Heart Work: Weaving Relationality into Métis Material Culture Repatriation

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the desires of Métis individuals in Alberta to advance repatriation and to analyze their views on the role that museums play in continuing to hold material culture. The Métis Nation of Alberta expressed interest in advancing repatriation efforts on behalf of Métis in Alberta, and it is anticipated that this study will provide insight into the desire for repatriation and the effect that repatriation could have on self-determination for Métis in Alberta. It is anticipated that articulating the desires of Métis individuals to advance repatriation would make clear the need for a Métis-specific framework for repatriation, and accordingly this study serves as a foundation from which a Métis-specific framework for repatriation can be negotiated between Métis in Alberta and the federal and provincial governments. Utilizing qualitative case study methodology, including focus groups and one-on-one interviews, this study canvassed nine individuals who self-identify as Métis and who currently reside in Alberta. The data collected through these processes highlight the need for museums and museum staff to develop policies and procedures unique to Métis needs and goals in order to advance repatriation. Through this study, it was found that there is a strong desire for Métis in Alberta to advance repatriation, and that Métis-specific repatriation centres on the development of good relations between Métis and museums in Alberta. This study also found that there is a need to create a framework for museums that hold Métis material culture, a framework that advances decolonization and reconciliation, empowering Métis with agency over their own material culture and re-engaging Métis communities with items central to their unique identity.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Leah Kirstie Hrycun. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Beading Histories: Reframing Métis Material Culture Repatriation,” No. Pro00093325, 15 October 2019.

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Definitions of Key Terminology

Métis Community:	For the purposes of this research, Métis community means those persons who identify as Métis, and/ or are registered members of the Métis Nation of Alberta and are currently resident in the Province of Alberta. The concept of community is difficult to define, especially when it comes to Métis communities who have continually been dispossessed of their lands and identity. To provide more clarity to the definition of community, Sloan suggests that current interpretations fall short because they suggest that "history, territory and community" exist separately.[1] In a Métis world view, these concept are inextricably linked and are co-constituted and therefore, definitions that separate history from territory and from community are not consistent with Métis understandings of community.
Material Culture:	Commonly referred to as artifacts by archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and curators, material culture refers to the objects people interact most closely with. The term material culture also encompasses the meanings given to objects by people through their culture, world views, ways of knowing, and their relationship to the object.

[1] Sloan, "Always Coming Home," 125.

Chapter 1
Introduction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action number 67 calls upon the Canadian Museums Association, in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, to conduct a national review of museum policies and practices "to determine the level of compliance with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*" (UNDRIP).[1] UNDRIP states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs," including the right to their histories, the present, and the future manifestation of their culture.[2] This includes the right to exercise care and control over their material culture in nation-specific ways, which includes the repatriation of material culture.

This study explores the desires of Métis in Alberta to open a dialogue surrounding the need for a Métis-specific framework for material culture repatriation. The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) expressed interest in advancing repatriation efforts on behalf of Métis in Alberta, and it was anticipated that this study would provide insight into the desire for repatriation and the effect that repatriation could have on self-determination for Métis in Alberta. Utilizing qualitative case study methodology, including focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and a workshop, this study canvassed nine individuals who self-identify as Métis and engage in expressions of Métis culture and who are interested in advancing repatriation discussions from a Métis perspective. The data collected through these processes highlight the need for museums and museum staff to develop policies and procedures unique to Métis needs and goals in order to advance repatriation.

[1] "Calls to Action: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," 8.
[2] "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," article 11.

Background

Much has been written about the advent of museums and the ways in which individuals and institutions collected curiosities to share with others. Spurred by the idea that Indigenous peoples would quickly disappear as a result of European colonization, many historians, anthropologists, missionaries, and explorers sought to collect the artifacts of Indigenous cultures in order to preserve them for humanity.[3] The artifacts were kept in private collections or were donated or sold to museums, and because collectors focused on preserving the artifacts of disappearing people, little heed was paid to the identity of the creators or the social meaning of the artifacts. As a result, many museums received artifacts that had little or no provenance and whose intent and meaning were lost.[4] Museums often displayed Indigenous material culture within frameworks that highlighted their primitive aesthetics, supported theories of social evolution, and romanticized narratives of the "Vanishing Indian."[5] Further, these artifacts were exhibited in museums as if those who created them were themselves relics of the past.[6] Museums and curators maintained white supremacist narratives by controlling knowledge created through the interpretation of the Indigenous material culture held in their institutions. It was not until the 1980s that museums began heeding criticism that the narratives and knowledges they produced and reproduced were incorrect, served to reinforce white settler supremacy, and misrepresented Indigenous peoples.

[3] Knocker, "Notes on the Wild Tribes," 196; Phillips, "Jasper Grant and Edward Walsh"; Kasprycki, "The Native American Collection of Friderik Baraga"; Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson*; Van der Beek and Vellinga, "Man the Collector: Salvaging Andamanese and Nicobarese Culture through Objects"; Classen and Howes, "The Museum as Sensescape"; Rowlands, "Entangled Frontiers"; Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*.

[4] Batty, "White Redemption Rituals"; Paterson, "Resolving Material Culture Disputes: Human Rights, Property Rights, and Crimes against Humanity"; Harrison, "Consuming Colonialism"; Isaac, "Using the Reciprocal Research Network."

[5] Hilden and Huhndorf, "Performing 'Indian'"; Egan, "'Yet in a Primitive Condition'"; Stevens, "Cultural Mediations"; Bruchac, "Revisiting Pocumtuck History."

[6] Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*, 15.

In 1988, "The Spirit Sings," a "critical event" in museum exhibition, marked a major turning point in the relationship between museums and First Nations communities in Canada.[7] Similar events had been occurring simultaneously in the United States, and a North American push to right the relationship between museums, governments, and Indigenous peoples was growing in importance.[8] In 1990, the United States enacted the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which created a legislative framework requiring museums to produce inventories of the Indigenous human remains held in their collections.[9] Acknowledging that Canada needed to implement policies similar to those legislated in the United States, and to generate a mechanism by which the contents of museums' collections would be made transparent, the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations released the "Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples" (TFR) in 1992.[10] The TFR recommended a number of actions be taken by museums to strengthen their relationships with the Indigenous peoples whose material culture and ancestral remains they held.[11] The actions included a recommendation to provide transparency regarding collections to Indigenous communities as well as a recommendation to return items that First Nations groups consider

[7] Harrison, "'The Spirit Sings'"; Archibald, "Contested Heritage"; Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 54. In 1988, the Glenbow Museum curated the exhibit "The Spirit Sings" as part of the Calgary Winter Olympics. The exhibition's major corporate sponsor, Shell Oil, had been exploiting oil on the traditional territory of Lubicon in northern Alberta. Lubicon called for a boycott on the exhibition through several highly publicized protests, which received international attention. Although "The Spirit Sings" is considered the critical event that pushed museums to reconsider their role in representing Indigenous peoples through their material culture, Expo 67 set the stage for critical reflection of the narratives produced by museum exhibitions. Expo 67 featured the "Indians of Canada Pavilion," set among the multicultural milieu of Canada's minority ethnic groups. For many of the artists included in the exhibition, this represented the first major art commission they had ever received; however, the pavilion stood "squarely within the long-standing, totalizing Western construction of Indianness … It assimilated all the Aboriginal peoples of Canada to the romanticized nineteenth-century 'noble savage' image of the Plains Indian, the image that also lies at the heart of dominant twentieth-century stereotype." For a full discussion of these exhibits and the issues raised by First Nations, see Phillips, 27–70.

[8] Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 48.

[9] Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Pub. L. 101-601, 25 USC 3001 et seq., 104 Stat. 3048.

[10] "Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples."

[11] Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 12–14, 135.

sacred.[12] At the time of the TFR, the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) hosted a computerized catalogue of the ethnographic collections of Canada's major museums. CHIN, which had been established in 1972 and was not without its flaws, was useful in research collaboration among museum professionals because it provided transparency in the collections of museums.[13] Despite the TFR's recommendation for greater transparency of collections, the federal government archived the CHIN database shortly after the TRF's release.[14] In 1991, the government of Canada commissioned an extensive report on the relationship between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and Canada. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP), Phillips states, "underlined the urgency of museum access and research in the context of Indigenous peoples' need to recover from the long period of colonial oppression."[15] RCAP recognized the need to engage in Métis-specific repatriation and included a recommendation "to repatriate major Métis artifacts from public and private collections to appropriate Métis-run locations."[16] However, RCAP's recommendations did not indicate how repatriation could be moved forward, nor did they include provisions for financial aid to recover object locations or provide funding for Métis-run locations. Despite the call for access and transparency in collections, and the urgency for museums to address access to their collections for Indigenous peoples, there is no policy or mechanism in place for museums to make their collections known to Indigenous peoples in Canada. For Blackfoot in Alberta and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, it became clear that the creation of legal policies for repatriation was necessary.

[12] Phillips, 135.
[13] According to Phillips, the database was inherently flawed because it utilized colonial classification systems and did not allow for any corrections to materials once they were entered into the system. See Phillips, 283.
[14] Phillips, 283.
[15] Phillips, 284.
[16] *RCAP*, vol. 4, 227.

In 2000, the government of Alberta introduced the First Nations Sacred and Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCORA) to legislate the return of sacred or ceremonial objects to First Nations. In 2004, the government introduced a regulation outlining a repatriation procedure for Alberta's three Blackfoot First Nations that complies with FNSCORA. However, FNSCORA is severely limited in its ability to advance the repatriation of material culture that falls outside classifications of Blackfoot sacred and ceremonial objects. FNSCORA remains the only repatriation legislation in Canada, despite Canada's pledge to support the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The recent acknowledgement of UNDRIP by the Canadian federal government supports the right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples through the repatriation of their tangible material culture that is currently held in museums. Scholars suggest that UNDRIP provides a space for the inclusion of Indigenous laws that could further repatriation because UNDRIP sets out a framework for the creation of nation-to-nation relationships.[17] Although not enough time has passed to determine whether or how UNDRIP will be "an effective tool for repatriation,"[18] there is scholarly optimism that the implementation of UNDRIP could lay the foundations for a legal framework to advance repatriation efforts for all Indigenous peoples in Canada. In 2019, the Canadian Parliament began debating Bill C-391, which seeks to "develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy to promote and support the return of Indigenous human remains and cultural property, wherever situated, to the Indigenous peoples of Canada."[19] The bill, if

[17] Chartrand, "Mapping the Meaning of Reconciliation"; Christie, "Revitalizing Canada's Indigenous Constitution," 49, 52; Nichols, "'We Have Never Been Domestic.'"
[18] Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions,'" 46.
[19] Bill C-391, sec. 3.

passed,[20] would encourage the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing[21] and create a "mechanism by which any First Nation, Inuit or Métis community or organization may acquire or reacquire" their material culture.[22] Unlike other recommendations and legislation that are specific to First Nations, Bill C-391 acknowledges the needs of all Indigenous peoples in Canada—First Nations, Inuit, and Métis—to advance repatriation on behalf of their communities.

The MNA has expressed interest in advancing the repatriation of material culture for its members.[23] The material culture of Métis is intrinsic to their unique identity as an Indigenous people in Canada. Métis material culture holds intergenerational knowledge,[24] and Métis identity was sewn directly onto clothing through intricate beadwork, embroidery, and quill work, where it stood as a visual statement of Métis sovereignty.[25] Despite the visual displays of their sovereignty and recognition as an Indigenous peoples by Canada, Métis are constantly battling to secure their rights because of the colonial perception that they are mixed, a people in between—not First Nations, not European, but a mixture of both—and thus that they defy classification.[26]

The perception of Métis as mixed has influenced the ways in which museums view Métis material culture. Scholars such as Racette, Peers, and Brasser argue that Métis material culture in

[20] Bill C-391 passed first reading in the Senate on 20 February 2019. On 30 May 2019, debate on second reading of Bill C-391 was adjourned. As of 20 July 2020, there have been no further readings of this bill. Senate of Canada, "Debates."

[21] Bill C-391, sec. 3(d).

[22] Bill C-391, sec. 3(a).

[23] Informal conversations between the author and members of the MNA that took place between 2017 and 2019 highlighted the desire of Métis to explore repatriation of their material culture. On 12 September 2019, the Cultural Team at the MNA expressed its formal interest in advancing repatriation on behalf of its members. Spicer, Telephone conversation.

[24] Kermoal, "Métis Women."

[25] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together."

[26] Harrison, *Metis, People Between*; Napoleon, "Extinction by Number"; Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Niemi-Bohun, "Colonial Categories"; Andersen, *"Metis"*; Gunn, "Defining Metis People as a People."

collections is often mislabelled, ignored, or placed within other ethnographic classifications.[27] These classifications trouble the identity of the Métis by shifting the focus to their mixedness and away from their uniqueness. The misattribution of Métis material culture to other Indigenous peoples also creates obstacles for Métis in achieving the recommended transparency of material culture collections and in furthering repatriation efforts. As a result, much of Métis material culture held in museum collections remains inaccessible to Métis.

Historically, federal and provincial governments have marginalized Métis rights in the creation of policies and legislation to promote First Nations rights in Canada.[28] It was not until the Supreme Court of Canada decisions in *Powley* (2003) and *Manitoba Métis Federation* (2013) that Canada began to recognize Métis rights.[29] The 2016 Supreme Court decision in *Daniels v. Canada*[30] and the adoption of UNDRIP have provided an avenue for the MNA to negotiate directly with the government of Canada and to renegotiate existing agreements with the government of Alberta. On 16 November 2017, the MNA entered into an agreement with the governments of Canada and Alberta to negotiate Métis rights on a nation-to-nation basis in order to advance reconciliation, and on 27 June 2019 the Métis Nation of Alberta signed a self-government agreement with the government of Canada. These agreements may lay the foundations for the negotiation of a Métis-specific framework for the repatriation of material culture.

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[27] Brasser, "In Search of Métis Art"; Peers, "'Many Tender Ties'"; Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."

[28] See Madden, Graham, and Wilson, "Exploring Options for Métis Governance in the 21st Century"; Teillet, *Métis Law in Canada*; Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import."

[29] R. v. Powley; *MMF v. Canada*. The Powley case was the first major case dealing with Métis in Canada. It set out what Métis rights could be and who those rights could be exercised by. In MMF, the court found that the Crown did not act honourably in its implementation of s. 31 of the Manitoba Act, which promised 1.4 million acres of land to Métis.

[30] *Daniels v. Canada*. In Daniels, the court found that Métis and non-status Indians are 'Indians' under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act. This decision opens the door for discussions between Métis, non-status Indians and the federal government.

Problem Statement

The Métis Nation of Alberta has clearly expressed interest in furthering the repatriation of Métis material culture to Métis in Alberta. Known as the "Flower Beadwork People," Métis beaded their identity onto their clothing, and in doing so asserted sovereignty over their territories, solidified kinship relations, and continued the transmission of intergenerational knowledge.[31] Material culture is therefore intrinsic to Métis ways of knowing, identity, self-determination, and the exercise of Métis rights. In Alberta, the provincial government has legislated repatriation for First Nations; however, current policies and the ways in which the province frames repatriation make repatriation unavailable to Métis in Alberta. To redress this, museums must develop policies and procedures unique to Métis needs and goals in order to advance repatriation and honour the right to self-determination of Métis in Alberta through the exercise of care and control over their material culture.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the desires of Métis individuals in Alberta to advance repatriation and to analyze their views on the role that museums play in continuing to hold material culture. It was anticipated that articulating the desires of Métis individuals to advance repatriation and creating space to open dialogues between Métis individuals and museum professionals would make clear the need for a Métis-specific framework and recognize the unique needs and desires of Métis. Further, by identifying how current policies reinforce a colonial notion of museum collections, it is expected that a new framework for museums can be constructed, one that advances decolonization and reconciliation by empowering Métis with agency over their material culture and re-engaging communities with items central to their

[31] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Belcourt, "Purpose in Art"; Kermoal, "Métis Women."

identity. This study serves as a foundation from which a Métis-specific framework for repatriation can be negotiated between Métis in Alberta and the federal and provincial governments. To explore these issues, this study has addressed the following research questions:

- How have colonial practices regarding the collection and retention of material culture contributed to Métis dispossession?
- What is the importance of repatriation to Métis communities in Alberta?
- What does a Métis-specific framework for repatriation look like?

Positionality

Scholars have highlighted the need to locate themselves as researchers when working in an Indigenous research framework.[32] Lavallée and others suggest that because many Indigenous people situate themselves in relation to land, time, and kin, researchers must do the same.[33] Absolon and Willett state that this act allows research participants to better understand who we are, what our connections to this place and time are grounded in, and who we are connected to.[34] I am a settler currently residing on Treaty 6 Territory and the homeland of the Métis. I am deeply connected to the Ukrainian heritage that was brought with my father's family when they began arriving in Canada in 1908. In 1909, my ancestors settled on a homestead on the southern banks of the North Saskatchewan River near Victoria Settlement, Alberta (a historic Métis settlement), and many of my relatives still call that area home. My mother's family began arriving in Canada from Germany in the 1920s and '30s and settled on homesteads near Bruderheim, Alberta. Much less is known about the ancestral connections on my mother's side, in part because my mother's family assumed new identities upon arrival in Canada. I spent my formative years in Stony Plain,

[32] Absolon and Willett, "Putting Ourselves Forward"; Baskin, "Storytelling Circles."
[33] Lavallée, "Practical Application," 26.
[34] Absolon and Willett, "Putting Ourselves Forward."

Alberta and travelled often to Long Lake, Alberta and Smoky Lake, Alberta (the closest town to Victoria Settlement) to spend time with family and friends.

At the time of this research, I was enrolled in full-time studies in the Master of Arts program in the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. I was also employed as a research assistant with the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research (RCMR), a position that I have held since early 2017. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies with Honours and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology. Since 2006, I have participated in several archaeological excavations and have had the opportunity to work in small museums around the world, cataloguing and documenting material culture. In 2007, I participated in an overseas archaeological project that moved ancestral remains for the construction of a new building on land claimed by the United States Air Force. This was a time of hard learning and self-reflection, and it ultimately fostered in me a desire to upset the colonial policies that have allowed institutions to dispossess people of the remains of their ancestors and their material culture.

My honour's thesis, completed in 2018, focused upon Métis who occupied the original river lots in Edmonton, Alberta and the dispossession they experienced from 1870 to 1900 as white settlers moved into the area. My understanding of Edmonton's Métis presence has deepened as I have continued my research assistant work with RCMR. Actively anti-colonial, my research seeks to open dialogues to build relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers that advance understanding and decolonize historical and contemporary narratives, which can function as a step toward reconciliation. My research experience combined with my personal standpoint has uniquely situated me to conduct this research.

Rationale and Significance

Gaudet asks researchers to ask themselves "why" questions: "Why is this research study important to me?" Why is this research study important to the community?[35] It is important for me to critique the policies and mechanisms that maintain white ownership and control over Indigenous material culture. This work includes deconstructing the dominant narrative, which is "oriented toward examining the issues, problems, and conceptualizations that confront … Western civilization."[36] Further, this research is important to me because of the relationships I have built through my work with RCMR. When I began informally discussing repatriation with members of the MNA, they encouraged me to pursue this research because they felt it important to regain control of their material culture as a community. Many also expressed concern that First Nations were successfully pursuing repatriation while Métis repatriation was being ignored.

The importance of this study to Métis in Alberta is that the knowledge produced will create a foundation to begin dialogues surrounding the repatriation of Métis material culture by Métis. With the recent signing of the framework agreements between the MNA and the provincial and federal governments in 2017, as well as the self-government agreement signed with the federal government in 2019, the MNA is positioned to advance the desires of its members to exercise self-determination through the care and control of their material culture. To create the foundation of a repatriation framework, the research participants have co-produced a document that outlines their desires to enter into relationships with museums in Alberta and for those museums to understand that addressing Métis needs and desires require a Métis-specific approach.

[35] Gaudet, "Rethinking Participatory Research," 78.
[36] Champagne, "In Search of Theory and Method," 356; Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies," 83.

This study is also important because community members have expressed their desire to not have to build new relationships with museum staff each time they want access to a specific object or piece of material culture. If museums make themselves aware of Métis protocols and have a framework in place to open dialogues surrounding repatriation, Métis in Alberta can have a mechanism that does not require them to always start from the beginning; instead, they will have a solid relationship with museums that recognize the need for repatriation to proceed in a Métis-specific way. For the community, this means that their desires to be able to visit with the material culture of their ancestors can be realized.

Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 builds on the development of repatriation in Canada, as introduced in this chapter, and examines legislative and policy options for repatriation as well as for addressing the marginalization of Métis in Canadian politics. Chapter 2 also provides a survey of repatriation in Canada and considers the successes and lessons learned from the process. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on the decolonization of museum spaces and demonstrates that there is a gap in the literature on the incorporation of Métis knowledges into museum policies. Chapter 3 also considers the entanglements of Indigenous peoples and their material culture, and concludes with a survey of the literature outlining the importance of material culture to Métis histories, present realities, and futurities. Chapter 4 examines the methodological and theoretical frameworks used in the creation and implementation of this research project, including Gaudet's methodology of "*keeoukaywin*: the visiting way," and Moreton-Robinson's theories of white possession. Chapter 5 presents findings of the data collected through focus groups and individual interviews. In keeping with this study's advocacy for the centring of Métis knowledges throughout this thesis, and its active pushing against the perpetuation of power structures that exist between researchers and research participants,

Chapter 5 includes extensive direct quotations from the research participants. Chapter 6 discusses the findings and places the knowledges created by the research participants within the context and literature of repatriation. This thesis concludes with a summary of the desires of Métis to advance repatriation of their material culture and describes opportunities for further research.

Chapter 2
The Politics of Repatriation in Canada: Setting the Context

Chapter 1 introduced repatriation in a Canadian context and presented an overview of the mechanisms to advance repatriation. This chapter picks up where the previous chapter left off and provides an overview of the political history of repatriation in Canada, the marginalization of Métis from policy creation, and the ways in which repatriation is effected in a Canadian context. First, I expand upon the legislative options for repatriation outlined in Chapter 1 and discuss the inclusion of Indigenous legal orders in repatriation legislation. I also examine the dialogues that push back against the need for legislative options for repatriation. Second, I consider the ways in which Métis have been and continue to be marginalized in exercising their Indigenous rights in Canada. Although Métis are recognized as one of the Indigenous peoples of Canada, their rights are routinely placed lower on the spectrum of importance of Indigenous rights in Canada.[1] More specifically, I explore how the marginalization of Métis rights contributes to the development of policies that exclude Métis ways of knowing, thereby nullifying any repatriation that could occur. Third, I examine case studies that illustrate the complexities and successes of repatriation in Canada, and the lessons that have been learned. I also examine the grassroots initiatives that have seen material culture repatriated to Métis communities, and the importance of repatriation to those communities. Through this examination, I provide a historical overview of how and why Métis material culture found its way into museum collections, and I discuss how a lack of understanding of Métis identity, community, and territory continue to dispossess Métis of their material culture. Several Indigenous communities in Canada have successfully repatriated their material culture; however, political marginalization and lack of understanding of Métis identity, community, and territory continue to dispossess Métis of their material culture.

[1] Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import."

