emphasizes the importance of continued dialogue, community engagement, and practitioner support in fostering identity

exploration and cultural resurgence among youth on their journey of (re)connecting and (re)vitalizing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To develop my research focus and questions, I completed a review of demographic and census data related to Métis people in Canada, as well as a literature review on my topic. My definition of “youth” refers to those between the ages of 13 and 25, and this is where I focused my literature search related to the search terms of “youth” and “young adult.” To conduct the literature review, I used the University of Victoria’s online library database and searched for peer-reviewed articles that included combinations of the following search terms: “Indigenous,” “identity,” “Indigenous identity,” “urban Indigenous,” “Indigenous youth,” “identity politics,” “Métis identity,” “white-passing,” “genealogy,” “race shifting,” “Métis politics,” “mental health,” “pretendians,” “reconnecting,” “revitalizing,” and “self.” I also looked at grey literature such as websites, blogs and policy documents, statistics, and reports related to Métis identity and demographics. It was not hard to find articles discussing urban Indigenous youth, identity politics, Métis identity, and genealogical research. However, it was difficult to find articles that discussed all aforementioned topics within the same study or article, and in relation to youth or young adults. Because of this, I had to access literature that discussed each of the topics separately, and then document and critically assess the gaps and common threads. This helped create space for me to acknowledge where my research fit within existing knowledge and practice gaps, and how to better streamline my inquiry so that it addressed what is currently missing in terms of conversations regarding urban Métis identity politics and the ways in which one can begin reconnecting, revitalizing, and resurging culture and connection to community.

Métis Population Statistics

According to the 2021 census, approximately 624,220 people in Canada identified as Métis (Statistics Canada, 2023a). Based on data collected in the 2021 census, approximately

134,615 Métis people reside in Ontario, 127,470 reside in Alberta, 96,730 reside in Manitoba, 62,800 reside in Saskatchewan, 61,015 reside in Quebec, 21,090 reside in Nova Scotia, 10,170 reside in New Brunswick, 7,330 reside in Newfoundland and Labrador, 2,890 reside in Northwest Territories, 1,290 reside in Yukon, 840 reside in Prince Edward Island, and 120 reside in Nunavut (Statistics Canada, 2023a). Approximately 97,865 self-identified Métis people reside in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Indigenous youth aged 15–24 account for 17% of the Indigenous population in Canada (Anderson, 2021), and more specifically, 15.4% of the Indigenous population in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

In addition to a focus on BC statistics, I also focused on literature and statistics regarding Indigenous and Métis youth living on Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ territories, which is colonially known as Victoria, British Columbia. I focused on where I live and conducted my research because of the implications of my research for working with Métis youth and families in Greater Victoria.

According to the 2021 census, 397,237 people resided in the Victoria census metropolitan area in 2021, 19,460 of whom identified themselves as Indigenous, with Métis people accounting for 39.4% of this population at 7,665 (Statistics Canada, 2022c, 2023a). The Victoria census metropolitan area includes the township of Esquimalt, district of Oak Bay, district of Saanich, city of Victoria, town of View Royal, district of Central Saanich, district of North Saanich, town of Sidney, city of Colwood, district of Highlands, city of Langford, district of Metchosin, district of Sooke, Juan de Fuca electoral area, and First Nations reserves (Capital Regional District, n.d.). In the city of Victoria, there are 4,360 Indigenous people, with 15–24-year-olds accounting for 675 of them (Statistics Canada, 2023b). The 2021 census indicates that the Indigenous population in the Victoria census metropolitan area is younger than the non-Indigenous

population (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Additionally, the age group of 15–34 years comprises 33% of the Indigenous population in Victoria (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Approximately 3,075 Indigenous people in Victoria are aged between 15 and 24 (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

Data shows that the Indigenous population in Victoria is younger than the non-Indigenous population. However, there appears to be limited research and statistics specifically about Métis youth who may be disconnected from, or seeking to reconnect with, their Métis identities. This knowledge gap highlights the need for research that explores how Métis youth can feel heard, seen, and validated by those supporting them on their journey of cultural reconnection and revitalization. These people can include but are not limited to Métis people living on the homelands or in urban centres; Métis organizations such as Métis Nation British Columbia, Métis Nation Greater Victoria, and other chartered communities on Vancouver Island; local Indigenous organizations such as the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and child and family-serving agencies; schools and postsecondary institutions; local Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) communities and organizations; other urban and disconnected Indigenous youth, Elders, and knowledge keepers; or non-Indigenous folks.

Métis History and Identity

Exploring Métis identity is a complex and nuanced process. The Métis are “a nation of people whose homelands stretch from the northern shores of Lake Superior, northward, and westward, across a vast terrain of prairie, parkland, and forest” (Adese, 2021, p. 115). A general misconception about the Métis Nation often equates Métis identity with mixedness, which can create tensions when trying to define Métis identity. Additionally, there are politics surrounding citizenship, differing governing bodies throughout provinces, and self-Indigenization that make

the discussion of Métis identity a particularly sensitive topic. These are all topics I will visit throughout my literature review and larger thesis work.

Gaudry (2018) shares that “Métis are witnessing an increase in the number of self-identified ‘Métis’ individuals and groups lacking affiliation with long-standing Métis communities” (p. 162). The reason behind a growth in Métis identity claims can be explained in part by ongoing lack of clarity surrounding the definition of Métis identity (Gaudry, 2018). Métis identity has been misrepresented, relying more on the concept of racial mixing, reducing it to a label for those who are neither “white nor Indian” (Gaudry, 2018, p. 168). This identity that has been claimed by so many is largely rejected by the Métis Nation, as it does not account for the historical origins of the Nation as a whole (Gaudry, 2018). Gaudry (2018) tells us that Métis identity is “grounded in a common culture, common historical experience, and a common sense of self that emerged in the historic ‘North-West’” (p. 166). Adese et al. (2017) echo Gaudry’s claims of a widespread misconception of Métis identity, sharing that it “has been further mediated by the state, serving as a kind of floating signifier positioned between Indigeneity and whiteness” (p. 2). Adese et al. (2017) conclude that “it is no wonder that confusion abounds on behalf of non-Indigenous peoples with little connection to Métis histories, nationhood, and political struggle” (p. 2). Legault (2021) asserts that “Métis scholars, politicians, and community members would agree the questions of ‘Who is Métis?’ and ‘What does ‘Métis’ mean?’ are at the centre of contemporary Métis identity politics” (p. 81).

Vowel (2016) discusses the difference between *little-m métis*, which is “essentially a racial category,” and *big-M Métis*, which can be defined as “a sociopolitical definition” (p. 38). When someone asks a Métis person “Which one of your parents is an Indian?”, they are referring to little-m métis, which is used to describe someone who is “neither fully First Nations nor fully

non-Indigenous” (Vowel, 2016, p. 38). Although big-M Métis is rooted in the historical concept of mixture, meaning that intermarriage between European men and Indigenous women did occur, it resulted in the Métis emerging as a unique people who shared a common homeland, culture, and language (Vowel, 2016). Eventually these commonalities resulted in a distinct “national identity during a specific period of time in the history of Canada” (Vowel, 2016, p. 38).

Rob Hancock (2021) is a Métis scholar who has contributed to the discussion on Métis identity, stating that “Métis conversations about identity, belonging, and community are ongoing in family and community settings” (p. 40). Hancock (2021) explores central questions such as “what it means to be Métis outside of [the] homelands; how we recognize and take care of one another, including how we relate to each other; and how we are to hold ourselves and one another to account” (p. 40). These reflections stem from Hancock’s dialogues with family, colleagues, students, and Elders. Although discussions surrounding Métis identity often highlight the importance of the Red River as a standard example of Métis identity and history, Hancock (2021) stresses the need for a shift to “include the communities that emerged when people left Red River” (p. 41). He poses what he calls “a fundamental question about Métis identity” (pp. 41–42): “Are our identities tied to a specific place, or are they orientations, ways of being, [and] webs of relationships that can be practised elsewhere?” (Hancock, 2021, p. 42). A central concept that Hancock (2021) discusses while navigating these questions is the value of *wahkootowin*, which translates to “being a good relative” (p. 40). This concept is highlighted as foundational to Métis existence, underscoring the importance of kinship and relationality in defining Métis identity and responsibilities.

It is clear that in Métis communities, identity holds deep significance and serves as a pivotal force for cultural preservation, communal unity, and the ongoing resilience of a

distinctive and dynamic heritage. It is crucial to acknowledge the dynamic and contested nature of Métis identity, as many individuals are actively exploring and reconnecting with their Métis ancestry, emphasizing the fluidity of cultural affiliations in this diverse community.

Métis Definitions, Citizenship, and Governance

Although I cannot address every facet of Métis citizenship and governance in detail, I would like to provide a brief overview of the key organizations that define Métis ancestry, provincial governing bodies, chartered communities, and available citizenship statistics. To effectively advance my thesis, it is essential to contextualize the current political climate of the Métis Nation and address questions that have long been at the centre of policies and practices related to identity verification and documentation. I therefore provide a summarized account of Métis political history to provide a general understanding of why my topic is nuanced, complicated, and dependent on provincial authorities and how they assess Métis identity.

Prior to the formation of a national Métis representative body, the Métis Nation was represented by the Native Council of Canada, which is now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (Welch & Gallant, 2024). Although the Native Council of Canada was formed by the three Prairie Métis organizations who then invited non-status First Nations and Métis people from other provinces, the organization was unable to adequately be a voice for the Métis Nation, as it was “compromised in its goals and aspirations” due to a pan-Indigenous structure (Teillet, 2019, p. 438). In March of 1983, only eight days before a First Ministers’ conference meant to define and clarify the existing rights of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, leaders from the three prairie Métis organizations—Manitoba Métis Federation, Saskatchewan’s Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians (now Métis Nation Saskatchewan), and the Métis Association of Alberta (now Otipemisiwak Métis Government)—cut ties with the Native Council of Canada and

established the Métis National Council (MNC), which would serve as the Métis national governing body (Teillet, 2019; Welch & Gallant, 2024). Shortly following the formation of MNC, Métis organizations from British Columbia and Ontario were admitted (Welch & Gallant, 2024). Métis Nation Ontario (MNO) was established in 1993 (Métis Nation of Ontario, n.d.) and the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia was established in 1996 as a grassroots vision for what became Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) in 2003 (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-b). As stated on MNC's website,

Since 1983, the MNC has represented the Métis Nation nationally and internationally. It receives its mandate and direction from the democratically elected leadership of the MNC Governing Members. Specifically, the MNC reflects and moves forward on the desires and aspirations of these Métis governments at the national and international levels. (Métis National Council, n.d.-b, para. 3)

Citizenship, as presented on MNC's website, is defined in the following way: "Métis' means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation" (Métis National Council, n.d.-a, para. 3).

Despite MNC's involvement in Métis governance, political disputes have spanned the past few years, creating tensions in the Métis community. Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) chose to separate from MNC in 2021 over disputes that "revolved around the membership list of the MNO, which the MMF argued did not meet the requirements of the MNC" (Welch & Gallant, 2024, Controversy section, para. 4). Following this dispute, Métis Nation Saskatchewan (MNS) and Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) withdrew from MNC, with MNS stating "it

had concerns about the registered citizens of the MNO” (Welch & Gallant, 2024, Controversy section, para. 5), while MNBC “cited concerns regarding equitable governance and equal voice within the Métis National Council as the reason for leaving” (Welch & Gallant, 2024, Controversy section, para. 6). The Métis National Council now consists of Otipemisiwak Métis Government and Métis Nation Ontario, while MMF, MNS, and MNBC represent the interests of Métis people living in their respective provinces. Furthermore, an article written by Cierra Bettens (2025) asserted that MNC had shared a report on April 3, 2025, that aimed to assess the legitimacy of the seven Métis communities in Ontario, stating that they met the national definition that had been established by MNC and accepted by all current and former governing members. The day after the report was released, MMF, MNS, and MNBC released their own statements actively objecting what MNC had stated in their report (Bettens, 2025).

In British Columbia, MNBC plays a key role in Métis governance. Recognized by both the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada, MNBC serves as the official governing body for Métis peoples in the province (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-b). It represents the Section 35 rights of over 27,000 registered citizens, as well as 39 Métis chartered communities (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-b, n.d.-c). To become a registered citizen of MNBC, individuals must demonstrate their ancestral connections and cultural ties to Métis communities. This involves submitting a five-generation family chart, birth certificates for themselves, their parents, grandparents, and all Métis relatives born after 1901, a copy of their driver’s licence, and a passport-quality photo. Additionally, as MNC’s definition of citizenship states, one must be recognized and accepted by the Métis Nation and, more specifically, a Métis chartered community (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-a). Métis Nation British Columbia (n.d.-a) writes that the Métis chartered communities “are the foundation of the MNBC

governance structure” (p. 8). One of their key responsibilities is to “support the political and substantive positions of the MNBC including matters such as Métis citizenship, governance and self-government” (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-a, p. 8). Registering as a citizen with the Métis Nation of British Columbia grants access to various rights and services specific to Métis citizens.

Findings from the 2021 census indicate that 224,650 individuals reported belonging to a Métis organization or settlement through registration, which accounts for approximately 33% of the people who identified as Métis on the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2022a). According to the 2021 census, MNA has a total of 45,355 registered members, MMF has a total of 43,920, MNO has a total of 36,240, MNS has a total of 26,695, and MNBC has a total of 25,580 (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Out of the 97,865 self-identified Métis people living in British Columbia, 33,475 individuals reported that they were registered members of a Métis organization or settlement, with 25,580 reporting being registered to MNBC, and 7,180 reporting they were registered with a differing Métis organization or settlement (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The 2021 census data states that 94.3% of MNBC members live in British Columbia, while the other 5.7% live outside of province (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

In addition to these statistics outlining self-identified Métis demographics, it is important to examine the increase in “pretendians,” particularly those claiming Métis identity through tenuous ancestral connections, often from regions “where historical Métis communities never existed” (Gaudry, 2018, p. 164). This creates the understanding that Métis identity is complex, multifaceted, and reliant on connection to community and place. What does this mean for folks who have grown up disconnected from community? Gaudry (2018) claims that, “while not all Métis are born into these families and communities, Métis collectives are sites of repatriation as

well where those who have been disconnected from this living chain of Métis cultural, political, and social practice can be reintegrated into communal life among their living relatives” (p. 164). How does one begin to reconnect and reintegrate themselves into this living chain of Métis community, especially without the necessary supports to do so? This is a salient current issue and one that I revisit in more detail later in this literature review.

There are significant nuances, considerations, and layers to the topic of Métis identity that I would like to address in this thesis. However, I am aware that I will never be able to cover all of them within the scope of an MA project. My focus is on understanding my own family’s history while making connections to practice for Métis youth. The issue of Métis identity is incredibly complex, and I will return to it later in this literature review and throughout my thesis.

Urban Métis Youth

My research focuses on urban Métis identity and youth because of my own positionality and how it impacts my practice as a CYC practitioner. Through my experiences in this field, as well as my personal life, I have encountered numerous urban Métis youth and young adults. There are a growing number of Métis youth who are urbanized, which has implications for how Métis identity is defined and lived. As such, I wanted to understand how urbanization has impacted Indigenous identity historically.

The federal Indian Act system created notions of difference and otherness, excluding Indigenous communities from urban areas throughout Canada (Peters & Andersen, 2013). Colonial policies that dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their lands and confined them to reserves and settlements reinforced the dominant narrative that they belonged in rural spaces, as their ways of knowing, being, and doing were viewed as incompatible with urban centres (Newhouse & Peters, 2003). Neale (2016) shares that historically, authentic Indigenous identity

construction has tended to be “located first and foremost in rural spaces” (p. 15). However, demographics from the 2021 census have shown that out of the 1.8 million people who identify as Indigenous and reside in Canada, approximately 1,090,240 of them are currently living in urban centres as opposed to rural spaces (Government of Canada, 2024; Statistics Canada, 2024), showing a growth of 11.5% from 2016 to 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2024). I was unable to find an exact number or percentage of how many Métis people lived in urban areas from the 2021 census. However, the 2016 census data indicated that Métis were the most likely out of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit to live in a city, with 62.6% living in a metropolitan area (Statistics Canada, 2017). The migration of Indigenous peoples from reserves and rural homelands to urban centres “continues to be misconstrued as a sign that Indigenous culture has been abandoned in favour of assimilation into mainstream society” (Neale, 2016, p. 4). Neale (2016) shares that “urbanization ... is frequently equated with ‘whiteness,’ in turn creating a social divide between Indigenous peoples who live in urban and rural areas” (p. 6). It is sometimes argued that living in urban settings may weaken Indigenous identity and culture, due to both the geographical separation from ancestral lands and the reduced opportunities for connecting with other Indigenous community members (Neale, 2016). Research has shown that due to growing demographic diversity, migration, and mixing of cultures in urban centres, there are instances where Indigenous identity and culture can be at risk and reconciling that can be difficult in spaces that are not the traditional homelands of those looking to connect (Lawrence, 2004).

There are youth who are not only urban but also disconnected in that they might never have lived on their traditional homelands, learned their traditional language, or even identified as Indigenous for a significant portion of their lives, and thus may feel uncomfortable accessing Indigenous organizations due to their disconnect. The National Association of Friendship

Centres (2021) identified several key factors contributing to why Indigenous people may be disconnected from their communities or may be living in urban areas. These factors include, but are not limited to: maintaining family ties, especially following marriage, relationship breakdowns, or child welfare interventions; accessing employment, health care, and educational opportunities that may not be available in their home communities; post-incarceration relocation due to the inability to return home; colonial child welfare practices that separate Indigenous children from their communities; and seeking safety and social support while escaping domestic violence, bullying, structural violence, or homophobia (National Association of Friendship Centres, 2021). Additionally, frequent travel between urban centres and home communities, as well as potentially being born and raised in urban centres, plays a role in this disconnection (National Association of Friendship Centres, 2021).

Neale (2016) explored urban Indigenous identity in Victoria, British Columbia through conducting semi-structured interviews with 11 Indigenous women who were both staff and community members of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC). Throughout these interviews, multiple respondents noted “a physical and emotional disconnection between the urban way of life and the culture of their home communities” (Neale, 2016, p. 48), especially with the more time that they would spend away from home. When asked what Indigenous identity meant to her, a staff member at VNFC shared,

It’s really just knowing who I am and where I come from. When I work with families, I really try to get to know that piece and explore that with them. ...

Sometimes we don’t get very far if they haven’t grown up within their families.

Sometimes they were in foster care themselves or disconnected from their

families or there are a number of reasons why they don't want to open up to that part of their life. (Neale, 2016, p. 45)

There is great importance and value in maintaining traditional cultural practices (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017), but what does that look like for urban Indigenous youth if there are instances in which their identity and culture are at risk? There are organizations, such as VNFC, located on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen Nation in Victoria, British Columbia, which focus on supporting the health and resilience of Indigenous people living in urban areas by enhancing personal, familial, and community strength (Neale, 2016). Additionally, as previously mentioned, there are 39 Métis chartered communities in BC. Out of these 39, there are 7 located in Region 1, which is known as Vancouver Island and Powell River (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-c). These 7 chartered communities are Alberni-Clayoquot Métis Society, Cowichan Valley Métis Association, Métis Nation Powell River, Mid-Island Métis Nation Association, MIKI'SIW Métis Association, North Island Métis Association, and the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-c). It is stated on Métis Nation Greater Victoria's website that their purpose is to offer support, organize events, and advocate for the Métis community in the Capital Region while rebuilding and enhancing family, community, and cultural connections among Métis individuals (Métis Nation Greater Victoria, n.d.-b). Indigenous organizations may offer vital pathways to strengthen urban Indigenous people's connection to self and community, but how does a youth begin that process if they have never had a strong sense of self or community?

Identity Politics

Navigating identity can be emotionally taxing, mentally draining, spiritually burdensome, and politically charged. Ineese-Nash (2020) shares that, "identity is a complex construct to

define in any political climate, but even moreso in a context where identity and nationhood have been purposefully attacked through policy” (p. 11). There are intersections that can create politics regarding identity, especially for those who are navigating this world as a white-passing urban Indigenous person, creating a “complex negotiation of culture, race, and privilege” (Ineese-Nash, 2020, p. 10). Ineese-Nash (2020) tells us that, “Indigenous identities are intersectional, variable, and complex, formed through the experiences and discourses prevalent in people’s lives” (p. 11). These identities can be even more complex while having mixed-ancestry, as it is this this “‘in-between’ space of Indigenous and settler nationhood” that can contribute to both feelings of belonging and disconnect (Ineese-Nash, 2020, p. 10). Lacking documentation or citizenship can further complicate the already challenging journey of navigating identity, potentially intensifying internal or social conflict. It is important to note that there are a lot of mixed people with status who may not experience these complexities to the same degree, since their identity is documented and legitimized, and recognized by government and other authorities.

A study discussing the experiences of navigating racism and discrimination amongst Métis women, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse community members in Victoria, British Columbia shared that white-passing Métis individuals often face skepticism or misrecognition regarding their identity (Paul et al., 2023). These experiences can lead to internal conflict and undermine their connection to their Métis heritage, because they highlight how perceptions of identity are frequently tied to visible traits (Paul et al., 2023). Paul et al. (2023) share that “the experience of being white passing is not without its challenges. Métis participants reported negative impacts such as a lost sense of identity, tensions of ‘prizing’ whiteness, rooted in white supremacy, feelings of inadequacy, and fear when disclosing Métis identity” (p. 246). However,

despite these challenges, it was shared that while accessing health care, white-passing Métis individuals may withhold sharing their Métis ancestry as a means of protecting themselves from potential discrimination, and to access white privilege, with some participants claiming they had never experienced racism (Paul et al., 2023).

In their thesis on reclaiming Indigenous ancestry, Michaela Louie (2024) shares that as someone who is of mixed-race identity, they “have gained concrete social, educational and economic benefits and have been spared many experiences of overt racism and racial profiling due to ... white privilege” (p. 4). It is important to recognize that although colonialism has impacted the lives of white-passing mixed-race individuals in a multitude of ways, white privilege has allowed them to not experience racial profiling while accessing services such as health care and education, finding housing and employment, and moving through day-to-day life while eating at restaurants, walking around, travelling, and shopping, among many examples. These are important nuances of identity, positionality, and appearance that impact Métis identity, as Métis people’s experiences interact with broader structures of power, privilege, and oppression (Paul et al., 2023).

Emily Coon (2020) further addresses being an Indigenous person with white privilege, stating that,

Being mistaken as white or being unrecognizable as an ‘obvious’ Indigenous person is not marginalization. This does not make my life difficult. And I will not use my white privilege to justify the hurt I have felt from being told that ‘I don’t look like an Indian.’

(p. 6)

This point is echoed throughout Samantha Nock’s (2023) discussion on confronting colourism in Métis communities, as she states that the “unchecked colourism within the Métis Nation has left

the door open for the weaponization of whiteness by our own relatives and by white settlers” (White Métis and Colourism in Métis Communities section, para. 1). There is an importance in white-passing, white-seeming, or white-coded Métis folks not “holding our white fragility at our centre, as a way to scapegoat our role in upholding white supremacy in our communities” (Nock, 2023, White Métis and Colourism in Métis Communities section, para. 4). Throughout this discussion, Nock (2023) does not aim to challenge white passing Métis people’s identities or legitimacy, but rather, acknowledges that much like what was shared in Coon’s (2020) work, “when we navigate Indigenous spaces, and are questioned by our darker skinned relatives, that is not colourism. It is not lateral violence to be asked who we are and where we come from” (White Métis and Colourism in Métis Communities section, para. 3).

These discussions regarding identity and culture in social and political theories have resulted in “social conservative critics rally[ing] against the rise of so-called ‘identity politics’ because of its perceived threat to majority rule” (Coulthard, 2009, p. 28). Identifying as Indigenous is in fact a political act, as settler colonialism has sought to erase Indigeneity (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Ineese-Nash (2020) shared that “resistance to colonial mechanisms of erasure, genocide, and assimilation have redefined our identities as not only Indigenous but also a direct adversary to colonial advancement which has shaped our responsibilities” (p. 14).

Many Indigenous people carry the responsibility of preserving cultural knowledge that settler colonialism sought to destroy. As emphasized by Ineese-Nash (2020), for many Indigenous people, having the opportunity to create a cultural identity can offer a sense strength and pride; however, when the environments where cultural knowledge is shared become exclusionary or fail to reflect lived realities, this potential is undermined. It is imperative to understand that while moving through this world as an urban, white-passing, mixed-ancestry

Indigenous person “identity [is] a politicized construct that continues to surveil Indigenous bodies, marking them as threats to settler advancement” (Ineese-Nash, 2020, p. 10). How does one walk in two worlds, both Indigenous and settler, both disadvantaged and privileged, both decolonizing and desettling? These are complex, politicized, ethically ambiguous questions for white-passing Indigenous people to navigate, since they must critically engage with their responsibilities to both their communities, as well as their responsibilities in relation to the broader historical and ongoing oppression of both Black and Indigenous peoples (Ineese-Nash, 2020).

Mental Health and Well-Being

Another reason this research is important is its relevance to discussions about the mental health and well-being of urban and disconnected Indigenous youth. Mental health and substance use issues are significantly more prevalent among Indigenous communities in Canada than in the general population (BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres [BCAAFC], 2020). However, BCAAFC (2020) shares that, “data about the wellness of Indigenous people who reside in urban areas is scarce, often not up-to-date, and fails to adequately reflect urban experiences” (p. 11). Although urban Indigenous populations are underrepresented in research on wellness, “the most direct and readily measurable impacts are poverty, inadequate housing, limited transportation, racism and discrimination, social exclusion and lack of access to culturally safe or relevant healthcare” (BCAAFC, 2020, p. 12). It is important to note that many Indigenous people move to urban centres for health-related reasons, yet “urban Indigenous peoples often feel that they have unmet health care needs as a result of a lack of accessibility, availability and acceptability” (BCAAFC, 2020, p. 12).

