

**'FROM AZTLÁN TO RED RIVER: THE CONTINENTAL COMMONALITIES OF CHICANA/O
AND MÉTIS ANTI-COLONIALISM'**

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Let me begin this essay, as is the customary protocol among many indigenous peoples, by paying respect to my Métis ancestors and other aboriginal relations by greeting them in their/our heritage language. *Taanishi Kiyawow? Nimiyou ayawn. Dishinikáshon Dylan. Michigumme nki nitáwikin. Ndatochkan Université de l'Etat de Michigan. Deu lii zanfan dayaawaawak. Ni moushoom taypwawsh Michif, taypwawsh Otepemisiwak. Gee paytohtahnahn Penetanguishene. Meena ka wawpamitin. Marsé.*¹

Following this epigraphic Michif introduction, it may also be instructive to recognize Gabriel Dumont, whose journey into the spirit world is recognized in this edited collection.² Although commonly written out of most Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American settler histories, I believe that Dumont was unmatched in his defense of Métis and First Nations sovereignty. As an indigenous guerrilla fighter, Gabriel Dumont embodied many of the anti-colonial principles that serve at the core of my comparative analysis of Chicana/o³ and Métis cultural practices. Although the figure of Dumont does not specifically surface within the body of this essay, I believe that his unique Métis anti-colonialism forever remains a specter underneath the surface of my rhetorical analysis. For this, he must be thanked.

As such, this essay on the relationship between Chicana/o—that is Mexican American—and Métis cultures of national liberation, preserves the legacy of resistance established by Dumont and innumerable other indigenous relations. It is imperative, and this will be expanded later in my essay, that we envision North and South America, not in strictly geopolitical terms, but rather in an approach analogous to the method used by many Nahuatl⁴ speakers. For the Nahua, as this linguistic community is called, the

hemisphere is described as *Ixachilan*. That is, they refer to both North and South America as one contiguous landmass of shared and sharing cultures. It is this continental approach, emerging from both indigenous and anti-colonial perspectives, that I find so informative when thinking about Métis and Chicana/o studies.

As a Métis scholar of Chicana/o cultural history, I find it useful to employ Chicana/o resistance movements as a model in which to contrast Métis examples. One question I have frequently confronted is: why haven't scholars and aboriginal activists explored the historical and sociological congruencies amongst these two groups? I believe that by comparing these divergent aboriginal social movements, we may begin to illuminate innovative directions that may reciprocally enrich both communities.

The cultural and historic similarities between Chicanas/os and Métis, although seemingly analogous, have been little studied. As point of fact, the ethnogenesis of both communities is coupled with the inequitable force of capitalist and imperial expansion into western North America. As historian David Weber suggests, Chicanas/os developed their citizenship based on *patria chica* over *patria grande*—the local outweighed the national (Weber, 1992). Because of this, specific local Chicana/o identities developed in Texas, New Mexico, and California, not to mention areas outside the U.S. Southwest.

Although only beginning to analyzed, a similar argument could be extrapolated about the multiplicity of Métis identities in the U.S.-Canada borderlands. Weber's construct of *patria chica* could easily be applied to Métis communities, particularly those in the Great Lakes. In fact, this is exactly what historians are beginning to do: flesh out the multiplicity of Métis histories in an attempt to move away from a focus solely on the Red River settlement. One such example is Ute Lichke and David T. McNab's edited

anthology *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*. This groundbreaking text is thorough in its inclusion of Métis intellectuals delineating the *patria chica* of the Métis community. Of exceptional importance is Karen J. Travers's work on the Lake Huron aboriginal society known as the Drummond Island voyageurs. Although I may be partial to this particular narrative, as I am a direct descendant of the Drummond Islander Hippolyte Brissette, I trust that Travers's analysis is vital. Accordingly, she argues that

identities may vary by locale and shift over periods of time, instilling a sense of belonging among people facing a common foe or rallying around a welcome ally. It is precisely this ability to transform and adapt that has enabled Métis communities in Canada to emerge with a unique sense of themselves as a distinct people. This is particularly true of the Drummond Island Métis in Lafontaine, Ontario. Since the beginning of contact between Aboriginals and Europeans, the Métis identities in the Great Lakes region that followed have all of these circumstances at their roots (Travers, 2007, p. 219).