Repatriation Legislation and Policy in Canada

As recently as the 1980s, repatriation was inconceivable to museums in Canada. Although museums had begun creating specific agreements under which objects were loaned to communities so that they could perform their sacred ceremonies,[2] many museums were concerned that the use of the objects would compromise their physical integrity[3] and that repatriation would lead to the deterioration or destruction of items intrinsic to human history.[4] Museum professionals understood that artifacts needed to be held in facilities where professionals would be able to guarantee their survival.[5] Museum professionals also feared that repatriation would mean involvement with Indigenous communities and that museum professionals could lose their research objectivity as a result of the relationships formed.[6] In addition, museum professionals considered museums to be the owners of the artifacts held in their collections.[7] These widespread views combined to make the idea of repatriation impossible.[8]

In the aftermath of "The Spirit Sings" in 1988 and the release of the Task Force Report (TFR) in 1994 and the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996, the subsequent inaction of museums and government officials to implement the frameworks developed through the reports led legal scholars to suggest that more needed to be done to strengthen the legal grounds for repatriation.[9] Currently in Canada, Indigenous rights are framed

[2] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*; Weasel Head, "Repatriation Experiences of the Kainai."

[3] Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*.

[4] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 26.

[5] For an overview of the development of preservation ethics and responsibilities in museums, see Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*, pt. 1.

[6] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 25.

[7] O'Keefe, "Provenance and Trade in Cultural Heritage Part IV"; Davies, "Property Rights"; Egan, "'Yet in a Primitive Condition'"; McDougall, "The Challenges of Repatriating."

[8] Egan, "'Yet in a Primitive Condition'"; Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 27.

[9] Simpson, "Claims of Indigenous Peoples"; Henry, "Back from the Brink"; Nicks, "The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples Part III"; Walker and Ostrove, "The Aboriginal Right to Cultural Property"; Bell, "Restructuring the Relationship"; Bell, *Repatriation of Cultural Material*; Breske, "Politics of Repatriation."

within western legal orders, and on that basis many argue that the only way to address repatriation is through carefully crafted legislation that holds institutions accountable to advance repatriation.[10] Currently, there is no federal legislation in Canada regarding repatriation; however, scholars have examined federal legislation in the United States and have discussed the enactment of similar federal legislation in Canada.[11] Scholars are divided on the necessity of introducing legislation, as well as on the efficacy of such legislation.[12] In the absence of federal legislation, requests for repatriation are subject to provincial law (where it exists)[13] and the policies and recommendations of the Canadian Museums Association (CMA), the Canadian Archaeological Association (CAA),[14] and provincial museum associations.[15] In Alberta, the First Nations Sacred and Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCORA) enables the repatriation of First Nations[16] sacred ceremonial objects[17] from Alberta provincial collections to First Nations in Canada,[18] as defined by the Act. Outside Alberta, and for non–First Nations Indigenous communities in Alberta, repatriation claims fall outside FNSCORA and are administered by

[10] McDougall, "The Challenges of Repatriating."

[11] Bell, "Aboriginal Claims"; Phillips, *Museum Pieces*; McDougall, "The Challenges of Repatriating"; Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions,'" 44.

[12] Bell, "Aboriginal Claims"; Bell, "Limitations"; Nicks, "The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples Part III"; Knox, "They've Lost Their Marbles"; Koehler, "Repatriation of Cultural Objects"; Asch, "Concluding Thoughts"; Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?*; Bell, *Repatriation of Cultural Material*; McDougall, "The Challenges of Repatriating"; Breske, "Politics of Repatriation."

[13] Koehler, "Repatriation of Cultural Objects"; Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions.'"

[14] Bell, "Aboriginal Claims"; Koehler, "Repatriation of Cultural Objects," 121; Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions,'" 44.

[15] Koehler argues that British Columbia and Yukon have legislation that deals indirectly with repatriation to Indigenous communities; however, there is little evidence to support this assertion. See Koehler, "Repatriation of Cultural Objects," 121.

[16] The FNSCORA regulation defines First Nations as "Blood Tribe, as represented by the Mookaakin Culture and Heritage Society; Piikani Nation, as represented by the Iron Shirt Culture and Heritage Society; [and] Siksika Nation as represented by the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Foundation." See Royal Alberta Museum, "FNSCORA Repatriation." FNSCORA Regulation.

[17] The FNSCORA regulation defines sacred ceremonial objects as "bundles that are essential to the practices of the ceremonial societies of a First Nation (such as the Horns, Motokiks, and Doves); [and] objects that are of intrinsic importance to traditional sacred ceremonies associated with the Sun Dance, Thunder Medicine Pipe and Beaver Bundle openings." Royal Alberta Museum, "FNSCORA Repatriation." "FNSCORA Repatriation."

[18] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 57–58.

museums on a case-by-case basis.[19] FNSCORA requires compliance with strict classifications of material culture as sacred or ceremonial, is applied at the discretion of government officials, applies only to provincial museums,[20] and thus effectively falls to the museums to administer. With these standards in place, Conaty suggests that FNSCORA merely provides the appearance of government officials "fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities" to facilitate repatriation in Alberta, when in reality the standards continue to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their material culture in museum collections.[21]

FNSCORA restricts repatriation to a First Nation's material culture, unless it is sacred or ceremonial in nature. Bell and Napoleon argue that the emphasis on sacred and ceremonial objects in current policies and legislation does not mean that Indigenous people are not interested in the repatriation of other objects.[22] Indeed, the Blood Tribe, the House of Luuxhon, U'mista, and Ktunaza/Kinbasket Tribe all state that while sacred and ceremonial objects are of great importance to them, there are numerous other objects that may be of greater importance yet do not fit within current repatriation frameworks.[23] Phillips further claims that the limitations and definitions imposed by current repatriation frameworks do not address the needs of Indigenous peoples.[24] She suggests that there is a need to look beyond the sacred and ceremonial because many Indigenous groups find these classifications "either restrictive in relation to their own cultural traditions or inadequate because they are not comprehensive."[25] Further, the classification of material culture as sacred or ceremonial leads to an oversimplification of

[19] Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions.'"
[20] The Royal Alberta Museum and the Glenbow Museum.
[21] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 57.
[22] Bell and Napoleon, *First Nations Cultural Heritage and Law*, 20–21.
[23] Bell and Napoleon, 20–21.
[24] Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 136.
[25] Phillips, 136.

material culture and forces objects into a sacred–secular binary.[26] This binary diminishes a people's agency over their material culture and projects western paradigms over Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing.[27] These restrictions diminish the ability of First Nations to further repatriation of their material culture, despite repatriation legislation being in place.

In addition to the adherence to restrictive guidelines to further repatriation through FNSCORA, both Koehler and Conaty draw attention to scholars' silence on two issues: (1) the return of ancestral remains; and (2) sacred or ceremonial objects found since the enactment of the legislation in 2000.[28] These critiques highlight the deficiencies present in current legislative options for repatriation in Alberta; however, scholars have thus far remained silent on two further issues. First, there is no requirement for museums to disclose to First Nations what material culture they currently hold in their collections. As a result, the onus falls on First Nations to make inquiries into collection holdings. Second, there has been no discussion about how current legislation and policies preclude Métis and Inuit from utilizing FNSCORA for the repatriation of their material culture in Alberta. Recently, however, the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) has come under public scrutiny and has been criticized for the ways in which it handles repatriation.

In November 2019, the RAM website contained information regarding the museum's commitment to repatriation for all Indigenous peoples, and professed its dedication to upholding the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and implementing the frameworks of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to encourage collaboration with Indigenous peoples and to further reconciliation. The RAM website

[26] Gervais, "Spiritual But Not Intellectual," 472; TallBear, "Beyond the Life/Not Life Binary," 196.
[27] Gervais, "Spiritual But Not Intellectual," 472; TallBear, "Beyond the Life/Not Life Binary," 196.
[28] Koehler, "Repatriation of Cultural Objects," 121; Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 57.

highlighted the museum's desire to further repatriation for all First Nations and to enter into dialogue with those whose repatriation requests fell outside of FNSCORA. In May 2020, Dr. Paulina Johnson, the acting head of community engagement for the RAM, and the individual responsible for working with communities to facilitate repatriation, made a complaint to the human rights commission and outlined a number of racist incidents that occurred during her employment.[29] A former community engagement officer, Judy Half, echoed Johnson's concerns and stated that deep-seated institutional racism was the impetus for her leaving employment with the RAM. Johnson, of Sampson Cree Nation, stated in her complaint that, based on the many racist incidents she experienced, "It became very clear that everyone within Community Engagement and Indigenous Studies were completely pro-Blackfoot. All other sacred ceremonial materials were simply, 'non-Blackfoot.'"[30] Johnson's comments underline that while there is no issue with Blackfoot repatriation, the focus on Blackfoot repatriation to the exclusion of all others is cause for concern. The RAM confirmed this shift in focus through amendments to its website.

By May 2020, the RAM had made significant changes to its repatriation page (including changing the page's title from "Repatriation" to "Community Engagement") and removed all reference to the Calls to Action, reconciliation, and Indigenous communities.[31] Now, the RAM states that it "commits to building strong, respectful relationships with First Nations communities and honouring their connections to these ancestral belongings and sacred objects," and that the

[29] Mosleh, "'I'm Not Your Token.'"
[30] Mosleh.
[31] In the Government of Alberta's 2020 Budget, the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, responsible for Alberta museums, there was a focus on removing the red tape associated with obtaining government funding. The government is not clear how this is to be done; however, they state that focusing on funding charities and non-profit organizations and removing Registered Historic Resources designations from 'ineffective' historic places will reduce red tape and bureaucratic obligations to the province. Government of Alberta, "Budget 2020."

only processes for repatriation currently in place are for Blackfoot sacred objects. The changes made to the RAM website and the removal of references to the TRC's Calls to Action and UNDRIP are alarming. In addition, the erasure of Inuit and Métis from material surrounding community engagement and repatriation highlights Isaac's observation that Métis are marginalized by Canadian policies that focus on First Nations. This marginalization is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Returning to legislative policies for repatriation in Canada, Bill C-391, discussed in Chapter 1, awaits assent by the Senate. Scholars have responded to the bill with some optimism, suggesting that while it may not be perfect, it could provide legal backing for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit to exercise repatriation—not to support Indigenous groups per se, but rather to hold institutions to account.[32] Despite the optimism, two critiques of Bill C-391 have emerged. First, thus far, there has not been a call from Indigenous people to have federal legislation regarding repatriation.[33] Indigenous people have been "pursuing different and creative avenues for repatriating sacred objects that correspond to their individual strengths and cultures," have looked to other means of exercising cultural resilience, including language revitalization, and have wanted to pursue repatriation as a moral issue rather than a legal one.[34] Second, unlike federal laws in other jurisdictions,[35] Bill C-391 does not address the coordination and funding that would be required to implement federal legislation regarding repatriation.[36] Costs associated with research, travel, and other aspects of negotiation would be the responsibility of the Indigenous peoples requesting repatriation.[37] Further, Bill C-391 includes no provision of

[32] Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions,'" 53.
[33] Dekker, 53.
[34] Dekker, 53.
[35] For example, the US Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This is mentioned only once in the text (chapter 1) and a few times in references. Full title and abbrev are helpful.
[36] Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions,'" 51.
[37] Dekker, 48–51.

funding to create accessible databases of museum and institutional collections that would provide transparency of collection holdings to Indigenous communities. Therefore, the onus of locating objects would continue to fall upon Indigenous communities and individuals. Dekker argues that it is only with full transparency, access to collections, and funding that federal repatriation legislation could be viable.[38] If Bill C-391 passes in its current form, Métis would receive federal support for creating a repatriation framework that acknowledges their specific ways of knowing.[39] However, with no provisions for transparency, access, or funding of costs, Métis would have to rely upon their own resources to further their repatriation claims. Therefore, regardless of whether Bill C-391 is enacted, Métis will continue to be dispossessed of their material culture because they will remain unaware of what material culture is housed in collections, will not be able to gain access to their material culture, and will have to rely upon their own finances to administer repatriation. Métis organizations such as the Métis Nation of Alberta would therefore continue to bear the burden of furthering repatriation efforts in order to meet the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta.

Although Bill C-391 is intended to advance repatriation for Indigenous peoples, it remains the case that legislators and policy-makers struggle to incorporate Indigenous laws into Canadian laws. Some scholars argue that utilizing Canadian law to repatriate material culture "obscures the significance of objects, images, words, and inventions under Indigenous law";[40] others maintain that Indigenous laws on the care and control of material culture can be incorporated into Canadian law;[41] and some contend that Canada's recent adoption of UNDRIP

[38] Dekker, 52.
[39] Chartier, "President Chartier Calls for Repatriation."
[40] Overstall, "The Law Is Opened," 93.
[41] Bell, "Aboriginal Claims"; McLay and Joe, "'A'lhut Tut e Sul'hweentst'"; Overstall, "The Law Is Opened"; El-Gendi, "Illusory Borders"; Bell, *Repatriation of Cultural Material*; Phillips, *Museum Pieces*.

provides the space necessary to incorporate Indigenous legal systems in Canadian common law. Métis scholars Nichols and Chartrand assert that UNDRIP must be implemented into Canadian common law because it allows for the creation of real nation-to-nation relationships and for the dismantling of barriers to true self-determination.[42] Moving beyond current legal structures would allow for a true plurality of legal orders, suggests Christie, and would make room for recognizing that true reconciliation cannot occur within current western legal structures.[43] If the Crown were to meaningfully engage in dialogue with Indigenous communities with regard to issues of state regulation over Indigenous bodies (land, water, legal orders, education, and truth telling), Christie claims that UNDRIP could be implemented and Indigenous laws and Canadian law could be fully integrated into one another.[44] Dekker suggests that not enough time has passed to determine whether or how UNDRIP will be "an effective tool for repatriation,"[45] while Nichols points out that little has been done to address the incorporation of Indigenous legal systems into Canadian common law since UNDRIP's adoption.[46] Although some scholars are optimistic that the implementation of UNDRIP will be a success, the failure of the state to recognize and implement the TRC's Calls to Action five years after their release[47] does not bode well. Indeed, Chartrand states that the failure of the Canadian state to implement UNDRIP is a violation of Métis human rights,[48] and a growing number of scholars have questioned why Métis

[42] Nichols, "'We Have Never Been Domestic,'" 40..
[43] Christie, "Revitalizing Canada's Indigenous Constitution," 48.
[44] Christie, 53.
[45] Dekker, "Challenging the 'Love of Possessions,'" 46.
[46] Nichols, "UNDRIP."
[47] Vowel, *Indigenous Writes*.
[48] Chartrand, "Mapping the Meaning of Reconciliation," 84.

rights have been continually ignored. Métis have been forgotten as an Indigenous rights-bearing people in Canada, despite their federal recognition as such in the 1982 Constitution.[49]

Métis Marginalization

Scholars have questioned why Métis rights have been continually ignored.[50] As to why Métis have been forgotten as an Indigenous rights-bearing people, Isaac posits that the unique emergence of the Métis population in western Canada, and the inability of Canadian law to recognize those who do not "fit into an easily identifiable legal box," have disadvantaged Métis in their ability to exercise their Aboriginal rights.[51] This argument is echoed by Bell, who contends that the unique emergence of Métis has given rise to injustices, including an unreasonable burden of continually proving their Métis identity.[52] Racette demonstrates that Métis have been excluded from government policy, thereby limiting or outright denying access to their lands and limiting their rights to hunting, fishing, and gathering.[53] Both Bell and Isaac contend that Métis have struggled to exercise their Aboriginal rights in Canada, and Isaac calls upon federal and provincial governments to reconcile their relationship with Métis people by recognizing their Aboriginal rights, and to "resolve outstanding Métis claims."[54] Although Chartrand is supportive of reconciliation between Métis and Canada, he highlights how problematic it is for governments to push agendas of reconciliation with "tools that are tainted by racism and are founded on the belief that Indigenous peoples are inferior and uncivilised."[55] To

[49] Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import," 3. While Métis have made little gain regarding their specific right to repatriation, there have been significant gains made in defining and exercising their specific rights in other areas. For example, see R. v. Powley; *MMF v. Canada*; *Daniels v. Canada*.

[50] Bell and Leonard, "A New Era in Metis Constitutional Rights"; Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import"; Madden, Graham, and Wilson, "Exploring Options for Métis Governance in the 21st Century"; Saunders and Dubois, *Métis Politics*.

[51] Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import," 3.

[52] Bell, "Restructuring the Relationship," 28.

[53] For example, see Racette, "Confessions and Reflections."

[54] Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import," 3.

[55] Chartrand, "Mapping the Meaning of Reconciliation," 49.

further true reconciliation, argues Chartrand, the tools found in the principles of UNDRIP and the TRC should be used, because these tools "view both sides with respect and dignity, while addressing past harms through meaningful decolonization and restoration of lands and governance authority."[56] As a result of their exclusion from government policy, Métis have been ignored in other sectors, such as museums, and their presence in museums is often misrepresented and defies categorization.[57]

The present exclusion and marginalization of Métis is deeply rooted in the history of the lands known as Canada. Indeed, Chartier argues that the marginalization faced by Métis was the impetus for many Métis people to part with their material culture.[58] The desire of collectors to obtain Métis material culture created economic opportunity for women to utilize the intergenerational knowledge that had been passed down to them; Through the commission of objects and the production of souvenir pieces, Métis women were able to provide for their families. [59] Historic sources recount visitors purchasing material culture objects from Métis women as they travelled through the Northwest.[60] Métis material culture was highly sought after for its unparalleled craftsmanship and beauty. Harrison states that Métis material culture was highly sought after by European explorers, travellers, and missionaries because it seamlessly blended popular ideals of primitive art with Victorian sensibilities.[61] The individuals who purchased these objects would then return home with their souvenirs and place them in their personal collections or sell or donate them to museums. Métis women mobilized their knowledge

[56] Chartrand, 85.
[57] Chartrand, 85.
[58] Chartier, "President Chartier Calls for Repatriation."
[59] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Brown, "Christina Massan's Beadwork"; Racette, "What Stories Do These Garments Tell?"; Kermoal, "Métis Women."
[60] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Berry, "Recovered Identities."
[61] Harrison, *Metis, People Between*, 31.

to support their families and ensure the survival of their culture.[62] While a great number of Métis material culture objects were collected in this manner, others have a more dubious history.

In the aftermath of the 1885 Northwest resistance, reports of soldiers looting the homes of Métis began to emerge. Gabriel Dumont's wife stated that their home had been raided by soldiers and that they had burned it to the ground.[63] Métis families highlighted the disparity between them and settler families, stating that government forces protected the homes and property of settler families while they did nothing to protect Métis homes from looting by military volunteers.[64] Items looted or confiscated in the aftermath of the 1885 uprising found their way into museum collections. For example, the personal property of Louis Riel, as well as parts of Riel's hair and original coffin, were retained by government officials upon his execution, and many of those items remain in the collection of the St. Boniface Museum, Saskatchewan. Indeed, items loaned from Métis in good faith to museums for exhibitions on the history of the Northwest resistance were not returned to those who loaned them.[65]

Purchased and confiscated Métis material culture carries little provenance regarding its origins or makers; that is, there is no narrative history of the object.[66] Uncovering provenance can provide a narrative of the object itself, reveal extra-legal acquisitions, and illuminate the origins of the object. Bringing provenance to light, argues Soltes, is an important first step in repatriation because it gives greater context to human histories surrounding the object.[67] Berry and Racette have reconstructed some object narratives of Métis material culture, but there is

[62] Kermoal, "Métis Women."
[63] Nichols, "'We Have Never Been Domestic.'"
[64] Métis homes and property were destroyed and looted by military and volunteers following the battle. See Boyer, "1885 – Aftermath." See also Kermoal, "Des Femmes Métisses."
[65] Devine, "J.Z. LaRocque."
[66] Brasser, "In Search of Métis Art"; Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Berry, "Recovered Identities"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[67] Soltes, "Cultural Plunder," 470.

much work to be done.[68] Hindering efforts to reconstruct object narratives are the ways in which museums classify Métis material culture. For example, Chartier recalls seeing a baby bonnet at the Museum of the American Indian with distinctive Métis beadwork; however, the object's origin was attributed to Plains Cree, not Métis.[69] Scholars such as Racette, Peers, Brasser, and Berry argue that this is not a unique occurrence and that material culture in collections are often mislabelled, ignored, or placed within other ethnographic classifications.[70] Because these objects are attributed to First Nations groups and not to Métis, they upset the identity of Métis and diminish their place within Métis kinscapes, and preclude their repatriation to Métis communities. The misclassification of Métis material culture in museums marginalizes Métis and undermines their ability to advance repatriation and their right to self-determination and sovereignty.

The struggle of Métis to exercise their rights through the care and control of their material culture faces an additional barrier: the current understandings of community and land base or territory. In Canada, the federal government adopted different strategies for the surrender of Indigenous land from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Negotiations with First Nations largely took place through the signing of treaties, under which First Nations were granted reserve land.[71] Because reserve land allotments were made on the basis of who was a member of a band or

[68] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Berry, "Recovered Identities"; Racette, "What Stories Do These Garments Tell?"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."

[69] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Berry, "Recovered Identities"; Racette, "What Stories Do These Garments Tell?"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."

[70] Brasser, "In Search of Métis Art"; Peers, "'Many Tender Ties'"; Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Berry, "Recovered Identities"; Racette, "What Stories Do These Garments Tell?"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."

[71] While most First Nations surrendered their land through the treaty negotiation process, several First Nations have never ceded their land to the Crown despite falling within the political boundaries of Canada. See Bartlett, *Indian Reserves*., for a discussion of First Nations reserves.

community, band lists were used to define membership in the band and community.[72] Inuit have had their land base and territory recognized through land claims agreements.[73] As a result, the majority of their population lives in 51 communities throughout their defined land base and territory—Nunavut, Inuvialuit, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut.[74] Métis, however, do not have a federally recognized land base.

Métis connection to the land was very deep and the ties the Métis have to their land play a significant role in their identity.[75] Having relied upon the land to support themselves through hunting, fur trading, and plant gathering, the Métis were greatly impacted by the settlers who were entering their traditional areas by the end of the 19th century.[76] European settlement caused a reduction in land resources and mobility, upsetting Métis lifeways and kinship connections. From 1870 to 1910, the federal government instituted policies of scrip for Métis, which could grant ownership of specified amounts of land available through homestead.[77] Scrip was a horrible failure. Tough demonstrates that nearly 99% of the land designated for Métis ended up being owned by settlers and land speculators.[78] Owing to the failure of scrip, Métis are an Indigenous people without a recognized homeland or territory.[79] Further, because of the

[72] Bartlett; Niemi-Bohun, "Colonial Categories"; Niemi-Bohun, "Contesting the Colonial Order on the Canadian Prairies."

[73] Northwest Territories Council, *Brief of the Government of NWT*; McPherson, *New Owners in Their Own Land*; Nunavik Inuit, *Agreement between Nunavik Inuit and the Queen*.

[74] Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, "About Canadian Inuit."

[75] Kermoal, "Métis Women"; Brown, "Christina Massan's Beadwork"; Supernant, "Modeling Métis Mobility?"

[76] Kermoal, "Métis Women"; Brown, "Christina Massan's Beadwork"; Supernant, "Modeling Métis Mobility?"

[77] For a discussion on scrip and the limitations of scrip to provide a land base for Métis, see Tough and Dorion, *A Study of Treaty Ten and Treaty Five Adhesion Scrip*; Tough and Mcgregor, "The Rights to the Land May Be Transferred"; Niemi-Bohun, "Colonial Categories"; Adese, "'R' Is for Métis"; Niemi-Bohun, "Contesting the Colonial Order on the Canadian Prairies"; Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, "RCMR Scrip Booklet."