In 2019, a report on Métis youth's health was published by the McCreary Centre Society in partnership with the Métis Nation of British Columbia (Smith et al., 2019). The data collected for the purpose of this report came from the 2008, 2013, and 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), which is a voluntary survey administered to students across the province who are in grades 7–12 (Smith et al., 2019). There were 38,000 people aged 12 to 19 who completed the BC Adolescent Health Survey, and of those 38,000, 3% identified as Métis (Smith et al., 2019). It is stated in this report that “around 1 in 5 Métis youth (21%) completed the survey in a rural school and 79% in an urban one” (Smith et al., 2019, p. 10). Although majority of Métis youth signified that their mental health was good or excellent, they were less inclined than their non-Métis counterparts to view their mental health positively, with ratings of 61% compared to 73% (Smith et al., 2019). In addition to Métis youths self-assessed mental health and well-being, it is noted that compared to non-Métis youth, they are more prone to experiencing the following mental health conditions: “Anxiety Disorder or panic attacks (33% vs. 18%), Depression (27% vs. 15%), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD; 14% vs. 7%), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; 7% vs. 3%), and a substance use addiction (5% vs. 3%)” (Smith et al., 2019, p. 28). According to Smith et al. (2019), 27% of Métis youth indicated they did not receive the mental health services and supports that they believed they needed during the previous year. The report shares that throughout the duration of the year prior, 24% of Métis youth had suicidal ideation, while 8% had attempted suicide (Smith et al., 2019).

Smith et al. (2019) presented findings related to the healthy development of youth, which emphasized importance on family, school, community, and other supportive relationships (Smith et al., 2019). For the purpose of my thesis, I reviewed the data concerning community

connections. As Smith et al. (2019) noted, “youth who had positive relationships with Elders and other adults were more likely to feel connected to their community” (p. 66). Additionally,

80% of those who felt quite a bit or very much connected to their community reported good or excellent mental health, compared to 61% of those who felt somewhat connected and 33% of those who felt a little or not at all connected to their community. (Smith et al., 2019, p. 66)

The BC AHS had included questions about connection to land, with 50% reporting that they felt connected often or always, 33% reporting that they sometimes felt connected, and 17% reporting that they very rarely or never felt connected (Smith et al., 2019). The 50% of youth who had reported that they almost always felt connected to land were more likely to report their mental health as good or excellent (Smith et al., 2019).

Lines et al. (2019) tell us that “social determinants of health in an Indigenous context also include unique structural (or foundational) determinants such as history, political climate, economics and social contexts” (p. 1). In Indigenous contexts, strong social connections, including relationships, a sense of community, and interconnectedness, are central to shaping health outcomes and well-being (Lines et al., 2019). BCAAFC (2020) states that, “while cultural discontinuity is associated with negative mental health outcomes, cultural continuity promotes positive mental health” (p. 11). It is imperative to explore these determinants of health and well-being from the perspective of Indigenous youth, as almost half of the Indigenous population in Canada is under the age of 25 (Lines et al., 2019). There are a multitude of reasons that may contribute to Métis youth being disconnected, one of them being the effects of colonialism, which is “considered to be the most important determinant of health for Indigenous Canadians” (Lines et al., 2019, p. 2).

In addressing the statistics of Indigenous youth's perceived mental health in Canada, the limited data regarding urban Indigenous people's wellness, as well as relationships and connection to culture being identified as key determinants of health by Indigenous youth, my research speaks to the mental health and well-being needs of Métis youth. By engaging with existing data on youth mental health and well-being, my research highlights the critical role of frontline practitioners in supporting youth through processes of (re)connection and cultural (re)vitalization. This analysis informs the concrete practice recommendations I present in Chapter 5, which serve as a starting point for building the capacity of practitioners to improve sociocultural and mental health outcomes for youth.

Race Shifting

Several growing issues in Métis communities include misrepresentation, appropriation, self-Indigenization, and the formation of Métis organizations that lack ties to the Métis national governing body. These political dynamics have made discussions around Métis identity multifaceted and often tense, with differing views influenced by individuals' connections to the Métis Nation and their understanding of its history and governance.

Race shifting, or self-Indigenization, is a process that involves white French-descendants inventing and claiming an "Indigenous" identity. This is particularly important to my topic, as the number of individuals identifying as Métis in Eastern Canada has increased dramatically in recent years (Leroux & Gaudry, 2017). Leroux and Gaudry (2017) state that,

Rather than a spike in birth rates, almost all of the increase is due to white Franco-Québécois and Acadian settlers 'becoming' Indigenous. To go along with these numbers, nearly 30 'Métis' organizations were founded in both provinces during roughly the same period. (para. 2)

Leroux and Gaudry (2017) caution that these emerging communities formed through self-Indigenization “erase actual Indigenous communities by denying them the ability to determine their own membership and narrate their own histories” (Race-shifting section, para. 5).

Leroux (2019) discusses the social phenomenon of the “shifting of otherwise white, French descendants in Canada ... into an Indigenous identity” (p. 1). It is important to clarify that Leroux’s book does not focus on people with Indigenous ancestry who have experienced dispossession at the hand of colonial policies, therefore resulting in disconnection, racial mixing, and efforts spanning multiple generations to restore ties. Rather, Leroux’s (2019) focus is on “white French-descendant people using an Indigenous ancestor born between 300 and 375 years ago as the basis for a contemporary ‘Indigenous’ identity” (pp. 1–2). In his analysis of three major regions of Quebec, Leroux (2019) critiques how the “logic of lineal descent has emboldened individuals to claim an Indigenous identity as a strategy to oppose Indigenous land claims” (p. 215). Leroux’s (2019) work raises the critical point that race shifting is not merely an issue of personal identity but a strategic maneuver that can affect land and treaty rights and political discourse.

Leroux (2019) observes that “genealogical research is at the centre of the race-shifting process, as ancestors are invariably put to a variety of different social and political uses” (p. 27). Yet, an ancestral connection alone does not define what it means to be family, does not equate to kinship, and does not fully explain the nature of being related (Leroux, 2019). Rather than engaging with Indigenous understandings of belonging, race shifters tend to rely on genealogical ties as the foundation of their kinship claims, reinforcing the centrality of blood in their assertions of identity (Leroux, 2019). This genealogy-centric approach tends to disregard the complex realities of Indigenous identity. Race shifters claim a legitimacy to speak for and act as

Indigenous peoples, therefore solidifying colonial logics that “white society can claim, appropriate, manipulate, or outright own Indigenous lifeways without consequence” (Leroux, 2019, p. 220). The trend of race shifting reinforces the distorted idea that Métis identity is primarily about mixedness, which is explicitly rejected by the Métis Nation. By basing claims on distant Indigenous ancestry rather than on a shared culture and historical experience, race shifters contribute to the erasure of the Métis Nation’s distinct identity. This further complicates ongoing struggles for recognition, self-determination, and sovereignty.

Pretendians

The concept of pretendians refers to someone “who falsely claims to have Indigenous ancestry, who fakes an Indigenous identity, or who digs up an old ancestor from hundreds of years ago to proclaim themselves as Indigenous” (National Indigenous Identity Forum, 2022, as cited in Kolopenuk, 2023, p. 469). Pretendians have become increasingly harmful to Indigenous peoples, since individuals lacking direct Indigenous ancestry or lived experience often perpetuate inaccurate portrayals and damaging assumptions about Indigenous identity (Kolopenuk, 2023). In postsecondary settings, there are instances in which resources dedicated to Indigenous students, staff, faculty, and researchers have been misappropriated by pretendians, therefore creating a further struggle against colonialism for Indigenous folks (Kolopenuk, 2023). Institutions are now creating policies related to identity documentation, identification, and fraud, which identifies this is becoming a salient legal issue. It also raises complex questions for those people who are mixed, who are reclaiming their identity, and/or who are undocumented.

Dalhousie University issued a report addressing how the institution should navigate false claims to Indigenous identity, as a means to “ensure non-Indigenous people aren’t taking advantage of resources and opportunities specifically meant for Indigenous people” (Chisholm,

2024, para. 4). The report suggested that people submit their federally issued status cards or written confirmation of membership; however, Chisholm (2024) notes that Indigenous scholars Naomi Metallic and Cheryl Simon had warned that this process could harm staff, students, and faculty. Metallic and Simon (2023) published a human rights and legal analysis of the Dalhousie report, sharing nine main points of concern, with two of them making note of how the verification process “fails to support Indigenous self-determination over identity because it centers Indigenous identity on official federal government recognition,” overlooking those who otherwise have “legitimate, legally-supported claims to being Indigenous” (p. 3). Metallic and Simon (2023) assert that, “the proposed verification process ... is not in keeping with constitutional law, domestic and international human rights, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (p. 3).

When discussing the nuances of documentation in reference to my thesis, it is important to acknowledge that there are youth, adults, and Elders who have yet to discover more about their ancestry due to various contributing factors that I will outline further in Chapters 4 and 5. A lack of knowledge leaves members of this demographic without the formal documentation needed for verification processes. Some individuals may otherwise meet the full criteria for registration, but due to factors such as family disconnection, political conflict, organizational policies, differences in provincial jurisdictions, and issues of self-determination, they may not want to engage in acquiring official government recognition.

Seeking out individuals who commit identity fraud is important and can battle racism and promote social justice. A separate issue is when some individuals who are targeted may be those who are on their journey of reclaiming and discovering their ancestry, as opposed to those who are falsely assuming and appropriating Indigenous identity. Colonialism sought to destroy

Indigeneity, and although there are people trying to claim Indigenous identity for the “benefits,” there are also those who are looking to reconnect and revitalize as a way to resist the very real historical colonial impacts of assimilation and cultural genocide.

I believe it is imperative to have open, transparent, and honest conversations regarding these complex and nuanced issues of lack of documentation, without the fear of being labelled as a pretendian. I grew up in a family where some family members consistently and firmly claimed that we have Métis ancestry, while other members have just as firmly contested this claim. While my immediate family has identified as Métis, my family does not have official Métis documentation or paperwork and so the question of my Métis identity has always been unresolved. For years, I have felt deep anxiety and imposter syndrome while identifying as Métis, which created an even deeper anxiety surrounding the idea of genealogical research. I was always afraid of what I would find out, and what people would think of me should the results show that I have no Métis ancestry after all. However, the longer I have engaged in this field, the more I have come to realize that this is not an isolated experience.

There are many families in Canada with histories of passing for white, who have hidden their Indigenous identity for generations as a means to survive. There are others who feel the same as I do, and in doing this research I am working to create open and honest conversations regarding identity and the complexities that can arise while being disconnected. This is particularly important for young people who are striving to develop their identities and ethically access meaningful cultural and community connections.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Throughout this chapter I explore the multidisciplinary methodology and conceptual framework that I adopted for the purpose of my research. I begin by presenting my research questions and objectives, followed by a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that helped to inform my approach. I then address the research ethics observed in this thesis, and describe the methodological approach and data collection and analysis methods. Together, these elements establish the foundation for Chapter 4, where the methodology is applied.

Research Question/Objectives

My project title is (Re)connecting and (Re)vitalizing: Métis Identity and Conceptualization of Self. My research explored the broad question of how urban Métis youth, and young adults, including myself, who are disconnected from their identities, can begin to ethically engage in genealogical research and access the necessary support to create meaningful conversations regarding the nuanced and layered aspects of identity politics. The objectives of this research were to:

1. Document, critically explore, and politicize the conversations that were had, and not had, in my family while exploring my own genealogical research.
2. Create a road map and discussion of implications for children and youth who are looking to discover and/or reconnect with their ancestry and culture, as well as for frontline practitioners working with youth.

My methodology utilized a multi-methods design consisting of qualitative and Indigenous methods. I proposed an intersectional, multifaceted methodology in recognition that my topic and identity are also deeply layered and multifaceted. I utilized methods drawn from both Western qualitative traditions (i.e., adapted autoethnography/life history, genealogy,

archival research), as well as Métis and Indigenous research traditions (i.e., storytelling, oral genealogy, kitchen table talks/relational circle work). This multidisciplinary methodology aligned with my research objectives, questions, and approach as they are either methods that rely on and explore the self and identity in the context of community and history and/or they are guided by Indigenous knowledge and protocols.

My research questions are deeply interconnected for me, as I navigated the complexities of my identity in my youth and now carry them forward as a frontline practitioner working with Indigenous communities and young people facing similar challenges. There is a notable scarcity of resources on these issues, both for Métis youth and for those working in supportive roles for Indigenous youth. Reflecting on my own family history, I understand that there were reasons behind being told I was Métis, but these explanations were often vague, with little conversation or guidance about what that identity truly meant. To politicize these conversations—both those that were had and those that were avoided—means applying a critical lens drawn from decolonial theory, intersectionality, and critical race theory to examine how racism, colonialism, white privilege, lateral violence, and dominant narratives around Indigenous peoples have shaped my family's experience. These forces have created environments in which my family did not feel safe, comfortable, or secure in embracing their identity, exploring what that could entail, or delving into genealogical research.

For these reasons, the majority of the research was autoethnographic in nature. Additionally, I consulted with a Métis Elder and gathered information from my own family, specifically my mother, as it relates to my ancestry and family genealogy. This information guided my genealogical research, the storytelling of my own identity and family history, and the findings for supporting other Métis youth in their genealogical journey. My findings raise

awareness about the importance of genealogical and life history research for Métis youth by sharing the knowledge gathered in several ways. My thesis includes a final chapter on implications that can be shared widely with organizations and community members, including youth.

Theoretical Framework

The issue of identity politics, and addressing undocumented or hidden Métis identity in particular, is a complex and constantly emerging research topic that requires a nuanced, multi-faceted theoretical lens. Because of this, I had to employ a transdisciplinary conceptual framework drawn from critical theories including decolonial, critical race, and intersectionality theories, as well as Métis studies. This conceptual framework helped to inform my methodology, analysis, and personal journey through the topic of exploring urban Métis identity.

Métis Studies

Métis studies has only recently begun to shift, specifically in the past decade (Andersen, 2021). Much of what passed as Métis studies previously was “firmly rooted in the academic discipline of history, which tended to position the Métis as pawns in larger imperial (and, later, national) games” (Andersen, 2021, p. 31). However, Andersen and Adese (2021) share that “Métis studies has taken a distinctive and positive turn toward research by and for the Métis people” (p. 3). This has been a result of a growth in Métis scholars spanning the past two decades, as well as a population increase of Métis peoples (Andersen & Adese, 2021).

Contemporary Métis studies addresses issues affecting Métis communities, while also engaging with Métis peoples’ specific legal and political relationship to the Canadian state (Gaudry, 2021). This proves to be difficult, as one must begin to undertake the challenging task of making sense of Métis legal and policy history, which is “anything but clear” (Gaudry, 2021,

p. 214). Gaudry (2021) shares that “Métis studies is firmly committed to exploring the specific issues of its people and to contributing to their self-determining capacities through relevant and detailed analysis of the people’s definitive historical and contemporary experiences” (p. 214). Métis studies scholars now hold a commitment to fostering meaningful relationships and exchanging knowledge in ways that support education on matters important to Métis communities, as there are “few people [who] feel comfortable teaching about Métis issues because few people have learned about Métis issues” (Gaudry, 2021, 216). Métis studies has adopted a Métis-centric approach, meaning that “historical and contemporary Métis voices are given the authoritative power to narrate and explain their own experiences” (Gaudry, 2021, p. 219). According to Gaudry (2021), “Métis-centrism is perhaps the definitive quality of current Métis studies and is a vital part of the field’s future” (pp. 219–220).

It was through applying and analyzing Métis studies, and more specifically, the use of research done by and for the Métis people that I began to unpack the central themes of my thesis, being (re)connecting and (re)vitalizing through decolonization at the personal level, conceptualization of self, and community building and development. Métis studies engages with both past and present experiences of Métis communities to support their ongoing efforts towards self-governance and autonomy (Gaudry, 2021). Engaging with Métis studies has allowed me to deepen my understanding of the complexities surrounding Métis identity, documentation, and citizenship. Additionally, it has enabled me to position my research as a contribution to broader efforts to reclaim Métis narratives, resist appropriation, and support the Nation’s ongoing sovereignty and resurgence.

Decolonial Theory

Aníbal Quijano's (2007) foundational work on decolonial theory introduced a critical distinction between colonialism and coloniality. He conceptualized colonialism as a political order driven by systemic oppression, whereas coloniality refers to the enduring cultural and institutional legacies of European domination (Quijano, 2007). Walter D. Mignolo (2011) built on Quijano's insights, highlighting how coloniality is intimately tied to the European constructs of rationality and modernity, which continue to shape global power structures.

Through utilizing Quijano's (2007) work on rationality and modernity, Mignolo (2011) further discusses the intimacies of modernity and coloniality, arguing that "modernity," originating in Europe, is often presented as a narrative that builds Western civilization by focusing on its triumphs. However, this narrative conceals its darker counterpart, coloniality, which remains hidden in its construction (Mignolo, 2011). The concept of coloniality, originally introduced by Quijano in 1992 as the "patrón colonial/moderno de poder," was later translated into English as the "colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo & Bussmann, 2023). According to Osborne (2023), "the colonial matrix of power includes four domains that Europeans sought to control and subsequently use to reformat their colonies with the assistance of rationalizations based in religion, philosophy, and science" (p. 80). These four domains are the control of the economy, authority, gender and sexuality, and knowledge (Mignolo, 2011).

According to Mignolo (2011), the primary objective of decoloniality, or decolonial theory, is to break away from the colonial matrix of power. Osborne (2023) offers a concrete understanding of decolonial theory grounded in Mignolo (2011) and Quijano's (2007) work, stating that decolonial theory has a "respect for place and a refusal to accept claims that people who are not reproducing the European notion of historical development are therefore trapped in

the past. As a result, it does not cut off Indigenous peoples from their own traditions and histories” (p. 82).

In applying decolonial theory to my research, it is crucial to recognize that the theory advocates for a reevaluation of global power dynamics and provides a framework for resisting the persistent colonial structures that continue to influence contemporary society. Decolonial theory is heavily informed by the everyday practices of Indigenous people who engage in “ongoing, radical resistance against colonialism that includes struggles for land redress, self-determination, healing historical trauma, cultural continuance, and reconciliation” (Driskill, 2010, p. 69).

Driskill (2010) further discusses decolonization, stating that “instead of seeing decolonization as something that has a fixed and finite goal, decolonial activism and scholarship ask us to radically reimagine our futures” (p. 70).

In completing genealogical research alongside a Métis Elder, I am actively decolonizing myself and the systems of colonialism that have permeated my family. It is by discovering more about our ancestry and actively engaging in conversations about it that I am being honest and vulnerable in accessing this part of our history, rather than hiding from it. Additionally, youth looking to reconnect and having conversations regarding the nuanced layers regarding identity politics is inherently decolonial. Applying decolonial theories to the research I am conducting in relation to my family, Métis youth’s identities, and identity politics has helped to guide the research, as colonial structures of power have been so pervasive in relation to Indigenous family identity, genealogy, and citizenship. Although using decolonial theory in a study does not in itself produce decolonization, it does entail a valuable process of reimagining youth’s futures and discovering ways in which they can begin to engage in contesting the power of colonialism over their identities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory, a concept coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989), is a framework coming from Black feminist theory that conceptualizes the relations between social categorizations such as gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and others that construct our identities and social locations. Vigoya (2023) shares that intersectionality “acknowledges that every person ... exists in a framework of multiple identities. ... An intersectional approach highlights the way in which there is a simultaneous interaction of discrimination as a result of [these] multiple identities” (p. 95). Intersectionality examines how systems of oppression operate through overlapping identities, exposing the ways in which structural inequalities shape lived experiences, while also seeking to challenge and dismantle entrenched forms of privilege and power (Njeze et al., 2020).

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, studies show that Indigenous adolescents living in cities across Canada often face greater challenges and hardships than youth from non-Indigenous backgrounds (Njeze et al., 2020). It is important to recognize that “individual culpability is not an adequate or appropriate explanation for such health and social inequities” (Njeze et al., 2020, p. 2001). There are intersecting social, political, economic, and historical forces that contribute to the injustices experienced by Indigenous youth in urban contexts (Njeze et al., 2020).

In a case study conducted by Njeze et al. (2020), it was shared that an intersectionality of resilience framework should be employed, as it works to address and fully understand how social processes can intersect and support youths’ wellness. This specific framework critically reframes intersectionality to include “strength-based perspectives of overlapping individual, social, and structural resilience-promoting processes” (Njeze et al., 2020, p. 2001). Njeze et al. (2020) suggest that utilizing an intersectional lens informed by resiliency can work to “expose multiple

layers of inequity and disadvantage occurring from intersecting forms of oppression, but also to encourage the inclusion of complex, strengths-based understandings of individual and social resilience promoting processes” (p. 2003). This framework has helped me to reconceptualize loss, shame, and silence when it comes to young people reclaiming Métis identity. By engaging in genealogical research and critically analyzing their family history to discover more regarding their ancestry, Indigenous youth not only acknowledge the oppression and disadvantages they may face, but also the “expressions, explorations, interactions, or opportunities for social performances that reinforce self-determination, agency, and wellness in life-affirming ways” (Njeze et al., 2020, p. 2015).

Finally, intersectionality shows that privilege is always connected to the oppression and disadvantages experienced by other groups, meaning it cannot be understood in isolation (Vigoya, 2023). When utilizing intersectionality to address my own positionality and family history, I have employed it as a framework to not only recognize the oppression that I may experience as someone who occupies certain intersections, but also the power and privilege that I have an accountability to address.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged in the mid-1980s when a group of legal scholars sought new perspectives on race (Kennedy, 2018). Rather than a single article driving the movement, it was a compilation of works from over twenty scholars, published in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, that helped establish its foundational ideas (Kennedy, 2018). CRT is significantly informed by the foundational principles of two preceding movements, critical legal studies and radical feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Vaught and Castagno (2008) share that “central to CRT is the notion that racism is a pervasive, systemic condition, not merely an individual pathology. Racism is a vast system that structures our institutions and our relationships” (p. 96). CRT is a theoretical framework that is grounded in three fundamental ideas: “that racism is pervasive; that racism is permanent; and that racism must be challenged” (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 96). These basic tenets of CRT hold that firstly because racism is not aberrational, it is challenging to address or overcome because it often goes unacknowledged, meaning that it is an everyday experience of most BIPOC individuals (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Secondly, many parts of society have little motivation to abolish racism, as it advances the interests of white people at the expense of people of colour (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). And thirdly, critical race theory argues that races are social constructs shaped by thought and relationships, rather than biological or genetic realities, as races are ultimately “categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9).

Throughout this thesis, I have applied CRT to analyze and understand how the dominant narratives, whether related to our ancestry or not, that my family continues to navigate, have been shaped by the systemic racism embedded in our structures and institutions. Integrating CRT into my work provides a more nuanced perspective on the complexities of identity formation, particularly as it pertains to race and the ways in which racial identities are fluid, relational, and socially constructed. This understanding opens space for considering how identity is shaped not only by individual experiences but also by the historical and institutional contexts in which we exist. Moreover, using CRT allows me to examine the racial power dynamics at play in relation to my own whiteness as I share space and engage with racialized individuals. CRT not only

compels me to face realities about privilege, but also motivates me to actively engage in dismantling discriminatory systems.

Research Ethics

There are specific ethical guidelines that a graduate student attending the University of Victoria must follow while completing research with human participants. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS), which is a collective guideline that was developed by Canada's three federal research agencies—the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)—acts as an ethical framework for research ethics boards and university-based researchers (Government of Canada, 2022). Throughout the document are three key principles: (1) respect for persons; (2) concern for welfare; and (3) justice (Government of Canada, 2022). Additionally, there are frameworks pertaining to Indigenous research ethics at the University of Victoria that outline principles of protection, participation, and partnership (Faculty of Human and Social Development, 2003).

While conducting this research, I worked alongside a Métis Elder and her husband, as well as some of my own family. It was my hope that through building relationships and trust, the research team, consisting of myself, my supervisor, my committee, and the Elder advisor, would resemble an extended family (Baskin, 2011). As I conclude my thesis research, I can say that the research team indeed resembled an extended family, composed of individuals who recognize the significance of this research. This research aims to benefit practice with Métis youth and families. I look to the youth and practitioners that this research will impact, and my family as

well, as this work has been done for all my relations. These aspects of my research were central to the design of my research ethics framework and procedures.

I began my human research ethics (HRE) application through the Research Administration Information System in August of 2024 and after a few rounds of revisions with my supervisor, I submitted the completed application on October 21, 2024, and it was approved on November 25, 2024. I started recruitment and data collection immediately upon receiving ethics approval. My approval certificate can be found in Appendix A.

In this section, I will present the information I submitted to the HRE board. My appendices include all appropriate documentation that was submitted for the purpose of this ethics application.

Researcher Qualifications

In addition to completing all required research-related requirements in my program, I completed the *TCPS 2: CORE-2022* tutorial and received a certificate in order to satisfy the ethics training requirements (see Appendix B). The online tutorial CORE-2022 (Course on Research Ethics) is an introduction to the TCPS 2 for the research community. All UVic research team members who intend to engage in research with human participants are required to complete the Course on Research Ethics, CORE 2022.

Alongside my ethics training, as a requirement for my graduate course work, I worked as a research trainee with the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. This experience allowed me to further my knowledge and competencies in a community-academic partnership, as well as qualitative and quantitative study instrument design, data collection and analysis, and knowledge mobilization. Our team completed several key assignments, including a partnership agreement, the design of research tools, and a research brief. These were not just for academic

credit, they were also created to support the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness' work and programming.

Research Involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People

As my research speaks to very sensitive topics in Métis communities, I had to be mindful that in the past, research has been harmful as it has been exploitative in nature. Historically, research was used to further oppress Indigenous peoples which led to the understanding that Western approaches to research do not acknowledge the interconnectedness of the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of Indigenous perspectives (Ormiston, 2010). Non-Indigenous people became experts on Indigenous people and exploited their lands and knowledge in order to benefit themselves and their careers (Wilson, 2003). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) shares that, “the ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples” (p. 1). Within Western frameworks, “research systems reward individual researchers for getting funding, publishing papers, etc., rather than for their research approaches or the impact their research has on communities” (F. Mawani, personal communication, December 15, 2022). In contrast, Indigenous people utilize research not simply to generate data, but also to generate change that will in return benefit their community (Milne et al., 2016). There is a great importance on recentering Indigenous ways of doing research, because, as Ormiston (2010) writes, “it benefits our people, communities, and our Nations” (p. 53).