For Métis and Chicanas/os, locally created identities were far more important than those 'national' ones emanating from Ottawa, Mexico City, or Washington, D.C. In fact, the incursion of Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American settlers and subsequent military forces, in many ways, cemented Métis and Chicana/o identities in the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borderlands.

With these Anglophone settlers came puritanical notions of racial simplicity and race-based national citizenship. Amongst non-aboriginal *hispanos* in the U.S. Southwest, this purity was known as *pureza de sangre* (purity of blood) and gave light-skinned *hispanos* otherwise unachievable benefits. In effect, many 'white' Spanish-speaking citizens actually used their phenotypical privilege to their advantage. Inversely, however, many local mixed-blood identities were structured in opposition to colonial mentalities of

purity and dominant racializing discourse. Moreover, in many parts of Canada, identifying as either Métis or Halfbreed complicated and challenged Anglophone systems of race and biology. Although I am unable to elucidate this material further in this essay, an extended study into the history of Western North America further illuminates this point.

Let me now touch upon Métis and Chicana/o ethnogenesis, even if it is somewhat reductive in its accuracy. As most are no doubt familiar, the Métis are (described as) the descendents of Aboriginal mothers and French or Anglo fathers, while Chicanas/os tell a similar narrative of being birthed from an indigenous mother, usually Mexica (Aztec), Chichimeca, or Pueblo, and a Spanish father. Unfortunately, these accounts of *mestizaje* and *métissage* collapse the intricacies and complexities of colonial racial, gender, and class dynamics. They do, however, serve an important function in that they initiate the construction of an ‘imagined community,’ as Cambridge-educated historian Benedict Anderson names them (Anderson, 2006).

That is to say, by producing a communal narrative of a shared mixed-ethnogenesis, Chicana/o and Métis people, as distinct aboriginal peoples at the borders of North America, preserve their communal autonomy in the face of expanding Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American hegemony. As Duke Redbird notes in ‘We are Métis,’ ‘the fact that the Métis developed their nationhood... was the natural expression of their own reality in the context of their own social development (Redbird, 1978, p. 11).’

One way in which mixed-blood aboriginal communities self-determine their struggles—similar to all indigenous and anti-colonial movements—is by demonstrating, both legally and culturally, a historic relationship to the land on which they live. Aztlán—

the allegoric Aztec homeland—became the symbolic site of Chicana/o liberation, while Métis peoples turned toward, as the Métis National Council utilizes, the Métis Nation Homeland, with its nucleus at present-day Winnipeg.⁵ While Native peoples frequently feel an understandable and unspeakable spiritual relationship to their ‘tribal’ or ancestral lands, attaining legal rights to this geographic space is habitually difficult, if not impossible.

In northern New Mexico, for instance, the intimate relationship between Chicanas/os and their legal title to communal land re-surfaced on 05 June 1967 when *la Alianza de Pueblos Libres* (Alliance of Free Pueblos), led by Reies López Tijerina, stormed the Rio Arriba County Courthouse in Tierra Amarilla. Tierra Amarilla is a small Chicana/o community near the Colorado-New Mexico border. Although the Alianza had initiated other avenues in reclaiming ancestral lands, armed resistance served as the irrevocable solution when other avenues were eliminated. Regrettably, armed struggle purely offered a temporary solution to continued oppression and renewed disenfranchisement as federal, state, and private entities continue to encroach on traditional Chicana/o lands.

Nonetheless, the Alianza and the subsequent *movimiento chicano* catapulted Aztlán—an indigenous conceptualization of time and space—into the (inter)national consciousness. Notably, artists and cultural workers served a vital role in constructing Aztlán within the popular imagination. Manuel Martínez, an artist from southern Colorado, produced a widely-circulated silkscreen printed on a used manila folder. The print illustrated a rifle-bearing *revolucionario* alongside the text *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Liberty). The print was then exhibited within the public sphere to gain support and

demonstrate solidarity with this collective struggle. This radical art-making produced in solidarity with the northern New Mexico land-based struggle, transpired at the exact time that artists such as Antonio Bernal were producing community-centered murals in California.

In Manitoba, the legal claims for Halfbreed land came to a head in 1981, when the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Native Council of Canada filed litigation with a Manitoba Court. Five years later in 1986, the Department of Justice sought the services of defiant anti-Riel and anti-Métis political scientist Thomas Flanagan. By turning to University of Calgary professor Flanagan, the Department of Justice made their anti-indigenous agenda known. After all, the U.S.-born Flanagan had been adamant about not offering First Nations people any uniquely aboriginal legal privileges from the Crown (Flanagan, 1991). In resistance, Native peoples have been unyielding in their demands for indigenous rights.