[78] Tough and Mcgregor, "The Rights to the Land May Be Transferred"; Hayter, "Racially 'Indian,' Legally 'White.'"

[79] Tough and Dorion, *A Study of Treaty Ten and Treaty Five Adhesion Scrip*; Tough and Mcgregor, "The Rights to the Land May Be Transferred"; Niemi-Bohun, "Colonial Categories"; Adese, "'R' Is for Métis"; Niemi-Bohun, "Contesting the Colonial Order on the Canadian Prairies"; Macdougall and St-Onge, "Métis in the Borderlands"; Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, "RCMR Scrip Booklet."

"displacement, dispossession, and migration"[80] caused by the failure of scrip, and because webs of Métis kinship are based on relationships rather than colonial boundaries and reserves, concepts of Métis community differ greatly from the concepts of community as defined by First Nations and Inuit.[81] Despite this, current frameworks for repatriation rely upon classifications of community embedded in colonial understandings of First Nations bands and specific bordered territories. Therefore, current interpretations of community in repatriation frameworks do not align with Métis understandings of community, kinship, and homeland.[82] This misalignment of understandings of community and land-base or territory perpetuates Métis marginalization in the development of repatriation policies.

Despite their continued marginalization, Métis remain dedicated to fighting for the recognition of their rights. Through petitions and resistance movements, Métis have pushed against colonial powers and the Canadian state to preserve their way of life.[83] For Saunders and Dubois, "the Métis have long viewed political organization as a way to protect their interests and identity as well as a means to exercise their rights and freedoms."[84] Indeed, many historians have highlighted the ways in which Métis have organized politically to exercise their rights.[85] Despite this, Métis rights and the ability to exercise those rights have been severely undermined by the Canadian state. And while scholars have focused on Métis control over Métis resources such as hunting, harvesting, and fishing, there has been little focus on Métis control over Métis material

[80] Kermoal, "Métis Women," 115.

[81] For a discussion on Métis community, see St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba*; Macdougall, "Wahkootowin"; Adese, "'R' Is for Métis"; Macdougall and St-Onge, "Rooted in Mobility"; Andersen, *"Metis"*; Macdougall and St-Onge, "'Kinscapes'"; Gaudry, "Communing with the Dead."

[82] Macdougall and St-Onge, "Métis in the Borderlands."

[83] Saunders and Dubois, *Métis Politics*, 35–36.

[84] Saunders and Dubois, 35.

[85] Anderson, *The First Métis: A New Nation*; Giraud, *The Metis in the Canadian West*; Kermoal, "Des Femmes Métisses"; Dickason, "Métis"; Andersen, *"Metis"*; Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk"; Devine, "J.Z. LaRocque."

culture.[86] Although there is a recognition from Métis about the intrinsic value of their material culture to the histories, present realities, and futurities of Métis,[87] few researchers have focused on repatriation for Métis, and little has been written on the desires of Métis to access their material culture in museum collections.[88] Chartier, one of the few to address Métis material culture repatriation, says that the repatriation of Métis cultural property is of paramount importance because Métis identity is often misunderstood, conflated with "mixed," and, until recently, was denied by many because of the "abject poverty" that has historically faced many Métis.[89] For Racette and Adese, Métis material culture repatriation has been impeded by the mislabelling of Métis material culture and the inability for museums to see beyond First Nations understandings of community and territory.[90] The intention of the present study is to provide a Métis-specific approach to repatriation, including the exercise of care and control over their material culture.

Repatriation of Indigenous Material Culture in Canada

As scholars and legislators continue the debate over the need for legislative support for repatriation, and as Métis continue to fight for recognition of their rights as an Indigenous rights-bearing people in Canada, museums and Indigenous communities have been working together to address the needs and desires of Indigenous communities to further repatriation. Indeed, even before the recommendations outlined in TFR in 1992 and RCAP in 1996, Indigenous communities and museums have been engaging in case-by-case repatriation negotiations by building and rebuilding relationships. These relationships have resulted in the repatriation of

[86] Racette, "Confessions and Reflections."
[87] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail"; Adese, Todd, and Stevenson, "Mediating Métis Identity."
[88] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[89] Chartier, "President Chartier Calls for Repatriation."
[90] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail"; Adese, Todd, and Stevenson, "Mediating Métis Identity."

material culture to First Nations and Inuit across Canada.[91] Two early examples of repatriation occurred in the early 1970s with Blackfoot in Alberta and Kwakwaka'wakw in British Columbia.

In 1972, four Iitskinaiksi bundles were "brought home"[92] to Aako'ka'tssin[93] encampment from the Provincial Museum of Alberta.[94] At that time, Frank Weasel Head became the keeper of one of the bundles.[95] Blackfoot keepers returned the bundles to the RAM that fall after the conclusion of their summer ceremonies.[96] The following year, the RAM denied the requests of Blackfoot to use the ceremonial bundles.[97] After the involvement of third-party mediators and the attendance of RAM curators at Blackfoot summer ceremonies, the museum once again loaned the bundles to Blackfoot and offered to sell the bundles to the Blackfoot; however, museum officials had not considered that the sale constituted a serious breach in protocol.[98] The Blackfoot retained the bundles to avoid future disputes.[99] Weasel Head applauds the decision to keep the bundles because they benefited the community in performing their role at summer ceremonies; however, it took over two decades for the RAM to repair their relationship with Blackfoot.[100]

Similarly, the Kwakwaka'wakw people have worked toward the repatriation of objects. The Kwakwaka'wakw people are represented by a number of nations in northwestern British Columbia who practise potlatch.[101] In 1884, in an effort to speed assimilation of First Nations in

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[91] See, for example, Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*.

[92] Frank Weasel Head uses the term "brought home" to articulate the view that the bundles are relatives of Blackfoot people. See Weasel Head, "Repatriation Experiences of the Kainai."

[93] Aako'ka'tssin encampment is located on Blackfoot Territory in southern Alberta.

[94] Weasel Head, "Repatriation Experiences of the Kainai," 151, 157.

[95] Weasel Head, 151, 157.

[96] Weasel Head, 157.

[97] Weasel Head, 151–52.

[98] Weasel Head, 157.

[99] Weasel Head, 158–59.

[100] Weasel Head, 159.

[101] For a discussion of potlach, see Webster, "The Potlatch Collection Repatriation Part III"; Gadacz, "Potlatch"; Bell, Raven, and McCuaig, "Recovering from Colonization"; Gladstone-Davies, "Why Go There?"; U'mista Cultural Centre, "The History of the Potlatch Collection."

western British Columbia, the Indian Act was amended to prohibit potlatch ceremonies. As a result, many of these confiscated items were sent to the Canadian Museum of History, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the personal collection of Duncan Campbell Scott (the head of the federal Department of Indian Affairs), as well as sold to the National Museum of the American Indian.[102] In the 1950s and '60s, sincere efforts were made to repatriate the objects that had been confiscated from communities, and in the early 1970s, the Canadian Museum of History[103] agreed to the return of some potlatch materials if they would be properly housed and cared for in a museum.[104] Indeed, the U'mista Cultural Society (a non-profit society created by Kwakwaka'wakw peoples) constructed two museums with assistance from the National Museums Assistance Program, one in Alert Bay and the other in Cape Mudge, and living descendants of the material culture decided where their family's material culture should be held.[105] In 1988, the Royal Ontario Museum repatriated its portion of the collection, and through processes of negotiation and relationship building and aided by legislation governing the National Museum of the American Indian,[106] nine items were repatriated in 1994, and another sixteen in 2000. Although many pieces have made their way home, "there are an undetermined number of objects whose whereabouts are unknown."[107] According to the U'mista Cultural Society, efforts to repatriate these items will continue as they are located.[108]

[102] Also known as the Heye Foundation in New York.
[103] Then known as the National Museum of Man.
[104] U'mista Cultural Centre, "The History of the Potlatch Collection."
[105] U'mista Cultural Centre.
[106] Part of the Smithsonian Institute of Museums in Washington. DC.
[107] U'mista Cultural Centre, "The History of the Potlatch Collection."
[108] U'mista Cultural Centre.

Since the early repatriation efforts of the Blackfoot and the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples, several Indigenous peoples in Canada have advanced repatriation.[109] Not all efforts at repatriation have proceeded smoothly; one thinks, for example, of the undocumented repatriation of "Naamiwan's Drum" and related artifacts to a community with no connection to them.[110] However, scholars and community members have published literature on the success of repatriation and the effect of returning care and control of material culture back to communities. In this vein, some museums are taking the initiative to collaborate with those Indigenous communities whose material culture they hold to advance repatriation and provide guidance to the repatriation process. For example, the recent *Indigenous Repatriation Handbook*, published by the Royal BC Museum and the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay, outlines a step-by-step process for communities to engage in repatriation.[111] The handbook highlights the need for nation-specific repatriation frameworks that consider the knowledges and protocols specific to the peoples who want to further repatriation.[112] In supporting museums' efforts to decolonize their institutions, the handbook identifies how current policies, including the classification of

[109] Fenton, "Return of Eleven Wampum Belts"; Webster, "From Colonization to Repatriation"; gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay, "Cultural Perpetuation"; Webster, "The Potlatch Collection Repatriation Part III"; Tooker, "A Note on the Return"; Gough, "Repatriation as a Reflection of Stó:Lô"; Bell, Raven, and McCuaig, "Recovering from Colonization"; Hennessy, "Repatriation, Digitial Technology, and Culture"; Krmpotich and Peers, *This Is Our Life*; Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*; Matthews, *Naamiwan's Drum*; Peers and Brown, *Visiting with the Ancestors*.

[110] Tooker, "A Note on the Return"; Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*; Matthews, *Naamiwan's Drum*. In the winter of 1970-1, 240 artifacts were purchased from individuals in Pauingassi and were brought back to the University where they were housed in the Northern Ojibwa Collection (Matthews, *Naamiwan's Drum*). In 1995, Omishoosh, the great-grandson of the creator of a water drum housed in the collection, stated that the artifacts should not return home to Pauingassi because there was no one who could look after them and he would rather the artifacts stay at the museum where they can be used to teach Anishinaabe youth and educate others about Anishinaabe culture (Matthews). Unbeknownst to Omishoosh and the community at Pauingassi several the sacred artifacts were repatriated to the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge in Wisconsin (Matthews). No one associated with the Lodge held any familial or community connection to the collection and the University could not explain how the artifacts ended up being repatriated to Wisconsin (Matthews, 100-1). After years of requests for the return of the artifacts, the University of Manitoba announced that several artifacts had "walked back" to the university and were transferred to the Manitoba Museum at the request of Omishoosh's descendants (Matthews, 250). As of 2016, twenty one artifacts remain missing, despite Matthew's accounts of seeing the artifacts in the home of the chief of the Three Fires Medewiwin Lodge (Matthews, 152, 247). See *Naamiwan's Drum*.

[111] Collison et al., *Indigenous Repatriation Handbook*.

[112] Collison et al., 11–13.

objects, reinforce a colonial notion of museum collections, and it provides mechanisms for museums to develop frameworks that advance relationship building and reconciliation with the nations whose material culture they hold.[113] While the majority of repatriation literature focuses on facilitating First Nations repatriation, and there is a gap in the literature regarding Métis-specific repatriation, Métis have been successful in furthering repatriation of their material culture.

Métis material culture repatriation has returned Métis material culture from Scotland to the RAM, and from individuals and institutions to Métis-run organizations. In 2006, forty three First Nations and Métis pieces were uncovered in the collection of James Carnegie, the Ninth Earl of Southesk, in Scotland.[114] Carnegie had travelled throughout the Northwest and purchased and commissioned the creation of many pieces of material culture.[115] When Senator Thelma Chalifoux heard that the objects were being placed for auction at Sotheby's, she sought the assistance of the RAM and grants from the government of Canada to purchase thirty three of the objects. The remaining ten objects were purchased by anonymous private collectors.[116] The Southesk Collection was returned home from Scotland and is now housed in the collection of the RAM.[117] In January 2017, the RCMP and the Manitoba Métis Federation signed an agreement under which a crucifix, book of poetry, and hunting knife belonging to Louis Riel would be repatriated, as soon as a Métis heritage centre is constructed and opened in Winnipeg.[118] In 2019, several pieces of Métis material culture were repatriated to Cumberland House, Saskatchewan from Kelowna, BC. The items were believed to have been gifted to a nurse while she was

[113] Collison et al., 61–66.
[114] Berry, "Recovered Identities," 29.
[115] Berry, 29.
[116] Berry, 30.
[117] Berry, 30.
[118] The Manitoba Métis Federation recently bought the Bank of Montreal (BMO) building in downtown Winnipeg (at the corner of Portage and Main) and will be converted it into a Métis heritage centre.

stationed at Cumberland House nearly 80 years earlier; they now reside in the Kwegich Historical Society Museum in Cumberland House.[119] Those involved in the repatriation commented that they hope more individuals will reach out to repatriate objects to their communities of origin rather than keep or sell them. Cumberland House curator Laura Chaboyer said, "We're connecting with our history. We're connecting with our ancestors and we have tangible items to showcase to our youth … Hopefully, they will take that and be proud of their history, be proud of their people, and stand up stronger."[120] Métis author, professor, and poet Gregory Scofield has committed his free time to locating Métis material culture through antique dealers and online auctions. Scofield considers himself the temporary caregiver to the objects, and he welcomes each object home with a smudge, honouring the generations of ancestors who have cared for that object.[121] Although Scofield considers these objects kin and part of his identity, he hopes that one day the objects can be housed in a Métis cultural space to ensure the continuity of intergenerational knowledges. To Scofield, bringing Métis material culture home is an act of "resistance," "repatriation," and "reconciliation."[122] The reconnection to material culture and Métis-specific interpretation at the Cumberland House Museum supports the rights of Métis to further their self-determination and sovereignty through the exercise of care and control over their material culture.

This chapter has provided the context of this research project, and presented an overview of the political history of repatriation in Canada, the marginalization of Métis from government policy creation, and the efforts of Indigenous peoples to see the repatriation of their material culture fulfilled. If repatriation is to be legislated, nation-specific legal orders must be

[119] ahnationtalk, "MN-S"; Modjeski, "Artifacts Returned to Sask."
[120] ahnationtalk.
[121] Rice, "Métis Poet Searches."
[122] Scofield, "Our Grandmothers' Hands."

incorporated—not just for First Nations but for Métis and Inuit as well. Further, Métis rights to self-determination must be recognized, and policies must be amended to include Métis ways of knowing. In recognizing Métis rights, there must also be a recognition of Métis as a distinct people, and museum policies must be amended to recover object narratives of Métis material culture and incorporate Métis-specific knowledges of land and community. In the next chapter, I will examine more closely the literature on Indigenous repatriation, the decolonization of museum spaces, and the relationships between Indigenous peoples and their material culture, and identify the gaps in the literature on Métis repatriation of material culture.

Chapter 3
Decolonizing Museum Spaces and Material Culture Relationality: A Review of Current Literature

In Chapter 2, I provided an overview of the politics and history of repatriation in Canada and discussed how material culture repatriation has been facilitated both through legislation and through collaboration. Chapter 2 also highlighted the historical and continual marginalization of Métis in Canada and the efforts that Métis organizations have made to advance their rights. The politics and history of repatriation, and the calls for Métis repatriation from scholars such as Chartier and Racette discussed in the previous chapter, fail to address how Métis would advance the repatriation of their material culture. Indeed, while an extensive body of literature has emerged regarding the repatriation of material culture worldwide,[1] and scholars have made significant contributions to the arguments both for and against repatriation, there is currently a gap in the literature on the implementation of repatriation for Métis material culture. As discussed in Chapter 2, this gap is likely the result of several converging factors, and the aim of this study is to fill a portion of that gap. To better situate this study in the literature and to highlight its contribution to scholarship, I now turn to the current literature regarding repatriation, the decolonization of museum spaces, and the entanglements of Métis and their material culture. This literature review examines repatriation and discusses the need for

[1] Fenton, "Return of Eleven Wampum Belts"; Simpson, "Claims of Indigenous Peoples"; Nafziger, "The New Fiduciary Duty"; Wright, "Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in Australia Part II"; Mead, "The Mataatua Declaration"; gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay, "Cultural Perpetuation"; Nicks, "The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples Part III"; Webster, "The Potlatch Collection Repatriation Part III"; Tooker, "A Note on the Return"; Knox, "They've Lost Their Marbles"; Curtis, "Universal Museums"; Merryman, *Imperialism, Arts and Restitution*; Gabriel and Dahl, *Utimut*; Herewini, "The Museum of New Zealand"; Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?*; Hollowell and Nicholas, "Using Ethnographic Methods"; Thorleifsen, "The Repatriation of Greenland's Cultural Heritage"; Bruchac, "LOST AND FOUND"; Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity?*; Curtis, "Repatriation from Scottish Museums"; Bruchac, "Revisiting Pocumtuck History"; Krmpotich, "Repatriation and the Generation of Material Culture"; Phillips, *Museum Pieces*; Yupsanis, "Cultural Property Aspects in International Law"; Keeler, "Indigenous International Repatriation"; Krmpotich and Peers, *This Is Our Life*; Titla and Thruston, "The Apache and NAGPRA Repatriation Symposium"; Robertson, "Extinction Is the Dream of Modern Powers"; Cuno, "Culture War"; Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*; Jenkins, *Keeping Their Marbles*.

relationship building and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges to further the decolonization of museum spaces. This literature review also explores the relationships that connect Métis people to their material culture and the importance of material culture to Métis identity. Through this review, I identify the gaps in the current literature and demonstrate how the current literature has informed my research problem and research questions.

Repatriation

As noted earlier in this thesis, a significant body of literature on repatriation has emerged since the 1980s. The focus of repatriation literature ranges from the politics and legalities of repatriation (discussed in Chapter 2), to the Indigenous right to repatriation. According to Conaty, "repatriation represents an assertion of the human right to freedom of religious expression and cultural identity."[2] For others, such as Robertson, the Indigenous right to repatriation furthers self-determination and the exercise of sovereignty.[3] Repatriation not only furthers sovereignty, it also subverts assimilative pressures of white settler states and creates space for Indigenous people to maintain their unique culture and identity,[4] and thus "is a vital component in the creation of an equitable, diverse, and respectful society."[5] For Métis scholars, self-determination involves the ability to have access to histories and present realities and to visualize the futurities of Métis. Accordingly, they argue that material culture is of vital importance to Métis identities and to self-determination.[6] And, according to Henderson, it is no longer a matter of whether, but when, self-determination negotiations begin.[7] Once they do, the

[2] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 27.
[3] Robertson, "Extinction Is the Dream of Modern Powers."
[4] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*, 27.
[5] Janes, "Prologue," 10.
[6] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections"; Racette, "What Stories Do These Garments Tell?"; Adese, "Spirit Gifting"; Adese, Todd, and Stevenson, "Mediating Métis Identity"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[7] Henderson, "The Art of Braiding," 19.

exercise of self-determination will decolonize existing structures and foster justice for Indigenous people.[8] Despite overwhelming support among some Indigenous peoples for furthering repatriation, some continue to push against repatriation, and some remain critical of what it represents and how it is carried out.

Acknowledging that current legal trends are pushing toward a framework that would allow for the return of cultural property internationally, Cuno and El-Gendi perceive repatriation as flawed because repatriation legislation can only return artifacts to the nation of its origin. Thus, the repatriation process occurs within the boundaries of the laws of the nation-state, repatriation perpetuates narratives of sectarianism and resurgent nationalism.[9] Indeed, many Indigenous scholars agree with Cuno and El-Gendi's arguments;[10] however, rather than suggesting reform of repatriation legislation, including the incorporation of Indigenous legal orders, or critiquing the state's assumption of its right to consider material culture as property, Cuno uses the flaws of repatriation legislation to argue for the retention of material culture collections.[11] Encyclopedic collections, explains Cuno, present material culture from one time and place next to material culture from a different time and place, and as a result impose a cosmopolitan perspective and create a centralized collection for research.[12]

Jenkins is also critical of repatriation legislation; however, she pushes beyond arguments of the nation-state and suggests that the complex histories of material culture, especially for those objects that have gained different meanings through the various transactions by which ownership changes over time, mean that material culture cannot exclusively represent current

[8] Henderson, 19.
[9] Cuno, "Culture War," 119–20.
[10] El-Gendi, "Illusory Borders," 497; Kramer, "Figurative Repatriation."
[11] Cuno, "Culture War," 119.
[12] Cuno, 120.

identities and communities.[13] For Jenkins, object narratives, first discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, do not begin and end with the creators of the object. Instead, she argues that object narratives include the placement of the object in museum collections as well as the interpretations given to it through museum curation. As a result, this "layered history" of material culture prevents the object from being defied by fixed concepts of time and place; because the whole narrative of the object must be considered, the object cannot be subject to repatriation.[14] According to Jenkins, once the generation who produced the material culture has passed, the original meaning and intent of the object pass with them.[15] Indeed, argues Jenkins, it is only through the collection and retention of material culture in museums that objects become valuable in cultural memory.[16] In this view, material culture becomes irrelevant to subsequent generations, and it is only through the perpetuation of collection and retention policies that material culture continues to create meaning.

The ideas presented by Jenkins are problematic and stand in direct opposition to the ways in which Indigenous people regard their material culture. As Knowles contends, the complex journey of objects as they change hands and occupy space in different territories does not only apply to the new meanings established by museums.[17] She argues that when objects in collections are accessed by the nations who created them, new meanings are ascribed to the objects by the nations, and museums cannot deny these changing meanings as well.[18] It is only when discussions about the meaning of material culture occur that the true meaning and the full journey of objects can be understood. Indeed, failing to recognize the meaning of material

[13] Jenkins, *Keeping Their Marbles*, 207.
[14] Jenkins, 214.
[15] Jenkins, 217.
[16] Jenkins, 217.
[17] Knowles, "Object Journeys," 37.
[18] Knowles, 38.

culture to Indigenous people denies their rights and privileges western knowledge over Indigenous knowledge. As a result, Jenkins's arguments against repatriation fail because she does not recognize the place of Indigenous knowledges in museums.

Recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledges in museums, Doxtater and gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay are critical of repatriation and echo El-Gendi's argument that repatriation is inherently flawed because it is based upon western concepts of property and ownership. According to Doxtater and gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay, current policies and legislative frameworks do not consider Indigenous definitions of property and ownership and privilege western knowledge over Indigenous knowledge.[19] If the goal is the furtherance of self-determination for Indigenous peoples through the repatriation of their own material culture, they echo the views of Chartier, Asch, Bell, and Isaac, as discussed in Chapter 2, that repatriation must be framed in ways congruent with a nation's ways of knowing.[20] Doxtater and gii-dahl-suud-sliiaay argue that simply returning objects denies the potential of material culture to further self-determination because material culture "come[s] with complex histories, right, and protocols," and self-determination would be ignored if repatriation is framed within western concepts.[21] Kramer is supportive of Doxtater and gii-dah-suud-sliiaay's arguments; she states that this required framework taints repatriation and that self-determination is denied by the refusal to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into western ones.[22] Therefore, Kramer argues that repatriation should be viewed "as the act of claiming metaphorical territory via control of the object."[23] This metaphorical territory, Kramer states, is about making a statement of who is in control of

[19] Doxtater and gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay, in Kramer, *Switchbacks*, 89.
[20] Doxtater and gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay, in Kramer, 89.
[21] Kramer, 89–90.
[22] Kramer, "Figurative Repatriation," 161.
[23] Kramer, 163.

material culture through the use of Indigenous terminology and concepts in museum interpretation.[24] Exercising control of the object through its interpretation within museum spaces links Indigenous people to their material culture in a visible and public way.[25] For Todd, culture is not about ownership as perceived from a western perspective of ownership; rather, culture is bound to a people through histories, knowledge, and kinship.[26] Because of the differences in theories of ownership, Todd asserts that colonial rule subverts the authority of Indigenous groups to express their cultures in their own way.[27] It is for this reason that Indigenous people must push back against colonial paradigms and resist dominant interpretations of their culture.[28]

Decolonizing Museum Spaces

To move toward empowering Métis with agency over their own material culture, museums must decolonize their policies and their collections. They need to shift their understanding of Métis culture and incorporate Métis-specific ways of knowing and methodologies into their collection and retention policies. If this is achieved, Métis communities may be able to re-engage with items central to their identity and regain their dispossessed histories.