My research specifically references Métis communities, homelands, people, languages, histories, and culture. Criteria for participation included belonging to a Métis Nation, community, or organization, as well as involvement from urban Métis populations. Métis identity or citizenship was utilized as a variable for analysis, as the research sought input from

participants regarding Métis cultural heritage, cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and the distinct characteristics of Métis experiences and realities.

Indigenous Engagement and Recruitment

Due to the nature of my research and the limited scope of an MA level project, I chose not to engage directly with local Nations or Métis organizations. Only individuals participated and none of them represented a group or organization from which I needed to seek approval. When seeking data from individual participants, I followed traditional Métis protocols of gifting, offering medicines, and visiting to ensure that the process was respectful and culturally congruent. Please refer to Appendix C for a copy of the recruitment script that was used for the purpose of inviting participants to engage with this project.

In terms of participants, I worked alongside a Métis Elder with whom I have a personal relationship. I met Barb Hulme while pursuing my bachelor's degree at the University of Victoria. Barb was, and continues to be, an Elder working for the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement. I followed proper protocol when inviting her to participate in the project, which included gifting and visiting. I engaged in a kitchen table talk with Barb for my thesis and collaborated with her and her husband to research my ancestry from a Métis perspective. Her husband Stan Hulme supported my genealogical research process. Since my family has been quite disconnected from our history, resulting in little to no understanding of who we are as a people, it was beneficial to have someone knowledgeable in Métis methodologies and ways of being to guide me as I conducted my research.

In addition to Barb, I included Stan, Barb's husband, as a participant. Originally, Stan had not signed a consent form and was not going to be a participant; however, after writing Chapter 4, it became evident that Stan made significant contributions to my thesis through

genealogical research and guidance. Therefore, I spoke with Barb and asked if they believed it was appropriate for Stan to be a participant in the thesis, to which both Barb and Stan agreed. Although Stan is not Métis, Barb informed me that he has been supporting the Métis Nation Greater Victoria with genealogical research for years. During my initial visit with Barb, I had prepared a handshake for Stan, which I will discuss in further detail later in this chapter. I spoke with Stan during the kitchen table conversation alongside Barb, and we continued email communication following my visit.

I also worked with my mother to gain more insight into our family history. This collaboration helped me discover the conversations that were had, and those that were not, providing me with the opportunity to analyze our history more deeply and uncover the pieces that have been hidden throughout the years. I was able to retrieve some historical documentation from my family that helped to document our suspected Métis lineage, and my mother provided as much information as she could during our kitchen table talk and throughout my thesis work. Although I initially wanted to speak with more family members, including cousins, aunts, and uncles, barriers such as family dynamics and time limitations prevented this from being possible.

Data Collection Methods

The methods used to collect data for this project included conducting kitchen table talks with participants in person and via telephone. These kitchen table talks were recorded using audio and notetaking. I also analyzed secondary data containing identifying information, such as birth certificates, citizenship applications, genealogical records, family trees, documents obtained from my family, and other government records.

Please refer to Appendix D for a copy of the thesis research questions used in the kitchen table talks, which were included in my ethics application.

Story Analysis

I utilized thematic analysis for the purpose of story (data) analysis. This method was applied to the qualitative research involving recorded and/or transcribed kitchen table conversations, as well as feedback and guidance from Barb. Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) share that thematic analysis “is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis” (p. 82). Through repeated engagement with qualitative data, researchers can organically identify significant concepts that eventually form broader patterns or themes (Daly et al., 1997; Rice & Ezzy, 1999).

I recorded the kitchen table conversations using my phone and/or laptop. I then uploaded those recordings to an online free transcriber. I read through the transcribed audio multiple times, pulling themes from both my mother’s kitchen table talk and Barb’s. While listening to the audio files, I simultaneously read the transcriptions. I tried to work in sections, writing as I listened. I began with a dynamic reading of the transcripts, followed by listening to the audio recordings, which led me to generate a broad list of themes in my Word documents that ultimately served as my headings.

I wrote about the full kitchen table talks with my mother and Barb, understanding the material to be of utmost importance regarding my thesis topic. However, there were certain pieces that I chose not to include, as they did not add substantive value to the general argument of my research. I made my selections based on their relevance to the overarching themes I had established: family stories, identity formation, the importance of cultural connections, family complexities, holding and sharing stories with care, ethically engaging in this work, Métis identity and connection, identity formation in children and youth, ancestry searches and genealogical work, and shared stories and community connections. The questions I asked my

mother were different from those I posed to Barb, and follow-up questions and probes organically arose throughout our kitchen table talks. By identifying the larger themes, words, and concepts throughout the data collected from my own journey, I gained a better understanding of how Métis youth can be supported in theirs.

Benefits, Inconveniences, and Risks of Harm to Participants

Benefits. It is important for Métis youth to understand their cultural heritage and the stories that have been passed down through generations. By doing so, we can build a stronger sense of community and pride in our shared history. It was my hope that through engaging with a Métis Elder and my family in order to do my own genealogical and life history research, I could utilize their advice and stories to then influence my findings to ensure future youth who would like to embark on a similar journey have the tools to do so. By having my mother engage, specifically as someone who has always been supportive of me doing this work and identifying with our culture, we were able to work together and feel a sense of strength, joy, and healing while revisiting our family stories and history, and now we can continue researching our family history together to then resolve the curiosities about our ancestry.

Inconveniences. Potential inconveniences for participants, including Elders, family, and myself, included devoting personal time to the research, loss of privacy, emotional distress, fatigue, and the discovery of familial secrets. Genealogical research and dissecting family history were not things I engaged in every day, and when I did, I found it to be very emotionally taxing. As this was very personal research, there inevitably was psychological and emotional discomfort for me. Although these potential inconveniences were ones I had to navigate, I made it a priority to ensure that the participants did not.

Risks of harm. There was potential for participants to feel emotionally uncomfortable while discussing family history, genealogy, and my childhood memories with me. As previously mentioned, due to the nature of this research being so personal, there was a heightened risk of emotional and psychological discomfort. I did not believe that this research would demean or embarrass the participants; however, it aimed to analyze the conversations that had been had and not had within my family, discuss our history, relive family stories, and recount childhood memories.

I ensured that the participants were informed of the potential risks associated with this research and let them know they could withdraw at any point in the process if they began to feel discomfort that they could not manage. I hoped that by recruiting family members willing to engage with genealogical research and discussions about family history, they would understand the potential risks and ultimately share only what they felt comfortable sharing. I made it clear to both Barb and my mother that they did not have to discuss certain stories and pieces of their history if it felt too emotionally taxing to do so. I also attempted to minimize and mitigate risks for my mother by letting her know she only needed to share stories relating to our Métis ancestry and identities, rather than our entire family history.

Handshakes and Gifting

As outlined in my ethics application, it was imperative to adhere to established protocols during the kitchen table talks, particularly with Elders, in order to gather information pertinent to the objectives of my thesis. I wanted to conduct myself in a good way and provide handshakes to those who participated. Given that the research was conducted on Coast Salish territory, and in collaboration with Barb, an Elder employed by the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement, I followed the Coast Salish protocol of offering a handshake as a

gesture of appreciation. This practice was not intended as monetary compensation but as a means of acknowledging the knowledge shared, the work performed, and the time volunteered by participants. I consulted the “Guidelines for Protocol” document, available on the Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement website, which provided clear instructions regarding honoraria amounts for participation in events such as the kitchen table talks. The document also indicated that a small gift could be offered to express gratitude for the knowledge shared, and it suggested appropriate gift ideas for working with Elders.

My mother would not allow me to provide her with a handshake; however, she did agree to accept a gift as I wanted to honour her and show appreciation for her time. I had hosted my mother at my house the weekend prior to conducting the kitchen table talk, and she had told me that she liked the candle that was on my coffee table, which was from a Métis-owned business. I was unable to purchase a candle from the same company due to product unavailability, but I gifted her a different candle from an Indigenous-owned company, as well as medicine.

I prepared handshakes for both Barb and her husband, Stan, prior to meeting with them. In addition, I presented a candle from an Indigenous-owned company, along with medicines, tea, and cookies as tokens of appreciation. Barb had graciously invited me to her home for the meeting. In recognition of her hospitality, I took it upon myself to provide refreshments and snacks, ensuring that the responsibility for these provisions did not fall upon her, as she had already kindly offered to host our meeting.

Free and Informed Consent

To obtain consent from participants, I first initiated contact through a phone call, text message, or email to arrange a meeting in person or via Zoom. After this initial contact, I provided the participants with the consent materials prior to our in-person meeting. During our

scheduled meeting, I reviewed the consent form with them and thoroughly explained the research. I then invited them to ask any questions, and once their questions were addressed, I asked if they consented to participate. If the participants agreed, they signed the provided consent form. I kept the signed copy for my records and provided an unsigned copy to the participants.

I made it clear to the participants that they could contact me at any time to withdraw from the research. I emphasized that it was their right to withdraw and assured them that I would not treat them differently and that they could keep their gifts. Although none did, if a participant had chosen to withdraw, we would have discussed how they wanted their individual data, such as documents and information they had provided through the kitchen table talks, to be handled. The options included having all their data destroyed and not included in the research, omitting any identifying factors in group data, such as references to kitchen table conversations, or allowing their data to remain included without further involvement in the project.

My mother and Barb were able to review and approve what I had written prior to me submitting my final thesis draft. I shared the draft with them weeks before the final copy was completed, and they received a gift as per protocol for their time, feedback, and contributions.

Please refer to Appendix E for a copy of the consent form that was used for the purpose of this project.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Since I worked alongside a Métis Elder and family members, and because of the nature of the research being genealogical research regarding my own family, as well as recounting family stories and memories, it proved to be difficult to assure anonymity and confidentiality. This was communicated prior to participants agreeing to recruitment or signing consent forms.

As I was the main participant, I ensured that I only shared what was necessary of my own story. I protected my confidentiality by not sharing all the details regarding my family, our history, and our ancestry. However, to ensure the integrity of my story, I did refer to my grandmother and great-grandfather who have passed away. Because they have passed and were unable to provide consent, I had to take great care to only share information such as what was shared with me about their ethnicity and growing up as it relates to Métis identity. I did not reflect on other aspects of their private lives. I took my findings and only shared selected aspects regarding my family and edited this content into something that could potentially be useful to others in their genealogical research process.

Methods for Autoethnographic and Genealogical Research

The following methods were related to my own research on my personal story. This multidisciplinary methodology consisted of autoethnography, genealogical research, and kitchen table talks, which were utilized while working with the participants. These three methodologies collaborated effectively, alongside the theoretical frameworks that guided my research, to provide a comprehensive approach for analyzing my own story. This analysis aimed to connect my experiences to the larger cultural and social contexts of ancestral searches, reconnection and revitalization, and the conceptualization of self and identity formation in children and youth, which will be explored through Chapters 4 and 5.

Autoethnography

I developed a simplified and adapted approach to autoethnography and life history. Autoethnography is a research method that acknowledges how personal experiences influence the research process by using them to describe and analyze cultural experiences (Adams et al., 2014). Reed-Danahay (1997) shares that “autoethnography is defined as a form of self-narrative

that places the self within a social context” (p. 9). Identity is typically understood as an ongoing external process influenced by social interactions, in which individuals present themselves to others through their life stories and experiences, as well as an internal process where one creates and maintains a stable self-image (Butz & Besio, 2009). As stated by Butz and Besio (2009) “we all engage in this sort of identity work. ... Autoethnography may be understood as the practice of doing this identity work self-consciously, or deliberately, in order to understand or represent some worldly phenomenon that exceeds the self” (p. 1660).

My autoethnographic process was supplemented by archival and genealogical research into my family history and ancestry, using family stories as well as public and online records. I analyzed and reviewed autobiographical data such as childhood memories and notes, family stories, as well as pictures. Additionally, I studied and referred to lineage information such as letters related to my Métis Nation British Columbia application, birth certificates, and genealogical data that I had retrieved throughout my research. This information has been woven throughout my thesis, somewhat like a thread holding everything together.

Genealogy

Connor (2022) tells us that, “writing about genealogy within the ‘academy’ has been hindered by the perception that researching family history and genealogy belongs in the realm of hobbyists as something you might peruse in retirement” (p. 1). Although some people may have this perception regarding genealogical research as a legitimate methodological tool, Connor (2022) shares that “scholars who are researching and writing genealogy are highly skilled academics. ... As a field of study, genealogical research has the potential to significantly contribute to the humanities and social sciences disciplines” (p. 1). Research has shown that

“writing genealogy contributes to our understandings of not only our own family histories but the social and cultural histories of the places we inhabit” (Connor, 2022, p. 3).

I worked alongside Barb and Stan to do research regarding my ancestry from a Métis perspective, using Métis genealogy methods. This process started prior to my thesis, and I received genealogical paperwork from Stan in 2022, which helped to inform the family tree, applications, and research I completed independently. I conducted my own genealogical research through accessing online documents and databases such as obituaries, genealogical websites, and family trees, as well as through reading the hard copies of genealogical documents that had been provided to me by multiple family members and Stan. I also applied to the Saint-Boniface Historical Society for proof of Métis ancestry; however, the wait time is typically anywhere from 9 to 10 months, and the documents did not arrive in time to be considered for this thesis. I delve into these procedures in further detail in my fourth chapter, where I describe my step-by-step process as a guide for young people and practitioners working with children, youth, and families who are engaging in their own genealogical research.

Kitchen Table Talks

I adopted a kitchen table talk-style method as a way to engage with storytelling and the exploration of identity histories. Kitchen table talks are “a spoken history in the oral tradition of Cree and Métis culture on the prairies” (Carlson et al., 2013, p. xxi), that essentially mirror a discussion one might have at the dinner table alongside family members. Loyer and Loyer (2021) share that a kitchen table talk methodology “does not set up an unequal power dynamic between an interviewer and their subject, but, rather, allows everyone’s voice to be heard” (p. 1). This is an informal way of talking that will hopefully allow for those involved to feel comfortable, while creating a distinct form of knowledge sharing (Loyer & Loyer, 2021).

The kitchen table talks consisted of myself, my mother, Barb, the Métis Elder who has guided me in the research, and her husband. Initially, I had wanted to include family members, aside from just my mother, in these kitchen table talks. However, I had to be mindful of the historical colonial impacts that have resulted in my family having fragmented and/or hidden Métis identity. Additionally, due to geographical locations of those involved in this project, I had to divide the kitchen table talks into multiple sessions with each participant, as opposed to one larger discussion including everyone.

Data Management

In summary, my autobiographical and genealogical data included childhood memories and notes, legal documents, genealogical documents, field notes/reflections, family stories, as well as pictures. The data collected informed the section of my thesis focused on implications for practice, offering a documented description of my process, how I undertook genealogical research, and the ways in which a young person can begin the process themselves.

The notes and audio recordings of the kitchen table conversations were typed up and quoted in my thesis, which will be outlined in Chapter 4. I invited participants to review and approve everything that was quoted. This data was used for the same purpose as the above data, in order to help influence the implications for Métis youth wanting to engage in their own genealogical research. This data also helped to give more context into my family stories and why I may have wanted to engage with this research in the first place.

The genealogical research, legal documents, citizenship applications, and such may be something I revisit in the future for purposes other than this research project. A request for future use was included in the consent form. The electronic data was stored on a password protected personal computer and the paper data was stored in a desk in my personal home. The data was

backed up through iCloud as to ensure it would not be lost if my laptop were to be damaged or lost. I utilized a personal computer with a UVic VPN as my thesis work was remote. The electronic files were saved to my own hard drive as opposed to through web-based technology. The data will be kept indefinitely as it is genealogical data, birth certificates, citizenship applications, photos, family stories, etc. that I would have already had access to. This data will be beneficial to me and my family and our future generations, therefore it is necessary to keep it. All other electronic data and notes such as the kitchen table conversations will be discarded once the requirements for my thesis have been completed. My family and I will discuss the best way to store and preserve genealogical data, birth certificates, citizenship applications, photos, and family stories that I requested and/or accessed during the research.

Self-Care

As this is a personal topic for me, there were inevitable discomforts associated with writing and researching about my identity and family ancestry. I had to ensure I was taking care of myself throughout the process, as this is heart work. I connected myself to community supports and Elders in community to help keep me grounded spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically while completing my thesis. I relied on Métis friends, community members, academics, and coworkers throughout this process, and regularly reflected on and discussed the personal implications of my project. Despite my doubts, it was these folks who encouraged me to continue with my research, as they validated its importance as a shared experience among many Métis and mixed-ancestry Indigenous peoples. Through my own personal discussions with Métis folks, it became clear to me that there are so many others who have similar lived experiences to that of my own family. Although it was disheartening to hear the disruptions of family history and stories due to colonialism, hearing this feedback from others reassured me that this research

does have a place in this field, and that so many others are looking for guidance and direction on how to start having these conversations, begin their genealogical research, and come home to their identities. Aside from conversations with community supports, Elders, and other Métis folks, I gained support from friends and family. My self-care practices evolved from simple pleasures to deeper self-connection and rest in order to manage the emotional toll of the project. Balancing full-time work with thesis completion and personal commitments was challenging, but I prioritized mental health and self-care, which continued to change throughout the process.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the integrative methodological approach and theoretical foundations that underpinned my research, along with ethical considerations, and methods of data collection and analysis. Building on this foundation through the application of the aforementioned methodology, Chapter 4 presents my stories, reflections, and the step-by-step process of the genealogical research and applications I completed.

Chapter 4: Research and Findings

In this chapter, I outline the steps that I took to conduct my research and gather information through genealogical research, kitchen table talks, and reflexivity, as well as the personal learning and findings that arose from conducting the research. Before discussing my reflections and findings, it is crucial to highlight that much of what I share in this chapter has been modified to keep sacred some of the stories that are in my family. Although my thesis focuses on creating open and honest discussions where folks are allowed to be vulnerable and share the journey that they are on, I must also be mindful that I have family members who have passed on who have not given consent for all our information to be shared. I want to be accountable, transparent, and rigorous in my research process, but I also want to ensure that I am proceeding in an ethical and respectful way while protecting my family, our stories, and my own heart.

It is also imperative that I mention that these conversations and personal research started long before I began the thesis portion of my project, as my family and I have been engaging with these questions well before the beginning of my graduate studies. However, it was through working in the field of child and youth care and supporting youth who have gone through similar situations as I have, that I realized the importance of my research and how it could be situated within the larger field of child, youth, family and community studies.

In this chapter, I share detailed information about the steps taken, organizations involved, and the costs associated with paperwork and applications, as I want to document the entire process. My intention is to provide concrete information for others who may wish to research their ancestry. This information will be reiterated in Chapter 5 to serve as a guide for young people and the service providers supporting them.

Engaging in Family Conversations

The first step that I took was engaging in discussions with my family. My MA program began before my late grandma passed away, and I remember messaging her on Facebook and asking her if my late great-grandfather had ever spoken to her about being Métis, to which she replied yes. I had recently gone to the University of Victoria to sit with Barb Hulme, the Métis Elder at The First Peoples House, and shared some of my story with her. Barb then discussed my story and family tree with her husband, who sent me a Word document containing my family's genealogical documents. There were some discrepancies in the genealogical records based off what I had been told by family members and what I was reading. I messaged my grandmother on October 13, 2022, asking if I could sit down with her and look through the documents together, because of the discrepancies and some questions that Barb and her husband had, and my grandma replied that she was more than willing to work on this alongside me. My grandmother passed away on October 20, 2022, after a short battle with cancer. I had hoped that I would be able to continue working on this with her, but we lost her much sooner than all of us anticipated.

Because I was unable to continue the conversation with my grandmother, I started to speak with my mother, cousins, aunts and uncles, and anyone else who was willing to sit down with me and engage. My mother made it very clear that she had always grown up being told that she was Métis, that she had a Métis citizenship card from a Métis office in Port Alberni when she was a youth, and most importantly, that she was longing for a connection to community and culture because of the stories that she had grown up with. My aunt also let me know that she had a citizenship card growing up, and that my mother's cousins did as well. Unfortunately, my mother and aunt no longer have these cards, so we are unable to decipher what the office was and if they had the jurisdiction and authority to be providing citizenship cards. As MNBC was

established in 2003, it could not have been the chartered community of Alberni-Clayoquot Métis Society (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-b). I have asked my mother if she remembers what the office or organization was called; however, all she remembers is that they were a community who supported people in obtaining their citizenship and provided access to group events. The story of our ancestry is something that has gone on for generations without a concrete understanding of what it means to be Métis, where our ancestry came from, or if it is even there at all.

Applying for Citizenship and Completing Genealogical Research

After deciding to focus my research on this specific topic, I began to do the research that I was able to conduct without having an ethics application approved first. I accessed the Métis Nation of British Columbia website to assess what I needed to apply for citizenship. Requirements for a complete application include applicants birth certificates with parental information, birth certificates with parental information for the applicants' parents, grandparents, and all Métis relatives born after 1901, a passport quality photo, a completed family chart, and a copy of the applicants valid BC Driver's License (Métis Nation British Columbia, n.d.-d). I began working on family trees, which proves to be very difficult when there are folks in your life who have passed on, and when those who are still with us have limited information due to varying family histories. With that being said, I relied on genealogical documents that had been provided by my grandmother's siblings and a distant cousin, as well as word of mouth and family information, to complete my own family tree for an application to MNBC and the Saint-Boniface Historical Society.

I completed a five-generation family chart, which is a visual representation that maps out my genealogical lineage, including myself, my parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents,

and my great-great-grandparents. Once I had completed the family tree, I began looking at accessing long form birth certificates for everyone. Thankfully, I had my own long form birth certificate, as well as my late grandma's; however, I had to apply through Vital Statistics British Columbia to get my mother's. There was a delay in receiving this due to my mother having limited information on her birth father, but ultimately, we were able to access it and I now have a copy. The cost of applying for a long form birth certificate was \$27.

I was unable to access a long form birth certificate for my late great-grandfather. I have a birth certificate for him, but it does not list his parents' information. My late great-grandfather was born in Manitoba, and I called Manitoba Vital Statistics multiple times throughout this project to ask them how I could apply to receive my late great-grandfather's long form birth certificate, but I was never able to get through. To receive a long form birth certificate through Manitoba Vital Statistics, you either need to apply as the person who is named on the certificate, or the parent of the person who is named on the certificate. It states that if the certificate you are applying for is not for yourself or your child, but you are the legal guardian, have written authorization from the person entitled, are the next of kin, or are applying for a certified copy of a birth registration, you must download a paper application form and submit it by fax mail or in person. This proved to be impossible as both my late great-grandfather and grandmother have passed. Although my grandma does have siblings, there are many varying factors as to why I did not want to ask one of them to fill out the application and send it to Manitoba Vital Statistics. Because of this, I submitted my Métis Nation British Columbia application with my great-grandfather's birth certificate that is not long form, and I added a note outlining what I have stated above.

I then had to get a passport photo taken, which I did through Walmart. The photo cost \$20.80. I also needed to provide a photocopy of valid BC government ID. Thankfully, I had access to a printer. If a printer is not readily available, you can download an application on your phone that will “scan” the documents for you. I use the application Office Lens on my phone if I am unable to access a printer.

Despite applying for my citizenship through Métis Nation British Columbia, I still wanted to gain more information about my family and the ancestry that had been discussed among my family throughout the entirety of my childhood. As previously mentioned, I had genealogical paperwork from my grandmother’s siblings, from a relative whose great-grandfather was my great-grandfather’s first cousin, and from Barb’s husband. This relative and her children received their citizenship through Métis Nation British Columbia, and they continue to have citizenship to this day. There were discrepancies between these three documents, outlining different parents for one specific ancestor. Because of these differences in documentation, and ultimately a lack of knowledge regarding our family and who we are, I decided that I wanted to apply for my genealogy through the Saint-Boniface Historical Society. I had to submit a copy of an official document connecting me to my parents, a copy of a valid government issued ID, and a four-generation family tree form that was provided by the Saint-Boniface Historical Society. I applied specifically for a proof of Métis ancestry package for family with origins in Manitoba. I paid \$28 for this genealogical book. I submitted this in January 2025. The Saint-Boniface Historical Society website advises that wait times are approximately 9–10 months. As of this writing, I have not yet heard back.

This is significant because I am completing my thesis without definitive documentation of my ancestry. I am still waiting for my proof of Métis ancestry package from the Saint-

Boniface Historical Society, which makes things difficult. Our family still does not have a clear answer regarding whether we are, in fact, Métis, which ancestor the ancestry comes from, and where these stories may have originated. If the process takes the full 9 to 10 months, I will likely have more clarity by September or October of 2025, which will be approximately 1 to 2 months after I defend my thesis. That said, my thesis has never been about proving our Métis identity. Instead, I aimed to write this thesis in a vulnerable way that is accountable to the stories that my mother, my grandmother, and I have been told while growing up, while also acknowledging that we do not have documentation and the tensions that can create. My thesis has always focused on how to approach this work in a way that is ethical and honors both my family and our stories, as well as the Métis community. Even though the process is not finished, it is the journey itself that I want to emphasize. For me, this thesis has been less about the destination and more about the act of seeking. It is, and will be, a process of guiding us back to our roots and reconnecting us to our origins, whether that is the Métis Nation or something else.

Kitchen Table Talks

In this section, I will discuss the kitchen table talks that occurred between me and my mother, as well as myself and the Métis Elder with whom I worked alongside, Barb Hulme. These talks were integral to my research, if not the most important part of it, as they allowed for me to understand where our family stories came from and how my mom's connection to culture has developed throughout the years, as well as to understand from a Métis Elder that these stories are not isolated and that many people navigate the same issues that my family has.

My Mother

I hosted my mother and little brother at my home in February 2025. On the final morning before they left, my mother and I sat in my living room together. I read her my recruitment script

and asked if she would like to engage in this work with me, to which she agreed. She signed a consent form that morning, and we planned to discuss the kitchen table talk questions over a phone call the following weekend. My mom lives three hours away from me and stated that she wanted to be fully present while answering the kitchen table talk questions, which is why we planned for the following weekend when my younger brother would be at camp. I completed a kitchen table talk with my mom over the phone on March 2, 2025. The kitchen table talk with my mother was modified, but the process and intention remained the same. We planned for over the phone, as we are dispersed geographically and unable to get together in person regularly. This geographical distance between families highlights another complexity and challenge of completing this work.