Even so, both of these instances—the former in which *nuevomexicanos* rose in arms to regain their aboriginal rights promised in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,⁶ the latter in which established aboriginal political organizations filed suit in an Anglo-Canadian court—demonstrate the scarcity of contemporary legal options available for *mestizo*⁷ and Métis peoples. Although these specific court cases demonstrate that the court system may function on behalf of Native peoples, these victories are often too sporadic and minimized to make any real structural transformation.

For instance, the unanimous 2003 Powley decision in Ontario legalized the harvesting rights of the Métis as an aboriginal people under s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. What was exceptionally shocking about this decision was that it recognized the

rights of the Métis outside the prairie provinces. Unlike the Métis who gained legal aboriginal title in 1982, Chicanas/os are still not legally defined as ‘Indian’ and therefore must submit their legal battles through non-indigenous precedence. One of the most significant legal accomplishments transpired in 2004, when the southern Colorado Chicana/o community of San Luis had their hunting, fishing, and harvesting rights reinstated on land that was once theirs. However as vital as these cases are, neither of them grant mixed-blood peoples legal title to their ancestral lands, but simply guarantee them the ability to use the earth in a traditional manner. In *This is Not a Peace Pipe*, Anishnaabe philosopher Dale Turner acknowledges that ‘there are a small number of ‘major’ cases in Aboriginal law (Turner, 2006, p. 3).’ For Métis and Chicana/o peoples, this is doubly problematic as their legal status is unstable and not entirely defined.

While mestizo struggles have been incessant since the influx of White society into the North American West, the tricontinental—that is Third World—liberation movements of the 1960s offer indigenous people living in North America a revolutionary paradigm to consult. Operating within a global network of anti-colonial movements, Métis and Chicana/o nationalists attempted (and must continue) to remove the yoke of capitalist colonialism on a hemispheric-level. According to Caribbean psychologist and revolutionary theorist Frantz Fanon, ‘colonialism did not dream of wasting its time in denying the existence of one national culture after another. Therefore the reply of the colonized people will be straight away continental in its breadth (Fanon, 1962, p. 212).’

It is for this reason that we need to investigate the anti-colonial continental commonalities between Chicana/o and Métis cultural practices. After all, both societies have been denied aboriginal rights due to their syncretic racial and cultural structure.⁸ In

Movements Toward an Indigenist Criticism, Joanne DiNova attempts to reassert the First Nation status of the Métis Nation. She writes that ‘to attribute to the Métis a firstness of nationhood [is] to speak of them in contradistinction to the Settler Nations...By First Nation, then I refer to the Métis connection to the land (DiNova, 2005, p. 117).’ It is through the sustained denial of a land-base that Métis and mestizo peoples have been held in perpetual colonial oppression. While the previously cited legal cases granted rights to Métis and Chicanas/os, the denial of ancestral rights to land was perpetuated by these decisions.

Since their *naissance* as distinct indigenous nations, Métis peoples have been forced to confront the colonialism inherent in Western European capitalist societies. As Serge Gruzinski, author of *La pensée métisse*, recognizes, the

relationship between victors and vanquished also took mestizo forms which blurred the borders that the new authorities sought to maintain between the two groups [Europeans and Indians]. Right from the start, a new destabilizing element was introduced by biological mestizos...often accompanied by mestizo beliefs and practices (Gruzinski, 2002, p. 42).

These complex Métis or mestizo epistemologies developing in the borderlands are intrinsically anti-colonial in nature. Latin Americanist critic Walter D. Mignolo labels this complex philosophy ‘border gnosis,’ while Chicana poet Gloria Anzaldúa names this phenomenon ‘mestiza consciousness’ (Mignolo, 2000; Anzaldúa, 1987). Similarly, I have been developing the concept of ‘Halfbreed Theory’ in dialogue with the writings of Maria Campbell and other Métis cultural expressions. Because of the inability to quantify mestizo racial bodies, the social identities of many Chicanas/os and Métis were—and remain—transitory. In many ways, this ambiguity remains powerful.