Acknowledging the flaws inherent in the current framing of repatriation, scholars, Indigenous individuals, and communities have begun discussing ways of decolonizing museum spaces. Indeed, many scholars are now focusing on relationship building between Indigenous communities and museums. This is causing a shift in the view of who is responsible for knowledge production and the care and control of material culture within a museum. Ronan

[24] Kramer, 163.
[25] Kramer, 163.
[26] Todd, "Notes on Appropriation."
[27] Todd.
[28] Todd.

suggests that Indigenous empowerment and new museology methodology should work in tandem to decolonize museum spaces.[29] Racette, Rosoff, Conaty, and Ames suggest that museums need to incorporate Indigenous research methodologies and theories into their policies and practices, and they call upon curators to learn about the Indigenous communities that their collections come from.[30] If this is done, exchanges of knowledge between Indigenous communities and museum professionals can occur and shared or co-curatorial practice can begin.[31] Racette argues that it is only through relationships that material culture in institutions can be connected to the people who created it.[32] Conaty echoes this sentiment and states that it was only through the building of relationships that the Glenbow Museum was able to fully understand how the institution needed to decolonize its policies regarding the collection and retention of material culture.[33]

The implementation of Indigenous methodologies in the presentation, conservation, and interpretation of material culture is discussed by Hollowell and Nicholas, who perceive Indigenous methodologies as the only way to reveal the "complex web of obligations and responsibilities" and relationships that peoples share with their material culture.[34] It is true that relationships between humans and objects are complicated to understand; however, Heckman argues that these relationships do exist, both in the material realm and in the discourse surrounding these relationships.[35] According to Heckman, recognition that these relationships exist will allow for the full appreciation and recognition of the entanglements of humans and

[29] Ronan, "Native Empowerment."
[30] Brown and Peers, *Museums and Source Communities*.
[31] Macdougall and Carlson, "West Side Stories."
[32] Racette, "Confessions and Reflections."
[33] Conaty, *We Are Coming Home*.
[34] Hollowell and Nicholas, "Using Ethnographic Methods," 154.
[35] Hollowell and Nicholas, 93.

more-than-humans (including material culture).[36] Ignorance of the entanglements of people and their material culture diminishes Indigenous ways of knowing and the webs of relations, or "kinscapes,"[37] encompassed in those relationships. Lonetree adds that sovereignty is expressed through a nation's ability to present its own history, culture, and futurities.[38] Accordingly, the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies into museum policies and practices can create space for Indigenous communities to express their sovereignty through their material culture, even if that culture continues to be housed in museum collections.

Indeed, some Indigenous communities who have been able to exercise sovereignty over their own material culture have considered whether or not physical repatriation is the ultimate desire, and a small but growing body of literature is emerging regarding alternatives to physical repatriation.[39] Webster observes that while some individuals have argued for physical repatriation, others were very proud of the fact that museums had taken such great care of their objects and that people around the world were able to see their culture.[40] However, it is only through the building of strong relationships that these conversations are able to take place. And, as Webster highlights, Indigenous communities must continue to have access to their collections while ensuring that the objects are protected by museums for future generations.[41] Clifford explains that often Indigenous groups desire an ongoing relationship with their material culture—not through physical possession but through an ongoing connection.[42] Therefore, physical repatriation need not be the only option. Through Kramer's framework of "figurative

[36] Hollowell and Nicholas, 93.
[37] Macdougall and St-Onge, "'Kinscapes.'"
[38] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 127.
[39] Resta et al., "Digital Repatriation"; Srinivasan et al., "Diverse Knowledges"; Kramer, "Figurative Repatriation."
[40] Webster, "From Colonization to Repatriation," 52.
[41] Webster, 54.
[42] Clifford, *Routes*, 212.

repatriation," a "claim of ownership is established by means of feeling connected, taking responsibility for, and controlling the uses of a cultural object without legally owning it."[43] Through this framework, a community can metaphorically repatriate an object even though they remain physically dispossessed of it.[44] Krmpotich and Peers discuss collaborative research practices co-created with Haida. They argue that if Indigenous knowledges are "recentred," the tensions that exist between Indigenous groups and museums can be refigured as a community partnership that supports and sustains research.[45] Krmpotich and Peers claim that when conversations are shifted away from physical repatriation, long-term relationships based upon reciprocity and shared goals can be formed.

The shift in conversation from repatriation to ongoing connection has raised interesting arguments about what role the continued presence of Indigenous material culture plays in museums. Some scholars argue that by occupying space in museums, Indigenous material culture is claiming territory, thereby "re-presencing"[46] Indigenous culture, identity, and meaning on the lands museums occupy.[47] If objects occupy territory in museums, they can serve as "contact zones,"[48] meeting places for multiple cultures to come together. For Kramer treating museums as contact zones allows museums to make space for Indigenous peoples to exercise self-determination through the interpretation and presentation of their material culture and, at the same time, grants museums the possibility of serving as spaces to foster intercultural relationships.[49] Although some fear that the presentation of Indigenous material serves to

[43] Kramer, *Switchbacks*, 88.
[44] Kramer, 88.
[45] Krmpotich and Peers, *This Is Our Life*, 423.
[46] Simpson and Strong, *How to Steal a Canoe*.
[47] Winter, "New Futures for the Past"; Kramer, "Figurative Repatriation"; Ronan, "Native Empowerment."
[48] Clifford, *Routes*, 191–92. See also Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Brown and Peers, *Museums and Source Communities*; Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued*.
[49] Kramer, *Switchbacks*, 97.

devalue it, both Clifford and Myers assert that the opposite is true. They argue that when self-determination is exercised over material culture, Indigenous communities can control the ways in which their material culture is received and place themselves in a position "worthy of international attention and respect."[50] Racette goes even further by stating that when material culture occupies the exhibition space of museums, it acts as gesture of reconciliation because it acknowledges the beauty, significance, and creative achievements of the people who created them and allows viewers to interact and reconnect with them.[51]

For the purposes of this research, it is important to consider alternatives to repatriation and how to build relationships that enable continued access and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and methodologies into museum policies. Indeed, while conversations regarding alternatives to repatriation have been occurring for quite some time, limited literature has been published. As noted in Chapter 2 and reiterated through the work of Doxtater and gii-dahl-guud-sliiaay earlier in this chapter, scholars have pointed out that each nation must decide its own path toward repatriation. Currently, there is a gap in the literature on Métis desires to advance repatriation and what a Métis-specific framework for repatriation would look like. This study intends to fill a portion of that gap. To better understand how this study intends to fill the gap with specific regard to Métis repatriation, I now turn my attention to the literature that supports the entanglement of Métis and their material culture and the place that material culture holds in Métis kinscapes and in the perpetuation of intergenerational knowledges.

[50] Myers, "Culture-Making"; Kramer, *Switchbacks*, 101.
[51] Racette, "What Stories Do These Garments Tell?"

Métis Material Culture

As early as 1840, Métis identity was outwardly portrayed by intricate embroidery and beading depicting flower patterns,[52] and Métis were known as the "Flower Beadwork People."[53] Material culture contains knowledge of the land, of plants and medicines, and of Métis identity.[54] Further, the body is a "marker against territorial appropriation, Indigenous futurities and contestations of colonial politics."[55] The cultural transmission of Métis-specific ways of knowing continues to be portrayed through the work of skilful artisans. Racette, Kermoal, and Todd acknowledge the relationships that Métis women have with material culture and the familial ties built through their creation.[56] Material culture contains knowledge of the land, of plants and medicines, and of Métis identity.[57] Further, the body is a "marker against territorial appropriation, Indigenous futurities and contestations of colonial politics"[58] For Métis, whose identity was worn on their clothes for everyone to see, material culture stands as a mark of Métis lands, Métis knowledges, and a connection between the past, present, and the future.[59] Material culture works to create resistance through the reclamation of histories and present realities.[60] The agency of Métis material culture is evidenced through the perpetuation of knowledge, the creation of new knowledges, and the dissemination of knowledge to new kin. The recognition of this agency is necessary to upset the ways in which material culture is classified within institutions. By continuing to require that material culture be sacred in order to be deemed

[52] Duncan, "The Metis and Production of Embroidery," 2.
[53] Thayer, "Some Examples of Red River Half-Breed Art."
[54] Kermoal, "Métis Women."
[55] Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles," 108.
[56] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Kermoal, "Métis Women"; Adese, Todd, and Stevenson, "Mediating Métis Identity"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[57] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Racette, "My Grandmothers Loved to Trade"; Kermoal, "Métis Women"; Adese, Todd, and Stevenson, "Mediating Métis Identity"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[58] Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles," 108.
[59] Goeman, 108.
[60] Racette, "Sewing Ourselves Together"; Kermoal, "Métis Women"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."

intrinsic to ways of knowing, Métis peoples will continue to be dispossessed of their material culture. The division between western and Indigenous ways of knowing cannot be bridged without recognition that material culture does not simply represent objects, but exists in relationship with Métis.

The ways in which Métis material culture continues to be held within institutions separate Métis peoples from their kin, culture, histories, and knowledge. As suggested in Chapter 2, current museum classification structures define material culture through concepts such as sacred and ceremonial and do not take into account the complex "existence of relations with other humans and more-than-human persons" that many Indigenous peoples have.[61] Scholars have been critical of these classifications because they disregard the reciprocal relationships that Indigenous peoples have with their material culture, and they privilege western knowledge over Indigenous knowledge.[62] For classifications to accommodate Indigenous way of knowing, institutions must understand the entanglement of Indigenous people and their material culture. There is a need to frame Métis material culture in a way that speaks to its agency and the relationships and knowledges it holds.[63] There is a need to push back against the imposed classifications and address the question: "Who, if not the people to whom the cultural property belongs to, can define it?"[64]

Métis scholars suggest that Métis should be responsible for the ways in which their material culture is defined. Todd's interpretation of cultural autonomy suggests ways in which Métis material culture can be defined. According to Todd, cultural autonomy is the right of an

[61] Shorter, "Spirituality," 435.
[62] Gervais, "Spiritual But Not Intellectual"; Povinelli, *Geontologies*; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[63] See Povinelli, *Geontologies*; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; TallBear, "Beyond the Life/Not Life Binary"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[64] Gervais, "Spiritual But Not Intellectual," 472.

individual and a people to cultural specificity.[65] It is the right to histories, stories, and the tangible and intangible representations of culture, and the right to have those presented in ways that are meaningful to the people and not dictated from outside influence.[66] For Welsh, these stories encompass a continuum of the past, present, and future of Métis people.[67] Through stories, Métis are connected to the land, kin, and a way of life. Further, Welsh argues that it is the women, the mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and aunts who perpetuate these narratives.[68] Welsh concludes that reconnecting with her ancestors and the narratives of her family places Métis women back into the colonial narratives that have dominated history and at the same time excluded them.[69] Indeed, acknowledging the embodiment of Métis narratives in material culture creates acts of "re-membering,"[70] and may allow for a regaining of cultural knowledges.[71] For Belcourt, Métis identity and ways of knowing are expressed through artwork.[72] She asks, "To what extent does art created by Métis visual artists in the Métis nation collectively lend itself to the 'telling' of the Métis people in contemporary terms?"[73] Through the use of both "traditional" Métis forms of art and contemporary forms of art, Métis artists are exploring what it means to be Métis while remembering that "'nothing is forgotten.' The knowledge of a people remains intact."[74] While a significant body of literature speaks to the importance of material culture to Métis knowledge, including its histories, present realities, and futurities, a significant gap exists with regard to regaining control over the narratives of Métis

[65] Todd, "Notes on Appropriation."
[66] Todd.
[67] Welsh, "Voices of the Grandmothers."
[68] Welsh.
[69] Welsh.
[70] Escalante, "State Violence, History, and Maya Literature in Guatemala," 215.
[71] Moreton-Robinson, "Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory"; Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*.
[72] Belcourt, "Purpose in Art," 144.
[73] Belcourt, 144.
[74] Belcourt, 145.

being portrayed in museums. Although as early as 1985 scholars were raising concern over the misclassification of Métis material culture in museums, these concerns have yet to be addressed. This research project intends to fill part of the gap in the literature and provide a greater understanding of the ways in which Métis desire to exercise their rights over the care and control of their material culture and how care and control feature in Métis-specific repatriation frameworks.

In this chapter I situated this study in the literature on the Indigenous right to repatriation and processes of decolonizing museum spaces. I also provided an overview of the literature relating to Métis material culture and its importance in maintaining kinscapes and intergenerational knowledge. In the next chapter, I continue situating this study by discussing the theories that have informed the creation and the carrying out of this research project. The theoretical framework described in the next chapter will situate the analytical discussion presented in Chapter 6, while the methodological considerations covered in the next chapter will outline the ways in which this research was completed.

Chapter 4
White Possession and *Keeoukaywin*: Methodologies to Further Métis Repatriation

The theoretical framework favoured for the accomplishment of this research project is based on Moreton-Robinson's theory of the white possessive. This theory exposes the colonial structures that seek to preserve Métis dispossession of material culture and highlights the need for Métis to be in good relation with their kin. The use of this theory as the theoretical framework of this study situates the knowledge produced by the research participants within Indigenous theoretical perspectives, treats research participants "as partners in the knowledge production effort,"[1] and provides a Métis lens from which to analyze the study results.

As discussed in Chapter 2, museums and collection institutions have perpetuated colonial ideologies of ownership and control through the classification of Indigenous peoples and institutional collection and retention policies. In Chapter 3, the discussion of the perpetuation of colonial control was expanded to include the ways in which Métis material culture is classified by museums. Moreton-Robinson argues that these colonial ideologies are enforced through racialized discourse and the characterization of race through white bodies. In her view, western culture functions "through the logic of possession."[2] She argues that Goldberg's conception of racialized discourse—"[c]lassification, order, value and hierarchy; differentiation and identity, discrimination and identification; exclusion, domination, subjection, and subjugation as well as entitlement and restriction"[3]—is based on possession of Indigenous bodies by whites. Moreton-Robinson states:

> Knowledge and power are produced in and through these concepts [as outlined by Goldberg] in relation to possession. You cannot dominate without seeking to possess the dominated. You cannot exclude unless you assume you already own. Classification therefore ascribes value and identification, which manifest as racial markers like blood quantum and skin color. Thus white possession is a discursive predisposition serving the conditions, practices, implications, and

[1] Daly, *Qualitative Methods*, 210.
[2] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, xxiv.
[3] Goldberg, in Moreton-Robinson, xxiv.

> racialized discourses that are embedded within and central to white first world patriarchal nation-states.[4]

To control is to classify, commodify, and possess those who do not fall into white settler narratives. Whiteness, Moreton-Robinson argues, operates through processes of racialization and reinforces white ownership and possession of Indigenous lands and people by placing whiteness "as the pinnacle of its own racial hierarchy."[5] For Moreton-Robinson, Indigenous sovereignty cannot exist while whiteness operates to possess Indigenous peoples, because Indigenous sovereignty removes the lands, power, institutions, and peoples that are currently possessed by the white state.[6] It is through the theories of white possession that Moreton-Robinson suggests that a critical analysis of history, law, and anthropology can reveal how white power is maintained and Indigenous sovereignty is denied.[7] Indeed, in utilizing this theoretical framework, I intend to analyze the ways in which white possession continues to dispossess Métis of their material culture. Theories of white possession can also be used to uncover the invisible ways that whiteness manifests itself in museums, including the ways in which white knowledge is accepted while Indigenous knowledge is denied. Moreton-Robinson's theoretical framework of white possession can provide the basis for a critical analysis of the ways in which museums continue to dispossess Métis of their rights to self-determination and sovereignty by shirking their responsibilities to engage in material culture repatriation discussions.

This theoretical framework will serve as a guide for analyzing the findings of this study, presented in the next chapter, and provide a framework from which to answer the study questions presented in Chapter 1 of this thesis. These questions are:

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[4] Moreton-Robinson, xxiv.
[5] Moreton-Robinson, xx.
[6] Moreton-Robinson, xx.
[7] Moreton-Robinson, xxii–xxiv.

- How have colonial practices regarding the collection and retention of material culture contributed to Métis dispossession?
- What is the importance of repatriation to Métis communities in Alberta?
- What does a Métis-specific framework for repatriation look like?

To find answers to these questions, I situate the methodologies of participatory action research and community-driven ethnography within a framework of "*keeoukaywin*: the visiting way."[8] This grounds the study in Indigenous research methodologies, which privilege Indigenous voices, focus on relationality, and drive social change. This research explores the desires of a sample community through in-depth data collection, which involves an extensive description of the methodological context and the methodologies that have shaped this study from its inception. First, I situate the methodologies for this study within the larger context of Indigenous methodologies and discuss what Gaudet refers to as "*keeoukaywin*: the visiting way." *Keeoukaywin* is a Métis-specific Indigenous research methodology grounded in relationality and reciprocity.[9] Second, I discuss the decision to utilize aspects of participatory action research and community-driven ethnography (CDE) within this study, discuss their place within Indigenous research methodologies, and examine how these methodologies are used to honour *keeoukaywin*. I also discuss how CDE serves as methodological framework for the substantial use of participants' voices to highlight the themes, issues, and desires brought forward through this study. Third, I discuss the design of this study, including the formal logistics required by the University of Alberta, the use of focus groups and one-on-one interviews, and the difficulties of doing research during a global pandemic. To conclude, I return to *keeoukaywin* and outline the requests that have been made of me by the research participants to disseminate this research in a

[8] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin."
[9] Gaudet.

good way and my commitment to honour the relationships that have been formed through this study. The goal of this thesis is to provide a foundation from which Métis in Alberta can further their right to self-determination through the exercise of care and control over their material culture.

A significant body of literature exists on the importance of decolonization in research practices involving Indigenous peoples. According to Smith, "decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practice."[10] Indigenous scholars have led the way in highlighting the importance of decolonized research methods and have called upon the academy to recognize its role in perpetuating the power struggles that are present in colonial institutions. Bartlett argues that the use of decolonial research methods that privilege Indigenous ways of knowing can upset the power that exists within settler institutions.[11] Smith argues that researchers upset the dominant power structures within institutions by honouring Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing through the use of decolonial methodologies.[12] Gaudet echoes Smith by stating that decolonial research methodologies "unsettle historical hierarchies of knowledge and inaccuracies about Indigenous peoples' ways of being, knowing, and doing."[13] As discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, repatriation requires a decolonial methodological approach because repatriation, by its nature, subverts the rights of the nation-state and seeks to restructure the power imbalance between settlers and Indigenous peoples.[14]

[10] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 20.
[11] Bartlett et al., "Aboriginal-Guided Decolonizing Research."
[12] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, chap. 11.
[13] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 47.
[14] El-Gendi, "Illusory Borders."

Scholars have highlighted the power inherent in the subjugation and objectification of Indigenous peoples by researchers and the research process. According to Gaudry, this is akin to the extraction of natural resources from Indigenous lands—researchers have mined Indigenous people of their knowledges and given nothing back in return.[15] This extractive process removes the "context, values, and on-the-ground struggles of the people who provide data to researchers," and does not require researchers to give anything back to the community.[16] Further, extractive research is research that remains inaccessible to the community. While the goal of academic research is to disseminate the knowledge produced through research studies, Indigenous peoples have largely been excluded from this dissemination process. They are not the intended audience of the research written about them and thus remain "the objects of research."[17] Smith argues that this is because extractive researchers ignore the responsibilities they have to the communities they work with.[18] When researchers centre the needs, desires, and knowledges of Indigenous communities and engage in respectful relationships with Indigenous people, extractive research practices can be avoided.[19]

This study sought to begin a dialogue to gain a greater understanding of Métis needs and goals to advance repatriation and honour the right to self-determination of Métis in Alberta through the exercise of care and control over their material culture. To achieve this, a Métis research methodology is required. Gaudet states that *keeoukaywin* is a visiting methodology that centres Métis ways of life and knowledges and focuses on being in good relation with one another.[20] The word *keeoukaywin* was gifted to Gaudet by a Métis knowledge keeper (elder),

[15] Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk," 245.
[16] Gaudry, 245.
[17] Gaudry, 245.
[18] Gaudry, 245.
[19] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk."
[20] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin."

Maria Campbell. It acknowledges the role that visiting plays in centring women's knowledge, fostering cultural continuity, reinforcing kinship relationships, and pushes against the colonial policies that have sought to dismantle Indigenous relationality.[21] Flaminio and Gaudet both demonstrate the need to apply visiting as an Indigenous methodology because "Métis visiting was active and embodied, meaning we lived and breathed visiting through our daily seasonal activities."[22] Gaudet argues that *keeoukaywin* "offers an Indigenous view of community-based participatory research methodology,"[23] because it upsets the "rigid and individualistic approaches to research whereby researchers attempt to predefine questions, processes, and the contributions of participants, without consideration of relevance, responsibility, or relational accountability."[24] Community-based participatory research, therefore, is well suited as a decolonial methodology to support this study.

Community-based participatory research originally developed in areas where colonial political structures had been dismantled in favour of independent nation-states.[25] In the wake of decolonization efforts, Indigenous communities began to push back on researchers who had been doing research *on* Indigenous peoples rather than *with* Indigenous peoples.[26] Participatory action research requires the full, equitable participation of the researcher and participants and reframes participants as co-researchers.[27] Further, in accordance with participatory action research, there must be "'shared ownership of studies, community-based analysis of social problems, … an

[21] Gaudet, 50–52.
[22] Flaminio, "Kinship Visiting"; Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 53.
[23] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 55.
[24] Gaudet, 58.
[25] Fletcher, "Community-Based Participatory Research."
[26] Fletcher.
[27] Bartlett et al., "Aboriginal-Guided Decolonizing Research"; Fletcher, "Community-Based Participatory Research"; Tuck, "Re-Visioning Action."

orientation toward community action,' and social change and transformation."[28] Participatory action research "recognizes the capacities of community experts of informing research design, decision making processes and effect meaningful change."[29] As well it "seeks to engage people in communities in all phases of research from the conceptualization of the research problem to the dissemination of the results."[30] It emphasizes the knowledge held by community members and acknowledges the significance of that knowledge,[31] and thus acknowledges different ways of knowing and the epistemological foundations of Indigenous peoples.[32] Finally it supports self-sufficiency[33] and sovereignty.[34]

According to Tuck, "sovereignty is a call for recognition and full realization of rights to social, cultural, and spiritual (tribal) identities and to our own envisioned political development. It is a call for respect for our integrity as whole, significant, contemporary civilizations with long histories … and even longer futures."[35] Sovereignty, argues Tuck, is not defined as a right or as a condition; instead, it is a way of knowing.[36] She further argues that respect is integral to this definition and that respect is shown to Indigenous peoples through "government non-interference."[37] Without acknowledging sovereignty, there would be no need to critique the institutional holding of Métis material culture, nor would there be any reason to suggest that self-determination would be furthered through control over one's material culture. Because I incorporate sovereignty into my research methodologies, Métis communities can guide the

[28] Kemmis and McTaggart, "Participatory Action Research," 568; Bartlett et al., "Aboriginal-Guided Decolonizing Research," 2376.
[29] Fletcher, "Community-Based Participatory Research," 31.
[30] Fletcher, 32.
[31] Fletcher, "Community-Based Participatory Research."
[32] Fletcher.
[33] Fletcher.
[34] Tuck, "Re-Visioning Action."
[35] Tuck, 56.
[36] Tuck, 56.
[37] Tuck, 56.

research questions as they progress through the research process with me. The knowledge they infuse into the process is based upon their lives, histories, and desires for the future, and has shaped the course of this study. Studies that utilize the methodology of participatory action research must strive to "make the research process useful for participants."[38] While community-based participatory action research provides a framework for utilizing Indigenous research methodologies, I have also explored community-driven ethnography (CDE) to acknowledge the Métis research participants' specific ways of knowing.