While I was discussing the kitchen table talk questions with my mother, it became evident that there is a lack of information in our family regarding our ancestry. At the end of the kitchen table talk, she told me that she wished she could have given me more, and the two of us discussed how our family is doing the best with what little information, documentation, and stories we have. I am incredibly thankful to my mother for her willingness to participate in this project, even though the questions explored deeply personal aspects of our family's history. Despite having limited information about our ancestry, I truly believe that this project would not feel complete without the meaningful insights that she contributed to my thesis.

Tracing heritage through family stories. I began the kitchen table talk by asking my mother where the story of us being Métis came from, and what her memories are of those stories are. My mom informed me that the stories had come from her grandfather, my maternal great-grandpa, who would share “just that we were Métis” (E. Williams, personal communication, March 2, 2025). My great-grandfather was born in Sainte Rose du Lac in 1923, where he grew

up. At the age of 18, he began farming in Grandview, Manitoba. After six years of farming, he moved and settled in Duncan, British Columbia, in 1947. In 1989, my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, whom he married in 1948, moved to Port Alberni. My mother lived in Port Alberni with my grandmother and great-grandfather during her youth, and she shared that there was a Métis organization in Port Alberni that was helping people to get their citizenship cards. Some family members, including my grandmother and her children, began speaking with my great-grandpa more for the purpose of getting their citizenship cards and to become more connected with the community. My mother shared that this process began when she was in high school, after she discovered our suspected ancestry at the age of 14.

When asked what information they had received from my great-grandfather, she shared that he was born in a known Métis settlement, Sainte Rose du Lac, on the Métis homelands. My mother asserted that when she was growing up, my great-grandfather explicitly discussed Métis culture and celebrations that he partook in while growing up, and more specifically, fiddling and jigging. Music has always been such a big part of our family, and most of our family members played and still currently play fiddles and guitars. Unfortunately, my mom does not remember much else that was shared beyond those points. Again, it seemed to be more about him talking generally about the ancestry rather than making deeper connections to cultural practices or the homelands. When I asked if my grandmother (my mom's mom) also spoke about being Métis, my mom said that they all talked about it, but it was not something that was deeply woven into their upbringing, especially since they were living in the Cowichan Valley at the time. She clarified that it was mostly just information about their ancestry that was mentioned, rather than specific teachings or cultural traditions being passed down. As we spoke about this history, we recognized that our family's story is not unique; many other families share similar disconnects

and unanswered questions, much like ours. A significant part of this is due to the disruptions caused by colonialism, along with people misrepresenting themselves on the census or hiding their identities when they could. However, we also acknowledged that my great-grandfather was not trying to hide anything. He simply seemed to be authentically himself, openly speaking about culture and sharing family stories. As my mother put it, “there was no real reason for him to fake it; it was real” (E. Williams, personal communication, March 2, 2025).

Identity formation, belonging, and the journey home. I asked my mother what being Métis meant to her. She shared that to her, being Métis is an understanding of our culture and where we came from, as well as being proud to be Métis. She stated that she has not known anything else about her family tree or ancestry due to having limited information regarding her father, and so it has always given her something to identify as and with. When asked if she had ever experienced feelings of imposter syndrome in relation to her Métis identity and ancestry, she shared that she had not until only recently, when this process of discovering and uncovering began. My mother said that when she was growing up, she never felt as if she had imposter syndrome as she believed wholeheartedly that we were Métis and therefore identified as such her whole life after learning of her ancestry at 14 years old. My mother and I discussed how when you grow up being told something by your family and hearing these stories, you have every reason to believe it. I have come to realize that doing this research and looking more into our ancestry as a family who does not have any formal documentation or paper trail linking us back to the Métis Nation, is a process of bringing us home.

Importance of cultural connections. I asked my mother to reflect on the significance of cultural connection, specifically through the lens of childhood and adolescence. I prompted her to consider this in relation to her own upbringing, as well as mine and my 11-year-old brother’s,

examining the value of cultural engagement during these formative years. My mother stated that connecting with culture is incredibly important as it gives you a sense of where you came from and that you belong to something, and that there is a richness in the culture that makes sense in your life. I then asked if there was anything that had affected her relationship and connectedness with culture, to which she said that because of the way she was raised, she did not learn about our Métis ancestry until she was 14 years old, meaning that before that there was no culture to necessarily be connected to. She shared that after learning about our ancestry from her grandfather, it did not suddenly change her life because ultimately, she was still doing the same things, but “it was just a different way of thinking” (E. Williams, personal communication, March 2, 2025).

I had always thought that my mother had not grown up with the culture. However, during our conversation where my mother reflected on her experiences working alongside my grandmother and great-grandfather to obtain their citizenship through the Métis organization in their community, she recalled an important detail. Although she does not remember specifics, she remembers a group of people who were working with this organization to obtain their citizenship, and therefore, it became a community, and they would gather together and have group activities. My mother did receive a citizenship card from this organization, along with her siblings.

My mother shared that she is currently not very connected to the Métis community, mostly because she has not been for all these years. When asked if this connection was something she would like, she stated that it would be nice to be able to learn more about the culture and that it would also be good learning for my younger brother.

Family complexities and conflicting narratives. I have briefly mentioned family complexities in this thesis, and more specifically, how some family members vehemently deny that we have Indigenous ancestry, despite my great-grandfather sharing these stories and information regarding our ancestry and Métis identity. I approached this topic with my mother and asked why she believes this narrative has presented itself in our family. My mother stated that she believes it may be due to them doing their genealogy, which pointed to no Métis ancestry. However, it is important to note that after accessing and analyzing these documents, I was able to determine that their genealogical information differs from other family members' paperwork who do in fact have their citizenship. This suggests that various branches of my family have relied on different, sometimes conflicting, genealogical information to establish Métis ancestry, leading to varying conclusions. At this stage, I am still uncertain about which documents are correct and the reasons behind the inconsistencies.

My mother also shared with me that the family members who deny our ancestry did not live in the same town as my great-grandfather, and therefore, my grandmother and her children were the closest in geographical proximity to my great-grandfather, and because of that, they had a very strong relationship and did everything together. It was shared by my mother that those family members were not involved with the process of filling out the paperwork and working to obtain citizenship, and although they may have known and had heard the same stories that my mother's family had heard in some capacity, they were not trying to get their citizenship, going to meetings with the local Métis organization, or connecting with the larger Métis community like my mother, her siblings, my grandmother, and my great-grandfather were. My mother, however, mentioned that she is not very familiar with how involved they were in the process.

Still, she believes this may have contributed to the narrative held by some family members that we do not have ancestry.

Holding and sharing our stories with care. I shared with my mother that I understand this thesis and the work I am doing does not just impact me, it affects our entire family. My late grandmother and mother have always been incredibly supportive of me exploring our ancestry, but I also had to acknowledge that if we find out we do not have Métis roots, despite the stories in our family and my great-grandfather's claims, it is not just my discovery, it would also affect my mother, aunties, cousins, and others who have identified as Métis throughout their lives and have felt a deep connection to that heritage. This became even more apparent to me when my mother mentioned earlier in the kitchen table talk that she had never experienced feelings of imposter syndrome until recently. I asked my mother that if even though she had not necessarily felt imposter syndrome, she had ever experienced a push or pull one way or the other, or feeling as though she was walking in two worlds, due to the uncertainty around whether we have Métis ancestry given the limited documentation. My mother shared that it bothers her that there is now question, as something that she had thought and believed her whole life was now up in the air. This process of uncovering and discovering could lead to a reckoning with our family's identity, and it is a raw, personal, difficult, and complex process. I must hold these stories carefully and share them with sensitivity, as it does not only affect me, but the larger family system as well.

Ethical considerations in a lifelong journey. During the kitchen table talk, my mother and I talked about how we have hesitated to take up spaces that might be better suited for others, given our disconnection from community and the fact that we still have much to learn. Although I have been self-identifying for the past six to seven years, I have always been very honest about my disconnect and general lack of information regarding my family. I have never applied for

Indigenous-specific scholarships, and when applying for Indigenized jobs, I have again been transparent about my family's story. My mom applied for a job with the Métis Nation of British Columbia and was explicit about our family's background during the interview process. We have done this to ensure that if there was someone better suited for the positions or scholarships, we would not be taking opportunities from them due to our proposed ancestry. However, we also acknowledged that at times we feel very certain in our ancestry, and we do want to occupy those spaces because this is the history we have grown up with. It is a process of honouring our family and these stories, while also being accountable and acknowledging our privileges. We had an in-depth conversation about how even if we discover that we do not have Métis ancestry, the stories, teachings, and connections we have inherited do not simply disappear. These stories came from somewhere, whether it is because my great-grandfather grew up in a Métis settlement on the Métis homelands or because we truly do have Métis ancestry, and ultimately, those stories remain a part of our family history. As I explore in further detail in my final reflections, because these stories remain, we can continue to be advocates and allies if we discover we do not have ancestry. We also discussed how engaging in this process will help to bring clarity to our family, holding us accountable not only to ourselves but also to past and future generations.

Barb Hulme, Métis Elder

I spent a significant amount of time with Barb throughout the duration of my undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria. When I first began considering this topic for my thesis, I knew right away that I wanted her to be involved. I sent an email to Barb explaining my thesis and requesting a phone conversation to discuss it in more detail, including reading my recruitment script and inviting her to participate. I emphasized how valuable her insights would

be and wanted to ensure our conversation took place at her convenience while following proper protocols. I later spoke with her on the phone.

While completing the consent form, I asked Barb whether she would be comfortable being named throughout the thesis or if she would prefer an alias, such as “Métis Elder in community.” She replied that she had no issue being named, so long as she was providing appropriate and supportive content, rather than what she playfully referred to as “sideline fluff” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). I could not help but laugh at her response, because I genuinely believe that nothing Barb shared could ever be considered as sideline fluff. Her knowledge, generosity, and time were truly invaluable, offering me clear direction and guidance on how to move forward with this thesis.

Métis identity, family connections, and belonging. When asked “what does being Métis mean to you?”, Barb responded that in many ways, being Métis is her connection to her family. She shared with me that her grandmother was their matriarch, and that she was *the* Métis person in their lives. So, to her, being Métis means following her grandmother’s way, being respectful not only to her family and others, but also to the world, and to be in the world in a way that is applicable and supportive of her grandmother’s vision of how we should behave. I acknowledged that it was interesting to see the difference between my story and those who grew up being raised with culture, stories, and knowledge. Barb then shared with me that, growing up in Selkirk, Manitoba (which at the time was a very Métis community), and being raised by generations of family who had also lived there, including her grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents, she did not necessarily see things as culture or protocol. Instead, she described them as “the standard ways of behavior within my community and my parents and grandparents’ friendship network, who were primarily Métis people” (B. Hulme, personal

communication, March 16, 2025). For Barb, it was simply a way of knowing and being, as she believed it to be the way that everybody did things, rather than something explicitly taught as cultural knowledge or teachings.

I then brought up my original research question of what affected her relationship and connectedness to culture, which was tailored to my mother's experience. I shared that it might not make sense to ask her due to her growing up in Selkirk with that connectedness being so explicit. Barb stated that her answer was both a yes and a no, as it depended on how we are defining culture. She then echoed that although she grew up with aspects of culture such as embroidery, the importance of sharing, and traditional foods and clothing, nobody had thought of it as "culture." She shared that the biggest takeaway from her growing up in a very matriarchal family, was that all the rules and regulations for all children, youth, and everyone else, were based on what grandma said.

I asked Barb what her connection to the community looked like, and she told me she would take it from the very beginning. She stated that she is a founding member of what is now known as the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria since 1997. Back then, they had to find 25 people to create a chartered community, although she does not think it was referred to as a chartered community at that time. Since then, they have identified, through the Métis Nation British Columbia, slightly more than 2,000 citizens. However, they also recognize that there are people in the Victoria, British Columbia, community who have ancestry that qualifies them but have chosen not to claim citizenship. Because of this, Barb stated that they believe there are probably just over 7,000 Métis people in the Victoria area, although not all of those who self-identify may meet the criteria for citizenship. Barb shared that one of her roles in the community has been teaching cultural crafts. She supports the University of Victoria and its student population, and

she identifies as a Métis veteran, which leads her to support veteran activities in the province and nationally. She mentioned that when the Métis Nation British Columbia asks for her support, she steps up because she believes that Métis people should no longer be the forgotten people. She emphasized the need for both Métis individuals and others to recognize their value, skills, and history and to acknowledge that their voices need to be heard within the broader worldview.

I discussed with Barb that my thesis delves into imposter syndrome, being white-passing, having no formal documentation, and similar topics, and because of that I asked if she ever experiences imposter syndrome. Barb shared with me that she has not experienced imposter syndrome. She did however share that depending on the context she does not always self-identify or divulge her ancestry. She related this back to the example of health care, sharing that sometimes it is easier from a health care perspective “just to say I am me and add no other aspects to me” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). We discussed how she began to embrace her Métis heritage as an adult more so than before, and she attributes that to the community she grew up in being so very Métis, that it was not necessarily a subject that was brought up or something that you had to define. When asked if she had ever supported students at the University of Victoria or people through Métis Nation Greater Victoria with navigating feelings of imposter syndrome, she stated that there are always people among us struggling with these feelings, and that there are people who are invisible and wish to stay that way.

I discussed my own experiences with Barb of feeling this push and pull. Some days, I wake up feeling certain that I am Métis—proud and grounded in that identity. Other days, however, I experience an identity crisis and feel that I cannot possibly identify as Métis because I am white-passing, do not live on the Métis homelands, and lack documentation. This constant

struggle makes me feel as though I am walking in two worlds. Barb then told me that if you go back historically to the Métis ancestors, they always walked in two worlds.

Fostering Métis identity formation in children and youth. Barb and I discussed the importance of identity formation in children and youth, specifically in the context of my thesis, which focuses on discovering and uncovering more about Indigenous ancestry. She initially spoke about children and youth living in Victoria, British Columbia, as that is the geographical region where she primarily works. Barb informed me that some of the agencies with roots workers know her husband, and they have collaborated, as neither Barb's husband, Stan, nor the agencies, have all the necessary resources. However, by working together, they have been able to slowly piece things together. She mentioned that some of the agencies have created personalized storybooks for the children, outlining basic stories about being Métis. With the assistance of these agencies and Stan, they can make these stories more specific by including family names, family stories, and context so that the children can begin to develop a sense of belonging and connection.

Barb then went on to discuss the larger picture, stating that “all children want to belong” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). She shared that in order to help children in their journey toward connection and belonging, we must equip the individuals within the child's circle of connection with the necessary tools to foster that sense of belonging. Barb and I discussed that this is part of what my thesis aims to achieve. She noted that there may be others in the child's circle of connection who could be difficult to engage with due to “political circumstances” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). Although I did not clarify with Barb what she meant by political circumstances, I believe that in the context of my thesis, it likely refers to broader systemic or interpersonal issues, such as cultural tensions, organizational

policies, differences in chartered communities and provincial jurisdictions, or family dynamics. Barb posed the question of what happens if we discover that a child is Métis, but due to certain circumstances, such as those listed above, we are unable to create a personalized storybook for that child. In such a case, what resources, knowledge, or strategies are necessary to still support that child? Specifically, how can we at least form a basic connection or sense of belonging for them, even if we cannot fully personalize the support or provide culturally specific materials, such as a personalized storybook? She emphasized the importance of recognizing that communities in the Métis world differ from many First Nations communities. Given the geographical distance from Métis homelands and the fact that many First Nations people who live in Victoria, British Columbia, are not local, she asked how we can work together to support these urban children living far from their homelands.

Something that Barb said that stood out to me as imperative for my thesis work was that it is not a matter of stopping the accumulation of tools for your toolbox. As people working with children, we must continue to put the best tools in our toolbox that we can find at that time. Barb emphasized that no matter what, you carry on, and although it may not be the right screwdriver, it is still a tool that can be helpful. This insight allowed me to recognize that although this searching process has worked for my research, it may not necessarily be effective for another child or youth.

When asked what she believed could potentially affect a child or youth's relationship and connectedness to culture, Barb stated that communities can play a significant role in that relationship. Many children who have recently discovered their heritage are those whose parents and grandparents grew up separated from the larger family dynamic. Therefore, we need to support today's youth in reconnecting with these aspects of their culture and heritage. She noted

that this situation may be less unique in contemporary times, as younger generations often lack the advantages of multigenerational guidance. Barb also emphasized that while some youth may reside in one province and be influenced by that environment due to displacement, their ancestry originates from another province. This is highlighted in my own family, as we now live in British Columbia but historically lived in Manitoba. She highlighted that Métis culture and traditions are very distinct across communities and provincial and territorial contexts. Barb gave the example that a slightly Protestant community in Manitoba would be different from the community of my great-grandfather in Sainte Rose du Lac.

Exploring my family history within the Métis community. When talking with Barb about family names, she mentioned that the names of my ancestors are not unfamiliar in the world of the Métis community. When discussing my family story, I let Barb know that we had found my great-grandfather's Pacific Métis Federation application. She mentioned that prior to the formation of Métis Nation of Greater Victoria, there were splinter groups that had emerged because people wanted to connect. They were saying, "we are called the forgotten people, but we truly do not want to be forgotten" (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). Barb shared that while other provinces like Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba were ahead of us, these splinter groups were forming on the West Coast. These groups consisted of people who had moved provinces due to specific circumstances, felt disconnected, and wanted to be heard. In regard to my great-grandfather, she suggested that he might have been at a point of saying, "I know who I am, I know why I am here, I know what brought me out here, but at the same time, my family and I should not be identified as forgotten" (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025).

Much like the conversation with my mother, I discussed with Barb how there are family members who deny that we have Indigenous ancestry. Barb shared with me that she had a family member who shared the same beliefs as mine, stating that they are not Métis and have no Indigenous ancestry, despite members of their family having citizenship and having family stories of being Métis. When discussing family dynamics, Barb reminded me that at the point in time when my great-grandfather was alive, the concept of being Métis was different. She shared that in many of the communities and families, you were not Métis, and were strictly identified as a half breed. Barb stated that if you were white-passing and did not want to be identified, you were Scottish, or French, or “definitely something else” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). When discussing this with Barb, I proposed that the period during which my mother was in high school was one where people often wanted to pass and hide their identities if they could. In contrast, my great-grandfather stood tall and proud, sharing stories about being Métis. This makes me reflect critically on the fact that he was potentially exposing himself to racism. He must have truly believed in the stories, culture, knowledge, and ancestry he represented.

Navigating ancestry searches and genealogy work. While discussing family names with Barb, she mentioned that she knew of many people who shared the same last name as my family. She had asked Stan to continue the work he began with me in 2022, and we talked about how the paperwork Stan provided me differed from that of family members who have already gained their citizenship. Barb had let me know that there could potentially be a multitude of reasons this may have occurred, such as that they were not able to connect the dots at that point in time due to not having spouses listed for specific ancestors. Barb reassured me that continuing my research with Stan could be beneficial, as he may have discovered additional information

since then, and that since time has passed since we last visited my family tree and genealogical records, there may have been a new connection added by somebody else every day since.

Throughout the kitchen table conversation with Barb, Stan continued to work on my genealogical research, and would come upstairs to ask follow-up questions. I explained to both Barb and Stan that it is complicated because we do not have much information on my mother's paternal side, and that there were a lot of family complexities and secrets in my mother's biological father's family system. While discussing the discrepancies between my cousin, aunts, and the paperwork Stan completed for me, I expressed my wish that I could talk to my late grandmother to seek clarification on the parents, siblings, children, and ancestors listed, as my mother and her siblings do not know the answers. Barb shared that my story is not unusual, and in some ways, life is like a big jigsaw puzzle, and it is about putting the right pieces into the right spot. After the meeting with Barb, I continued to receive emails from Stan stating that my genealogical research was quite complex and that he needed more time.

I asked Barb if she had to go through similar processes of genealogical research, and she confirmed that she did. She shared that when she was obtaining her citizenship card in Manitoba in the early nineties, the process was quite simple. She attended a local meeting where they asked who she was and what her connections were. She named her great-grandfather and ancestors, and that was the entire process. They then issued her a citizenship card, recognizing her connection verbally. However, as the citizenship application process has evolved over the years, especially across different provinces, Barb stated that to become a citizen of the Métis Nation of British Columbia, in 2007 she had to submit birth certificates, family trees, and other documents like those required by the 28,000 individuals currently identified as citizens.

Shared stories and community connections. I felt that an important question to ask Barb was whether she had encountered people in the community who have had similar experiences as my family, in that they have been told they are Métis but lack formal documentation and have little connection to the community. Barb assured me that she had encountered such individuals. When I asked if these people had ever discovered that they were not, in fact, Métis, despite being told they were, she explained that there are indeed cases where individuals find out they do not have the ancestry they believed they had. She noted that, in some circumstances, people discover they have mixed-ancestry but do not fit the definition of being Métis. Barb shared that in these cases, individuals might have Anishinaabe ancestry or ties to one of the West Coast Nations, linking their heritage to those communities and traditions, but they are not Métis. After discussing this, she added that, depending on the individual, “it is an element of them wisely recognizing the importance of this Indigenous heritage and being able to explore within themselves and their family relationships how that particular cultural connection truly is” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025).

I discussed with Barb how, when I was in high school, I would get called to the Aboriginal Education room, due to my mother and I checking the Métis box on my school paperwork, and that they encouraged me to apply to Métis Nation of British Columbia. I never filled out these applications while in high school, due to personal conflicts such as wanting to do genealogical research to discover more about our family, internalized racism, and a general fear that was holding me back from completing paperwork, let alone identifying. I shared that although it seems that educational supports for Indigenous and Métis students have evolved in the past 10 to 15 years since I have been in high school, it still feels as if we are in the infancy stage of Indigenous school-based supports.

With regards to my own process as a young adult, I mentioned how, although I have always been told I was Métis, I only began connecting with culture and community in 2018, and more recently initiated the process of genealogical research and citizenship applications in my mid to late twenties. Barb shared that in my late twenties I am still young, as she has worked in the community for several years and has seen people in their sixties and seventies begin this work. She shared that the sudden desire to discover more at that age may potentially be triggered by finding something like a Métis citizenship card, hearing the fiddle or drum, or grappling with a feeling that they have always felt inside of them, like there was a puzzle piece that was missing.

Barb discussed how many older community members did not necessarily have explicit conversations about culture or traditions, but rather, “we just thought that was the way it was done in our house” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025). I shared that I have always wondered, and it will likely remain a mystery since I cannot ask him, if my great-grandfather, his family, or the family members who deny our ancestry believed that the way he was raised reflected his family’s way of knowing, being, and doing, rather than being connected to the broader cultural context of Métis identity and ancestry. Barb mentioned that my great-grandfather was a bit younger than her mother. She noted that if she considers this in relation to her mother living in Manitoba, some family units had sister families, meaning sisters married different men but all lived together in the same community. She spoke specifically about communities such as Selkirk, Saint Pierre-Jolys, Sainte Rose du Lac, and those along the Assiniboine River going west, explaining how they were often made up of Métis families. Barb discussed how, during that period in history, Ukrainian and Polish settlers entered various communities, and like the Métis people, they maintained significant aspects of their culture and

traditions within their units. She shared that from listening to her mother and aunties talk, she understands that it was not unusual for kitchen parties to take place, where family units, neighbors, and those with farms would all gather, as Métis people enjoy socializing and hosting events. We noted that while discussing my great-grandfather, he was associated with people who had been there for a generation or two. Therefore, it would not be inappropriate to think that, whether or not he was Métis, he did not grow up with access to Métis cultural norms, social networks, and gatherings.

Barb shared that it is important to think of the First Nations communities and families we interact with, where everyone can be considered a sister, brother, grandma, auntie, or uncle, even if they may be a niece, nephew, or not related by blood at all. She explained that because of the way they support each other in their family units, they become one. Reflecting on her childhood, she noted that she had many aunties and grannies, even though she now realizes that they were not related to her by blood; rather, these terms were expressions of respect in a community setting.

Barb reminisced on her childhood and how she remembered going to the country social, and how everyone was baking bannock, every family had a fiddle or guitar player, and if you were not learning how to jig, you were learning how to polka. Based on our discussion, we concluded that if my great-grandfather did not indeed have the ancestry as he had told our family for generations, it was because he grew up in a community where everyone was sharing stories, culture, and teachings, and therefore he was raised around it and in it, and as Barb shared, depending on the circumstances of his pre generations, nobody would have necessarily been around to say “you do not fit” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025).

Elder recommendations for future research. Barb shared recommendations for future research in two streams, one focusing on my personal research related to this thesis and the other concerning future research on the thesis topic and similar areas. Barb's suggestions for my own thesis, family, and ancestral research included continuing to work with Stan, as he may have discovered more in the past few years after providing my initial family tree. She also recommended reaching out to the president of the Port Alberni Métis chartered community, as she has lived there for many years and may be able to provide clues regarding my late great-grandfather. Additionally, Barb advised keeping my family stories private, but added that based on the outcome of my search I should consider writing a paper or chapter that could be shared widely that offers a toolbox of sorts for frontline practitioners working with children and youth who have navigated experiences like my own.

Barb then went on to discuss the recommendations for future research, which included reaching out to the Executive Director of Island Métis Family and Community Services Society to understand their process of supporting children and youth with ancestral research and applications. The goal is to discover whether any potential changes could be made from a service provider perspective based on this research. Additionally, she suggested reaching out to the Minister of Children and Families for Métis Nation British Columbia, as well as the Region 1 (Vancouver Island) director for MNBC, to help further guide this research in the context of Métis children and youth living in Victoria, British Columbia.

Elder support and encouragement. Barb and I ended our kitchen table conversation by discussing how I wish I had begun this process earlier. I shared that I understand that there are reasons as to why I did not, why my mother did not, and why my grandmother did not. Barb echoed that there is a reason as to why I am on this journey at this point in my life. She shared

that I need to remember that even twenty-five years ago, when Métis Nation British Columbia was being created, the whole concept of publicly identifying and being accepted was not at the same place it is now. She stated that if I am looking at my literature review and the work of relevant scholars, twenty-five years ago there were not many academic sources related to Métis identity and Métis studies. She stressed that what each of us are doing now is opening a world of conversation that has been thought of, but not yet said out loud. Barb stated that I am doing cusp work, where I am still part of that frontier of young scholars who are laying the groundwork for those yet to come, and that “there are many people that talk about Louis Riel and it will be the seventh generation and all the rest of it, but in many ways, you are all the seventh generation because you are opening up those doors that have been closed for so long” (B. Hulme, personal communication, March 16, 2025).