Throughout history, scores of mixed-bloods disavowed their aboriginal identities in favor of whiteness, while others were relegated to reserves with their First Nation relations. Those Native peoples with white privilege—seemingly disregarded in Native studies—labored under the same harsh conditions as their more ‘authentically Indian’ cousins, but had the ability to renounce their ‘otherness’—that is their Indianness. According to labor historian David Roediger, ‘whiteness was a way in which...workers responded to a fear of dependency on wage labor and to the necessities of capitalist work discipline (Roediger, 1999, p. 13).’

So while some mixed-bloods commonly adopted white identities, transforming themselves into ‘American’ and ‘Canadian’ workers—such is the case with my great-grandfather—others were unable to assume this position of privilege. Accordingly, as Métis anti-colonial activist intellectual Howard Adams notes: ‘These halfbreed people did not have a choice as to whether they would be Indians or whites or in-between; society defined them as members of native society and it still does today (Adams, 1975, p. ix).’

What this means is that Chicanas/os and Métis formed their collective ‘national’ identities around the hybrid beliefs and practices to which Gruzinski previously alluded. Concurrent with the production of syncretic epistemologies was the production of resistant cultural practices. It is here that we see the rise of a direct-relationship between hybrid cultural and artistic practices and an alternative ‘national’—Chicana/o and Métis—identity. As Métis historian-turned-politician Sharon Blady recognizes, Métis ‘beaded embroidery was a material representation of their [Métis] cultural identity during the

nineteenth century when they came into their own and came into conflict with the incoming Anglo-Canadian population (Blady, 1996, p. 113).’

Much earlier, *nuevomexicanos* (mixed-blood New Mexicans) cemented a cultural identity that drew simultaneously from Spanish, Mexican (both mestizo and indigenous), Pueblo, and Comanche traditions. Enrique Lamadrid notes that ‘by the end of the seventeenth century, castizo [white] aspirations were immersed in the hybrid, mestizo realities of life and society (Lamadrid, 2003, p. xiii).’ In fact, the people from the Chicana/o community of San Antonio del Embudo, New Mexico still sing a narrative about their community’s history by privileging their mestizo heritage:

*Nuevo México querido,
no hagas caso al mitote,
entre indios y americanos
toditos semos [sic] coyotes.
(Lamadrid, 2003, p. 1)*

New Mexico beloved,
pay no attention to rumor,
among Indians and Americans
we are all *coyotes* (mixed bloods).

It is important to note that in nation-states with predominantly indigenous populations, such as Mexico and other Latin American countries, identifying as mestizo is commonly an act of disavowal and assimilation. Inversely, amongst hegemonic Canadian and U.S. discourses, Métis and mestizo identities were (and continue to be) viewed as somehow mongrel and less human than white identities. For aboriginal people in Canada and the U.S., to maintain a mixed-blood identity is a sustained act of indigenous resistance to over 500 years of colonialism and miscegenation.

The dehumanizing process of forced assimilation came to a head during the late nineteenth-century when the railroad brought mass incursions of whites into the West. This westward expansion facilitated the production of distinct Chicana/o and Métis national identities. In many ways, since Indianness only exists in opposition to

whiteness,⁹ hybrid mixed-blood identities needed both white and First Nations societies to operate between and against. Unlike Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American nationalism, the ‘new peoples’ disregarded blood quantum laws as a qualifying requisite for citizenship. Louis Riel, the distinguished Métis leader and revolutionary martyr who was hanged by the Canadian government, was adamant about the hybrid history that Métis people must embrace. Appropriately, he wrote that

We honour our mothers as well as our fathers. Why should we concern ourselves about what degree of mixture we possess of European and Indian blood? If we have ever so little of either gratitude or filial love, should we not be proud to say, ‘We are Métis.’ (Riel cited in Howard, 1952, p. 46)

But today, being of hybrid-ethnic ancestry means little, as human societies have always drawn from multiple linguistic and cultural systems. From these distinct trajectories, a solidified whole is then produced. What is important, however, are the anti-colonial practices and the manner in which indigenous communities (including Métis and Chicana/o, of course) are sustained. This preservation, although not explicitly defiant, is intrinsically political. By turning to issues of hybridity, syncretism, and *métissage*, Chicana/o and Métis cultural producers recognize the transformative power of culture.