According to Hollowell and Nicholas, CDE combines community-based research approaches—which have their foundation in participatory action research—with ethnographic methods.[39] As Van Maanen puts it, "broadly conceived, ethnography is a storytelling institution."[40] Researchers who employ ethnographic methods rely upon research participants for their stories to support the research questions examined in a study and seek to provide an understanding of the cultural significance of an issue.[41] According to Curry et al.,

> Ethnography is a form of field research that seeks to learn the culture of a particular setting or environment. It often relies on participant observation through prolonged field work and may include other qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher becomes embedded in ongoing relationships with research participants for the purpose of observing and recording talk and behavior. In such cases, the researcher (as opposed to, for instance, surveys or questionnaires) is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The researcher seeks to place specific events into a broader, more meaningful context, with a focus on the culture and social interaction of the observed people or groups.[42]

In this description of ethnography, the focus is on the researcher. What can the researcher learn? What can the researcher gain from the relationships formed with research participants? How does the researcher interpret the information that is gathered? In this definition,

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[38] Bartlett et al., "Aboriginal-Guided Decolonizing Research."
[39] Hollowell and Nicholas, "Using Ethnographic Methods."
[40] Van Maanen, *Representation in Ethnography*, 3.
[41] Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography Principles*.
[42] Curry, Nembhard, and Bradley, "Qualitative and Mixed Methods."

ethnography is an inherently colonial concept. It conjures images of an anthropologist watching from the sidelines, observing subjects, and then making conclusions about their values and beliefs on the basis of the anthropologist's analysis and interpretations. Yet scholars acknowledge the validity of ethnography in serving the specific needs and desires of a cultural community, but only when researchers critically engage with ethnography and the process is actively decolonized.[43]

Indeed, scholars have suggested that not all ethnographic methods need to be abandoned. Todd suggests that decolonial approaches to ethnography exist and that they can be practised by "incorporat[ing] and acknowledg[ing] the critical scholarship of Indigenous thinkers whose work and labour informs many current trends in Euro-Western scholarship."[44] Hollowell and Nicholas indicate that when an ethnographic method is used, the researcher can facilitate and lead interviews and discussions by providing space for research participants to speak for themselves and articulate their ways of knowing in their own words.[45] This, they argue, allows for a more meaningful exploration of the ways in which oral histories are linked to material culture.[46] Further, according to Hollowell and Nicholas, CDE can address issues of sovereignty because "ethnography is employed to ground heritage management in customary principles and practices defined by [Indigenous] communities."[47] When the power structures inherent in traditional ethnographic methods are critically examined and decolonized through "collaboration, centring self-determination, engaging in researcher self-reflexivity, changing power dynamics, and

[43] Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take"; Hollowell and Nicholas, "Using Ethnographic Methods"; Ninomiya, Hurley, and Penashue, "A Decolonizing Method of Inquiry."
[44] Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take," 4.
[45] Hollowell and Nicholas, "Using Ethnographic Methods."
[46] Hollowell and Nicholas.
[47] Hollowell and Nicholas, 153.

privileging community knowledge,"[48] ethnography can be used to upset colonial power structures that have continued to be responsible for dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their material culture. Further, CDE aligns with the principles of *keeoukaywin*: it demands researcher self-reflexivity and a commitment to reciprocity, and it 'honors the cultural value of relationship, it emphasizes people's ability to shape and change their own destiny, and it is respectful.'"[49]

For the purposes of this research, CDE has provided insight into the ways in which the research participants think about their connection to material culture, how material culture is important to their sovereignty, and how material culture is inextricably linked to the past, present, and future. Further, CDE has provided a greater understanding of the relationships between Métis people and their material culture and how misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Métis material culture in museums are detrimental to their sovereignty. CDE honours the knowledges held by the research participants at the centre of this research. Because of that, their voices are generously featured throughout the findings of this thesis.

The participants chosen by a researcher play an important role in the knowledges produced and reproduced through the research. Scholarly writing requires that existing knowledges be utilized through the use of citations to "define a specific context of knowledge," and commands that new knowledge be embedded within current knowledges to establish a knowledge's uniqueness, importance, and relevance.[50] Hyland argues that academic disciplines serve either "to acknowledge or suppress the role of human agency in constructing knowledge … [and] what constitutes valid claims and admissible reasoning."[51] The decisions that researchers

[48] Ninomiya, Hurley, and Penashue, "A Decolonizing Method of Inquiry," 220. See also Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; De Leeuw, Cameron, and Greenwood, "Participatory and Community-Based Research"; Smylie et al., "Understanding the Role."

[49] Kovach, "Emerging from the Margins," 30; Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 56.

[50] Hyland, "Academic Attribution," 343.

[51] Hyland, 335.

make regarding which subjects to include in or exclude from their academic writing inform the researchers' view of who is valid and admissible in the production of knowledge. According to Ahmed, the pressure to cite white male scholars is prevalent in the academy,[52] and as a result white male voices are validated in the production of knowledge. As Todd argues, "when we cite European thinkers who discuss the 'more-than-human' but do not discuss their Indigenous contemporaries who are writing on the exact same topics, we perpetuate the white supremacy of the academy."[53] These are the voices that are acknowledged by the academy in the production and reproduction of knowledge, while the voices of Indigenous people, women, and other minorities are suppressed.

The decisions that researchers make regarding whom to validate or suppress in the results of their studies do not end with the inclusion of academic literature. When utilizing ethnographic methods, researchers must integrate ethnological findings into the results of their research. Researchers accomplish this by analyzing the information provided by research participants. It is the researchers' voices that are featured, not the voices of research participants. Indeed, scholars such as Claire Anderson caution researchers on the use of quotations, stating that the use of "long quotes with little analysis or discussion … should be avoided."[54] But if a researcher should avoid long passages of quotations and include significant analysis and interpretation, how does a researcher centre the voices of research participants? Reflecting on this, Todd states:

> I was left wondering, when will I hear someone reference Indigenous thinkers in a direct, contemporary and meaningful way … Without filtering ideas through white intermediaries—but by citing and quoting Indigenous thinkers directly, unambiguously and generously. As thinkers in their own right, not just disembodied representatives of an amorphous Indigeneity that serves European intellectual or political purposes, and not just as research subjects or vaguely defined "collaborators." As dynamic Philosophers and Intellectuals, full stop.[55]

[52] Ahmed, "White Men."
[53] Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take," 18.
[54] Anderson, "Presenting and Evaluating Qualitative Research," 5.
[55] Todd, "An Indigenous Feminist's Take," 7.

Acknowledging Todd's query, I made the decision to include the knowledges presented by the research participants in their own words. They are the keepers of their knowledges. Their knowledges will be attributed to them. The participants have analyzed and re-analyzed their responses throughout the research process. They do not need to be "filtered" by my research process. Instead of my analysis of the research results, I provide a discussion of the analysis performed by the research participants during the focus groups, interviews, and workshop, contextualizing this through the theoretical framework of white possession.[56] Where applicable, I include the voices of Métis scholars to support the knowledges presented by the research participants. It is my intention to centre Métis voices and provide space for them to articulate their own ways of knowing and exercise care and control over their material culture.

Methodological Approach

From its inception, this study has focused upon the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta to further self-determination through the exercise of care and control over their material culture. Smith suggests:

> The methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. In other words, they need to be "decolonized." Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our [Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our [Indigenous] perspectives and for our [Indigenous] own purposes.[57]

If decolonized research methodologies are to be utilized, they must be employed from the beginning of the research process, including in its design, its goals, and the ways in which the

[56] A study such as this should be Métis led and should include participants as co-researchers; however, the constraints of using this research to complete my MA degree have not made this possible. As part of the reciprocity I have promised to the participants, the dissemination of the results of this study will frame participants as co-researchers through the co-authoring of publications and conference presentations, as discussed later in this chapter.

[57] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 39.

knowledges generated through the study are presented and disseminated. In that light, I have carefully and critically considered the methodologies and methods of this study.

Considering the gaps that the literature review revealed, and utilizing existing relationships with members of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) developed through both previous and on-going research projects through the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research (RCMR), I began identifying and contacting individuals who were interested in repatriation. I also contacted and met with staff and managers at Michif Cultural Connections and identified additional individuals who were interested in advancing Métis-specific repatriation efforts. Acknowledging the methodological framework of *keeoukaywin*, I met with each potential research participant informally. We chatted over coffee or tea, or on the telephone if they were from further away, exchanging stories of where we were from, who we are connected to, and the importance of having access to the objects that will carry our respective cultures into the future. According to Simpson, this is an important step in the process of being in "respectful consensual reciprocity with another living being."[58] Flaminio suggests that visiting is "a shared responsibility to kinship relations, both human and non-human."[59] Gaudet states that "*keeoukaywin* holds great promise to bring all the pieces back together, and lead us back to what is right; it is a relational obligation, a spiritual responsibility."[60] To engage in *keeoukaywin* as methodology, it was therefore imperative to approach visiting as necessary to the research process. Although the research is not about me, it is necessary for me as the researcher to give stories about myself and to connect with research participants in ways that acknowledge our shared responsibilities to one another. In the process of visiting, the research participants and I

[58] Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy," 11.
[59] Flaminio, "Kinship Visiting"; Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 48.
[60] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 48.

discovered many things we had in common with one another, including, at times, connections to kin and space. The stories that we shared led me to recover the stories of my ancestors who settled on Métis land when they arrived in Canada in 1908. These meaningful connections to place, time, and kin compel me to continue practising the methodology of *keeoukaywin* beyond this research.

After informal conversation and based upon the needs and desires informally expressed by the research participants during our initial visits, I refined the study by considering and critically examining my methodological approach and creating semi-structured interview questions. The semi-structured interview questions formed the basis of the focus groups and one-on-one interviews that I conducted during this study. These semi-structured interview questions addressed the research questions of this thesis and provided space for the research participants to address their own needs and desires surrounding repatriation. The semi-structured interview questions that form part of this research are attached as Appendix A.

The primary method of data collection centred on three focus groups and three individual interviews with the research participants. Nine Métis individuals, ranging in age from early twenties to late seventies, participated in this study. In keeping with the goal of *keeoukaywin* to ensure representation from different genders,[61] seven of the research participants identified as female and two as male. The research participants granted their permission for the use of their names in this study and for the dissemination of research. Each focus group and one-on-one interview revolved around the sharing of food—often around the kitchen table—honouring *keeoukaywin*.[62] In a small act of reciprocity, each of the research participants received

[61] Gaudet, 60.

[62] According to Kermoal, the sharing of food is an important part of visiting. See Kermoal, "Métis Women." Also, Sherry Farrell Racette refers to "the kitchen table theory," which is a Métis way of learning, sharing, and

honorariums for their time and received reimbursement for travel expenses. Recognizing the importance of the knowledges shared with me, I prepared a pysanka (Ukrainian Easter egg) for each of the research participants. The knowledges of pysanka have been passed through the generations of my family and taught to me by my grandmother around her kitchen table. It was very important for me to gift this cultural knowledge as an act of reciprocity for the knowledges shared with me.

All of the focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants received a copy of the transcript and had the "right of reply"[63] prior to the analysis of the transcripts. During the reply process, some of the participants requested that when their quotations are presented within the text of the thesis, a non-verbatim transcription approach be adopted. They asked that filler words such as "um," "uh," and "hmm" and vernacular speech such as, "like," "you know," and "eh?" be removed. Further, some of the quotations presented in this thesis appear out of their original context of the verbatim transcriptions of the focus group and one-on-one interviews. As a result, pronouns have been replaced with contextual nouns. Further, the identities of individuals or institutions external to this research process have been redacted from the transcripts as requested by the research participants. The quotations included in the body of this thesis are as close to verbatim as possible, aside from the edits noted above. Once the research participants approved the transcripts, I undertook a coding process to identify themes and subthemes. I developed category coding system based upon the themes that emerged during the focus groups and individual interviews that aligned with the theoretical framework for this research. I then grouped the themes and sub-themes together, coded the themes and sub-

reclaiming women's space, and revolves around *wahkotowin* therefore subverting the colonial pressures that seek to disrupt Indigenous visiting. See Racette, "Kitchen Logic."

[63] Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*.

themes for diverging and duplicate information, and complied with the actions that need to be taken by museums to acknowledge Métis-specific ways of knowing in museum collections.

The original intent of this study was to bring the research participants together to discuss the importance of material culture to self-determination and to open discussions surrounding Métis-specific repatriation with the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM). In collaboration with MNA, Michif Cultural Connections, and RCMR, the research participants and I were working to schedule a one-day workshop with the RAM. In January 2020, I was advised by the RAM that they were not willing to participate in this study.[64] While those I spoke with at the museum stated that their inability to open dialogues of repatriation with Métis was due to cutbacks,[65] the issues raised by employees in Chapter 2 of this thesis suggest that cutbacks were not the only reason for their disinterest. After discussing other avenues to advance repatriation dialogues with the research participants, I contacted the Alberta Museums Association (AMA) to inquire whether they were willing to meet with us to discuss Métis-specific repatriation efforts. The AMA advised me that their policies regarding repatriation stated that repatriation is the responsibility of each individual museum in Alberta and was handled on a case-by-case basis.[66] The AMA suggested contacting the RAM's repatriation and community engagement team to begin discussions surrounding repatriation from a Métis perspective, since most museums in the province took their lead from them.[67] I again approached the research participants for their thoughts.

[64] Personal communication with RAM staff, who has asked to remain anonymous.

[65] Indeed, the Alberta Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women reduced funding to the RAM for the 2020-21 fiscal year by $33 million—a 21% cut. It is also anticipated that an additional $28 million will be cut in the province's 2022-23 budget. See Short, "Royal Alberta Museum Staying Closed."

[66] Personal communication, Berry, "Alberta Museums Association," January 16, 2020.

[67] Berry.

Fortunately, one of the research participants, Sharon Morin, is the education programmer at Musée Héritage Museum in St. Albert, Alberta. She suggested that I contact the curator to inquire whether the museum would be interested in opening dialogues surrounding Métis-specific repatriation. Musée Héritage agreed to meet with us to hold a workshop, which included an artifact-handling session and the opportunity to open dialogues surrounding the importance of material culture to Métis self-determination and Métis-specific repatriation efforts. The workshop was initially postponed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. By the end of March 2020, it was clear that museums would not re-open and that social-distancing measures would stay in place for some time. As a result, the workshop was cancelled indefinitely.

Recognizing the importance of completing this study in a good way even in times of COVID-19, I provided a copy of the results of the initial focus groups and interviews to the research participants. I then scheduled a virtual workshop via Zoom and research participants responded to the results, asked questions, and provided comments. Participants were invited to respond to the group during the workshop and were invited to contact me directly if they did not feel comfortable addressing their concerns in a group setting, to ensure consistency with their lived experiences and points of view. Further, the workshop ensured that those who have contributed their knowledge to the research had the opportunity to read and respond to what has been written about their knowledge.[68] If anything was unsatisfactorily represented, I had the responsibility to acknowledge and consider righting the concerns. For the purposes of my research, this "right of reply" was integral. The virtual workshop created space for the "right of reply," and, as Russell suggests, it also created space for participants to "reflect on and learn from the peers' accounts of the lived experiences."[69] Through this process, research participants

[68] Russell, "Indigenous Knowledge and Archives," 165.
[69] Russell, 165.

asked questions, provided further information for clarity, and spoke about the possibilities for change in museums. The research participants also co-created the "Museum Recommendation and Policies for Métis Material Culture," which outlines the protocols for building relationships with Métis community members and the expectations of Métis to have access to their material culture housed in collections. These recommendations are attached to this thesis as Appendix B.

Acts of Reciprocity

Gaudry states that "research as a service [must] be based on the voices and experiences of the people themselves."[70] The methodologies that are used by researchers when working with Indigenous peoples must serve those who are participating in the research and sharing their knowledge. Research methodologies must be based upon the needs and desires of Indigenous peoples and focus on their voices, interpretations, and dissemination of the knowledges produced through the research process. Indigenous research methodologies also include relationship building and reciprocity throughout the research process by all research participants, including the researcher.

As acts of reciprocity, the research participants have asked me to do the following:

- Distribute copies of the thesis to the RAM, the Glenbow Museum, and the AMA.
- Present the results of this study at the next AMA annual conference (ideally as a keynote presentation).
- Present the results of this study at community events in a way that is accessible to the community.

[70] Gaudet, "Rethinking Participatory Research," 79.

- Present the results of this study in the form of presentations and publications to further academic understandings of the unique needs of Métis to exercise care and control over their material culture.

To fulfill these responsibilities, I will send my thesis to the RAM, the Glenbow Museum, and the AMA. I will also provide a copy of my thesis to each of the research participants. I am committing to present the results of this research at the conferences that they have requested. Further, I am committing to co-present the results of this research with research participants and putting forward a paper for publication with the research participants as co-researchers.

While this outcome was far from desirable, the COVID-19 pandemic required reforms to our daily behaviours and denied access to public spaces. Gaudet states that "the spirit of visiting [*keeoukaywin*] leaves room for the unpredictable,"[71] and, indeed, nearly everything about this research process has been unpredictable. Despite this, I must state how grateful I am to the participants in this research for adapting to the obstacles encountered throughout this study, and for their determination to further this research in trying circumstances. I am also grateful that, in keeping with the methods of *keeoukeywin*, community-based participatory research, and community-driven ethnography, I have been asked to have this research serve the participants and their larger community.

In this chapter, I discussed white possession and how it will serve as a theoretical framework for analyzing the findings of this study. I also introduced *keeoukaywin* as a methodological framework and explained how it guided this study. My incorporation of the methodologies of *keeoukaywin* will not end with this thesis, but will continue as I fulfill the requests for reciprocity made by the research participants. The next chapter presents the findings

[71] Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin," 60.

of this study. These findings reveal both the desires of Métis to see repatriation furthered in Alberta, and the obstacles they have faced in exerting their right to self-determination through the interpretation and presentation of their material culture.

Chapter 5
Métis Knowledges and Desire to Advance Repatriation

The purpose of this study is to explore the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta to further repatriation of their material culture held in collections. Thus far, this thesis has set the stage for the context of Métis repatriation by situating it within the politics of repatriation in Canada, examining the ways in which Métis have been marginalized, as well as placing this study within the body of literature regarding repatriation, decolonization of museums spaces, and the importance of Métis material culture. This chapter now turns to the heart of the research process: hearing the voices of the research participants. This chapter presents the findings of the knowledges shared by the nine Métis individuals who participated in this study. Four findings are developed through this study:

1. All participants believe that it is of paramount importance that museums and collection institutions be in good relation with Métis.
2. All participants believe that there is a historical and contemporary misunderstanding of Métis identity.
3. All participants view museums as places of learning and, as such, should be held accountable for the knowledges they reproduce.
4. All participants believe that the pursuit of repatriation is very important.

The findings of this qualitative study addressed the advancement of a Métis-specific framework for the repatriation of Métis material culture that acknowledged Métis needs and desires to exercise care and control over their material culture.

Finding 1: All participants believe that it is of paramount importance that museums be in good relation with Métis.

By far, the greatest desire for participants was to build relationships and be in good relation with the museums that hold their material culture. This is a significant finding because

all of the research participants repeatedly mentioned relationships, relationality, and being in good relation with museums during their participation in the study. Relationality and the desire to be in good relation with museums is the key finding of this study. According to Sharon:

> I think that's one of the biggest lessons we can teach the non-Indigenous community is the importance of building and maintaining those relationships. And that does not mean that you're all buddy-buddy and wanting to go for coffee. I mean that's not what it's about. I mean, it takes effort and it takes time, but it's so important to the process of what we have to do. And you have to build those relationships. So, I think that's one of the biggest things that we can really stress is that importance. Because they don't, some people do realize it, but they don't realize just the importance of giving a piece of us to them. You know? (Sharon)[1]

The key finding of this study is that relationality must be at the core of Métis material culture repatriation. As Sharon stated, this important process takes time, but how is it fostered? What initial steps can be taken by museums to begin good relations? For most of the research participants, there was one clear way to begin the process. To build relationships in a good way between Métis and museums, participants spoke about their desire to have community liaisons whose full-time position it is to foster and build relationships with the communities of the material culture that they hold. There was an emphasis on decolonizing the role of community liaisons through minimal office time, understanding the value of visiting, creating manageable workloads, and providing full-time stable employment. Highlighting the value of Métis visiting in relationship building, both Tanya and Josh stated that people need to spend time together to build relationships.

> There needs to be an emphasis and a value on just hanging out. Because, as Sharon said, trust is so important because you're not just dealing, these aren't just pieces or items, they are stories, they are all these different things that are encapsulated in an item. And if you don't trust a person to deal with that, how can you work with them? (Tanya)[2]

> I mean as a community connector you absolutely cannot, or your work cannot, hold you up inside [your office] because you're not going to be able to build relationships or you're not going to keep the relationships. They're going to ask what happened to this person, right? They just disappeared but then they realize it's only because they are being held hostage by their workspace. LET THEM

[1] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[2] Morin, Morin, and Ball.

OUT! (Josh)[3]

Other research participants focused upon the workload of Indigenous community liaisons, stating that often the amount of work they were tasked with was unreasonable and relied upon the exploitation of Indigenous labour. As a result, those placed within the positions were set up to fail.

> The expectations, because I know people that do have a full-time person, but then when they get there the expectations are unreasonable … Not only are they expected to have all of that knowledge and make all of those connections but now they are doing that, and that, and that, and that, and then you're responsible for this, and this, and this … (Krista)[4]

> I worked at the University of Victoria's Sea Art Galleries on like just a year contract as an intern actually. And that was a really big thing. There was me and a Cree woman who was on this part-time contract that was not stable, and it was the two of us doing the most work in terms of engaging with Indigenous communities. We didn't know the protocol for everything—we knew enough to kind of like get by and people would give us a pass because we are both Indigenous. But the reality is that they needed someone who knew that, and they needed to be around all the time. You know? Like you say, when the elders come, make sure there are chairs for them. You have tea going. There's food. You know? Everything that they could want is right there and we know what not to say. And that is so important, but we are always being hired on these part-time and unstable contracts and it is just not feasible. (Wyatt)[5]

While a commitment to stable Indigenous community liaison positions that focus upon relationship building in museums will go far to build relationships with Métis in Alberta, many research participants expressed feelings of being unwelcome in museums, even though many of the research participants have worked or continue to work in museum settings. Many of the participants stated that they were uncomfortable in museums, feeling objectified because of the institutional and colonial histories and ideas perpetuated within museums. Krista noted that there could be no relationship built with museums while they held the remains of Indigenous ancestors. She questioned how they could respect her as a person while those who had become ancestors were now artifacts.