Reflections on Personal Findings

Healing Through Grief and Loss

As I noted earlier, my late grandmother passed away on October 20, 2022, after a short but difficult battle with cancer. I spoke with my grandma on October 13 and asked if she would be willing to look through the genealogical paperwork from Stan. She let me know that she was more than willing to sit down and look through it, but that it would have to wait until she had finished her first round of chemotherapy. My mother texted me on October 16, 2022, that my grandmother was in the hospital on oxygen, but that she was okay and that she would be returning home with her own oxygen tank. On October 19 my mother called me and told me that my grandma would not be returning home, and that I needed to come to Port Alberni to say goodbye.

Throughout all stages of my thesis and research process, I grappled with feelings of grief and loss. Although I moved through the stages of grief including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005), healing allowed me to form a deeper connection to the memory of my grandmother. In doing so, I learned how to navigate a world where my grandmother was no longer physically present (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). I have processed her death and have become at peace with it, and although I miss her every day, I know she walks alongside me. Eyetsemitan (2025) discusses the difference between acute grief and integrated grief, with acute grief including feelings of “shock, sadness, disbelief, fear, anger, and having intrusive thoughts or images of the deceased” (p.103), while integrated grief “occurs when the bereaved is able to ... forge ahead with his or her life” (p. 103). While navigating integrated grief, one can think about or remember the loss of their loved one without experiencing the intense emotional responses that are typical during the acute grief stage (Eyetsemitan, 2025).

Because I am now at the point in my journey where I can remember the loss of my grandmother without experiencing feelings of acute grief, I want to share a story about the day that I drove up to say goodbye to her. I had left my house in Langford around 11:30am and texted my mom that I was on my way. She responded that my grandmother had decided to be sedated and taken off oxygen, so she would likely be unconscious when I arrived. At the time, I do not think it registered what that meant, as I drove the speed limit, stopped for coffee, made another stop for gas, and believed that I would have the chance to say goodbye. When I was in Nanoose Bay, which is approximately 45 minutes from the Port Alberni hospital, my mother called me and said I needed to say goodbye to my grandmother over the phone. I immediately felt sick to my stomach and was experiencing such anger towards myself for making all of those

stops and not leaving earlier in the day. Tears began falling down my face and I had to pull over on the side of the highway. My grandmother came on the phone, and although she sounded quite sedated, she told me how much she loved me and said goodbye. I hung up the phone and with tears streaming down my face, began driving to the hospital. Not one minute after I hung up the phone with my grandma and got back on the road, beating myself up for all the things I could and should have done, an eagle came down from the sky and flew directly above my vehicle. I began crying even harder; while working alongside Elders and community members at the University of Victoria as a student and on WSÁNEĆ territories as an Indigenous Education Assistant and Indigenous Youth and Family Counsellor, I had received teachings that seeing an eagle is a sign that good things are coming, and that they fly closest to Creator therefore are messengers that carry prayers and offer guidance. It felt as if it was a message that my grandmother would be okay, and that it was her time.

When I arrived at the hospital, my family gathered around my grandmother's bed. She was unconscious, just as my mom had said, and her breathing was strained. My family said "Mom, Kennedy is here." I sat by her bedside and cried, and again, began feeling an internal anger towards myself. After a short period of time, my grandmother woke up and looked at me. My family was shocked, as she had been heavily sedated and unconscious for hours and showed no signs of stirring. She said "Kennedy, hold my hand." I immediately hugged her and kissed her and told her how much I loved her. She let me know that she was just taking a nap. She then fell back asleep. It felt like another sign that it was her time, and that everything was going to be okay. I got to say goodbye to her, and I will always be grateful for that.

I know that my grandma is with me every day, and that she would have supported me continuing this work, as she wanted to do it alongside me. In saying that, it has been difficult to

do it without her, not just because I am unable to verify information and validate claims through her, but because writing about her and our family experiences makes my heart ache. I had never experienced grief to this degree, and only knew how truly complex and difficult it is once I lost her. It is important for me to discuss the thoughts and feelings associated with my grandmother's death, while also acknowledging that grief does not always include painful and sorrowful emotions, but "sadness, anger, pain, and loneliness, along with love, fun, strength, and joy" (Cragg, 2008, p. 25). I feel a sense of strength and love knowing that I can discover more about our family not only for myself, but for my grandmother as well.

Despite feeling a great sense of strength as I continue my journey of self-discovery for myself and my family, it proves to be very difficult without my grandmother here. If she were here, I would be able to discuss our family stories in more depth, verify genealogical information, and gain a better understanding of our family's history. Together, we could potentially work to locate the documents that have been lost over the years, or at the very least, understand which organizations those documents and citizenship cards came from.

The Impact of Lost Documentation

While some of our family members once had citizenship cards from a local organization and paperwork completed to receive those cards, we can no longer locate them. Although my mother's cousin has stated that they still have their citizenship card somewhere and that they would share it with me, I have yet to see it. My mother no longer has her citizenship card and is unsure of where it went, and the same goes for my grandmother and great-grandfather's cards that they had obtained through the local organization. The only paperwork my mother and I have been able to locate is my great-grandfather's Pacific Métis Federation application and my great-aunt's genealogical paperwork that differs from that of our relative who does have their

citizenship. As I have mentioned, we are unsure if these citizenship cards came from Pacific Métis Federation, Alberni-Clayoquot Métis Society, or another agency or organization. Because of this, we have had to rely heavily on oral history and intergenerational transmission of knowledge through stories. As I have had to rely primarily on stories and memories regarding our ancestry, the different perspectives of my family members on our suspected Métis identity have come to the surface. There are some relatives in my family who may be experiencing a sense of shame, which appears to play a role in the suppression or silencing of the intergenerational narratives that have been shared in our family.

In research interviews with 33 Métis participants, Monique D. Auger (2021) outlines the colonial policies and the impacts of assimilation that resulted in “a sense of shame associated with Métis identity” (p. 15). It highlights that some families’ actions of self-protection were “often rooted for fear of the negative impacts associated with identifying as Métis people” (Auger, 2021, p. 16). One participant in the study shared, “in those days, people did not tend to publicly identify as Métis and celebrate Métis culture if they could, kind of, pass for white” (Auger, 2021, p. 15). Despite my grandfather identifying as Métis and applying for his citizenship, I often wonder if the impacts of colonialism may have contributed to my family no longer having formal documentation. Auger et al. (2022) state that “as a result of violent colonial policy and practice, Métis people’s identities have been challenged—and in some cases fractured” (p. 35). Prior to completing the research for this thesis, I interpreted my family’s denial of our Indigenous ancestry, along with the absence of formal documentation, as internalized racism. While this may still hold true for some, I have only recently begun to view the denial of our ancestry not simply as shame and internalized racism, but also as a broader set of potential survival and protection tactics (Auger et al., 2022). It is important to understand that

internalized racism, shame, survival, and protection tactics are intimately linked and not mutually exclusive. They exist along a spectrum of coping mechanisms shaped by colonialism and may shift or overlap over time, depending on the context. What may appear as denial can simultaneously serve as a means of preserving safety.

My great-grandfather passed away when I was seven years old, and unfortunately, I do not remember much about him. Most of the stories I have come from my grandmother and mother. In her article “Voices of the Grandmothers: Reclaiming a Métis Heritage,” Welsh (1991) refers to her ancestor, Margaret Taylor, who left no diaries, letters, or wills, and therefore left no written record of how she experienced her life. As a result, Welsh had to rely on alternative sources and documentation to learn more about her ancestor. Relying on alternative sources that cannot always be verified can be difficult, as everyone in my family seems to have different recollections of how things transpired and what our ancestry is, and some people have passed away, further complicating the search for accurate information.

Navigating Gaps and Discrepancies in Ancestral Documentation

A primary aspect of this research was to locate documents and complete ancestral research, not only alongside a Métis Elder and her husband, but on my own as well. As mentioned throughout this thesis, there were discrepancies between genealogical documents shared by relatives and my great-grandfather's Pacific Métis Federation application, therefore making the process even more complex. Additionally, while looking through census records provided online, last names, names of parents, and children of ancestors differed depending on where I was looking and which record I was accessing. Because of this, although a large portion of my thesis was focused on locating historical records and conducting ancestry research,

definitive documentation concerning my own family remained elusive during the course of my project.

Typically, genealogical research is completed by utilizing primary documents to trace the familial links between successive generations (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017). Devlin and Cuggy (2017) share that,

Genealogists and family historians can run into numerous obstacles when trying to obtain the necessary primary documents. These obstacles arise from two main sources: gaps in the historical record, and legal restrictions preventing access to documents that are more recent. (para. 3)

Sources that are used for genealogy purposes can include census records and church and other registers, however, they are not always reliable regarding Indigenous populations as “these colonial forms of record-keeping were not designed to accommodate Indigenous traditions or ways of life, often resulting in ignorance and erasure in the historical record” (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017, para. 4). Additionally, the information collected for the purpose of census records was often unreliable due to several factors, including the reluctance of individuals to disclose personal details, linguistic differences and the misspelling of traditional names, and patterns of frequent geographic mobility (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017). It is also important to highlight that “public access to federal census records is restricted under the Statistics Act, preventing third-party access until 92 years after the census was taken” (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017, para. 8). These discrepancies, exclusions, and legal restrictions pertaining to accessing records can have severe effects on Indigenous families who are seeking to trace their ancestral roots (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017).

As noted in previous paragraphs, Stan, Barb's husband, emailed me following my kitchen table conversation with Barb, as I provided him with my email so that we could continue to do the genealogical research together. He shared with me that my ancestry was quite a challenge, and that there was "lots more to do yet" (S. Hulme, personal communication, March 17, 2025). I am led to believe that the above discussion regarding the complexities of accessing genealogical records, as well as my family's lack of documentation, has contributed to the challenging nature of my ancestry searches. Because my family has little formal evidence linking us to the Métis Nation and has faced extreme difficulty accessing records, it has been challenging for us to access Indigenous rights, spaces, and events, as citizenship which is obtained through genealogical research is typically needed (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017). However, the requirements established for obtaining genealogical evidence have created additional challenges for our family.

Devlin and Cuggy (2017) shared that "amateur and professional genealogists, family historians, consultants, and policy makers ... now have an opportunity—and indeed an obligation—to shift the focus of the historic record away from colonial administration and back to the people behind the pages" (para. 13). Since the records typically accessed for genealogical research contain gaps due to historical colonial impacts, there is a crucial need for a shift in how we approach and interpret historical records. We must give voice to individuals who have been marginalized, silenced, and overlooked in official records. It is time to decolonize archives and recover the perspectives and lived experiences of the people these records name. My family has relied on primarily oral history for our stories of being Métis and the ancestry we supposedly have and currently "there are no Indigenously-developed standards for genealogy that take these unique challenges into account and make space for alternatives to colonial documents, such as

oral histories and traditional knowledge” (Devlin & Cuggy, 2017, para. 12). Struggling to access genealogical records, formal documentation, and archival materials is an issue faced not only by me but also by many others engaged in this work. If we were to imagine a world where people who grew up hearing stories, but lack formal documentation, could use their oral histories and traditional knowledge as a supplementary component to genealogical research, what would that look like? How would this reimagination of Indigenized genealogical and archival research interact with the issues of colonial control over Indigenous identity, pretendians, provincial/territorial bodies and differing jurisdictions, and the many historical and sociopolitical complexities within the Métis Nation?

Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge

Although we have found some forms of documentation, such as my great-grandfather’s Pacific Métis Federation application, and there is also verbal confirmation from my mother, her siblings, and cousins that they all had Métis citizenship cards from a local organization while growing up, our history has primarily been oral as noted above. The stories that have been shared in our family serve as a form of knowledge, and while discussing my journey with reconnecting, revitalizing, and rediscovering, as well as that of youth looking to reconnect, it is important to acknowledge the validity of intergenerational transmission of knowledge through oral stories.

Absolon (2011) shares that oral tradition is where “Indigenous experiences and knowledge are passed from generation to generation and where that knowledge explains the nature of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual worlds of the people” (p. 24). Oster and Lizee (2021) discuss how Métis functions are full of storytellers, as “telling stories has always been an essential part of who the Métis are as a people” (p. 64). Oral traditions are often passed down through multiple generations, as Elders share their lived experiences with younger family

members, who then continue the practice by retelling these narratives to future generations (Oster & Lizee, 2021). Storytelling is “how we come to understand our family history and it is how we keep our culture alive” (Oster & Lizee, 2021, p. 64). Despite my family having no formal documentation and some members not identifying, there were still aspects of culture that were shared through storytelling, whether it was explicitly named as culture. Absolon (2011) states that “Indigenous cultural histories are rich and have been passed from one generation to the next since time immemorial” (p. 26), and that, “such histories have been carried on from generation to generation via oral traditions of storytelling, ceremony, songs, teachings, ritual, and sharing” (p. 26). We have family recipes, songs, dances, and stories that link us back to the Métis Nation that have been shared for generations as my great-grandfather shared them with my grandmother, who then shared them with my mother, who then shared them with me.

It is essential to situate intergenerational transmission of knowledge and stories in Métis contexts for the purpose of my thesis and research. In St. Vital, Manitoba, a significant meeting took place in 1909 at the home of Joseph Riel, where prominent figures of the Métis Nation convened. This gathering brought together not only those who had lived through the Red River and North-West Resistances but also younger family members and community representatives who embodied the next generation of Métis leaders (Teillet, 2019). In *The North-West is Our Mother*, Métis author and Indigenous rights lawyer Teillet (2019) shared that although these men had many names, they were referred to as the Old Wolves. A key point to consider is that until the Old Wolves published their book *Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans l'Ouest Canadien*, “the Métis Nation’s history was passed down orally” (Teillet, 2019, p. 8).

Although there is importance in having written documentation, an article examined and challenged how the production of knowledge in small-town archives often clashed with the

stories shared by Indigenous Elders by utilizing the narratives of the author's grandmother alongside local history texts (Hunt, 2016). The author's research revealed inconsistencies in the written history, therefore "highlight[ing] the importance of oral histories, not only as alternatives to the inconsistencies in the narratives settlers often tell of themselves, but also as valuable historical texts that make claims to spaces of belonging that assert long-held notions of Indigenous community" (Hunt, 2016, pp. 34–35).

While looking at oral history as a form of legal evidence, it should be acknowledged that "it is often oral history and stories that tribes rely upon as evidence to support their claims" (Babcock, 2012, p. 19). However, there are federal rules that limit the legal weight of oral evidence, such as the hearsay doctrine, which therefore dismiss some oral histories as inadmissible in court (Babcock, 2012). Despite these evidentiary rules, Akhtar (2022) shares that "there is a more responsive attitude towards the acceptance of oral evidence in court which stems from the Constitution Act, section 35, which requires the rights of the Indigenous peoples to be 'recognised and affirmed'" (p. 169). Although these sources primarily address oral histories in the context of land claims, I believe they are relevant to the topic of my thesis, which has discussed ancestral research and the significance of storytelling. When a youth holds onto a story, there is meaning behind it, and ultimately, that story has a source. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and affirm their journey as individuals who have the right to continue their path of self-discovery. There is validity to their stories, whether or not they have ancestry, because these narratives connect them to the culture and Nation in some capacity and it is important for young people to have opportunities to explore and document what this entails.

Lifelong Commitment to Uncovering Family Ancestry

As I come to the end of my MA research and my thesis, in spite of an extensive search, I still do not have conclusive documentation about my ancestry. The valuable learning I have gathered throughout the process offers important insights into the procedural, logistical, and ethical aspects of the search process, its complex political, sociocultural, emotional, and personal dimensions, and implications for sound practice with other young people with similar experiences. The kitchen table talk process was very enlightening and helped me gain more of an understanding of where our family stories came from, as well as how common this kind of search is among folks looking to reconnect and discover more about their ancestry and culture. Despite my undertaking, I have not yet received definitive answers regarding our family ancestry due to lack of accurate documentation, competing information, and time constraints related to my citizenship application and genealogical research. Additionally, as I have outlined, I continue to face limitations in what I can legally and personally access regarding records and genealogical and ancestral research, and there is a general lack of information within my family, with very few people to rely on for questions and further discoveries. Because of this, my research will not be limited to this thesis but will continue as a lifelong process.

This story began with my great-grandfather, grandmother, and mother when my mother was in high school; it has entailed generations of our family trying to discover and uncover more about our ancestry and analyze the stories that we have been raised with. It was evident in my kitchen table talk with Barb that there are folks who do not engage in this work until well into their senior years, for a multitude of reasons. This led me to feel incredibly grateful to my family for starting this process, or at least having conversations about starting this process, roughly 35 to 40 years ago. I found many others who shared experiences of being disconnected from their

culture during childhood and adolescence. In a CBC News article, Julianna Maggrah (2023) shared her story of growing up in La Ronge, a small town in Saskatchewan. Maggrah (2023) stated “before the age of 30, I had never smudged, set foot into a powwow, picked medicine or picked up a drum” (para. 5). These experiences led to Maggrah not knowing “what it meant to be Indigenous” (2023, para. 6).

Maggrah’s story is not an anomaly, nor is the story of my own family. These experiences are so very common, and many Indigenous people must search for their culture on their own in their adult years (Maggrah, 2023). Maggrah’s story and mine differ, as she grew up with her family speaking their traditional language, living off the land, and in near proximity to a reserve (Maggrah, 2023). However, Maggrah (2023) shared that despite her family speaking fluent Cree and being sustained by the land, “they didn’t know about their ancestor’s spiritual connection to the land” (para. 4). She shared that she wants to bring culture back as it was stripped away from her people. I want to continue doing this process of genealogical and ancestral research for my late great-grandfather and grandmother because they were unable to.

Chapter 5: Implications for Practice

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed my family history, our presumed ancestry, and the ways I have undertaken genealogical and ancestral research. I hope that this inquiry contributes to a conversation that needs to be had among practitioners working with children, youth, and families, as well as to questions that have long been at the forefront of the Métis Nation. In this chapter, I address the topics discussed in my thesis in the broader context of their implications for practitioners working with children, youth, and families. More specifically, I provide my own reflections and recommendations for youth and practitioners on how to engage in this work. I draw upon the insights of frontline CYC practitioners, Indigenous scholars, and existing literature discussing Métis identity, cultural continuity, genealogical research, and conceptualization of self to further situate how youth can initiate their own identity search process in a supported way. I also outline what role frontline practitioners can play in affirming, supporting, advocating for, and encouraging youth to undertake this work in a good way while meeting them where they are at. I hope these recommendations are useful and help illuminate the complexity of this work, the challenges it can present, and the significant time and resources it often requires.

Métis Survival, Knowledge, Connections, and Resilience in Colonial Contexts

Strategies of Survival

In previous chapters, I briefly touched on survival strategies for Métis people and the ways in which these strategies have become an intergenerational process of learning and unlearning (Monchalín et al., 2020). When discussing survival strategies in the context of practice with children, youth, and families, it is important to understand that some individuals may not learn about their Métis ancestry until later in life due to the intergenerational shame that

permeates some families as a result of the colonial practices of the settler state (Monchalin et al., 2020). Auger (2021) describes family secrets as being “rooted in shame and protection from the destructive forces of colonization” (p. 11). The internalized shame, racism, and concealment of Métis ancestry that some families have faced and continue to grapple with can also represent important survival strategies intended to protect individuals and families and ensure a degree of safety while living in a society marked by racial bias (Paul et al., 2023).

Survival strategies for Métis people included hiding Métis identity through silence and passing (Fiola, 2015). Fiola (2015) claims that “silence can be viewed as a self-identification strategy whereby the individual/family self-identifies as anything but Métis ... as a survival mechanism” (p. 30). Linked to the concept of silence, passing was also a common survival strategy (Fiola, 2015). While some individuals and families were able to pass as white due to lighter skin, others identified as Spanish or said they “‘have a suntan’ as a way to explain why they have dark skin” (Monchalin et al., 2020, p. 326). Fiola (2015) shares that “passing means to shift one’s racial reference group to that of another group (including other groups of colour) perceived to be less marginalized in the existing racial hierarchy” (p. 31).

Although passing is often “done strategically in order to promote personal or family safety and overall wellness” (Paul et al., 2023, p. 248), these strategies “have contributed misunderstandings around identity and belonging” (Paul et al., 2023, p. 248). It is important to acknowledge that passing is not without its challenges, as it “does not protect the individual from the internal wounds received through witnessing racism towards other Métis people, particularly other family members and loved ones” (Richardson & Seaborn, 2009, as cited in Paul et al., 2023, p. 249). In examining passing in Métis contexts, it is crucial to recognize that multiple realities can coexist: Passing can serve as a necessary survival strategy against racism and

discrimination, but it also reasserts a form of white privilege that is not available to non-white-passing Indigenous people; at the same time, it can also negatively impact one's sense of identity and reflect conflicting dynamics related to the valuation of whiteness, which are shaped by the broader context of white supremacy (Paul et al., 2023). As Fiola (2015) explains, "continuous passing, denying one's identity, and disconnecting from one's culture(s) may result in psychological distress, identity crises, spiritual imbalance, and strained family relationships" (p. 32). It is clear that supports for young people searching for their ancestral roots must acknowledge multiple and difficult truths and eschew singular models of identity development.

Further, these complexities bring to light the importance of examining in greater detail the historical colonial impacts on the formation of Métis people's identities, which I do in the following section. It is important to consider the specific strategies Métis individuals have employed in order to survive, ensure safety, and find protection against colonial policies and regimes, both historically and in contemporary contexts, as these practices continue to shape the identities, narratives, and experiences of some Métis children, youth, and families.

Cultural Continuity, Resistance, and Resilience

Auger (2021) asserts that "despite the challenges that many Métis individuals, families, and communities have faced as a result of colonialism, resistance and resilience were thoroughly demonstrated, with stories of bravery, resistance, and gratitude" (p. 1). In Auger's (2021) qualitative study that aimed to explore how the effects of colonialism have shaped and complicated Métis experiences of land, identity, and resilience, one youth participant echoed these insights, sharing that for them, being Métis meant exhibiting "inner strength and bravery, and the courage to kind of stand up to the status quos and stuff because being Métis isn't easy... because we're known as the invisible people and it takes a lot of bravery and courage and inner

strength” (p. 20). Other participants in Auger’s (2021) study shared their recognition and appreciation for the ancestors who “worked so tirelessly and bravely, and really resisted so many different forces in their lives that were trying to, I guess, mute our Métis identity or community or existence really” (p. 20).

While traditional definitions of resilience have primarily focused on individuals, more recent interpretations are broadening to include families and communities (Sasakamoose et al., 2016). Sasakamoose et al. (2016) state that “the notions of resilience are grounded in cultural values that have persisted despite historical adversity and that acts of resistance or creative transformation such as efforts to revitalize language, culture, and spirituality contribute to individual and collective healing” (p. 640). Among Métis people, there is an “emphasis on self-reliance, autonomy, and independence” (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 87), which helps explain why Métis people proudly assert that they are Otipemisiwak, a name given to them by their Cree kin that means “the people who command themselves” or “the independent people” (Teillet, 2019, p. 476). Participants in Auger’s (2021) study shared a distinct pride in being Métis, with one stating,

I am a Métis. I have always been a Métis. I carry it and wear and speak it every day. My life has been powerfully shaped by it. There are some specific experiences of oppression, unique racism..., and passion and pride in our resilience to overcome; to be powerful, to be strong, to laugh even when things are bleakest, to know that we will survive and feel it in our bodies, to visit our ancestral places and feel the power when we are there, and have a true knowing of our connection to the land, to experience our grandmothers’ and grandfathers’ presence in sometimes spiritual and supernatural ways. (p. 19)

Métis people have long resisted, and will continue to resist, the colonial structures that have persistently undermined the foundations of their culture (Auger, 2019). As Auger (2021) states, “Métis people are survivors of colonial attempts at assimilation” (p. 20). But what does this mean for practitioners working alongside children, youth, and families who are striving to reconnect with their identities? More specifically, how can practitioners support young people who have been disconnected from their family stories, youth whose ties to ancestry, culture, and history have been severed by colonial policies and assimilation efforts, leaving them unsure of where or how to begin?

Emily Coon (2020), a mixed-race Indigenous CYC practitioner, shares about her personal journey of healing from intergenerational shame and trauma, stating: “I am working through the violences my grandmothers endured, exploring the places where trauma tore our family apart, and holding up the resiliency, strength, and resurgence that they embodied” (p. 22). Youth seeking to reconnect are not only acknowledging the intergenerational trauma their families experienced at the hands of the settler state, but they are also illustrating significant strength and resilience in the process. Enacting this resilience is heart work, and it can involve both painful and joyful experiences of learning and unlearning. Sasakamoose et al. (2016) advocate for a strengths-based approach to youth mental health, as it shifts “the perceived deficits away from the individual and places mental health problems into the appropriate context ... allowing one to focus on the strength and resilience that many of these youth have demonstrated in the face of remnant colonization” (p. 640). Youth on their journey of reconnection showcase their “individual forms of resilience, through the ways that they have lived with and navigated their healing” (Auger, 2019, p. 95). Métis children, youth, and families have continued to display

significant resilience, specifically in the face of colonial practices that have aimed to disconnect them from not only their culture and community, but from their land as well.

Community, Kinship, and Navigating Displacement

There were, and continue to be, “ongoing assimilative strategies [that] have served to disconnect, relocate, and displace Métis people from the land” (Auger, 2021, p. 8). Logan (2015) observes that “Métis [people] were removed, displaced and dispossessed of land, and military action was taken against them in order to reduce their presence and prominence in Canada” (p. 434). The forced movement of Métis people from Red River began during the 1870s (Teillet, 2019). As in previous sections of this thesis, although I would like to discuss this topic in greater detail, for the purposes of my research—and to focus on the implications for practice with children and youth—I will offer a summarized account of what led to the displacement of Métis people “from their families and communities by the many tentacles of Canadian colonialism” (Gaudry, 2018, p. 184).