In many regards, as Chicano cultural critic Rafael Pérez-Torres notes, ‘mestizaje serves as a trope [that] plays a complex role [in signaling] change while simultaneously marking how institutions, ideologies, and numerous networks of power bound [that] change (Pérez-Torres, 2006, 4).’ In terms of Métis and Chicana/o nationhood, *métissage* as a rhetorical trope serves as the decolonizing apparatus for these aboriginal communities. It is decolonial in its ability to unify and challenge the respective Métis and Chicana/o communities. According to Fanon, ‘decolonization unifies ...people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national,

sometimes a racial, basis (Fanon, 1963, p. 46).’ So while critics have been quick to demonstrate the fallacy of métissage, many have been unable to deal with the revolutionary potential that it plays within Chicana/o and Métis communities.

By using visual, performative, and literary texts, the Chicana/o and Métis Nations have recognized the transformative capabilities of cultural practice. But we must be cautious not to subsume ourselves in the ‘recovery’ of pre-colonial ‘customs’ as if this desire toward the ‘authentic’ (meaning non-European) is an act of decolonization. On the contrary, those individuals that erroneously embrace the authentically non-European are often times engaging in a form of naive self-exoticizing. Again, Fanon serves as the ideal source from which to draw. He writes:

Culture has never the translucidity of custom; it abhors all simplification. In its essence it is opposed to custom, for custom is always the deterioration of culture. The desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people (Fanon, 1963, p. 224).

This is an aspect of the essentializing nature of the contemporary First Nations and American Indian art market: it sustains outdated and outmoded forms of cultural practice as the quintessential aboriginal or ‘Indian’ visual form. This is not to argue that tribal artists should not preserve their characteristic cultural life-ways, rather these practices must be held in dialectic and dialogic tension with shifting and mutating forms that continually arise in contemporary society. By returning to a stereotypical pan-Indian cultural system, many Métis and Chicana/o artists are active in positioning indigenous people deeper and deeper into colonial structures by way of ‘cultural imperialism.’

Following Howard Adams:

Cultural imperialism is the re-tribalization of Native culture to the ‘stone age’ level. It is an act of returning to pre-conquest rituals and beliefs that have been emptied of power and have become meaningless... Government officials recognize the significance of cultural imperialism as a control mechanism (Adams, 1999, p. 116).

So in many regards, colonizing forces distinguish the hegemonic power embedded in projects such as the Santa Fe Indian Market, a New Mexico-based art market that has been held every August for over eighty years. These are used by the settler society to perpetuate indigenous subjugation.

By acknowledging the colonial power allotted to such activities, we must be careful not to vilify or victimize aboriginal participants in such markets. In many cases, artists manipulate the status quo by using anti-colonial modes and indigenous epistemologies that escape capitalist commodification. The work of Tsalagi (Cherokee) painter America Meredith is a model example of this market manipulation. For Meredith, the visual form, including the work’s respective denotation and connotation, dialectically challenge the task of the Indian Market.

Nonetheless, Chicana/o and Métis peoples are frequently denied participation into events such as Indian Market because of their lack of ‘authenticity’ and legal rights as aboriginal peoples. DiNova notes that ‘externally imposed determinations of identity have historically been used to exclude [the Métis] from the benefits of Native and Canadian life, and, at a more fundamental level, to deny the validity of Métis nationhood and culture altogether (DiNova, 2005, p. 110).’ Although extremely painful and traumatic, this is, after all, the very nature of colonialism.

In response, Chicana/o and Métis cultural producers must be unwavering in their application of cultural production as a specter that counters hegemonic and colonial

notions of who aboriginal people are. Is it not the role of culture to engage with contemporary society and begin to construct new epistemological systems? To paraphrase radical dramaturge Bertolt Brecht, art is not simply a mirror, but instead art functions as a hammer. Through the process of art-making we may smash open the current shells of capitalism and colonialism, and through the shards will be revealed the regenerative cultural seeds of a decolonial future.

However, when cultural expressions are reduced to formulaic illustrations of the cultural body that produces them, they are, as Fanon points out, merely custom. For cultural expressions to remain relevant within the contradictions of late-capitalist society, they must be both dialectic and dialogic. That is to say that artistic practices must be held in tension with established norms, both communal and hegemonic, as well as shatter contemporary constraints to expose unremitting and innovative possibilities. Mexican philosopher Alberto Híjar acknowledges the dialectic between the aesthetics of a work of art and its social or ideological function (Híjar, 2000). In terms of Chicana/o and Métis cultural expressions of nationhood, this dialectic persists between the maintenance of ‘traditional’ indigenous forms and their expansion through contemporary media. It is for this reason that the works of Métis artists such as Christi Belcourt and David Garneau are so successful: they use ‘traditional’ and ‘national’ forms, but expand them in an otherwise unthinkable fashion. These artists are not bound by the parameters of custom. They are, in fact, thoroughly opposed to custom.