What's the difference between that ancestor that's sitting in that box over there versus myself who

[3] Morin, Morin, and Ball.
[4] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.
[5] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.

> is walking around? It could be me in 200 years. Right? What's the difference? Right? Just like it could be my artwork sitting in some museum in 200 years, right? That my descendants don't feel a part of … I still think that in the very basic sense, a lot of museums still follow that idea of social Darwinism. That somehow we are subhuman, and we are oddities and we are interesting things to be put on display. Whether it be the things we make, remnants of how we lived, to our very bodies, right? (Krista)[6]

Colonial histories, according to Krista, continue to make Métis feel unwelcome. Although many museums now acknowledge the need to hire Indigenous people, Dawn suggests that those in positions of power utilize lateral violence to make Métis people feel unwelcome. For Dawn, it is very important to draw attention to these issues and for museums and institutions to create "brave spaces"[7] where issues of social justice can be discussed.

> There is a lot of issues with institutions. There's lateral violence, there's all kinds of things happening that are really destructive and harmful … People who are in these positions of power really have action around some of this stuff and [should] encourage other staff to reconsider how they are thinking about things and encourage space for Indigenous peoples, all of them to feel welcome. And folks that look like us, we're not typically … you know, we don't look as Indigenous as others and I am sure we've all received our fair share of [questions] … So how do we work safer and with more confidence. You know it's why I left [previous employer] because my—people who should have been supporting me in the work I did were not great so, is it due to jealousy? Is it due to their own biases? I don't know. It's probably a variety of things. And part of me, I think it's okay for them to feel that too but how do we all try to work together and better and with these kinds of issues too … So, having the space. Space is important. A space where you feel comfortable. Where you recognize yourself. Where you feel like you can belong for a little bit. (Dawn)[8]

In contrast, Connie shared past experiences when she did feel welcome in a museum in British Columbia, a feeling that came after a significant amount of work by the museum to ensure the inclusion of Métis community members. This gave her hope that similar relationships could be built between museums and Métis in Alberta and she could once again feel welcome in a museum space.

> You know, when they finally opened the doors and they started having community members come in … I felt so comfortable when I would go in there because it … it wasn't just this building with my stuff housed somewhere. You know, it was like, I can go in there and I know I am going to see somebody who knows something about Métis who can talk to me, who can understand some of my

[6] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.
[7] Dawn clarified her idea of safe spaces and redefined them as "brave spaces" during the workshop.
[8] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

> story and my history. (Connie)[9]

Sharon also had welcoming experiences in museums but these too centred upon relationality. For Sharon, the act of visiting was integral to making Métis feel welcome and creating Métis spaces within museums. She reflected on the relationship building that had taken place at the Musée Héritage Museum between First Nations and museum staff and the success of the co-created exhibition that resulted from the relationship.

> So, they actually did a couple of Saturday afternoons with tea and bannock where they met Joanne, the curator, Celina was there, and they worked on building the trust and the relationship. And then the objects started coming in. Most of the objects that we got were on loan from the families. (Sharon)[10]

For all of the research participants, being in good relation with museums is paramount and integral to discussions surrounding repatriation in a Métis-specific framework. However, being in good relation goes beyond the relationship between museum staff and Métis people. It extends to the ways in which Métis are able to be in good relation with their material culture. For some of the research participants, this meant that museums need to understand that they are stewards of the material culture they hold, not owners of it, and that material culture should not be viewed by museums as commodities. Krista reflected upon her view that as caretakers of material culture, museum staff all have a responsibility to be in good relation with those whose material culture they house. She stated:

> I really think that if you have larger government institutions you need standards of the idea of repatriation and the idea of stewardship. But then they are also forced to ensure that everything they display has our input and it is respectful and appropriate, so the stories are told … It would have been nicer to have a larger body to say, you know this needs to be told in a very specific way to tell the truth without it being sugar coated. (Krista)[11]

[9] Kulhavy, Interview.
[10] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[11] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

All of the research participants expressed that for museums to be in good relation with Métis in Alberta, museums need to be honest and transparent about the extent of their collections and make efforts to recover the object histories of unknown material culture. Tanya recalled a conversation she had with Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) staff about some of the Métis items in their collection. She stated, "[The RAM] has no idea … about the objects that they have … and people are starting to ask them questions. Oh hey, what about this? And, what about this? And they can't, they don't have the capacity to answer them. So, I don't feel like even some of the museum curators have enough knowledge to even house these items."[12] To achieve transparency, museums must decolonize their collections, conduct appropriate research to recover the origins of material culture, and build relationships with communities of origin that will allow for open and honest dialogues about the object histories present in collections. Highlighting the lack of an accessible database or a way to know where Métis material culture is housed, Norma stated, "A lot of our material culture is scattered throughout the province. We need a concerted effort to find what and where these materials are located."[13] Dawn echoed Norma's desire, declaring, "For me, it's accessing records that I would really like more—more knowledge about knowing what's where. You know and I know that there is some things in the Glenbow and you know understanding what is in collections."[14] All of the research participants highlighted their desire to know where their material culture is held so that they could more easily be in good relation with it, which includes accessing it for ceremony. For Connie, Josh, and Sharon, it is important to know what is in collections and to have access to those items to ensure that the knowledges contained within that material culture can be used to connect Métis histories and contemporary

[12] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[13] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.
[14] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

realities, and ensure that Métis remain in good relation with their material culture through ceremony.

> If our stories are closed in a box or stored in a basement, who gets to read them and how? And if there's pictures and things that we don't know—that we are trying to connect back to our cultures and our families … And a lot of times we have lost that through colonization, so trying to come back and find that. And if it's upstairs there's a glass wall in between and we can't touch it. (Connie)[15]

> I would really like it where big museums and the museums that carry lots of material culture, that they would have easy access to it. In our centre here, I always make sure to bring out the sash and just anything that anyone wants to see, I will physically bring it out and show it to them. And, I think there has to be, just that concept to it. Where someone from a community or culture has a specific connection to that item, there can't be really any hesitation on, oh no, you know, we can't really see it because of this policy. Or, whatever, you know what I mean? There can't be any of that. The policies have to be written around them having access to it … In any form or way, no can't be the answer. There has to be another way. (Josh)[16]

> Coming from a museum field … I also understand the importance of care of a collection and proper storage and so forth. So, I am kind of, of the belief that … we [the Musée Héritage Museum] can house the things … [until] the family wants that item to go back for ceremony or for maintenance when it comes to the prayer around it if it requires that. So, then I think that's a place where a museum could really stretch themselves and say we can send that back for the ceremony and then it will come back and be protected until the next ceremony season comes. (Sharon)[17]

Granting access to material culture comes with questions. Many questions were raised by the research participants regarding access to Métis material culture. Who will have access to the material culture? Who gets to decide? As Krista and Dawn highlight, it is important to protect their cultural knowledge from the general public. However, for many Métis in Alberta, complying with the requirement to be a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) can be difficult.

> I think it just comes again to if it's cultural or academic. You know? And if it's academic, what is the purpose of that? Like, yeah, you have an ethics board for that and I think there also needs to be some sort of body that determines if academic access to that is going to be a benefit to Métis people or is it just profiting off or getting some sort of advantage from that object … that would also be really great for accessibility, like you were saying you have all of this stuff but how—to even have a digital list. Like, I've been doing a lot of research for work, like on Peter Erasmus and the different families on the river lots and it's been an absolute nightmare. I am going to have to travel to archives all over the province just to get some history because they are not digitized. I mean I am looking

[15] Kulhavy, Interview.
[16] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[17] Morin, Morin, and Ball.

> forward to the road trip but it would be so nice to, you know, have something that you could access, even if you have to submit your … Métis number or something like that to get access to it. So that way it's still protected from the general public but that way just to know what's there. So that I can go and see and whatnot. (Krista)[18]

> So that is also limiting. I don't have a Métis card because I don't speak to my father and he won't give me documents … And as somebody who is trying to do the research … it just poses as another barrier. I have to put in a number, and I don't have it. And I think of others who—my story is not unusual. (Dawn)[19]

During the workshop, the participants discussed the idea of access further. The consensus among the research participants was that if museums are in good relation with Métis in Alberta, they will know who can and cannot access the material culture housed in their collections. In effect, by being in good relation with Métis, museums can rely upon Métis to make decisions regarding access. This radically changes the power dynamic of museums by shifting responsibility from museum professionals to Métis in Alberta. Participants also spoke about "stretching" current museum policies on access and conservation. For most of the research participants, a paradigm shift is needed in which the value placed upon an object is shifted to the person who holds the knowledge.

> I also like what you [Dawn] said about allowing people to take it apart because a lot of these pieces, like it's important to understand how to make them because not a lot of us get that chance anymore. But then also, they were never meant to last forever, you know, and like it would be cool to see the back of some of these beaded pieces as well … It's like, no no no, you need to get past that idea [that] we're wanting to take this apart. Because it's the knowledge that is important. And you're going to have to be cool with us not wearing cotton gloves when we are handling these moccasins. It's okay. (Wyatt)[20]

Conversations about museums being in good relation with Métis in Alberta also involved ideas of providing access to those who live far from urban centres or who are unable to travel to other urban centres to visit their material culture. The research participants discussed the idea of travelling exhibits along with the necessity to curate exhibits in a good way. For Krista, the idea

[18] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.
[19] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.
[20] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.

of travelling exhibits made complete sense. “We moved around. There’s no reason why those things can’t move either.”[21] For Dawn, it was important to see material culture from other areas of the Métis homeland. She stated, “For me personally, I would like to see things from Winnipeg come and from Minneapolis and Minnesota and those areas too.”[22] Norma wanted to ensure access to all Métis histories, including material culture from both large and small museums. She stated:

> I believe that larger Museum collections should not only display Metis material culture but they should also borrow and lend materials from families & small museums for specific showings. I think it is important that some of our material culture be displayed in the community of origin but I also believe it is important to accumulate information on where it is located, who owned it, accessibility and whether these items can be part of traveling exhibits. (Norma)[23]

Tanya expressed a desire to have museums partner with communities to ensure that material culture stays connected to community. Tanya said:

> Well even if, and maybe even a step towards that would be if the museums could partner and keep the collection, but maybe it’s floating between all of these different areas and then it could be exposed to more community people. So, if you can’t get into the museum, you could say, come here and view those items. (Tanya)[24]

In contrast, Bailey initially felt trepidation about the idea of travelling exhibitions to enable Métis to have access to their material culture. She cited concern over the logistics of travelling exhibitions and how easily they could be done in a way that is not respectful to Métis communities. However, as we spoke more about the idea, Bailey clarified her position and expanded upon how it was important to do things properly by truly including Métis in a co-constituted exhibition:

> I mean I think that would be really cool if it [travelling exhibition] was done properly. I mean, how is that done? How does that benefit the community? How does the community have access to it? Is it just you open up a room in hall and people can come see it? How is the community involved in that piece rather than it just being there? How is it … taken and then made into a broader scale discussion about Métis artifacts. About that artifact in particular or are people able to bring their

[21] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.
[22] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.
[23] Spicer.
[24] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

> artifacts and show them and have that discussion. Because lots of people have all sorts of stuff … So you have these smaller centres like Lac La Biche, would something like that work in Lac La Biche or is it too small. There is a huge population in Lac La Biche, but they also don't have the setup for, you know, a Hiding in Plain Sight type of thing. So, if it's on a smaller scale how do you make that engaging and interesting and make it worthwhile going to. Not that I think that it's a bad idea or anything, just how does it work? And if you're thinking like bigger centres, then 100%, but it's in those smaller communities that so many people are Métis. (Bailey)[25]

Bailey stated that she was very concerned about the portrayal of disrespectful and inaccurate narratives of Métis identity have been produced by museums. She emphasized that it was very important to include truthful narratives of Métis histories and to call out institutions that perpetuate the erasure of Indigenous narratives, an idea that will be explored in detail in Finding 2. Indeed, it is only through strong, respectful relationships between museums and Métis in Alberta that co-constituted activities such as travelling exhibitions could occur.

Finding 2: All participants believe that there is a historical and contemporary misunderstanding of Métis identity.

The second finding of this study is the belief that most non-Métis have misconceptions about Métis identity. Reflecting upon what it means to be Métis and as one of the recognized Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the many misconceptions that people have regarding what it means to be Métis, Josh stated that he often gets questions like, "Who are Métis? How can you be Métis? … I'm used to people asking, so what is a Métis person? Or I have a First Nation great-great-grandmother. So, am I a Métis now?"[26] Sharon continued, "And then they say, well what do you mean they're not Métis? So, then you have to go and prove your ancestry. I don't consider myself half of anything. I do have ancestors that come from different parts, but I am Métis."[27] Connie expanded upon this and stated, "We know who we are, but I think it's really the rest of Canada that doesn't know."[28] Bailey added that the misconceptions of what it means to be

[25] Oster, Interview.
[26] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[27] Morin, Morin, and Ball.
[28] Kulhavy, Interview.

Métis brings up another issue—the assumption that Métis and First Nations are the same. Bailey stated, "I keep thinking … how many people do not know the difference between Métis and First Nations?"[29]

As stated in chapter 2, Museums have reproduced misconceptions of contemporary Métis identity. For example, many pieces of material culture that are in museum collections are not attributed to their Métis creators. Rather, they are attributed to First Nations groups or have been placed within other ethnographic classifications. For the research participants, this mislabelling has contributed to the misconceptions of historical Métis identity and has been perpetuated into the present.

> Our great-grandmothers made those beautiful pieces, but they were sold and labelled as something else and those museums and organizations actually taking the time to do the research saying this was made by a Métis woman from this area judging from the signature. Like in beadwork you always have a signature because it's there … It would be wonderful for it to be properly labelled. (Krista)[30]

> I think the biggest thing is just marking down whose [object] it was … and giving as much credit to the family and the culture as possible. Rather than just being "Indigenous artwork"—here's one Métis thing amongst many other Indigenous things … We need to be clear that this is Métis. And, when you are repatriating these things, make sure that you know who it's coming from. (Bailey)[31]

> What is confusing are displays that have First Nation, Metis and pioneers' materials all mixed together—not clearly linking to families, location of origin and/or source documentation. Metis families seeing their ancestor's material culture displayed with no mention of original ownership can be devasting. (Norma)[32]

> I went to Orkney over the summer and they have a museum there and Orkney was a huge place during the fur trade and so they end up with a lot of Indigenous stuff from all over the world. And they have a special section for Indigenous North America and they even have a little thing about Métis. But, because they're not engaging with it half of the time, they will say Métis and half of the time they will say Indian, or North American … (Wyatt)[33]

[29] Oster, Interview.
[30] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.
[31] Oster, Interview.
[32] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.
[33] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

In addition to museums attributing objects to other Indigenous peoples, both Sharon and Josh highlighted the difficulty of museums classifying, or not classifying, objects as ceremonial. Josh felt that museum classifications hindered relationship building because museums continue to exert power and control over Métis material culture. Josh stated, "I would prefer it where the communities are in total control to classify what is ceremonial."[34] For Sharon it is important to "not have the museum say, I don't think that was used for ceremony. Damned rights. That was on my Grannie's table every Sunday when the family got together. That's our ceremony. It might be just a special teapot but there is ceremony around that teapot."[35]

Expanding upon ideas of power and control, participants expressed a desire to have Métis overseeing and conducting the interpretation of their own material culture in museums. Having such control encourages kinship connections and connection to land and fosters self-determination through the telling of Métis stories. Tanya associates objects with stories, "I think there needs to be stories because stories are so cultural. And it's such a good pedagogical tool." She relayed a story that Josh had told her a few weeks earlier about "tuppies for puppies,"[36] and how the information presented through the story remained present in her mind. Tanya also talked about the importance of having material culture central to family histories presented in museums and how material culture can reinforce kinship connections.

> My family we're from Manitoba and we have different artifacts in the Human Rights Museum and the Manitoba … Provincial Museum as well. And, whenever we visit Winnipeg, my mom always makes us visit the museum. Because, we have lots of family albums and stuff about different items and stuff that she interacted with. Like, she, my family had a Bombardier. Do you know what a Bombardier is? It's kind of like a tank, really, that is used for ice fishing. So, when we walk around there, my mom uses it as a platform to tell her stories. And then, she relates it back to the photo albums that we have at home. She'll say, that's what a Bombardier is. That's how big it is, and that's the thing that your grandpa put through the ice and it sunk to the bottom of the lake. But there's also, when she brings us there, she shows us all of our family pictures … that's your uncle,

[34] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[35] Morin, Morin, and Ball.
[36] A tuppie is a decorative dog blanket used by Métis to dress their dog sled teams. See, for example, Fay, "Dog Blanket."

> that's your auntie. So, it's almost like a sense of belonging. And, just like you said, it's a conversation starter belonging to the Canadian story. Which, I mean, it's not often times you find that Métis are included in those conversations. So, yeah, that's what I think about. But it would be nice because if they did consult with my family, I'm sure that my mom would have brought a fishing net, and all of these other things, and just pumped up this exhibit with family photos and stuff too. I mean, she probably would have done that. And would be so prideful of it. (Tanya)[37]

For Bailey, the objects themselves, while extremely important, do not replace the stories that belong with material culture. The stories that come with material culture, stated Bailey, are intrinsic to Métis identity today.

> I'm not sure if the objects are so important to me … but more so having that detailed history of the object, who it was worn by. It's really cool to see jackets that were worn by buffalo hunters and then, like, read about them. Obviously, that's not always possible and sometimes there is just no history on it, but having the information there, having access to that history I think is more important to me as opposed to what specific object. Because there is such a rich history, for example, about the buffalo hunt itself. How could a conversation about a buffalo hunter's jacket jump start a conversation about the history of the buffalo hunt and how it related to Métis governance and how it *still* relates to Métis governance. (Bailey)[38]

For Norma, there is a need to have museum interpretation that includes more of the religious artifacts that were important to many of her ancestors—something that is largely left out of the narrative in current museum interpretation. Norma stated:

> Often not part of exhibits are the religious artifacts of our material culture. Bibles, crucifixes, scapulars … I often wore one as a child. Religion and prayer were paramount in Métis life permeating celebrations and daily activities. I remember my grandmother had a large bible and she had recorded the birth of each of her children. (Norma)[39]

Norma's comments highlight the need to understand the multitude of experiences of Métis. For all research participants, the representation of daily life is very important, and the all participants highlighted different aspects of daily life that they value. The comments of the participants also highlighted the need for non-Métis to understand that Métis culture is not stuck in the past.

[37] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[38] Oster, Interview.
[39] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.

The desire to bring Métis narratives into the present is also a key piece of Métis identity that was expressed in the focus groups and interviews. For some, it is about ensuring that all people understand that Métis not only existed in the past but are part of a vibrant Indigenous culture that will continue into the future. For others, it is about connecting, learning, and reconnecting with kin, lands, and histories, and supporting Métis artists to continue celebrating Métis material culture into the future.

Tanya and Josh both spoke about how they wanted to see museums make it clear that Métis are continuing to practise their culture today. Tanya stated:

> One of the main problems with the museum setting is that there is an automatic assumption that they are presenting a culture that no longer exists. So maybe if people are curating, presenting some sort of a toolkit so it has some sort of past interpretation but also a contemporary component to balance it out. So then … if whoever is not there, then it's discussed properly. (Tanya)[40]

Josh recalled a recent event at the chapel in St. Albert while he was working as an interpreter. He recollected:

> Once there was a pair there [at the chapel at St. Albert] with their young kids and they were looking at the stuff that we had and she was wording it like, oh this is what they *used to* make and this is how they *used to* live. And she kept using the word[s] *used to*. And every time she would say that, I would look at the kid and be like, yup, so we do workshops that make those, and we do a workshop that makes those, you know, just trying to let those kids, at least know, that we still do this stuff. (Josh)[41]

Further, all research participants expressed a desire for museums to support current representations of Métis material culture by working with and supporting Métis artists. Wyatt said that while it is important for museums to show the historical connection of Métis to the fiddle, it is also important to bring the fiddle into a contemporary context, and he expressed his desire to expand understandings that Métis culture does not need to be stuck in the past. He stated:

> While I think it is important to keep Métis fiddle going, I also think that [] keeping it sounding the

[40] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[41] Morin, Morin, and Ball.

> same way will lead to it being forgotten. I hear people talk about the importance of fiddle, as a symbol. But a lot of people don't seem to listen to it or get excited about fiddle music … But we keep that as a reference for what Métis fiddle should be now, and this is a mistake. I want to see some Métis music turned EDM or introduced into a club scene. I want to see it become something that people will genuinely enjoy listening to on Spotify or will choose to buy because they enjoy it and not because it's nostalgic. Bringing Métis music into the present means that we start to reimagine what it could mean to listen to Métis music even when we aren't dancing—museums can play a role in this. Where museums have in their collections recordings of Métis music these could be taught to fiddle players (with the proper protocols being followed) but could also be remixed and made relevant again. There is a lot of music in other folk genres that pulls from audio clips of local historical figures, and these then become wonderful tracks. Digitizing these kinds of audio materials and making them accessible would help Métis music develop. I would like to see more of that kind of engagement from Métis people, but we need access to material. (Wyatt)[42]

It was the desire of all the research participants for non-Métis to have a better understanding of Métis identity by including a range of Métis histories and supporting contemporary Métis culture. This can be achieved through the inclusion of Métis interpretation and by having museums support Métis artists. Indeed, the misconceptions and misrepresentations of Métis identity in museums can only be rectified through the building of relationships between museums and Métis and for museums to take responsibility for the knowledges they reproduce.

Finding 3: All participants view museums as places of learning and, as such, should be held accountable for the knowledges they reproduce.

The third finding in this study to emerge from the focus groups and interviews was that museums are places of learning. As highlighted by the research participants, museums are not only places for the public to learn; they are also places for museum professionals to learn. Further, museums should serve as a place where Métis who have been dispossessed of their culture can reconnect in tangible ways. All the research participants recognized the power of museums and their role as knowledge producers.

During the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, research participants spoke about how museums are based on colonial ideologies and the ways in which this has shaped non-Métis

[42] Schiefelbein, personal correspondence.

perceptions of Métis. Museum narratives, it was stated, have perpetuated histories of whiteness and have been complicit in the erasure of Indigenous peoples from the lands they occupy. Because of this, most of the research participants highlighted the need for museums to take responsibility for their roles in perpetuating Indigenous erasure and to subvert the dominant narratives they produce. Tanya talked about the damage that can be done when museums misrepresent Métis. She stated, "Museums are such an educational place. If somebody gets something wrong … then that misinformation gets stretched out so far."[43] Museum professionals have a responsibility to tell the truth and they must take the lead on these initiatives before successful relationships can be built between museums and Métis. For Dawn and Krista, both of whom work in museum settings, it was clear that museums need to tell the truth[44] about their role in the dispossession of Métis peoples from their material culture and kinship networks with First Nations. The following quotations are from Krista and Dawn.