Historical colonial impacts aimed to dispossess Métis people from the land, with the purpose of creating “space for European settlers with the vision of reaching Canada’s manifest destiny” (Auger, 2021, p. 8). This sentiment was echoed throughout a letter written by Sir John A. MacDonald, wherein he stated that, ““these impulsive half breeds have got spoilt by their émuete [riot] and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers”” (as cited in Logan, 2015, p. 441).

Leading up to the Red River Métis diaspora that began in the 1870s was a series of political, territorial, and cultural tensions beginning with the “Hudson’s Bay Company’s transfer of the vast northwest territory of Rupert’s Land to the Canadian government without prior consultation with the people who lived on these lands” (Kermaal, 2016, pp. 115–116). These

events are historically documented as the trigger for the events that transpired between 1869 and 1870 (Kermoal, 2016). To safeguard their land, rights, and safety, “the Métis, through a provisional government led by Louis Riel, negotiated terms for entering Confederation. As a result of these negotiations, the province of Manitoba was created by the Manitoba Act” (Kermoal, 2016, p. 116). Despite the Manitoba Act promising land to the Métis people that was “to be redeemed in the form of scrip—government-issued certificates good for land or a cash equivalent” (Kermoal, 2016, p. 116), the Canadian government undermined Métis land rights by mismanaging the implementation of the Manitoba Act, effectively ignoring the protections and entitlements the Act was meant to guarantee (Logan, 2015). As Teillet (2019) explains, “the reign of terror and the broken promised amnesty” made Red River “a bad place to live” for the Métis in the early 1870s (p. 293). With their leaders in exile, many Métis began to follow, effectively becoming exiles themselves from Manitoba (Teillet, 2019). This displacement of Métis people from their ancestral lands remains a persistent issue, as Métis people “continue to be wanderers in non-Métis spaces” (Richardson, 2004, p. 69).

Kermoal (2016) shares that, “despite this history of displacement, Métis people have maintained a very strong connection to the land and, more generally, to the Northwest, carrying with them knowledge systems integral to their culture” (p. 116). It is important to highlight that despite the enduring consequences of settler colonialism on Métis people’s connection to land, they “remain adaptable and determined to find creative ways of connecting with the natural environment” (Auger, 2017, p. 86). Métis people continue to find kinship and community connections in spite of land dispossession, through participating in “third-space cultural experiences, [where] they experience respite from this separation, and proceed toward the

creation of a self that is more complete” (Richardson, 2004, p. 70). Gaudry (2018) speaks to the connections that Métis people build away from the homelands, sharing that,

For Métis displaced by Canadian adoption policies and other colonial interventions, a path of repatriation remains open to them. Others may find a home in the communities where their ancestors actually came from, if of course those communities will accept them. (p. 184)

One participant in Monchalin et al.’s (2020) study exploring the experiences of urban Métis women’s identity shared that a connection to community means “a connection both to my ancestors and my contemporary community” (p. 326). Many Métis people continue to see their relationship with the land as essential to their overall wellness and consistently work to stay connected to it (Auger, 2017). This highlights the importance of creating opportunities for connection to land, and more specifically to the Métis homelands, for young urban people who have grown up away from their traditional territories.

It has been mentioned many times throughout this thesis that Indigenous youth connecting with culture, traditional knowledge, language, and community can serve as a protective factor against suicide and self-harm, contributing to a greater sense of self and improved mental health outcomes. In her thesis focused on conceptualizing Métis culture and mental health in British Columbia, Auger (2017) argues that there is a need to support “cultural practices, Michif language revitalization, and Elder-youth engagement opportunities for increased cultural continuity for Métis people, families, and communities in BC” (p. 54).

There are many urban Indigenous communities, and each is different depending on if one is located near the homelands, or far from them. Being urban specifically in British Columbia, and on Vancouver Island, raises unique issues in terms of reconnecting, due to the distinct

distance and disconnect from the homelands. Métis communities in BC have proven to be incredibly resilient, creating pathways for community connection despite not living on their traditional homelands. Urban Métis youth are more likely to maintain a stable sense of self when their communities provide a strong sense of cultural continuity (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). As practitioners, we need to be mindful of the barriers to cultural continuity, community, and land connections, such as “a lack of funding for cultural programming and services, and youth apathy toward cultural continuity” (Auger, 2017, p. 41). Practitioners supporting youth in their journeys of reconnection must “understand these barriers in an effort to improve policies and programs that recognize and enhance cultural continuity” (Auger, 2017, pp. 44–45). To effectively support youth in their path to reconnecting, practitioners must first comprehend the barriers that arise from being displaced from their homelands, as well as how these barriers complicate the process of completing genealogical research.

Confronting Colonial Disruption on Identity Formation

Meaningfully engaging with youth looking to reconnect requires practitioners to educate themselves on the lasting impacts of colonialism on Métis identity formation. This includes acknowledging the trauma inflicted by residential and day schools, the forced removal of children during the Sixties Scoop, displacement from traditional territories, and the ongoing suppression of Métis culture and identity.

It has been noted that “for Métis people, connection to culture, land, and identity are integral components of health and wellness” (Auger et al., 2022, p. 20). Additionally, Chartrand (2007) stated that “being Métis is not so much about who you are as an individual as it is about having kin or family relationships within a Métis community” (p. 8). When discussing my story, as well as those of other children, youth, and families who may be navigating similar family

histories, it is important to recognize the above insight that connection to culture, land, and identity is essential for health and wellness. However, being in a constant state of uncertainty due to limited documentation, family grief and loss, displacement, and differing narratives among family members can lead to feelings of disconnection, a distorted understanding of self, and a general longing for belonging. A youth participant in a report on Métis youth's health shared that "strong identity promotes strong self-worth" (Tourand et al., 2016, p. 52). This raises a key question for my own research: What does self-worth look like for someone who does not have a strong sense of identity, and how do we support them in restoring their connections to culture, land, and community?

Tourand et al.'s (2016) study identified significant mental health benefits for Métis youth who engage in cultural practices, sharing that doing so "fostered a greater sense of belonging and feeling of pride in their Métis identity, increased youth's skills and knowledge, and improved self-esteem" (p. 52). However, despite the positive impact of cultural engagement on youth's mental health, not all youth have the ability to engage in traditional or cultural activities. A large majority of Métis individuals reside in urban areas, where they might live assimilated lifestyles and experience geographic separation from other members of the Métis community (Richardson, 2004). Although there are urban centres and chartered communities such as the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Métis Nation Greater Victoria, drawing upon my own experiences I can share that youth may not always feel comfortable accessing services due to the impact of historical colonial forces on their perceived sense of self in relation to their Métis identity.

Although the same cannot be said for all Métis peoples, Auger (2021) discusses an important narrative that I have heard from many people in the community, sharing that she has experienced "ongoing struggles around imposter syndrome related to identity—not feeling

‘Indigenous enough’ or ‘fully Métis’” (p. 11). It is important to understand that these feelings of inadequacy are deeply tied to the legacy of colonialism, as “colonization told us that we were not good enough” (Auger, 2021, p. 16). An article written by Auger et al. (2022) exploring Métis identity and belonging through sharing stories from 24 Métis women, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people included the following excerpt from one participant:

For me as a Métis person, I didn’t have any sense of connection and no sense of identity and was completely disenfranchised and made to be really assimilated.

Like basically, I am the result of assimilation... So, because of that, knowing your sense of identity or feeling a sense of belonging... you just don’t have it... I’m in the process or reclamation but I still am bearing the brunt of not having close ties and not having a sense of connection and feeling welcomed or wanted or a part of anything. (p. 29)

When working alongside youth who are looking to reconnect, it is important to support them in reframing these feelings of imposter syndrome as products of colonial disruption, as opposed to personal failings. In order to do this, a practitioner must understand the historical colonial disruption that has affected Métis individuals, and how it has often resulted in a sense of shame surrounding their ancestry and identity (Auger et al., 2022). To provide responsive support to youth dealing with feelings of imposter syndrome, it is essential to meet them where they are, with compassion. This involves utilizing a strengths-based approach, exercising patience, and providing clear information. Additionally, collaborating with Elders who can explain historical context and including them in events and circles that youth can attend would be beneficial.

Stories Guiding Reconnection

In my previous chapter, I discussed the intergenerational transmission of knowledge in relation to my own story, as well as that of Métis history. While addressing implications for practice, I find it imperative to emphasize the importance of reconnecting through storytelling and oral tradition. Additionally, it is important to note that practitioners need to engage with Indigenous literature and stories in a good way. Reder (2022) aims to challenge Western academic approaches to interpreting Indigenous texts, and instead, proposes a new framework for understanding Indigenous literature that is grounded in the Indigenous tradition of life writing.

As shared by Macdougall (2017), “Métis identities are nurtured and sustained by the stories, traditions and cultural practices taught by our grandmothers, grandfathers, and ancestors” (p. 5). Reder (2022) focuses on the use of autobiographical practices in Cree and Métis communities in her book *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, arguing that “autobiographies—âcimisowina [stories about oneself]—best allow us to assert control over our identities, histories, and knowledge systems” (p. 18). Building on the recommendation from Auger (2017) regarding increased Elder-youth engagement opportunities, I echo her words and invite practitioners to envision ways to support the use of Elder-youth relationship building and intergenerational storytelling as methods of reconnection. A youth participant in Auger’s 2017 study shared the importance of Elders in intergenerational transmission of knowledge stating, “I totally associate culture with Elders so every time I can be around Elders, I think that that’s healing and they always find a way to share some new knowledge or traditions” (p. 67). Furthermore, a Métis Elder participating in the same study shared the following statement, clearly outlining the “need for more opportunities for learning and sharing” (Auger, 2017, p. 67),

We have to exercise our culture to move forward with the younger people. Young people today, they are educated, physically fit, and emotionally, they deal with those issues at an early age. Us old people we bottled it up for so long. It is not easy to bring out. But the young people are doing all that. And the spiritual part, the spirituality, they'll find their own way. Once they know where they come from and learn their values and so forth they will know how to look after that part.

(Auger, 2017, p. 67)

Richardson (2004) emphasizes the importance of stories, sharing that “our stories are inseparably linked to our survival. Culture is the blanket that protects us, and stories are the threads of that blanket” (p. 69).

As practitioners, it is vital to recognize the validity of stories. If a youth is told by their family that they are Métis, that story holds significance, whether or not the documentation has been gathered. These stories originate from somewhere, and we can support youth in deciphering where that is and why these narratives are important within their family system. Lavallée (2023) shares that “Indigenous communities and cultures have historically relied on intergenerational relationships to preserve and continue cultural practices and ways of being” (p. 31), as “cultural continuity relies on oral storytelling within intergenerational relationships between community members, especially with Elders” (p. 31). Passing down cultural knowledge and skills has helped Indigenous communities preserve their traditions for generations (Lavallée, 2023). Lavallée (2023) highlights that the transmission of cultural knowledge is rooted in fostering meaningful and lasting relationships with younger generations, as “learning cultural teachings often brings the responsibility to share this teaching with future generations” (p. 32). The greater the exposure a Métis person has to cultural narratives, the stronger their sense of Métis identity becomes

(Richardson, 2004). Richardson (2004) asserts that “telling a story was and is a way of providing information to witnesses so that it will be recorded in the memory of the community and become part of history” (p. 21). As previously mentioned, Métis people are adaptable and continue efforts to build and strengthen community connections and kinship relations. To support these important investments into Métis communities, it is also important for practitioners to develop avenues for meaningful community connections that help to bridge the gap for youth who may not know where to begin.

Further highlighting the benefits of accessing cultural stories during formative years, Ross (2022) shares from her own experiences growing up stating, “these memories and lessons learned while growing up in my Métis community and living miyo-pimatisiwin [a good life] contributes to who I am today. The stories, connection, humour, and laughter made life happier and much more pleasant” (p. 56). However, the connection of intergenerational storytelling “are not [only] limited to Elder and youth but continues between youth and younger children too” (Lavallée, 2023, p. 72). There is importance in employing peer relationships for telling stories, which was highlighted through my own journey of discovering more about my ancestry. Discussing my family story with peers helped me understand that it is not unlike others. Ferguson et al. (2021) state that “peer mentorship is an effective approach ... that may be particularly useful among underrepresented populations” (p. 1). They provide the example of an Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, which utilizes mentoring across age groups, including elementary school students, high school student mentors, and young adult health leaders, to promote “healthy lifestyles in children and youth” (Ferguson et al., 2021, p. 1). One young adult health leader shared their perspective on contributing to intergenerational connections, stating it, “meant a lot to me because maybe in the

future it might affect these children a lot more or maybe it'll affect them less but in some way, shape, or form I've come to realize that it has affected me too in a positive way" (Ferguson et al., 2021, p. 7). Children and youth want to partake in this work; we just need to find ways to support them in doing so.

Affirming Métis Identity and Validating Experiences

All children and youth who are told that they are Métis have the right to know about their ancestry, kinship, and homelands, and should be supported in their search, whether or not they can access a Métis agency that offers this support. It is important that practitioners affirm a young person's exploration and feelings about their identity without requiring confirmation before they are "allowed" to explore that part of themselves. A young person should not need a citizenship card or a completed family tree to deserve support, belonging, or the right to ask questions.

Gabel et al. (2024) share that "the hiding of Métis identity, or not feeling pride in one's history, begins to be engrained through the kindergarten to year 12 (K-12) education system in Canada" (p. 8). Participants in Gabel et al.'s (2024) study described these experiences not only beginning in K-12, but also continuing into postsecondary education. Gabel et al. (2024) shared that "despite a shift in recent years, Métis perspectives and cultures have been omitted from university Indigenization strategies, which has caused Métis students to feel shame that they are not 'Indigenous enough' to be included within the space" (p. 8). To create cultural safety and belonging for youth, which as noted is a significant protective factor for their mental health and well-being, affirming this stage of wondering, questioning, and seeking is critical. Supporting youth to do this work in a good way must honour Métis protocols and be responsive to where

each youth is in their journey. In order to do so, practitioners must recognize that no two paths to reconnection are the same.

To affirm Métis identity and belonging for youth who are on their journey of reconnecting, practitioners have a duty to further educate themselves on the colonial practices of Indigenous erasure that have impacted so many families. Andrea Currie shares her own story as a Sixties Scoop survivor in her book, *Finding Otipemisiwak*, which outlines her “journey to finding her Métis roots and reuniting with her birth family” (CBC, 2024, para. 1). Currie further expresses that growing up, she “had beliefs that were unlike the rest of the family members that I was growing up with, that I now see were aligned with Métis core values and ways of thinking” (CBC, 2024, para. 14). The stories young people carry from their families are echoes of places, times, and people that came before. As discussed in my conversation with my mother in Chapter 4, those stories do not disappear simply because one discovers that their proposed ancestry is not, in fact, Métis, as they have been led to believe. Nevertheless, these stories continue to influence how individuals navigate the world and how their family members interacted with and established kinship ties to Indigenous peoples. Currie discusses how, much like my own journey of looking to reconnect and using this thesis as a beginning point for conversation, her book was not necessarily written for herself but rather was “written to contribute to the conversation that I think needs to happen in our country” (CBC, 2024, para. 20).

This broader conversation about identity, belonging, and accountability also extends into professional and community practice, where questions of relationships and responsibilities assume different, yet equally important, forms. Moreno and Mucina (2019) share insights from their experiences as two racialized women of colour practitioners, stating that “in human service practice, we work alongside urban, rural, on-reserve and off-reserve, status and non-status

Indigenous peoples” (p. 88). While they acknowledge that they are unable to speak to the specific needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, they emphasize their ability to speak to how practitioners can demonstrate decolonial ethics when working with individuals, families, and communities affected by colonial violence (Moreno & Mucina, 2019). Although some practitioners may not fully understand the complexities and nuance in reference to Métis identity and the community’s specific needs, they can still play a critical role in supporting youth by navigating systems and applying decolonial ethics to foster understanding, cultural safety, and affirmation of identity. Furthermore, Moreno and Mucina (2019) speak to the settler colonialism that permeates the field of human services, stating that “social work, like other human service fields that have been granted validation by Euro-western academia, has been shaped by and through colonialism” (p. 89). They pose the following question to practitioners: “As human service practitioners we often find ourselves moving through these policies, and even acknowledging their limitations as they apply to a white Canada; but do we recognize the colonial structures on which they are built and sustained?” (Moreno & Mucina, 2019, p. 91). Practitioners understanding that “the policies that direct our practice and ethics with Indigenous people are built on settler colonial violence and genocide” (Moreno & Mucina, 2019, p. 90) is crucial. This awareness can help for them to better support youth through validating their experiences navigating systems and institutions that are otherwise colonial while trying to complete their own ancestral research.

Colonial dynamics in education systems and human services contribute to the ongoing systemic erasure of Métis identity that is directly tied to the contemporary experiences of urban Métis youth. As a result, urban Métis youth might be left without the support they need to meaningful reconnect with their ancestry, revitalize cultural ties, and explore the stories carried

by their families. This is where we as practitioners have a responsibility to step in and offer informed, affirming, and culturally grounded support. Later in this chapter I offer more detail around what this would specifically look like.

Complexities and Challenges in Métis Genealogical Research

Reflections on Genealogical Research in Academia

Genealogical research is incredibly important for the process of (re)connecting and (re)vitalizing. Conducting this work on my own has given me the opportunity to understand the support that urban and disconnected youth may need while attempting to conduct their own genealogical research, as well as the insights they should consider before beginning this work. I will touch on these aspects later in this chapter.

Prior to speaking with faculty, other academics in the field, and peers who completed their master's degree in CYC, I was under the impression that genealogical research had no place in academia. However, after having honest and vulnerable conversations with researchers and peers, I have come to the realization that genealogical research can create “understandings of belonging, identity and self” (Bottero, 2015, p. 540).

Despite the importance of genealogical research, it is not an easy task. Loyer and Loyer (2021) inform us that, “the process of accessing records, even for an experienced genealogist, is not easy” (p. 2). Accessing genealogical research, though important, can be intimidating to urban Indigenous youth as there is limited time, resources, supports, and financial aid to do so. If records are difficult to navigate, and youth are left without supports, this is a piece of them that will go unexplored. Kramer (2011) argues that genealogy can be seen as “a creative and imaginative memory and kinship practice ... used to map affinities and connectedness, enact

relatedness, and produce self-identity” (p. 379). Kramer (2011) stresses that genealogy can offer “a geographical and/or temporal ‘place to stand’” (p. 392).

Utilizing genealogy as a research method has not only helped me construct my own self-identity but has also deepened my understanding of the kinship ties and connections that link me to those who came before me. Exploring my history and ancestry has fostered a strong sense of belonging, which, in turn, will influence the generations that follow. While some critique the academic value of genealogical research (Connor, 2022), I contend that it offers a powerful means of developing a richer historical and geographical understanding, creating a more profound connection to the people and places that have shaped our identities. Through mapping these relational bonds, genealogy does not merely serve as a tool for personal reflection; it invites us to engage with the larger historical narrative, enriching our sense of continuity and belonging across time.

If youth are unable to access these services that contribute to connectedness, relatedness, and production of self-identity due to time, financial, and support constraints, how will their mental, spiritual, physical, and social health be affected? Jetten et al. (2012) share that “a growing body of research has demonstrated that social groups and networks are important predictors and protectors of health and well-being” (p. xv). While discussing the protective nature of kinship ties in terms of Indigenous identity, belonging to a community can have significant impacts on your mental health. As reflected in my own personal experience, without the opportunities to complete this identity work, I believe youth could be left feeling lost, defeated, and unsure of who they are or where they belong.

Systemic and Institutional Delays in Reconnection

While supporting youth who are looking to reconnect, it is important to acknowledge that ancestral searches and genealogical research take time and resources. Various contributing factors can influence the time constraints one might encounter while completing these efforts, some of which I outline below, such as geographical disconnect, differing policies, and gaps or contradictions in documentation. These are also aspects I have discussed in my personal findings chapter in relation to my own family story.

The time constraints associated with this work were evident throughout my own story, as well as that of others, with waiting times spanning several months. The Saint-Boniface Historical Society reports wait times for genealogy packages of approximately 9 to 10 months. While MNBC does not currently list how long it takes to process an application on their website, when I previously accessed the website to inquire about starting my process, it stated that the timeline would be approximately 8 months. If youth want to complete their genealogy through the Saint-Boniface Historical Society before applying for citizenship, they could be waiting up to 18 months. While youth can be connected to chartered communities throughout British Columbia, there are limitations on the supports and services they can access prior to membership, specifically with Métis Nation Greater Victoria. In order for someone to become a member of MNGV, their genealogy must first be verified through MNBC or the Saint-Boniface Historical Society in Manitoba (Métis Nation Greater Victoria, n.d.-a). This can create further delays in youth being able to access timely community resources, connections, and events, as they have to wait on different organizations to process applications.

Loyer and Loyer (2021) share that “learning to navigate different systems in different institutions and the policies that vary by institution can take as much time as understanding the

records requested” (p. 2). Genealogical research is no easy feat, as illustrated in Loyer and Loyer’s (2021) kitchen table discussion, where Darrell Loyer further explored his experiences accessing archival records through the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Loyer and Loyer (2021) stated that “as in most archives, actually viewing the records requires assistance from a staff member, which may not be immediately clear to visitors” (p. 2). Because some youth may want to embark on similar journeys as my own, these are important insights to have, as “researching is hard work, from navigating the structures of the archive and dealing with staff to travelling far distances to visit” (Loyer & Loyer, 2021, p. 3). Relying on staff can create even more barriers with regard to time, as Loyer and Loyer (2021) outlined that Darrell was limited in the number of records he could access in one visit.

As child, youth, and family-serving practitioners, it is crucial to understand the logistical and systemic challenges youth may face when engaging in genealogical research and ancestral reconnection. We must strive to create spaces that foster connection and kinship, even while official documentation is pending. Or, at the very least, we should offer consistent care, encouragement, and affirmation while youth wait for legal documentation, citizenship, or genealogical records to support them throughout their journey of reconnection.

The Challenge of Reconnecting in Urban Spaces

I have discussed Métis people navigating displacement and residing in urban centres, far away from their homelands, as well as the distinct challenges that arise while conducting genealogical research. All three of these aspects contribute to the complex and nuanced process of learning more about ancestry, trying to reconnect, and beginning a genealogical research journey. Combining these three aspects can create significant setbacks for youth.

There have been many times when I have thought that perhaps going to the homelands would provide me with a better understanding of our family story and supposed ancestry. Conducting this work in urban settings, particularly ones so removed from the homelands, proves to be difficult, especially when it may be challenging to connect with people who know the specific family stories that come from a distinct place and time. Gabel et al. (2024) state that “Métis understandings of cultural practices and identity that are linked to an archival connection exclude the ways Métis culture and identity continue to be practiced and understood” (p. 5). I have heard stories of individuals returning to the homelands and having their ancestral connections confirmed by Elders in the community. This was also echoed in my kitchen table talk with Barb, where she shared her experiences of acquiring her citizenship in Manitoba. In Chapter 2, I discussed the differences between provinces and jurisdictions, and that each have unique definitions and guidelines for assessing Métis claims. I also shared that for youth living in Victoria, obtaining membership to Métis Nation Greater Victoria requires first applying for citizenship through MNBC or applying for genealogy through the Saint-Boniface Historical Society. When accessing the Saint-Boniface Historical Society website, it states that they are “devoted mainly to preserving and making accessible archives documenting the Francophone and Metis experience in Western Canada and particularly in Manitoba” (Société historique de Saint-Boniface, n.d., para. 1). While their online application time is 9–10 months, I wonder what it would entail to access the centre in person and whether one could play an active role in genealogical research alongside the staff. I am also curious to know if this process would be quicker or if one would have to wait the allotted time set out for online applicants.

Some youth experience a “sense of disconnection and insecurity related to their identity and culture” (Gabel et al., 2024, p. 7) due to a relocation away from the traditional territories of

the Métis people. I wonder how many youth do not begin their journey of reconnecting because they feel similarly to a participant in Gabel et al.'s (2024) study, who stated, "I had like a very difficult time I think feeling like I was right in my identity. I don't know if that's the right way to put it just because ... not in community like we're we live outside community" (p. 7). I urge practitioners to have empathy for and validate the experiences of youth who are living in urban centres away from the homelands. Validation is especially important from Indigenous practitioners who may be urban themselves, so that youth can see their experiences mirrored in a trusted mentor. Given my experience of growing up urbanized, having someone who relates to my own story and the ways in which it contributes to the complexities surrounding my ancestry has helped immensely.

Colonial Inaccuracies in the Archives

As noted in previous chapters, inaccuracies in records relating to Indigenous peoples can make navigating archival documentation especially difficult. I have explored this through my own story, where the limited documentation that our family has access to contains conflicting information such as differences in the names of parents and family members, birthplaces, and other key details. This is not an isolated experience and has been reiterated throughout the literature that I have accessed pertaining to Indigenous genealogical and archival research.

Indigenous researchers are well aware of the racism and bias embedded in these records (Loyer & Loyer, 2021). Loyer and Loyer (2021) expand on this in their kitchen table discussion, explaining that "most records in archives about Indigenous people have not been created by Indigenous people" (p. 6), which is primarily due to the fact that, "white people in positions of power (like Indian agents, census-takers, and hospital staff) recorded official documents by mishearing or misidentifying Indigenous life" (p. 6). The fact that archival records are not

created by Indigenous people creates serious complications, as “once it is printed in somebody’s genealogy or printed in a book or printed somewhere, then everybody thinks it’s true” (Loyer & Loyer, 2021, p. 6). Loyer and Loyer (2021) further discuss name changes, stating that “Indian agents and missionaries put pressure on Indigenous families to follow European naming conventions” (p. 6). The prejudice present in archival records is illustrated through Loyer and Loyer’s (2021) experiences accessing genealogical records related to their own family, which included a death certificate blaming the mother for malnutrition due to insufficient lactation, even though the certificate indicated that the baby had a medical condition preventing it from nursing properly. Loyer and Loyer (2021) note that “there are many inaccuracies in the records relating to Indigenous people, but one glaring issue is the way records ... tracked race and ethnicity” (p. 9). Those who were in charge of creating archival records and documentation made assumptions and may have found Métis people “hard to categorize” (Loyer & Loyer, 2021, p. 9). As a result, the races and ethnicities of Métis people recorded in archival documentation, such as live birth records, varied greatly (Loyer & Loyer, 2021). Loyer and Loyer (2021) also address the “patriarchal ideas about ownership and identity [which] obscure many women’s lives in the historical record” (p. 12). Examples of this in Loyer and Loyer’s (2021) story include mothers not being listed on death certificates or mothers’ places of birth not being recorded on birth certificates while the information of fathers is included. These are just some examples of how documents can differ and how people in power have inaccurately documented Indigenous genealogies. Loyer and Loyer (2021) state that “when people are not aware of the oral history of families and rely solely on written family trees, these inaccuracies can be replicated” (p. 13). Darrell Loyer recounted his personal experience with this issue, explaining that in a family

member's genealogical documents, he was listed as being married to the same wife and having the same birthday, but not belonging to the same family.