Although flower beadwork endures as an active communal Métis and First Nations expression, Belcourt transforms the *custom* of beadwork into a more profound and engaging *cultural practice*. In other words, Belcourt refurbishes flower beadwork in

a variety of ways that makes it relevant to the contemporary Métis life-world. As syncretic peoples formed as the forgotten remnants of capitalist expansion, Métis and mestizo peoples must be cognizant of the active nature of culture and refuse to coalesce to Eurocentric notions of indigenous custom.

Amongst Chicanas/os, this can be seen in the work of Malaquías Montoya. In his 1972 lithograph *Viet Nam Aztlán*, Montoya evokes the indigenous land-base Aztlán, but does so by constructing a network of solidarity in opposition to North American military ventures into Vietnam. By evoking a multiplicity of forms and positions, Chicana/o and Métis artists and activists are attentive, not only of their communal struggles against Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American structures, but also of the hemispheric nature of this resistance.

By operating continentally, Chicana/o and Métis cultural workers, as well as all aboriginal and oppressed peoples, will continue to cast off the shadow of colonialism and regain control of communally held lands. As Louis Riel so astutely stated: ‘My people will sleep for 100 years, and when they awake, it will be the artists who give them back their spirit.’ But we must remember, the Métis spirit evoked by contemporary artists must have the form and content of the new millennium, not that of Riel.

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¹ I apologize for any orthographic, grammatical, or structural errors in this Michif-language introduction. Like many Métis people, I am not fluent in Michif, but rather I am learning ‘back’ the language as part of the decolonial process. This translates as: Greetings, how is everyone? I am well. My name is Dylan and I live in Three Fires Territory. I work at Michigan State University. I have two children. My grandfather was Michif (Métis); he was Otepemisiwak, the people without bosses. We come from Penetanguishene. Thank you.

² Since this essay was originally drafted as an oral presentation presented at the bilingual French-English *Colloque Gabriel Dumont*, I have intentionally left some references to the conference to keep the *cours d’esprit* of that momentous occasion.

³ While the etymology of the word is constantly in question, the nomenclature Chicana/o refers to U.S. residents of Mexican descent. As a mixed-blood aboriginal people, they share many of the same experiences of colonization and marginalization as the Métis of the Great Lakes and Canadian West. Because the Spanish language is inherently gendered, with the male appellation Chicano used when referring to both men and women, I choose to evoke the dualistic and less repressive Chicana/o. While this does little to change the actual gender inequality in contemporary society, it does begin to change how we think about our language practices.

Throughout this paper, I will also use the Spanish concept of mestizo to refer to mixed-blood people in the U.S. Southwest and Latin America. This is used at times when not simply referring to Mexican Americans.

⁴ Nahuatl was the language spoken by the Mexica, the people commonly known as the Aztecs. Nahuatl is still spoken today by over 1.5 million people in Central Mexico.

⁵ Culturally, most Métis identify Winnipeg, what was once the Red River settlement, as the privileged site of the Métis Nation. However, the Métis National Council presently resides in Ottawa, the ‘colonial’ seat of power. Both of these centers are being politically and theoretically challenged by marginalized Métis groups.

⁶ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was the document that ended the Mexican-American War by ceding nearly one-half of Mexican territory to the United States. In return, the Mexican government received a

lump sum payment and *mexicanas/os* living in the former Mexican territory were guaranteed their rights to self-determination.

⁷ *Mestizo* is the Spanish equivalent to Métis.

⁸ Although the Powley decision set precedence in jurisprudence, its application within Canadian society has been less definitive. I argue that Métis people still lack the basic legal protection and rights accorded them as Native people. It should come as no surprise that the four countries voting in opposition to the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples included the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

⁹ This essay does not allow for an extended discussion of this complex proposition. What I mean to say with this argument is that Indian and First Nations identity did not exist until Europeans named the various indigenous societies collectively as 'Indians.' Prior to this point, Native peoples identified along kin, clan, tribal, linguistic, and socio-political units. Although these social relations are still practiced, it was the colonial process that created an American Indian identity.