> I think also, museums have to talk about their responsibility and their role in that. So, there has to be an acknowledgement of what they did to divide and conquer. Because it's amazing when you have people around a table like this and then you can show evidence … these were the actual tactics done by the government. (Krista)[45]

> I think this is a real opportunity for museums to show real leadership. I think there is some reconciliation that needs to happen first between First Nations and Métis. For sure that has to happen and how that happens, perhaps museums can help foster safe spaces[46] for that to happen. (Dawn)[47]

> This is a big thing with reconciliation. Reconciliation isn't for us. It's for everybody else. So, if you're a non-Indigenous person, reconciliation is your responsibility, not our responsibility. Right? … I hear people say we have to come halfway. No, we don't. Nope. It's up to the museums to make it happen. They have to want to do it. I mean, we can sit there and point out because people may not be aware, right? They may not be aware that the language they are using or the things they have is offensive, or sensitive or whatever ignorance they have. That can be fixed by simple

[43] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

[44] Truth telling is an initial step before discussions surrounding reconciliation can be addressed. See, for example, Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi, "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-Telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation"; "TRC - Our Mandate."

[45] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

[46] During the workshop, Dawn clarified her preference for "brave spaces" as opposed to "safe spaces."

[47] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

conversations. But that's their responsibility. (Krista)[48]

Krista went on to discuss an experience she had at the St. Boniface Museum in Manitoba and her reaction to the presentation of the personal property of Louis Riel:

> Has anyone else been to the St. Boniface museum? … Well, go and wear your armour … First of all, their interpretation of Métis history is flawed. Even some of their historical stuff is completely wrong … They hold a lot of Louis Riel's items … They have a bundle of hair in this little box and it is on public display and I almost threw up because when the coroner brushed Louis Riel's head after and they put it in a box and it's on display like a trophy … They have his first coffin—the pieces of it. And you can touch it and it's set up like trophies … Like, they honestly believe they own [it], like they have every right to that. And it's power, the fact that they have it. So, there are people who do a pilgrimage to St. Boniface museum just to go and see Louis's things. And like they have his comb, his toothbrush, they have all of these items, and it's devastating … And you know it's interesting too because speaking to other Métis people here that are part of our cultural leadership and they've never seen it either, you know. And I wonder too if more people knew, and actually saw it, I wonder if there would be a bigger push for change … I mean, think how dehumanizing it is for us, it's awful to think that your leader that you hold in esteem and the symbol of our independence as a nation is in a glass case in a little box. (Krista)[49]

Krista acknowledged that it is extremely important for museum professionals to gain knowledge about the material culture they hold and of the people that the material culture represents. By presenting Riel's personal property in this manner, Krista felt dehumanized and objectified and she called upon museums to do better. One of the ways in which the research participants felt this could be accomplished is by hiring Métis interpreters to engage with youth and the greater public by providing educational opportunities. Many of the research participants currently work or have worked with children in the past and spoke with passion about educating both Métis and non-Métis youth about Métis history and culture. Bailey reflected upon both a past role and her current role connecting youth to their Métis culture. She stated:

> When I worked [at the museum], you see a lot of kids coming in with school groups and when a kid sees something and you say this is a Métis artifact or this is a Cree artifact or whatever group you are talking about. And the kids say, oh, that's me. My mom told me I am Métis and then they ask questions about it and they really want to learn about it. And I think that could almost jump-start that kind of cultural connection, or that desire to learn more about their culture and their history. And I think that is the same for adults maybe who are more disconnected from their culture, they have that same thing, but I really think kids are where—kind of where it's at. *Teach them*

[48] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.
[49] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.

> *young. Get them interested young* [emphasis added]. And, I think it's just, well I don't think a pair of beaded moccasins is going to, you know, do anything crazy. But it can make someone interested and it can make someone proud of who they are even if they don't know who they are. And it can jump-start that conversation. I work with the youth team upstairs and that's what we're trying to do—have all of these youth cultural programs. Whether it's camps or our summits or a program that we have here on like a Monday night for 20 youth to sit around the table and learn how to bead. So, it's really exciting in that way. (Bailey)[50]

In addition to youth engagement, the research participants stated that adult education in museums is integral to upsetting the narratives that have continued to misrepresent Métis in museums. Dawn spoke about the need for museums to engage with tourists and newcomers to Canada. Dawn stated, "I think to some degree museums have the power to have that evidence for [newcomers and tourists]. When [tourists come] there's got to be something that's put together so there's more access for people who come here and then can understand what has happened."[51] Krista agreed and recalled her experience encountering Métis material culture when she was visiting Germany, and the power of the words used to describe the makers of the piece.

> I remember, I was 18, a long time ago, and I was in Germany visiting some of my mom's family and we were in this little town called Guttering … They have this little collection of oddities and … they had a fire bag and it was like falling apart under the glass. And the translated, well it basically said, half breed from Canada. Yeah. So, I was sitting there with these German cousins and I was like, so you want to know about my culture? That right there is about my culture. And they were like, oh! But I thought you were this thing called Métis. And I was like, well that's what we call ourselves, but that's not what other people call us. Oh! And it had never occurred to them that that would be a reality. (Krista)[52]

These representations sparked conversations with Krista's non-Métis kin—conversations that would not have happened if she had not been there to properly interpret the material culture they were viewing. Sharon spoke about the need for museums to create more current exhibitions about both historic and contemporary Métis. Sharon noted problems with a current travelling exhibition, and its placement of Métis in the past while ignoring the present. She stated:

> There needs to be an initiative to create a more current, or a couple more current exhibits, specifically on Métis. You know, the idea of land scrip and title and what happened with that …

[50] Oster, Interview.
[51] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.
[52] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.

> you know we've talked residential schools, so I think we need to do, you know that's part of it, but I think we need to focus on other histories too. And, the idea of political activity that happened here in Alberta when it was illegal for them to be meeting, and they're meeting in the basement of the church and they're saying they're having religious meetings, but they're actually politically organizing for us to have land base here in Alberta. And, those are such unique stories, right? And that's where you can get the writings from, the guys that were writing back like Jim Brady, but you can also do recordings and so forth and have the whole objects. So, I think there needs to be more of a push from, or more initiative from the museum community to look at this history as Canadian history, western Canadian history, and we're not just people that were figments. Because even when you go into the RAM right now, there are some good things in there, but they don't have anything current. They don't talk about the current Métis. Like, why don't they have a picture of Muriel Stanley Venne in there? Why isn't there a picture of my mom [Senator Thelma Chalifoux] in there? You know? Like, they used my mom when they did their presentation about the new museum, but you know you don't see no picture of her. (Sharon)[53]

When reflecting upon youth engagement and educating the greater public, Wyatt spoke about his desire to see kinship connections between Métis and First Nations re-established. He felt as though museums could take the initiative to provide spaces for Indigenous peoples to share their knowledges with one another to begin being in good relation with one another again. Wyatt stated:

> I think too, like, my experience has been that Indigenous people love to do the culture share. It's like, oh what do you do? Oh, we do this, this is why. And it's like, oh that's so cool! We do this! And it's a similar reason. So, like if we could … how would access to material culture encourage cultural connection … I think a big part of that is how do we move forward with other First Nations people because now that those, a lot of people take up these divisions. Moving forward I think these culture shares, not just access to Métis people, but maybe like Métis people showing off these things in the museums to non-Métis people and being like, okay, let me tell you about this and then like having that share. (Wyatt)[54]

Acknowledging the role of museums in the perpetuation of knowledge, research participants also spoke about the need for museums to be places of connection and reconnection. During our conversations, all of the research participants focused upon their desire for museums to also make space for Métis who are looking to connect or reconnect with a culture that they have been dispossessed of. Norma talked about the suppression of Métis culture and how important it is for Métis to have access to material culture. She stated, "Because Metis history,

[53] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[54] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

culture and traditions were suppressed for so many years after the resistance; a lot of our people are only learning about their roots. Connecting to one's roots, learning about our history, having access to see our material culture will explain why the Metis Nation is striving for self-determination and self-government … we were known as 'Otipemisiwak … the people who own themselves.'"[55] For Krista and Bailey, museums should act as a place where connecting and reconnecting with ancestral knowledge is possible. Krista talked about the effect that losing her ancestors had on her personal development and how she regains that connection through material culture. She said:

> When we talk about Métis culture, especially how a lot of what we've done has been forced underground for a lot of families, and then also looking at how Métis, especially women, were supporting their families through creating beautiful art and whatnot, and those things were so—I mean I think there is so little of what we actually have that we can see and hold and be with to each us all of those lost ideas and patterns and arts and whatnot and so, when we don't have that it's really hard to share a lot of those concepts of culture and identity with our children and to pass on those traditional arts and to pass on their own sort of, you know, culture and community … My kohkum, she was a knowledge holder, you know she did genealogy, stories, medicine, that sort of thing, she embroidered and whatnot, but she surrounded me when I was young with beaders and artisans to learn. But then they, they passed away. Right? So, then that was lost. In some ways I feel cheated because I never got that chance to, you know, sit during my first moon time with different aunties and them teaching me the different patterns and the stories behind all of them. And so, I feel like every time I see a piece of Métis work in a museum, I have a sense of kinship to it and that is somebody trying to teach me. So some of those objects, they have to be open for Métis to see because we didn't have that passed down to us in the proper way so now we have to grab it any way we can. (Krista)[56]

Bailey also spoke about the intergenerational knowledge that is passed down through material culture. She recalled learning about Métis-specific techniques for beading that would ensure beadwork lasted for a long time. She stated:

> You know and now I think in terms of bringing it into the present, and having people reconnect. I think being able to be like oh I've seen that beadwork in the museum, and I want to learn how to bead. So, now I've learned how to bead or embroider or any types of those things. And so now I can do these things that connect me back to what I see in the museum, like what my family would have done … and I think there's something really cool with Métis beadwork being so specific with how it was done. Most Métis beadwork was floral. A lot of it was the five petal and to be able to actually go in and look at it and see like, oh this was done with two needles and even there to be a

[55] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.
[56] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

> description of how, because a lot of people bead with just one needle because it's easier or they like it better, or whatever, but it's like traditionally, it was done with two and it was done in this specific way and if there was a way to get close to that as a beader and to be able to learn that history as well. Like hey, they want to do two needle beadwork because the needle that holds all of their beads breaks easy and they would rather just use a regular sewing needle to do all of the hard work. And this makes it stronger and last longer … and then just to be able to be in a place that's all Métis … and Métis were known as the flower beadwork people … For artisans and people who already have some experience to be able to go and look at it. And that's why Métis beadwork you see it lasting so long and it being so strong and holding up is you can tell this was done, every bead was beaded. They didn't skip beads. And they used two needles and … imagine beading that by a little coal light in the middle of winter in a cabin. (Bailey)[57]

For the public to be truthfully educated about Métis histories, realities, and futurities, and for museums to recognize their role as a meeting space for Métis to connect and reconnect to their culture, museum professionals must be in good relation with Métis. This includes being educated in Métis methodologies for museum interpretation and upsetting the colonial power structures that perpetuate the objectification of Métis in museums. Museums can begin upsetting power structures by engaging in research projects that recover the narratives of the material culture they house, consulting with community, and upsetting colonial ideas of the ownership of material culture by practising true stewardship. This also means that museums must acknowledge their role in the continued dispossession of Métis from their material culture and engage in repatriation.

Finding 4: All participants believe that the pursuit of repatriation is very important.

Throughout this study, research participants repeatedly expressed a desire to engage in the repatriation of Métis material culture. Josh and Sharon both recounted experiences they had with the repatriation of Métis material culture. Josh spoke about the return of his great-great-grandfather's sash and how meaningful it is for him to have access to it through his work with Michif Cultural Connections. He said:

> I just think of my great-great-grandfather's sash and how it was very easy for us to get that once people knew it was connected to our family. Especially when my grandma was in the Senate and

[57] Oster, Interview.

> people knew who she was. They contacted her, and literally travelled all of the way down from the Yukon area and gifted it to our family and to this day, we still have it in our centre here today and we are very glad about that because it is a strong representation of our Métis culture. And, that we have access to it 24/7 in that we have total control of where the sash goes, how it's preserved, and how the history of it is taught … (Josh)[58]

Sharon also got to experience the joy of repatriating Métis material culture, this time to the RAM. It is important to note that while these objects came home, they continue to be housed at the museum. Sharon stated:

> They had found that collection [the Southesk Collection] in a castle in Scotland … it was in a trunk and they found these beautiful Métis items that were from around this area because he [the Earl of Southesk] was through this area. They were pristine. And they—it was going up for auction, I think from Sotheby's—and the Royal Museum got wind of it. And it wasn't the MNA, it was the Senate of Canada, and Senator Thelma Chalifoux that wrote the letter of support in order for them to get that quick grant to purchase that collection, which is now at the Royal Museum. And when they brought it back, we participated in that ceremony because it was brought back and they did ceremony[ies] around those objects and things like that. So, that was really cool to witness. (Sharon)[59]

As our conversations turned toward how repatriation in a Métis context could be conceived, many research participants grew hesitant and expressed concern at the lack of resources available to them to further repatriation. Norma questioned whether repatriation is even an option, given this lack of resources. She stated, "Repatriation may not be possible given that the Metis Nation does not have the facilities (museum) to house large collections of our material culture."[60] Tanya expressed similar concerns, suggesting that repatriation cannot be worked toward until museums are in good relation with Métis. She said:

> So, the repatriation of material culture is so important, but it really depends upon the context. Because I agree with you, with material culture you want to keep them updated so it doesn't get destroyed. But, repatriation—I think only the community knows the right way to deal with a collection like that … Repatriation to me can't exist unless that foundation is there. So, it is difficult for me to imagine it without having that base of relationality. So, it's almost like the building blocks, like you can't really get there unless these pieces are kind of in place. So, it's difficult for me to imagine it. (Tanya)[61]

[58] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[59] Morin, Morin, and Ball.
[60] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.
[61] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

In a similar vein, Connie stated that she felt Métis repatriation was based upon being in good relation with museums and museums understanding the need to have Métis working with their material culture in museums. Furthermore, she said, "I think that the way that we repatriate is to bring [Métis] in and be able to share some of that with [the museum] because who is going to know better than somebody with your own culture?"[62] Without exception, research participants emphasized that repatriation cannot occur while museums are not in good relation with Métis in Alberta.

When talking about ideas of repatriation and the role that museums play, most research participants expressed their desire to utilize the resources of museums to preserve Métis material culture. They also said that material culture, while being cared for in museum collections, can serve to further understandings of Métis identity and culture and act as a tangible representation of past and present relationships. For Sharon, it was important for museums to care for Métis material culture; however, she highlighted the need and desire to remain in ceremony with the material culture. She stated:

> I also think of how we care for artifacts and the process that goes into that. I also know how they can deteriorate if they're not stored in the proper context. So, I kind of look at it in both ways. Because I see where in a museum, if you have the right kind of museum you can really work with community, like I said. And then they can take it out when the need it. And, like I said, that's where the relationship is built. You have trust in this museum that they are going to look after kohkum's teapot. But, when you are doing the feast for your kohkum that you do every year, you want that teapot there. We won't use the teapot, but the teapot will sit on the table and we can talk about it and the stories about, oh, kohkum used to make tea in that, and that kind of stuff. That's where I see that repatriation act, unless the community is set up with a museum and that, and they can store that where it's not going to be—or it's going to be protected. Because they do need to be protected. (Sharon)[63]

Bailey and Wyatt both expressed their view on the role of museums in making material culture available to them and others. Bailey liked the idea of a space where everyone could

[62] Kulhavy, Interview.
[63] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

access the material culture, "We went to the Glenbow to do some research and they let us into the basement of the archives and we saw all of the old Métis stuff and I thought, this is so cool. And I don't know if I would want that taken out and just given to somebody because it was so beautiful and so delicate, and it was so organized there."[64] Wyatt also expressed that the museum in Orkney should retain the Métis material culture they hold because of the kinship connections between Orkney and Métis. He said, "Those pieces that they have there [in Orkney] they should keep because there's a really cool—like it helps people realize there is a history between Orkney and the Métis here."[65] For Wyatt, the connections between Orkney and Métis are not recognized enough and having Métis material culture stay in Orkney represents the possibility that kinship connections can be re-established.

For all the research participants, repatriation is of the utmost importance. However, research participants agreed that the repatriation of Métis material culture cannot occur until museums are in good relation with Métis and resources are made available for Métis to physically repatriate their material culture. Further, research participants highlighted differing points of view when it comes to the role of Métis organization to further repatriation on behalf of its members.

Connie communicated her desire to have Métis-specific agreements or legislation that would guide repatriation and Métis care and control over material culture in collections. She acknowledged that while agreements are good, they also need to be worded properly to consider the unique emergence and identity of contemporary Métis. She said that legislation would be good, as long as it stated that Métis is history diverse and does not fit one mould. Legislation would have to be broad enough to recognize the different geographies and lands of Métis, the

[64] Oster, Interview.
[65] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

different cultural expressions within Métis culture, and the variety of Métis experiences, while being specific enough to recognize Métis culture as being distinctly Métis. For Connie, this is most likely to be achieved through the development of relationships between museums and Métis communities.[66]

When speaking about the idea of written agreements, Josh expressed concern that museums would not consult with the Métis community regarding access and, therefore, could deny access to those who did not fit into a potentially narrow definition of Métis identity. Josh also expressed a desire to see museums take the initiative on agreements and not wait for governments to mandate an agreement for Métis-specific repatriation, care, and control.

> I think there has to be, it just has to be more written whether the community or the nation has more power in that sense … And I think that still leaves room for museums to build relationships with communities because that's a personal initiative that the organizations should be doing. It shouldn't be, oh the government tells us we have to do this so we're going to do it now. If they take this initiative themselves when the government introduces it, they're not going to have to worry about anything because they've been doing the work in that sense. They are prepared for it, right? But obviously that's just me saying how I wish things would go. (Josh)[67]

Wyatt echoed Josh's sentiment and also expressed concern that the participation of Métis national bodies could potentially hinder the relationality necessary to advance care, control, and repatriation of Métis material culture. Wyatt stated:

> I'm of the opinion that it would be better for museums to work with families and communities rather than national bodies. The latter can't handle that kind of responsibility. I also know of Metis people who actively choose not to join these bodies (which I sympathize with) but who would be left out of such an agreement. For these reasons, I think it is better for museums to work with individuals, families, and communities on a case-by-case basis. I trust museums more than I trust our own national bodies. (Wyatt)[68]

Conversely, for Norma, the MNA plays an important role in creating repatriation frameworks for Métis in Alberta. With written agreements, the museums and institutions that

[66] Kulhavy, Telephone conversation.
[67] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[68] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

currently house Métis material culture "would remain at arm's length from political interference and subject to the rules and regulations of museums in Alberta."[69] For Norma, the ability to have written agreements between the MNA and museums would further self-determination of Métis and could be guided by the Provincial Council of the MNA.

When reflecting upon the length of time required to create legislation for Blackfoot repatriation in Alberta,[70] Tanya expressed that policies and relationships needed to grow and progress together and that any policies needed to be created in a Métis-specific way. Without a focus on relationality, Métis-specific policies cannot be developed. She stated,

> Yeah, develop the policies and the relationships. I would think that they would want to build both of those at the same time because the relationship, how long is it going to take to write those policies? Like, if it's 35 years then you're not going to have the same relationships. (Tanya)[71]

The desire to advance repatriation is of the utmost importance to the research participants, though they envision the development of a framework in different ways. However, one theme connects all the research participants ideas: relationality. Museums must be in good relation with Métis in order to advance any type of Métis-specific framework for Métis care, control, and repatriation of Métis material culture.

This chapter presented the four findings from this study. The first finding focused upon museums and Métis being in good relation with one another—a theme that is braided through each of the other findings of this study. This study also found that there is a historical and contemporary misunderstanding of Métis identity, and that there is a desire to see museums take responsibility for the knowledges they produce. This study further found that repatriation is very important to Métis and that there is a desire to develop a written framework that supports Métis

[69] Spicer, Responses to Questionnaire.
[70] The First Nations Sacred and Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCORA)
[71] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

care, control, and repatriation. The next chapter in this thesis places these findings within the current literature on repatriation.

Chapter 6
Discussing Métis Material Culture Repatriation

Building from the context discussed in Chapter 2, the literature of repatriation, decolonization, and Métis material culture discussed in Chapter 3, and the theoretical and methodological considerations presented in Chapter 4, this chapter provides an analysis of the findings presented in Chapter 5. This chapter places the findings in the greater context of repatriation in Canada, the marginalization of Métis from policy creation, and the importance of material culture to further self-determination. When the findings are situated within the discussions of the previous chapters, the questions posed in this study can be answered. As mentioned in Chapter 1, and reiterated in Chapter 4, this study sought to answer three questions:

- How have colonial practices regarding the collection and retention of material culture contributed to Métis dispossession?
- What is the importance of repatriation to Métis communities in Alberta?
- What does a Métis-specific framework for repatriation look like?

The first research question asked:

How have colonial practices regarding the collection and retention of material culture contributed to Métis dispossession?

Participants identified several ways in which museums continue to exert power and control over material culture through their policies. This study found that historic and contemporary misunderstandings of Métis identity and the ways in which museums classify and label the material culture in their collections have contributed to the dispossession of Métis from their material culture.

All research participants believe that there is a historic and contemporary misunderstanding of Métis. Research participants all indicated that many non-Métis did not

understand that Métis were a distinct Indigenous people and that Métis does not mean mixed Indigenous and white. Norma reflected this view, saying:

> Métis people have known and celebrated together as a "distinct" Nation for nearly two centuries … We are a unique Indigenous community with an inherent relationship to the land. The Nation was born of the fur trade; Métis developed their own language, culture and identity distinct from First Nations and Europeans. We became a "New" Indigenous people. (Norma)[1]

Scholars have highlighted the misconceptions and misunderstandings of Métis identity and the ways in which colonial categories have contributed to those misunderstandings. The term "métis" has become a general reference to an individual of mixed Indigenous and European fur trader descent, and a replacement for the historic term "half-breed."[2] It has also become a catch-all category for Indigenous groups and individuals who do not fall under the umbrella of other Indigenous categorizations (such as being a status Indian under the Indian Act) but who still want to identify as Indigenous and pursue the rights that exist under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.[3] It has become a term that residual, non-categorized Indigenous communities and people have adopted regardless of the labels they may have used previously.[4] However, reliance upon "métis" as a replacement for the historic term "half-breed," and as a catch-all category of mixedness between Indigenous people and European settlers, diminishes the identity of the Métis and contributes greatly to the misunderstandings and misconceptions of Métis by non-Métis. As Andersen points out, Métis are more than just their mixed heritage.[5]

Historically, Métis were recorded by governments as "half-breeds," classified not as European but not as "Indian" either. According to Teillet, "the very concept of Métis, as a people, challenged the established boundaries of culture in Canada,"[6] and as a result federal and

[1] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.
[2] Andersen, "'I'm Métis, What's Your Excuse?'"
[3] Gunn, "Defining Metis People as a People."
[4] Grammond and Grioux, "'Finding' Metis Communities."
[5] Andersen, "'I'm Métis, What's Your Excuse?'"
[6] Teillet, in Dubois and Saunders, "'Just Do It!,'" 191.

provincial governments were unable to apply their classification schemes to Métis. This history of misconception is exemplified by current policies that state in order to be Métis, one cannot be First Nations (read "Indian" as defined by the Indian Act). In *Powley*, the Supreme Court of Canada places Métis and "Indian" in direct opposition, in a binary system where one member of a culture cannot be a member of the other.[7] This colonially imposed concept does not account for the uniqueness of Métis and the importance of kinscapes[8] and relationality. According to Moreton-Robinson, white possession is evident within state classification because Indigenous peoples are continually having to prove their identity. Moreton-Robinson argues that because Indigenous people are required to "authenticate their indigeneity for access to welfare, citizenship, or Native title,"[9] power remains vested in the state and the state remains in possession of Indigenous identity.