The issue of inaccuracies in records is mirrored in my own family's records, where three different relatives have genealogical documents listing different parents, even though they share the same partner and children. It becomes difficult to know what is accurate, especially when some family members have passed away or documentation is incomplete or inconsistent. A young person seeking information about their ancestry may not have connections to their family for varying reasons, leaving no way to confirm the details. Accessing documentation is one challenge, but making sense of the records and figuring out what is accurate is another challenge altogether, one that adds to the difficulty of genealogical research for youth looking to reconnect. It is important for practitioners to understand that genealogical records and archival documentation do not define a youth's entire self, history, or identity. While these documents are indeed significant, they represent only a part of the overall story. Practitioners must be compassionate, patient, and persistent, and they should access as much information as possible to provide youth with the complete puzzle rather than just a piece of it.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Praxis Grounded in Relational and Ethical Care

Prior to discussing my recommendations for practice, I believe it is important to first share my own praxis and approach in this field. This is not to position myself as an expert but rather to situate my understanding of how my research relates to practice with children, youth, and families, and its relevance for the broader context of child and youth care.

As stated in Chapter 1, I am committed to continuously learning and actively working towards decolonizing not only my practice and self but also the systems in which I operate. I am

aware of my white privilege, and I strive to create spaces that ensure those I work alongside feel safe, heard, seen, and supported. I have worked in a variety of practice settings and have encountered many children, youth, and families from diverse backgrounds. I aim to tailor my praxis according to the needs of those I work with. My practice heavily relies on Indigenous knowledge and practices. Additionally, I utilize culturally competent, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed approaches while focusing on advocacy, empowerment, accountability, and continuity of care. I recognize that there are ecological and/or contextual influences on children's and youth's development, which can include but are not limited to their family, neighbourhood, and sociopolitical values. Completing my undergraduate degree in child and youth care really shaped the work that I do, as it taught me to be ethical, self-aware, responsive, and accountable. It is important to recognize that it was through politicized conversations with other students, instructors, and practitioners, as well as through frontline experience that I gained my understanding of CYC practice, not only through engaging with the literature that was introduced to us in our program. I also have committed myself to ongoing learning, as dynamics in this field are ever evolving, shifting, and growing, much like the people that we are supporting.

Many frontline practitioners, academics, scholars, and activists have highlighted the importance of doing CYC as a politicized practice (e.g., Land et al., 2018; Loiselle et al., 2012). Land et al. (2018) share that “much of the CYC literature we have met in our work at the University of Victoria roots politics in our everyday encounters with children, youth, and families amid settler colonial legacies” (p. 576). This framing from Land et al. invites us to recognize how deeply political day-to-day practice truly is. Yet, despite this growing recognition, there has been noticeable pushback in the field. Dominant voices have often resisted critical and

Indigenous analyses, framing them as disconnected from practice. Loiselle et al. (2012) echo this sentiment by arguing that “critical concepts and language that were unfamiliar to many practitioners were framed as academic ‘jargon’ and dismissed by several dominant voices in the field as disconnected from real, frontline CYC practice” (pp. 179–180). I view frontline practice as a space for justice and change. Ultimately, I believe that CYC is inherently political, and engaging with it as a politicized practice is not just a choice but the only ethical and necessary way to approach the field. Likewise, Loiselle et al. (2012) see frontline practice as an opportunity to “unpack, disturb, and transform normative/neoliberal/neocolonial framings of bodies, social relations, place, justice, practice, and theory” (p. 182). In doing so, they seek to understand how moving beyond those dominant approaches in CYC practice can open up meaningful ways to respond to the nuanced and multifaceted realities of people’s lives (Loiselle et al., 2012).

It is important to note that dependent on a practitioner’s social location, CYC as a political practice will look different. For example, two Indigenous practitioners in Land et al. (2018) highlighted “the inescapability of living politics as Indigenous women in settler-colonial Canada,” while one white settler practitioner and one Canadian Shia Ismaili Muslim practitioner spoke to how, for them, “politics is about constantly negotiating how to claim and become accountable to the privileges settlers assert/steal” (pp. 580–581). Much like the children, youth, families, and communities that practitioners work alongside, we all show up in our own ways while serving as frontline practitioners. It is important to recognize that how I engage with the individuals I work with may not necessarily align with how another practitioner operates. However, it is our duty to think critically and politically while engaging in conversations that challenge the colonial narratives that have historically dominated the field of CYC. Loiselle et al. (2012) argue for “courageous, expansive conversations and risk-taking in our field” (p. 185).

Engaging in transformative, liberatory, and visionary discussions with peers, coworkers, practitioners, academics, and activists helps to shape my practice and influences the ways in which I connect with children, youth, families, and communities. It is important that we highlight the work of scholars who have centered how to be critical, politicized, and transdisciplinary in their approach to complex issues of colonialism, racism, and identity in practice (Land et al., 2018; Loiselle et al., 2012).

de Finney et al. (2020) argue that “ethical land and community engagements [are] integral to resurgent Indigenous practice” (p. 34). One of the authors shares from their own experiences as a Cree-Métis frontline practitioner: “I bring my own set of teachings and values that must be reconciled with the people of the land I live on now” (de Finney et al., 2020, p. 48). They highlight that there are foundational principles “informed by the land and relational experience” that are vital to guiding one’s practice (de Finney et al., 2020, p. 48). These principles are as follows: “knowing who you are and the land you come from”; “knowing where you are now and how you have connected with the land and the people you will serve”; “knowing that colonization has dispossessed many Indigenous people from their lands and teachings”; and “knowing what drives your daily work and asking yourself whose needs are being met and why” (de Finney et al., 2020, p. 48).

The principles as outlined by de Finney et al. (2020), which emphasize the importance of knowing who you are, where you come from, and why you engage in this work, have been a guiding light for my practice and, ultimately, this research. The conceptualization of self has been a guiding thread throughout this thesis, as I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of my own identity while using my lived experiences to inform the recommendations for practitioners and youth that I outline in further detail later in this chapter. Lebanese-Canadian CYC scholar

Kouri (2010) states that “self is the context of CYC work, a way of being, and the essence of the helping relationship” (p. 227). However, Anglin and Scott (2019) share that “seldom do researchers comment on or discuss in their publications the impact of their research on themselves” (p. 142), and they emphasize the importance of,

Students and beginning researchers ... need[ing] to be introduced to the psychoemotional dimensions of the researcher’s own experiences in the research process in order to ... prepare them for the possible (even likely) impacts on themselves as researchers, professionals, and human beings. (pp. 153–154)

It was crucial for me to acknowledge the concept of self in practice while completing this thesis. Much like the discussion presented by Anglin and Scott (2019), I had to remain aware of my own experiences and the impact this research would have on me, not just as a researcher but also as a frontline practitioner and individual. I urge practitioners to consistently engage in reflexive practice, recognizing how they exist in this field, how the work impacts them, and how those impacts, in turn, shape and propel their politicized CYC praxis—praxis that is rooted in justice and change.

Reflecting on Research as Reconnection

In Chapter 3, I outlined the importance of engaging with Métis studies and the ways it has contributed to the support of the Métis Nation’s sovereignty and resurgence. By utilizing Métis methodologies and relying on the work of Métis academics, scholars, and activists, I have further influenced my practice in the field. Prior to completing this thesis and discovering more about how to begin engaging in genealogical research while reconnecting with my ancestry, I had actively started decolonizing myself but still had much to learn about the Métis Nation, who they are as a people, and how my family’s connection to the Nation has influenced my

conceptualization of self. Through conducting this research, analyzing literature written by Métis individuals, and continuously having conversations with Métis people throughout this process, my level of knowledge and understanding of the Nation has broadened significantly. This will continue to influence the ways in which I engage with Métis children, youth, families, and communities as my practice evolves. I feel better equipped to support them through the complex and nuanced discussions that can arise when one is Métis, living away from the homelands, and navigating ancestral and genealogical research and citizenship applications.

It was important to me that I utilized Métis research methodologies for the purpose of my thesis work. Stevenson (2024) shares that,

For many disconnected Métis, our connections to our ancestors are often found through archival research, and often when seeking out genealogical connections for Métis citizenship. In other cases, they emerge from a desire to make sense of gaps, silences, and missing stories. (p. 47)

Métis research offers a way to reconnect and rebuild the fragmented parts of our lives and histories (Stevenson, 2024). I still am unsure of my ancestry, and I will not have a definitive answer prior to my thesis defense; nonetheless, because my thesis sought to discuss how youth can be supported on their journey of reconnecting and engaging with genealogical research, utilizing Métis research contributed to a process of “coming home” (Stevenson, 2024, p. 47).

Stevenson (2024) asserts that,

Coming home through research is being able to claim your identity as a Métis person, ground yourself in a Métis worldview, understand where you belong in your family web of relations, identify the lands around you as the homeland, and,

finally, connect to the broader community to help to rebuild lost relationships. (p. 48)

As highlighted in the kitchen table talk with my mother, my research has been a process of navigating back to ancestral connections, whether those ancestral connections are Métis or not. Highlighting Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, and more specifically, Métis methodologies, has allowed me to better understand the ways in which my family has held these stories for all these years. It is through our interconnectedness with the community that I have begun this work and will continue to do this work, not just for myself but for others in the community.

Recommendations for Supporting Youth in Practice

The recommendations for practitioners presented in this chapter are based on my own experiences with genealogical and ancestral research as someone living away from the Métis homelands and disconnected from the community, without any formal documentation, and growing up with family stories. It is through my own journey that I speak to the complex, nuanced, and unique experiences that youth may encounter while engaging in this work. Based on my research findings and key reflections, I have five concrete recommendations for practitioners.

1. Affirm identity journeys. While practitioners do not have the authority to determine whether a youth is Métis, they can support and affirm the youth's ongoing identity journey and questions. Practitioners can create a safe space where youth feel encouraged to explore, discuss, and critically engage with their identity with the support of relevant resources. Youth need to be informed that it is okay to be unsure and in a place of seeking. Drawing from my own experience, I understand how important it is to have people you can speak and debrief with

throughout this process of discovery and self-understanding. Having someone validate your birthright to know more about your ancestry, especially for someone who has grown up being told they are Métis, can make a profound difference. It is crucial to clarify that this affirmation is not about confirming Métis identity, as that is something only the appropriate authorities and community can do, but rather about supporting the youth as they uncover and explore their ancestry and identity.

2. Support genealogical research with respect and care. Practitioners must learn to approach genealogical research among youth with respect and care in order to provide meaningful and culturally appropriate support through the process. As highlighted through my research, genealogical and ancestral research, particularly in Métis contexts, goes beyond accessing archival records. This process also involves connecting with community and being accepted by them. To support youth effectively through genealogical research, practitioners need to understand how to engage with community and organizations in culturally respectful ways. This includes understanding community dynamics and relationships, Métis Elder protocols and gifting practices, and the protocols of the territories in which they are living and/or visiting. This knowledge is rooted in community traditions and is essential for helping practitioners to decolonize their engagement with Métis youth. While a youth may not know how to proceed with these necessary aspects of genealogical research and community engagement in a storytelling context, practitioners can play a key role in guiding and supporting them through the process.

3. Address systemic barriers. Practitioners have a duty to understand the systemic barriers that are present for Indigenous peoples, especially in the context of the human services field and the ways in which institutions, organizations, and systems that we work within can

contribute to furthering colonial structures. It is not enough for practitioners to understand these structures that we work in. Although dismantling the settler state is not necessarily something individual practitioners can achieve, I argue that we need to advocate for increased access to culturally relevant genealogy support services, financial assistance, and culturally safe programming for urban youth who are looking to reconnect with their ancestry or discover more about their identities. As evidenced in my research, these processes not only take time but also require extensive research, preparation, and resources, as well as access to websites, forms, printing, photocopying, and mailing. Youth will need an advocate and support system that can assist them in finding and completing the correct forms, submitting documents, accessing genealogy support and documentation, paying fees, and obtaining necessary mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual support while navigating these complex systems and processes.

4. Build relational practice. The Four R's were initially developed by Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt (1991) as an Indigenous pedagogy aimed at supporting Indigenous students in higher education. This development was a response to the systemic failure of Western postsecondary institutions to adequately support, include, and/or value Indigenous students and their ways of knowing, being, and doing (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The Four R's consist of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). A fifth R, relationship, was added following the work of Harris and Wasilewski (2004), Restoule (2008), and Styres and Zinga (2013). Although the initial intent behind the Four and Five R's was related to Indigenous education in both in-person and online settings, this methodology has since been employed as a framework for collaborating with Indigenous peoples in various capacities, including community work, research, and academia. Styres and Zinga (2013) explicitly state that "relationships are fundamental because respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility are

grounded in an understanding and acknowledgment of interconnected relationships and are expressed through those relationships” (p. 293). These five principles can be utilized by practitioners as a foundational ethical framework while working alongside Indigenous children and youth who are on their journey of reconnecting. To build relational practice, it is essential to employ the guiding principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility.

5. Promote restorative intergenerational and kinship practice. As discussed in my literature review and in my findings, intergenerational and kinship connections among Indigenous peoples can contribute to a greater sense of self while fostering storytelling across generations. Practitioners can support identity healing and community reconnection through restorative and strengths-based approaches grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems. It may not always be possible for youth to reconnect with their birth community and kinship due to displacement, disconnection, severed ties with family, and other extenuating circumstances including cost and distance. Nonetheless, practitioners can advocate for more creative opportunities where urban Indigenous youth can access Elders, build connections with urban Métis communities and organizations, as well as seek out kinship connections, even if this is in an urban setting, or virtually such as reconnecting with family over social media, zoom, or phone. If youth are unable to access their birth community and kinship, I urge practitioners to envision ways in which youth can access other intergenerational kinship relations.

Recommendations for Youth

Given that this thesis is dedicated to youth on their journey of reconnecting, I felt it was important to close it with recommendations for youth who are beginning their journey of (re)connecting with and (re)vitalizing their Métis identity. In this concluding section, I outline four guidelines of support for youth who are looking to complete genealogical research, discover

more about their ancestry, and gain a greater conceptualization of self. Some of these recommendations have been echoed by others throughout my research process, and others I wish I had heard myself along the way.

Love, care, and compassion. Based on what I have learned, I would encourage you to approach this work with love and care for yourself. It is not easy work and will evoke complex emotions while you are essentially having a reckoning with your identity. Treat yourself the same as you would treat others who are navigating this journey: with the utmost compassion and gentleness.

Integrity, respect, and intention. As you engage with this work, I encourage you to strive to do so in a good way, always aiming to be ethical and to follow protocol. It is important to stay connected to the intentions behind engaging with this work, such as wanting to gain a better understanding about your ancestry, strengthening community connections, and working towards a clearer conceptualization of self.

Origin, meaning, and value. Always remember that your story is meaningful and comes from somewhere. Whether or not you have Métis or Indigenous ancestry, there is reasoning behind why your family has held these stories. This is important to remember on your journey and will help to ease your mind as things become difficult to navigate. You may never learn the origin of these stories or the intention that led to the sharing of them, but you can assure yourself that perhaps they came from a good place.

Courage, connection, and belonging. Building connections with community, even if you are scared to do so, is essential to this work. Try to seek out others who have similar stories to your own, allowing for companionship through relational practice. It may feel intimidating, but I can assure you that speaking with others will give you a more holistic understanding of just

how common this experience can be of navigating identity politics, genealogical research, and conceptualization of self.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has explored personal and ancestral inquiries alongside broader discussions relevant to practitioners working with children, youth, and families, particularly in the context of Métis identity and cultural continuity. Drawing from Indigenous scholarship, insights from practitioners, and existing literature, I have provided reflections and recommendations to support youth in their identity journeys. Furthermore, I have emphasized the vital role of frontline practitioners in affirming and guiding this process with care, patience, and cultural responsiveness. It is my hope that the insights shared here will contribute meaningfully to ongoing dialogue and practice in this field.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Through this project, I have raised awareness about the importance of genealogical and life history research, noted implications of my research for Métis youth and practitioners, and shared the knowledge I gathered and the process I undertook. While applying for citizenship with the Métis Nation of British Columbia, I encountered barriers such as not having long form birth certificates, needing to wait for Vital Statistics to deliver them, and not being able to apply for long form birth certificates for my family members without consent. Additionally, once I had submitted all the necessary paperwork to the Saint-Boniface Historical Society and MNBC, I was notified that the wait times would exceed the time it took to complete my thesis. This created further delays in the necessary next steps to access my genealogical research and pursue citizenship. Furthermore, my own family history is oral, with no concrete paperwork tying us to the Métis Nation. There is the possibility that once I receive correspondence back from Saint-Boniface Historical Society and MNBC, I will hear that the oral history passed down in my family was incorrect. Because of this possibility, throughout the research portion of my thesis, I shifted my focus to a discussion for practitioners working with children, youth, and families who are navigating reconnecting with their heritage through genealogical research.

Shifting the focus of my thesis towards the broader implications of genealogical research for Métis youth makes it a valuable resource for those seeking to reconnect with their heritage. The research aimed to document my own process, thereby offering a guide through the complex process of researching one's family history. Implications for practice such as those outlined in Chapter 5 make this information more accessible to future generations of Métis youth who are looking to connect with their cultural roots and develop a deeper understanding of their heritage. By highlighting the challenges and potential roadblocks encountered during the process, I hope

to encourage others to take up the task and embark on their own journey of self-discovery. It is important for youth to understand their cultural heritage and the stories that have been passed down through generations.

Reflections on Family History, Truth, and (Re)connection

My family's history is still unknown to me. Although this process is unfinished, there is value in other professionals being given an opportunity to think through these questions the way that I have thought through them. These processes are incredibly complex, flawed, contradictory, and nuanced. It is important to recognize that there is a difference between folks who have fabricated stories and knowingly created falsehoods and people who have been told something their whole life, dig deeper into it, and discover that the stories may differ from what they were originally told. The purpose of this research project was to find truthful stories and belonging while working to protect those who are on genuine reconnection journeys, thus guarding this nuanced space from pretendians.

In the long run, my personal experiences do not matter much beyond my own family. However, there are implications for practitioners working with children, youth, families, and communities who are going through their own process of reconnecting, revitalizing, discovering, and uncovering. More than figuring out if I am Métis or not, this project has been about how one ethically engages with genealogical research, family history, identity formation, and recognizing privilege. In my practice as a CYC practitioner, I have come across many youth who are navigating these same complex conversations and journeys—specifically the important discussions regarding education and a general misunderstanding of the Métis Nation. Regardless of the outcome of my ancestry search, I am committed to standing in solidarity with Indigenous

peoples, especially the Métis community. I will continue to listen, learn, and work alongside them as an ally, supporting their voices, leadership, and priorities.

Moving Forward in a Good Way

My hope is that this project will inspire others to pursue their own genealogical research and contribute to the preservation and celebration of Métis culture. Coon (2020) tells us that, “due to ongoing erasure, marginalization and powerlessness in [the] city, urban Indigenous peoples seem to struggle over resources, knowledge and power” (p. 58). There is a need for vulnerable and honest conversations regarding identity politics and how young people can begin the process of conducting their own genealogical research, while being urban and seeking to reconnect with community and cultural supports. Especially with the rise of pretendians, there need to be safer, accessible spaces in which urban and disconnected youth can respectfully begin a process of historical research and reconnection alongside necessary supports, without the fear that they will automatically be perceived as identifying as Indigenous primarily for the “benefits,” as opposed to someone who grew up being told they have Indigenous ancestry and is longing for a further connection to self, culture, and community to promote their overall health and well-being.

I am doing this research for myself, my future children, and those who will come after us. I am doing this research for my urban kin, my rural kin, my white-passing kin, my Black kin, and my Brown kin. I am doing this research with and for the urban and disconnected Indigenous youth who do not currently have a connection to community or a voice within it but are hoping to. I am doing this research to support youth “finding their truths and their way home, whether that home is Native or not” (Y. Houssin, personal communication, January 21, 2025). My intention is to impact my own practice and the lives of urban and disconnected youth who may

have grown up hearing similar family stories to mine. This kind of research can also inform practice and policy change for local Indigenous organizations such as the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, chartered communities on Vancouver Island such as Métis Nation Greater Victoria and Island Métis Family and Community Services Society, and other child, youth, and family serving agencies. This project aims to “guide people to do this process, find truthful stories of belonging, and protect those who are on genuine reconnection journeys” (Y. Houssin, personal communication, January 21, 2025). This research represents the beginning of a longer conversation, which will help to ensure that we have the space to have a voice, to hear each other’s stories, and to create a community in which we feel safe.

References

- Absolon, K. E. (2011). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know*. Fernwood.
- Adams, T. E., Holman Jones, S., & Ellis, C. (2014). *Autoethnography*. Oxford University Press.
- Adese, J. (2021). Restoring the balance: Métis women and contemporary nationalist political organizing. In J. Adese & C. Andersen (Eds.), *A people and a nation: New directions in contemporary Métis studies* (pp. 115–145). UBC Press.
<https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774865081-007>
- Adese, J., Todd, Z., & Stevenson, S. (2017). Mediating Métis identity: An interview with Jennifer Adese and Zoe Todd. *MediaTropes*, 7(1), 1–25.
<https://mediatropes.com/index.php/Mediatropes/article/view/29157>
- Akhtar, Z. (2022). The rule against hearsay, Indigenous claims and story-telling as testimony in Canadian courts. *American Indian Law Journal*, 10(2), 142–169.
- Andersen, C. (2021). Peoplehood and the nation form: Core concepts for a critical Métis studies. In J. Adese & C. Andersen (Eds.), *A people and a nation: New directions in contemporary Métis studies* (pp. 18–39). UBC Press.
<https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774865081-003>
- Andersen, C., & Adese, J. (2021). Introduction: A new era of Métis studies scholarship. In J. Adese & C. Andersen (Eds.), *A people and a nation: New directions in contemporary Métis studies* (pp. 3–17). UBC Press. <https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774865081-002>
- Anderson, T. (2021). Chapter 4: Indigenous youth in Canada. Statistics Canada.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/42-28-0001/2021001/article/00004-eng.htm>
- Anglin, J. P., & Scott, A. (2019). Researching pain—Re-searching the researcher: Pulling back the curtain on the inner life and anxiety of the investigator. *International Journal of*

- Child, Youth, and Family Studies*, 10(2–3), 142–155. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs102-3201918857>
- Auger, M. D. (2017). *Understanding our past, reclaiming our culture: Conceptualizing Métis culture and mental health in British Columbia* [Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University]. SFU Summit Research Repository. <https://summit.sfu.ca/item/17605>
- Auger, M. D. (2019). “We need to not be footnotes anymore”: Understanding Métis people's experiences with mental health and wellness in British Columbia, Canada. *Public Health*, 176, 92–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2018.12.001>
- Auger, M. D. (2021). Understanding our past, reclaiming our culture: Métis resiliency and connection to land in the face of colonialism. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 10(1), 1–28. <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/jisd/article/view/70465>
- Auger, M., Jones, C., Monchalin, R., & Paul, W. (2022). “It's in my blood. It's in my spirit. It's in my ancestry”: Identity and its impact on wellness for Métis women, two-spirit, and gender diverse people in Victoria, British Columbia. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 17(1), 20–38. <https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/585>
- Babcock, H. (2012). “[This] I know from my grandfather:” The battle for admissibility of Indigenous oral history as proof of tribal land claims. *American Indian Law Review*, 37(1), 19–61. <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/ailr/vol37/iss1/2/>
- Baskin, C. (2011). *Strong helpers' teachings: The value of Indigenous knowledges in the helping professions*. Canadian Scholars' Press.
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. (2020). *Urban Indigenous wellness report: A BC Friendship Centre perspective*. <https://bcaafc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/BCAAFC-Urban-Indigenous-Wellness-Report.pdf>

- Bettens, C. (2025, April 4). 3 Métis governments, Chiefs of Ontario dismiss report on Ontario Métis communities. *APTN News*. <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/3-metis-governments-chiefs-of-ontario-dismiss-report-on-ontario-metis-communities/>
- Bird-Naytowhow, K., Hatala, A. R., Pearl, T., Judge, A., & Sjoblom, E. (2017). Ceremonies of relationship: Engaging urban Indigenous youth in community-based research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917707899>
- Bonds, A., & Inwood, J. (2016). Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(6), 715–733. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132515613166>
- Bottero, W. (2015). Practising family history: ‘Identity’ as a category of social practice. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 66(3), 534–556. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12133>
- Brown, A. K. A. (2019). *The connection between culture and wellness for Indigenous social workers: How culturally-grounded practice can impact our work with children, families and communities* [Master’s thesis, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/11411>
- Butz, D., & Besio, K. (2009). Autoethnography. *Geography Compass*, 3(5), 1660–1674. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00279.x>
- Capital Regional District. (n.d.). *Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)* [Map]. Retrieved March 5, 2025, from <https://www.crd.ca/media/file/victoria-census-metropolitan-area-cma>

- Carlson, N., Steinhauer, K., & Goyette, L. (2013). *Disinherited generations: Our struggle to reclaim treaty rights for First Nations women and their descendants*. University of Alberta Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781772121292>
- CBC. (2024, October 18). Books: Finding Otipemisiwak is the story of family, identity and reconnecting with a stolen heritage. <https://www.cbc.ca/books/finding-otipemisiwak-is-the-story-of-family-identity-and-reconnecting-with-a-stolen-heritage-1.7356195>
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. (1998). Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35(2), 191–219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346159803500202>
- Chartrand, P. L. A. H. (2007). *Niw_Hk_M_Kanak* ("All my relations"): Métis-First Nations relations. National Centre for First Nations Governance. https://fngovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/paul_chartrand.pdf
- Chisholm, C. (2024, January 6). Indigenous faculty raise concerns about Dalhousie University's proposed identification process. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/concerns-dalhousie-university-indigenous-verification-1.7074400>
- Connor, H. (2022). Special issue "writing genealogy: Auto/biographical research, autoethnography and narrative inquiry": An introduction. *Genealogy*, 6(2), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy6020050>
- Coon, E. C. (2020). *Oh nisa'taro:ten? Learning how to sken:nen as a contemporary Haudenosaunee woman* [Master's thesis, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/11529>

- Coulthard, G. S. (2009). *Subjects of Empire? Indigenous peoples and the “politics of recognition” in Canada* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/1913>
- Cragg, C. M. (2008). *Constructing a life after death writing my younger experiences of grief and loss* [Master’s thesis, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/1077>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.
- Daly, J., Kellehear, A., & Gliksman, M. (1997). *The public health researcher: A methodological guide*. Oxford University Press.
- de Finney, S., Wright Cardinal, S., Mowatt, M., Claxton, N., Alphonse, D., Underwood, T., Kelly, L., & Andrew, K. (2020). *ƆENTOL TFE TENEW (together with the land) part 2: Indigenous frontline practice as resurgence*. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 11(3), 34–55. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs113202019698>
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). NYU Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1ggjjn3>
- Devlin, S., & Cuggy, E. (2017, December 7). Settler records, Indigenous histories: Challenges in Indigenous genealogical research. *Active History*. <https://activehistory.ca/blog/2017/12/07/settler-records-indigenous-histories-challenges-in-indigenous-genealogical-research/>
- Driskill, Q.-L. (2010). Doubleweaving two-spirit critiques: Building alliances between Native and queer studies. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(1–2), 69–92. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2009-013>

- Eyetsemitan, F. E. (2025). *Cultural influences in coping with grief: Impact of social and psychological factors*. Springer Nature Switzerland. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-86817-7>
- Faculty of Human and Social Development. (2003). *Protocols & principles for conducting research in an Indigenous context*. University of Victoria. <https://icwrn.uvic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/igovprotocol.pdf>
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>
- Ferguson, L. J., Girolami, T., Thorstad, R., Rodgers, C. D., & Humbert, M. L. (2021). “That’s what the program is all about... building relationships”: Exploring experiences in an urban offering of the Indigenous youth mentorship program in Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020733>
- Fiola, C. (2015). *Rekindling the sacred fire: Métis ancestry and Anishinaabe spirituality*. University of Manitoba Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780887554780>
- Gabel, C., Henry, R., Nychuk, A., Hartmann, S., & La Vallee, A. (2024). “We know who we are”: Reflections on Métis youth identity, health and well-being. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 19(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v19i1.41314>
- Gaudry, A. (2018). Communing with the dead: The “new Métis,” Métis identity appropriation, and the displacement of living Métis culture. *American Indian Quarterly*, 42(2), 162–190. <https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.42.2.0162>

Gaudry, A. (2021). Building the field of Métis studies: Toward transformative and empowering Métis scholarship. In J. Adese & C. Andersen (Eds.), *A people and a nation: New directions in contemporary Métis studies* (pp. 213–229). UBC Press.

<https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774865081-011>

Government of Canada. (2022). Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans – TCPS 2 (2022). https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html

Government of Canada. (2024). *Indigenous peoples and communities*. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>

Hancock, R. L. (2021). The power of peoplehood: Reimagining Métis relationships, research, and responsibilities. In C. Andersen & J. Adese (Eds.), *A people and a nation: New directions in contemporary Métis studies* (pp. 40–66). UBC Press.

<https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774865081-004>

Harris, L. D., & Wasilewski, J. (2004). Indigeneity, an alternative worldview: Four R's (relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, redistribution) vs. two P's (power and profit). Sharing the journey towards conscious evolution. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 21(5), 489–503. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.631>

Hunt, D. (2016). Nîkîkîwân: Contesting settler colonial archives through Indigenous oral history. *Canadian Literature*, 230–231, 25–42. <https://doi.org/10.14288/cl.v0i230-1.187955>

Ineese-Nash, N. (2020). Is resistance enough? Reflections of identity, politics, and relations in the “in-between” spaces of Indigeneity and settlerhood. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 16(1), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180119878239>

- Jetten, J., Haslam, C., & Haslam, A. (2012). Preface. In J. Jetten, C. Haslam, & A. Haslam (Eds.), *The Social Cure*. Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203813195>
- Kennedy, D. (2018). Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas. In D. Kennedy & W. W. Fisher (Eds.), *The canon of American legal thought* (pp. 887–901). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691186429-023>
- Kermoal, N. (2016). Métis women’s environmental knowledge and the recognition of Métis rights. In N. Kermoal & I. Altamirano-Jiménez (Eds.), *Living on the land* (pp. 107–138). Athabasca University Press. <https://doi.org/10.15215/9781771990424-008>
- Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). First Nations and higher education: The four R’s—Respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3), 1–15.
- Kirmayer, L. J., Dandeneau, S., Marshall, E., Phillips, M. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2011). Rethinking resilience from Indigenous perspectives. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 56(2), 84–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674371105600203>
- Kolopenuk, J. (2023). The pretendian problem. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 56(2), 468–473. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423923000239>
- Kouri, S. (2010). Claiming the self. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 1(3/4), 227–243. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs13/420102085>
- Kramer, A.-M. (2011). Kinship, affinity and connectedness: Exploring the role of genealogy in personal lives. *Sociology*, 45(3), 379–395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511399622>
- Kübler-Ross, E., & Kessler, D. (2005). *On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss*. Simon & Schuster.

- Land, N., Gulamhusein, S., Scott, A., & Coon, E. (2018). Transdisciplinary conversations in child and youth care. *World Futures*, 74(7–8), 572–594.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02604027.2018.1485442>
- Lavallée, S. J. (2023). *Learning from each other, together: Exploring Red River Métis youth experiences in cultural activities through relationality* [Master's thesis, University of Manitoba]. MSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/37264>
- Lawrence, B. (2004). *“Real” Indians and others: Mixed-blood urban Native peoples and Indigenous nationhood*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Legault, G. (2021). Hegemonic discourses of Métis identity in British Columbia, Canada. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 14(1), 79–95.
<https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcis.1876>
- Leroux, D. (2019). *Distorted descent: White claims to Indigenous identity*. University of Manitoba Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780887555961>
- Leroux, D. R. J., & Gaudry, A. (2017, October 25). Becoming Indigenous: The rise of eastern Métis in Canada. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/becoming-indigenous-the-rise-of-eastern-metis-in-canada-80794>
- Lines, L.-A., Yellowknives Dene First Nation Wellness Division, & Jardine, C. G. (2019). Connection to the land as a youth-identified social determinant of Indigenous peoples' health. *BMC Public Health*, 19(1), 176. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6383-8>
- Logan, T. (2015). Settler colonialism in Canada and the Métis. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 17(4), 433–452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2015.1096589>

- Loiselle, E., De Finney, S., Khanna, N., & Corcoran, R. (2012). “We need to talk about it!”: Doing CYC as politicized praxis. *Child & Youth Services*, 33(3–4), 178–205.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2012.745778>
- Louie, M. (2024). *A woven approach: Decolonizing my praxis* [Master’s thesis, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <https://hdl.handle.net/1828/20333>
- Loyer, J., & Loyer, D. (2021). Talking with my daughter about archives: Métis researchers and genealogy. *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies*, 5(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.18357/kula.140>
- Macdougall, B. (2017). *Land, family and identity: Contextualizing Métis health and well-being*. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. <https://www.ccnca-nccah.ca/docs/context/RPT-ContextualizingMetisHealth-Macdougall-EN.pdf>
- Maggrah, J. (2023, December 8). My ancestors’ First Nations culture was stripped away. I want to work to bring it back. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.7044231>
- McIntosh, P. (2019). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In *On privilege, fraudulence, and teaching as learning: Selected essays 1981–2019* (pp. 29–34). Routledge. (Original work published 1989) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791-4>
- Metallic, N., & Simon, C. (2023). *A human rights and legal analysis of the understanding our roots report*. Dalhousie University. <https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/reports/83>
- Métis Nation British Columbia. (n.d.-a). *A guide to the Métis Nation British Columbia*. Institute for Community Engaged Research. <https://icer.ok.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/88/2018/06/metisnationbritishcolumbia21948.pdf>
- Métis Nation British Columbia. (n.d.-b). About MNBC. Métis Nation British Columbia. <https://www.mnbc.ca/about-mnbc>

Métis Nation British Columbia. (n.d.-c). Chartered communities. Métis Nation British Columbia.

<https://www.mnbc.ca/citizens-culture/chartered-communities>

Métis Nation British Columbia. (n.d.-d). Citizenship. Métis Nation British Columbia.

<https://www.mnbc.ca/work-programs/ministries/citizenship>

Métis Nation Greater Victoria. (n.d.-a). Membership. Métis Nation Greater Victoria.

<https://www.mngv.ca/membership>

Métis Nation Greater Victoria. (n.d.-b). Welcome. Métis Nation Greater Victoria.

<https://www.mngv.ca>

Métis Nation of Ontario. (n.d.). Métis historic timeline. Métis Nation of Ontario.

<https://www.metisnation.org/about-the-mno/metis-timeline/>

Métis National Council. (n.d.-a). Citizenship. Métis National Council.

<https://www.metisnation.ca/about/citizenship>

Métis National Council. (n.d.-b). Governance. Métis National Council.

<https://www.metisnation.ca/about/governance>

Mignolo, W. D. (2011). *The darker side of Western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394501>

Mignolo, W. D., & Bussmann, F. S. (2023). Coloniality and the state: Race, nation and dependency. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 40(6), 3–18.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221151126>

Milne, V., Konkin, J., & Lafontaine, A. (2016, August 11). The new era of First Nations health research. *Healthy Debate*. <https://healthydebate.ca/2016/08/topic/first-nations-research/>

Monchalin, R., Smylie, J., & Bourgeois, C. (2020). “It’s not like I’m more Indigenous there and I’m less Indigenous here.”: Urban Métis women’s identity and access to health and social

- services in Toronto, Canada. *AlterNative*, 16(4), 323–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180120967956>
- Moreno, S., & Mucina, M. K. (2019). Cultivating a racialized practitioner ethic: A guide for the human services. *Intersectionalities*, 7(1), 82–104. <https://doi.org/10.48336/IJYIRJ9794>
- National Association of Friendship Centres. (2021). *Urbanization and Indigenous peoples in Canada: Responses for the questionnaire from the special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples*. <https://nafc.ca/downloads/un-questionnaire-from-the-special-rapporteur-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples-2021.pdf>
- Neale, K. (2016). “It’s something that runs through your blood”: *Urban Indigenous identity-making and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre* [Master’s thesis, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/7499>
- Newhouse, D., & Peters, E. J. (2003). Introduction. In D. Newhouse & E. J. Peters (Eds.), *Not strangers in these parts: Urban Aboriginal peoples* (pp. 5–13). Policy Research Initiative.
- Njeze, C., Bird-Naytowhow, K., Pearl, T., & Hatala, A. R. (2020). Intersectionality of resilience: A strengths-based case study approach with Indigenous youth in an urban Canadian context. *Qualitative Health Research*, 30(13), 2001–2018.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732320940702>
- Nock, S. (2023, April 6). Confronting colourism in Métis communities. *IndigiNews*.
<https://indiginews.com/first-person/confronting-colourism-in-metis-communities>
- Ormiston, N. T. (2010). Re-conceptualizing research: An Indigenous perspective. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 5(1), 50–56.
<https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/173>

- Osborne, C. A. (2023). *“We know where we are” the role of place in Indigenous historiography by Haudenosaunee and Northwest Métis Historians* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/1828/15092>
- Oster, B., & Lizee, M. (2021). *Stories of Métis women: Tales my kookum told me*. Durvile & UpRoute Books.
- Paul, W., Monchalin, R., Auger, M., & Jones, C. (2023). “By identifying myself as Métis, I didn’t feel safe...”: Experiences of navigating racism and discrimination among Métis women, two-spirit and gender diverse community members in Victoria, Canada. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, 28(4), 244–251.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13558196231188632>
- Peters, E. J., & Andersen, C. (2013). Introduction. In E. J. Peters & C. Andersen (Eds.), *Indigenous in the city: Contemporary identities and cultural innovation* (pp. 1–20). UBC Press. <https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774824668>
- Quijano, A. (1992). Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad. *Perú Indígena*, 13(29), 11–20.
<https://www.lavaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/quijano.pdf>
- Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 168–178.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>
- Reder, D. (2022). *Autobiography as Indigenous intellectual tradition: Cree and Métis âcimisowina*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Reed-Danahay, D. E. (2021). Introduction. In D. E. Reed-Danahay (Ed.), *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003136118>
- Restoule, J.-P. (2008, November 26). The five R’s of Indigenous research: Relationship, respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity [Workshop presentation]. Wise Practices II:

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network Research and Capacity Building Conference,
Toronto, Ontario.

Rice, P. L., & Ezzy, D. (1999). *Qualitative research methods: A health focus*. Oxford University Press.

Richardson, C. L. (2004). *Becoming Métis: The relationship between the sense of Métis self and cultural stories* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1828/655>

Rodriguez, N. M. (2000). Projects of whiteness in a critical pedagogy. In N. M. Rodriguez & L. E. Villaverde (Eds.), *Dismantling white privilege: Pedagogy, politics, and whiteness* (pp. 1–24). Peter Lang.

Ross, D. (2022). Northwest Saskatchewan Métis perspectives of miyo pimatisiwin. *The Northern Review*, 53, 51–67. <https://doi.org/10.22584/nr53.2022.004>

Sasakamoose, J., Scerbe, A., Wenaus, I., & Scandrett, A. (2016). First Nation and Métis youth perspectives of health: An Indigenous qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(8), 636–650. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416629695>

Smith, A., Martin-Ferris, S., Beggs, M. K., Poon, C., & McCreary Centre Society. (2019). *Ta saantii deu/neso*. McCreary Centre Society.

https://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ta_saantii_deu_neso.pdf

Smith, L. T. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.

<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350225282>

Société historique de Saint-Boniface. (n.d.). Hours and staff. Centre Du Patrimoine.

<https://shsb.mb.ca/about-the-centre-overview-page/?lang=en>

Statistics Canada. (2017). *Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 census*. The Daily. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. (2022a, September 21). Membership in a Métis organization or settlement: Findings from the 2021 census of population. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021006/98-200-X2021006-eng.cfm>

Statistics Canada. (2022b, December 16). Focus on geography series, 2021 census of population: British Columbia, province. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=e&topic=8&dguid=2021A000259>

Statistics Canada. (2022c, December 16). Focus on geography series, 2021 census, Victoria, census metropolitan area. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&topic=8&dguid=2021S0503935>

Statistics Canada. (2023a). Census profile, 2021 census of population (Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001) [Table]. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&DGUIDList=2021A000011124&GENDERList=1,2,3&STATISTICList=1,4&HEADERList=0&SearchText=Canada>

Statistics Canada. (2023b). Indigenous population profile, 2021 census of population (Catalogue no. 98-510-X2021001) [Table]. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/ipp-ppa/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&DGUID=2021S0503935&SearchText=Victoria&HP=0&HH=0&GENDER=1&AGE=7&RESIDENCE=1>

Statistics Canada. (2024, February 16). *How the census counts Indigenous people in urban areas* (Catalogue no. 11-627-M) [Infographic]. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022059-eng.htm>

- Stevenson, A. (2024). Coming home through Métis research. In L. Forsythe & J. Markides (Eds.), *Around the kitchen table* (pp. 47–56). University of Manitoba Press.
- Styres, S., & Zinga, D. (2013). The community-first land-centred theoretical framework: Bringing a “good mind” to Indigenous education research? *Canadian Journal of Education*, 36(2), 284–313.
- Teillet, J. (2019). *The north-west is our mother: The story of Louis Riel’s people, the Métis Nation*. HarperCollins Canada.
- Tourand, J., Smith, A., Poon, C., Stewart, D., & McCreary Centre Society. (2016). *Ta saantii: A profile of Métis youth health in BC*. McCreary Centre Society.
https://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ta_saantii.pdf
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1–40.
- Vaught, S. E., & Castagno, A. E. (2008). “I don’t think I’m a racist”: Critical race theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11(2), 95–113.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320802110217>
- Vigoya, M. V. (2023). From the center to the margins, (re)politicizing intersectionality. In L. De Souza Lima, E. Otero Quezada, & J. Roth (Eds.), *Feminisms in movement: Theories and practices from the Americas* (pp. 91–106). transcript Verlag.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839461020-005>
- Vowel, C. (2016). *Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada*. Portage & Main Press.

Welch, M. A., & Gallant, D. (2024, December 9). Métis National Council. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-national-council?utm_source=chatgpt.com#Controversy

Welsh, C. (1991). Voices of the grandmothers: Reclaiming a Métis heritage. *Canadian Literature*, 131, 15–24. <https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/canlit/article/view/193586>

Wilson, S. (2003). Progressing toward an Indigenous research paradigm in Canada and Australia. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 27(2), 161–178.

Appendix A: HRE Approval Certificate



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
 Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sandrina Carere (Supervisor) PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: Kennedy Williams Master's student UVIC DEPARTMENT: Child and Youth Care CHIL	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER: 23-0470 Expedited review - delegated ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 25-Nov-2024 APPROVED ON: 25-Nov-2024 APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 24-Nov-2025
PROJECT TITLE: (Re)connecting and (Re)vitalizing: Métis Identity and Conceptualization of Self RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL: tcps2_core_certificate.pdf - 14-Jul-2024 RECRUITMENT SCRIPT - THESIS.docx - 02-Sep-2024 CONSENT FORM - THESIS.docx - 06-Oct-2024 Thesis Research Questions.docx - 20-Oct-2024	
Conditions of approval	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Amendments To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol. Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date. Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.	
Certification	
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> Dr. Sandra Gibbons Chair, Human Research Ethics Board </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Dr. Cindy Holder Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board </div> </div>	

Certificate Issued On: 25-Nov-2024

PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE 2022

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Kennedy Williams

*successfully completed the Course on Research Ethics based on
the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research
Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE 2022)*

Certificate # 0000845497

14 September, 2022

Appendix C: Recruitment Script

You are being invited to participate in Re(connecting) and (Re)vitalizing: Métis Identity and Conceptualization of Self. This research is being conducted by myself, Kennedy, as a requirement of my graduate studies in Child, Youth, Family, and Community Studies at the University of Victoria.

The purpose of this research is to discover how Métis youth looking to reconnect and revitalize can begin to engage in genealogy research, with the necessary supports, and create meaningful conversations regarding identity politics and the many nuanced and layered aspects regarding such. In order to do this, I intend to politicize and discuss the conversations that were had, and not had, within my family while exploring my own genealogy research alongside a Métis Elder and create a road map for urban Indigenous youth who are looking to reconnect with community and revitalize culture.

This research is important to me as I grew up being told that I was Métis, and have been looking to reconnect, but have been unable to figure out the truth regarding my family history. I have spent the past six years working with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities from all different walks of life. In doing so, I have encountered youth who are urban and disconnected, but looking to reconnect with that piece of themselves. I hope to demonstrate ways in which one can begin the process of conducting genealogy research, while creating spaces to have these vulnerable conversations regarding identity politics alongside other Indigenous folks with similar lived experiences. I believe that these conversations need to be had to create safe spaces for other youth who may be in similar situations as myself, as their perspectives, gifts, and conceptualization of self are imperative to revitalizing cultural practices.

You have been selected to participate in this research, as you are either a Métis Elder within the community or are of my immediate family and have self-identified yourself as Métis. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position or how you will be treated.

Your engagement will include semi-structured kitchen-table talks, phone calls, one-on-one meetings, text messages, or other forms of communication consisting of questions regarding Métis identity, genealogy research, family stories and history, and the complications for youth. This data will be recorded through audio and note-taking. The duration of these interactions will

be to the discretion of you as the participant and myself as the researcher. These interactions can take place at the First People's House at the University of Victoria, community walks, via Zoom or phone calls, personal homes, and/or wherever you feel most comfortable.

The benefits of this research are that it will help to create meaningful and vulnerable discussions regarding identity politics, will provide guidance on how to conduct genealogy research as a Métis youth looking to reconnect, and will create a sense of community for those looking to reconnect as they will gain the understanding that they are not alone in their journey. There are potential emotional risks due to the nature of the research/conversations regarding conceptualization of self, identity politics, disconnect from community, etc. These risks will be addressed by providing you with a list of supports that are easily accessible and available to you (i.e. crisis line phone numbers, Elder phone numbers, etc.)

You may withdraw from this project at any time without explanation or consequence. Should you withdraw, there will be measures taken to protect your anonymity and confidentiality (such as summarizing the kitchen table conversations with no identifying information). Ongoing consent will be revisited with you upon each contact with me.

Due to the nature of this project being genealogy research on my family, it proves to be difficult to assure anonymity and confidentiality. This project will aim to utilize western qualitative methods (i.e., adapted autoethnography/life history, genealogy, archival research), as well as Métis and Indigenous research traditions (i.e., storytelling, oral genealogy, kitchen table talks/relational circle work). As the research will be exploring life history, genealogy, storytelling, and life history of myself as the primary researcher, your family names and stories are a necessary piece in further situating the research within Métis contexts.

The research may be used/disseminated in my thesis, class presentations, and/or presentations at scholarly meetings.

Data from this study will be disposed of after the fulfillment of my thesis has been completed. The electronic data will be erased, and the paper copies will be shredded.

If you agree to participate, I will provide you with a consent form to confirm your consent. This can be done either verbally or in writing dependent on your choice.

Appendix D: Kitchen Table Talk Questions

What does being Métis mean to you?

What are your memories of our family being Métis and where do they come from?

What do you know about the history of my family names?

What is your connection to your community like?

Have you ever experienced feelings of imposter syndrome regarding your Indigenous identity?

What do you believe to be the importance of connecting with culture?

What do you believe to have affected your relationship and connectedness with culture?

I will be including follow up questions and probes as needed.

Appendix E: Consent Form

Project Title: Re(connecting) and (Re)vitalizing: Métis Identity and Conceptualization of Self

Researcher: Kennedy Williams, Graduate Student, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Supervisor: Dr. Sandrina Carere, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- How can Métis youth looking to reconnect and revitalize begin to engage in genealogy research, with the necessary supports, and create meaningful conversations regarding identity politics and the many nuanced and layered aspects regarding such?
 - To politicize and discuss the conversations that were had, and not had, within my family while exploring my own genealogy research alongside a Métis Elder.
 - To create a road map for urban Indigenous youth who are looking to reconnect with community and revitalize culture.

This research is important because:

- I grew up being told that I was Métis, and have been looking to reconnect, but have been unable to figure out the truth regarding my family history.
- I have spent the past six years working with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities from all different walks of life. In doing so, I have encountered youth who are urban and disconnected, but looking to reconnect with that piece of themselves. I hope to demonstrate ways in which one can begin the process of conducting genealogy research, while creating spaces to have these vulnerable conversations regarding identity politics alongside other Indigenous folks with similar lived experiences.
- These conversations need to be had to create safe spaces for other youth who may be in similar situations as myself, as their perspectives, gifts, and conceptualization of self are imperative to revitalizing cultural practices.

Participation:

- You have been selected to participate in this research, as you are either a) a Métis Elder within the community or b) are of the researcher's immediate family and have self-identified yourself as Métis.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.

- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position or how you will be treated.

Procedures:

- Semi-structured kitchen-table talks, phone calls, one-on-one meetings, text messages, or other forms of communication consisting of questions regarding Métis identity, genealogy research, family stories and history, and the complications for youth. This data will be recorded through audio and note-taking.
- **Duration:** Up to the discretion of the participant and researcher.
- **Location:** First People's House at the University of Victoria, community walks, via Zoom or phone calls, personal homes, and/or wherever the participants feel most comfortable.

Compensation:

- You will receive a gift for your participation in this project.
- If you withdraw during data collection or any time after, you can keep your gift.

Benefits:

- This research will help to create meaningful and vulnerable discussions regarding identity politics, will provide guidance on how to conduct genealogy research as a Métis youth looking to reconnect, and will create a sense of community for those looking to reconnect as they will gain the understanding that they are not alone in their journey.
- Potential emotional risks due to the nature of the research/conversations regarding conceptualization of self, identity politics, disconnect from community, etc.
- **Risk(s) will be addressed by:** Providing participants with a list of supports that are easily accessible and available to them (i.e., crisis line phone numbers, Elder phone numbers, etc.)

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:

- The researcher may have a relationship to you as a student/mentee or family member.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position or how you will be treated.
- This relationship should not influence your decision to participate, it is your decision.

Withdrawal of Participation:

- You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.

- Should you withdraw, there will be a conversation regarding your data and the options available to you.
- You may decide you would like all data that you have provided to be destroyed, that there will be measures taken to protect your anonymity and confidentiality (such as summarizing the kitchen table conversations with no identifying information), or that your data can continue to be used without your further involvement in the project.
- Ongoing consent will be revisited with you upon each contact with the primary researcher.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- Due to the nature of this project being genealogy research on the primary researcher's family, it proves to be difficult to assure anonymity and confidentiality. This project will aim to utilize western qualitative methods (i.e., adapted autoethnography/life history, genealogy, archival research), as well as Métis and Indigenous research traditions (i.e., storytelling, oral genealogy, kitchen table talks/relational circle work). As the research will be exploring life history, genealogy, storytelling, and life history of the primary researcher, your family names and stories are a necessary piece in further situating the research within Métis contexts.

Research Results will [may] be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

- Thesis, class presentations, presentations at scholarly meetings.

Disposal of Data

- Data from this study will be disposed of after the fulfillment of my thesis has been completed. The electronic data will be erased, and the paper copies will be shredded.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1.
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545
ethics@uvic.ca

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Future Use of Data [PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT]

I **consent** to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)