As a "people in between," Métis occupy an ambiguous position in Canada's political and legal framework.[10] Isaac and Racette both suggest that Métis have been excluded from Indigenous rights conversations because, as Isaac states, Canadian law does not recognize those who do not "fit into an easily identifiable legal box."[11] Andersen suggests that until policy actors take responsibility for having created the notion that Métis means mixed rather than distinct as a nation, and until policy-makers stop trying to define Métis in their own terms, Métis will never truly be free to be Métis.[12] Vermette states, "By placing Aboriginal identifiers in the historical past rather than the present or recent past, the Court denies that Aboriginal people act in the world. They merely *were* rather than *are* [emphasis added]. Aboriginal people are denied the

[7] Gunn, "Defining Metis People as a People"; R. v. Powley.
[8] Macdougall and St-Onge, "'Kinscapes.'"
[9] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 115.
[10] Teillet, in Dubois and Saunders, "'Just Do It!,'" 192.
[11] Isaac, "A Matter of National and Constitutional Import," 3; Racette, "Confessions and Reflections."
[12] Andersen, "'I'm Métis, What's Your Excuse?'"

luxury of adaptation and change that the oppressor society takes for granted … Aboriginal peoples and cultures of the historical past are speculate upon, defined, and judged in contemplation of the present."[13] The state has been unwilling or unable to move beyond the concept of Métis as mixed and to create space for Métis to define themselves, and as Moreton-Robinson suggests, this unwillingness or inability indicates that the state is operating as it was intended: by "white possessive logics."[14] According to Moreton-Robinson, "White possessive logics are operationalized within discourses to circulate sets of meaning about ownership of the nation, as part of common sense knowledge, decision making, and socially produced conventions."[15] Within dominant discourses, racial signifiers such as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are used to reinforce ownership of the nation—namely, that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are not part of the ownership. These discourses reinforce the concept that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are owned by the nation. But for Métis, white possessive logics go one step further. Métis, although named by the state, have not and cannot be defined by the state because the state has focused definitions upon Métis mixedness. To the state, Métis are simultaneously neither Indigenous nor non-Indigenous. Because the state places emphasis on Métis as mixed, Métis fall into "a jurisdictional gap, victims of the competitive nature of Canadian federalism."[16] Because Métis do not fit into the state-mandated binaries of Indigeneity, they are simultaneously possessed and dispossessed by the state.

The ramifications of the misconceptions about Métis and the ways in which Métis continue to be possessed and dispossessed by the state are made apparent in museums. Like states, museums have imposed western categories of classifications that are based upon their

[13] Vermette, "Colonialism," 44.
[14] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 115.
[15] Moreton-Robinson, xii.
[16] Papillon, in Dubois and Saunders, "'Just Do It!,'" 191.

racialized view of the world. According to Nakata, "Western categories of classification … have been developed in ways that suit the hierarchies, linearity, abstraction and objectification of Western knowledge—all of which are the antithesis of Indigenous Knowledge traditions and technologies."[17] Indeed, the categories of classification do not represent Métis understandings of identity or knowledges, and the classifications that museums impose on Métis trouble Métis identity by, once again, shifting the focus from their uniqueness to their mixedness. As Bailey pointed out, in museums she sees "artifacts that are labelled, like, 'Cree beadwork' … and I'm like, no, no, no. We need to be clear that this is Métis."[18] Bailey expressed frustration that mislabelling could lead to material culture being repatriated to those who have no connection to it. She said, "When you are repatriating these things … make sure that you know who it's coming from."

These sentiments are confirmed by Métis scholars such as Racette, who suggests that "Métis material culture has either eluded categorization or been ignored and subsumed within generic regional identities. Occasionally catalogued outside ethnography, Métis objects can also be in "pioneer" or "settlement" collections."[19] Indeed, research participants raised concern over misrepresentations of Métis when jumbled together with "generic regional identities" or "pioneer or settlement collections." Norma stated, "What is confusing are displays that have First Nation, Métis and pioneers' materials all mixed together—not clearly linking to families, location of origin and/or source documentation."[20] Norma added that when Métis material culture is not connected to those who created, it devalues the kinship structures that exist within Métis ways of knowing. She said that "Métis families seeing their ancestor's material culture displayed with no

[17] Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines*, 192.
[18] Oster, Interview.
[19] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail," 226.
[20] Spicer, Responses to questionnaire.

mention of original ownership can be devastating."[21] Norma's thoughts are supported by Métis scholars, such as Racette, St-Onge, and Macdougall, who argue that kinship structures are intrinsic to Métis ways of knowing.[22] As Racette states, "The Métis must be regarded as a set of relational constellations—kinscapes—where families … are connected to each other, building extensive economic networks based on inter-generational extended family networks across the northern Plains."[23] Museums that misclassify or misrepresent Métis material culture deny the kinship relationships present between Métis and their material culture. This denial of kinship reinforces white possession of Métis and privileges western classification schemes above Métis knowledges. Further, because Métis material culture continues to be misclassified, Métis are not able to exert care or control over material culture, since museums do not recognize their authority. Museums remain in power and continue to exert control over Métis material culture. As a result, Métis continue to be dispossessed of their material culture and cannot exercise self-determination through care and control of their own material culture.

The first question of this study sought to expose the ways in which misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Métis have contributed to the dispossession of their material culture. This study confirms the findings of scholars such as Racette, Brasser, and Peers, who, as stated in Chapter 2, contend that Métis material culture is misrepresented and misclassified in museums.[24] This study has shown that these misrepresentations and misclassifications are a result of historical and contemporary misunderstandings of Métis and are perpetuated through white supremacist ideas of racial hierarchies and Métis as mixed. These colonial ideologies

[21] Spicer.
[22] Macdougall, "Wahkootowin"; Macdougall and St-Onge, "'Kinscapes'"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."
[23] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail," 261.
[24] Brasser, "In Search of Métis Art"; Peers, "'Many Tender Ties'"; Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail."

continue to dispossess Métis of their material culture. This study also confirms the desire of Métis in Alberta to critically dismantle the idea of Métis as mixed, by exercising care and control over their material culture and ensuring that museums include Métis narratives in their interpretation. This concept is discussed at greater length below.

The second question in this study asked:

What is the importance of repatriation to Métis communities in Alberta?

All of the research participants in this study expressed a strong connection to material culture and the ways in which it connected them to their past, present, and future kin. Tanya reflected, "Having a piece of material culture is a way of connecting with your ancestors which is so powerful. I've held stuff that great-grandparents had and it's like, oh, this is so special. And it makes you feel, I don't know, … connected. You get back your stories as well but having something tangible makes it different."[25] The stories that accompany material culture are often as important as the objects themselves. The ability to reveal the object narratives that accompany material culture in museums collections is a very important aspect of self-determination. One research participant, Josh, reflected deeply about the necessity of telling Métis histories from Métis perspectives. He stated:

> One aspect of self-determination is that we have the right to tell our history and the right to teach our culture and our traditions … The way that descriptions and certain things can be written. For Métis people, it can make them think that they are not a Nation. It's just everyone who is mixed and they're not a sovereign people. If the descriptions are written right, it honours the people. (Josh)[26]

Josh's comment not only give a perspective on self-determination, it also extends knowledge to museums. He explains how, through Métis interpretation, the misconceptions of Métis as mixed can be righted. Museums could right the ways in which their knowledges have

[25] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[26] Morin, Morin, and Ball.

contributed to the misconceptions of Métis as mixed. Creating space for Métis to exercise self-determination is a way in which Métis can exercise sovereignty and control over their own material culture. Racette supports Josh's comments and acknowledges that material culture is of vital importance to Métis self-determination because it encompasses the past, present, and future of Métis.[27] Josh's comments are also supported by Lonetree's assertion that sovereignty can only be expressed through a nation's capacity to express its own history, culture, and futurities.[28]

However, the denial of self-determination is also the denial of sovereignty. Writing about the ways in which the Canadian state denies self-determination Moreton-Robinson states:

> To deny this right [self-determination] is a way of refusing and disavowing Indigenous sovereignty, which is consistent and all too evident in their respective treatment of Indigenous peoples. For example, the unresolved issues first brought to the League of Nations by Chief Deskaheh continue today between the Six Nations Haudenosaunee and the Canadian federal government.[29]

According to Moreton-Robinson, the state does not stand against Indigenous sovereignty as such—it simply makes it unattainable. She argues that the virtues espoused by the state regarding its commitment to uphold Indigenous sovereignty serves only to reinforce white possession by the state.[30] According to Moreton-Robinson, "This is how virtue functions discursively within the possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty to dispossess Indigenous peoples from the ground of moral value, enabling racism to be exercised with the best of intentions."[31] When the state (and by extension museums) affirms that it is committed to Indigenous sovereignty, it can appear to take the moral high ground; the state, through its virtue, places Indigenous people in opposition to it.[32] Not being able to achieve sovereignty thereby

[27] 05-Sep-2020 09:13:009/5/2020 9:13:00 AM
[28] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 127.
[29] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 183.
[30] Moreton-Robinson, 183.
[31] Moreton-Robinson, 189.
[32] Moreton-Robinson, 181.

becomes the fault of Indigenous peoples.[33] Thus, while the state espouses Indigenous sovereignty, the frameworks necessary to achieve sovereignty, such as the exercise of self-determination, are not put into place.

One of the goals of this research project is to create a foundation from which Métis can exercise self-determination to further sovereignty over their material culture. The experience of one research participant with a museum highlights the ways in which Moreton-Robinson's virtuous white sovereignty is used in museums. Bailey spoke at length about an experience she had at the St. Paul Museum, and the ways in which the museum encouraged her to write a Métis history of St. Paul,[34] while simultaneously diminishing the Métis narrative. Bailey stated:

> If you are going to do a piece about Métis, then you have to do it right … The original writeup that [the St. Paul Museum] had in the 80s said that the Métis weren't able to farm properly so they [the French] came in to help save the colony and now it's a French colony. That's not what happened. So, we went in there and we told them our point of view. And, I realized, that if I didn't re-write that piece then nobody would. So, I spent a couple days and I re-wrote that basic history of St. Paul des Métis … It was too long for what they wanted because they wanted to keep their history next to our history rather than just replace their wrong history. So, they put mine below it, not at eye level so you had to crouch down. And they used a really, really, small font. And they had it on two awkward pages right below their history of what they had said in the 80s and they took out the part at the end about how much racism my family had experienced. James Brady puts in his writing, he said that the racism he experienced was the, what do you call it, "the unending ordeal of daily conflict," and I quoted that, and they took it out. And I asked them after … why didn't you ask me to shorten it then? (Bailey)[35]

Bailey's experience highlights the ways in which museums work with Indigenous peoples to deny Indigenous sovereignty. By allowing Bailey the forum and space to write an accurate representation of Métis histories and narratives of St. Paul des Métis, the museum appeared virtuous. Yet in the end, the museum's unwillingness to feature a truthful Métis narrative that included the racism experienced by Métis in St. Paul, and the inclusion of Métis histories on a less than equal footing with white history, work against Métis self-determination

[33] Moreton-Robinson, 181.
[34] St. Paul is historically referred to as St. Paul des Métis.
[35] Oster, Interview.

and sovereignty. According to Moreton-Robinson, "These representations provide white people with a sense of pride and investment in their ownership of the nation, its institutions and public spaces."[36] In exercising white people's "sense of pride and investment in their ownership of the nation,"[37] St. Paul Museum chose to further white settler supremacist narratives.

Having worked with Métis material culture within a museum setting, Racette has unique insight into the ways in which Métis self-determination and sovereignty are denied by museums. She states, "Museum systems are useful road maps, but we must never accept their authority without question or be limited by their impositions. We must pose our own questions, and be prepared to open every drawer, peek in every shelf, and challenge structural categories."[38] Racette's assertions about museum authority are demonstrated in Bailey's experience with the St. Paul museum. Accordingly, Métis must not accept museum authority over their material culture; however, museums must take the steps necessary to move beyond virtue; they must engage in true relationship building and acknowledge their role in producing and reproducing colonial narratives of Métis histories and misinterpretations of Métis present and future realities. This work involves taking accountability and actively engaging in learning about contemporary and historic Métis realities. However, one of the research participants, Dawn, stated that Métis lack the support to assert control over their material culture. She said:

> Well, and I think … the fact that the Calls to Action didn't really acknowledge Métis as well is a big barrier in these kinds of things where we're, if we were to go to that museum and say this is not right, you know, we can't even have that document as a backup to say, look at what TRC is requested. This is the same thing … Time and time again, we see again, this continued rape. That's what that is like. (Dawn) [39]

[36] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 97.
[37] Moreton-Robinson, 97.
[38] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail," 226.
[39] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

Dawn's statement is not easy to hear. And, indeed, it should be difficult to hear. Dawn's comments highlight the need for museums to decolonize their practices surrounding their authority of knowledge. They must learn about Métis histories from Métis. According to Boostrom, "Learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favour of a new way of seeing things."[40] Webster argues this new way of seeing is to be "actively anti-colonial" through the incorporation of nation-specific knowledges.[41] Indeed, what Métis are asking museums to do to upset the colonial power regimes that are perpetuated by and within their institutions. They are asking museums to critique and decolonize the ways in which they continue to possess Métis through the continued retention, care, and control of Métis material culture, as well as the ways in which Métis narratives are misrepresented by current interpretation. If museums truly are committed to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty, it is absolutely necessary for museums to give up their current ways of knowing and their power and control over the production and reproduction of knowledge.

This study has highlighted the ways in which Métis have been marginalized in museum policy creation, which has limited in their ability to exercise their right to repatriation in Canada. At the time of writing this thesis, the provincial museums of Alberta, the Royal Alberta Museum and the Glenbow Museum, have successfully partnered with First Nations to further Indigenous self-determination and, indeed, even Indigenous sovereignty, through repatriation. However, there is currently no literature speaking to partnerships between museums and Métis or to Métis repatriation or what a Métis-specific framework would look like.

The third question in this study asked:

[40] Boostrom, "Safe Spaces," 399.
[41] Webster, "From Colonization to Repatriation," 27.

What does a Métis-specific framework for repatriation look like?

Many of the research participants stated that a framework is necessary to advance repatriation, and they highlighted several ways in which museums and governments could enter into frameworks for repatriation with Métis in Alberta. This study found that a Métis-specific framework for repatriation is an agreement that is based in relationality. Without relationality at the centre of repatriation, repatriation cannot occur with Métis in Alberta. With relationality at its centre, a Métis-specific framework for repatriation acknowledges historic and contemporary Métis identity, includes Métis in the production of knowledge surrounding their material culture, and focuses on both repatriation and the exercise of self-determination through care and control over material culture. With relationality, museums are placed in the position of steward of the material culture they hold.

Repatriation as Relationality

This study found that a Métis-specific framework for repatriation is built within Métis relationality. One of the research participants, Josh, spoke of his desire to see museums be in good relation with Métis and how repatriation can only work if museums and Métis are in good relation with one another. He said:

> We're working so hard to just have a good relationship with, whether it's Canada, whether it's these big organizations that still technically do represent Canada in some form of way or another. But that's really what it's based on. We're really just hoping that we can get a good relationship out of it. So, with that, you could get really great ideas for how repatriation would work in a Métis context because you will have that great relationship and you will have the people in that community to lead you. I mean, just like what we are doing today. This is a perfect example of building relationships in that sense. (Josh)[42]

The good relationship that Josh speaks about is more than relationality from a western perspective. Moreton-Robinson argues that when Indigenous people speak of relationality, understandings of relationality move beyond western concepts of relationship. She states:

[42] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

> Relationality is grounded in a holistic conception of the inter-connectedness and inter-substantiation between and among all living things and the earth, which is inhabited by a world of ancestors and creator beings. It informs our epistemological and ethical premise that social research should begin with an awareness of our proper relationships in the world we inhabit, and is conducted with respect, responsibility, generosity, obligation, and reciprocity.[43]

Moreton-Robinson's concept of Indigenous relationality seeks to explain the deep interconnectedness of all living things. However, scholars such as Macdougall have suggested that there is a more complex way to expresses the nature of Métis relationality through the concept of wahkotoowin:

> "Wahkotoowin" has been translated by scholars of the Cree language as "relationship" or "relation," but such a translation misses much of the meaning and sentiment that the term and its various derivates actually express.[44] As much as it is a worldview based on familial—especially interfamilial—connectedness, wahkotoowin also conveys an idea about the virtues that an individual should personify as a family member. The values critical to family relationship—such as reciprocity, mutual support, decency, and order—in turn influenced the behaviours, actions, and decision making processes that shaped all community's economic and political interactions. Wahkotoowin contextualizes how relationships were intended to work within Metis society by defining and classifying relationships, prescribing patterns of behaviour between relatives and non-relatives, and linking people and communities in a large, complex web of relationships. Just as wahkotoowin mediated interactions between people, it also extended to the natural and spiritual worlds, regulating relationships between human and non-humans, the living and the dead, and humans and the natural environment.[45]

Regardless of the term used to describe Métis relationality, when the relationships between Métis and museums are based in Métis relationality, Métis material culture repatriation can be fully realized.

Métis relationality provides the guidelines for relationships to be built between museums and Métis. These guidelines are based on "reciprocity, mutual support, decency, and order,"[46] and can work to support Métis sovereignty by exercising self-determination through care and control of their material culture.

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[43] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 71.

[44] For a discussion of wahkotoowin as well as its linguistic origins, see Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 264 note, 13.

[45] Macdougall, 8.

[46] Macdougall, 8.

Repatriation as Knowledge

This study found that a Métis-specific framework for repatriation is founded in Métis knowledge. As was expressed earlier in this chapter, museums seek to perpetuate their power in the white supremacist state by controlling the narratives they produce. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo argue that power is reproduced through knowledge, and they pose a series of questions about the co-production of knowledge and power. They ask, "Who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, sources of evidence for constructing knowledge, what constitutes truth, how truth is to be verified, how evidence becomes truth, how valid inferences are to be drawn, the role of belief in evidence, and related issues."[47] In current museum institutions, Métis are not positioned as knowers and therefore cannot be involved in the co-production of knowledge. Instead, museums privilege the knowledge they have obtained and frame themselves within the authority of the knower. One of the research participants, Sharon, reflected upon the role that museums have as producers of knowledge. She said:

> Museums have a huge responsibility when it comes to education. They have a *huge* responsibility when it comes to education, and, it's a new thing for museums. This kind of idea is a new thing for museums. Educating the public is a new thing for museums because they were always in the back with their dust and their glasses and the artifacts. And it's changing now. And teachers and educators and families are demanding that in a lot of ways. You know? You house this so you are the keeper of that knowledge. But we also have to train people that *we* are the keepers of that knowledge. And in doing so, with *our* descriptions, then we show we have a bit of an authority when it comes to that information. [Emphasis in original.] (Sharon)[48]

Sharon's statement highlights the ways in which knowledge is currently produced in museums. Many scholars, including Racette, Peers and Brown, contend that museums must utilize Indigenous theories and methodologies when engaging with Indigenous material culture.[49] Indigenous methodologies would allow museums and communities to co-construct activities that

[47] Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, "How We Know," 57.
[48] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.
[49] Racette, "Pieces Left along the Trail"; Brown and Peers, *Museums and Source Communities*.

further wahkotoowin. Indeed, Hollowell and Nicholas argue that incorporating Indigenous methodologies is the only way for museums to understand the interconnectedness between Indigenous peoples and their material culture.[50] For these reasons, a Métis-specific framework for repatriation must be based in Métis methodologies and relationality.

Repatriation as Care and Control

This study found that a Métis-specific framework for repatriation requires that Métis exercise care and control over their material culture. Two separate aspects of care and control were identified by the research participants in this study: stewardship and Métis futurities.

Acknowledging that Métis repatriation must be based in relationality requires museums to move beyond their ideas of ownership of the material culture they hold. The concepts of ownership of material culture are tied to white possession and white domination.[51] As was discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, museums seek to place material culture within the classifications of racial hierarchies. In doing so, museums perpetuate their imposed value of material culture, which leads to the commodification of culture. One of the research participants, Krista, stated that she felt concepts surrounding commodification and ownership could be dismantled if museums shifted their role from ownership of material culture to stewardship. She said:

> I think some of the idea of commodity would change if museums actually took the stance of that actual stewardship. That they don't own it, that they are the caretakers for it and the reason they're doing it isn't about, you know, putting a paycheque in their pocket. It's about the calling of it. The calling of being able to create these collections and educate and maintain a link to that past. If all of the museum staff had an understanding of that, every single person working in that place, whether it be the executive director all the way down to the part-time janitor person, you know, that's helping out, I think you would see a very different narrative and I think that's what is necessary. Having that change in perspective. (Krista)[52]

[50] Hollowell and Nicholas, "Using Ethnographic Methods."
[51] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*.
[52] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy, Focus Group.

Krista highlights the ways in which stewardship could shift narratives of white supremacy perpetuated within museums. By embracing true stewardship, museums could create space for Métis to exercise self-determination through care and control over their own material culture. Krista's comments also highlight the importance of educating people about the difference between ownership and stewardship.

Part of stewardship involves museums being transparent about what they hold in their collections and making the material accessible to the kin of those who created it. Currently, under both federal and provincial legislation, there is no requirement for museums to make the contents of their collections known to those whose originated the material culture. Indeed, the withholding of information about museum collections from the kin of those who created it enacts white possession. By denying knowledge of what material culture that they hold from Métis in Alberta, museums deny the self-determination and sovereignty of Métis and perpetuate the power of museums to control Métis material culture.

The denial of sovereignty through the dispossession of Métis material culture not only upsets existing and past kinship connections, it also effectively denies Métis futurities. By keeping Métis in the past, museums do not need to acknowledge that Métis exist today. Two research participants, Krista and Wyatt, spoke about how stewardship, access, and Métis futurities are found within wahkotoowin. Krista stated:

> It also expands the relationship. If you are a steward of our stuff that means you also need to support our modern artists and sell their work in your shop. That's so important and it speaks to Métis … Well, we as Métis people, we're not just from the past. We are still here. We're still going to be here. You can't get rid of us. So, supporting that. But in a respectful way. (Krista)[53]

Krista's comments are supported by Tayac, who has a desire to see Indigenous material culture presented in a good way. Both believe that a good museum would be "about the living, in

[53] Schiefelbein, Saunders-Dahl, and Leddy.

honor of the ancestors, for the future generations."[54] By denying transparency and access, museums maintain ownership over Métis material culture. Moreton-Robinson argues that the maintenance of ownership preserves the white supremacy of the state. She states, "Underpinning property rights, possession entails values, beliefs, norms, and social conventions as well as legal protection as it operates ideologically, discursively, and materially. Property rights are derived from the Crown, which in the form of the nation-state holds possession. Possession and nationhood are thus constituted symbiotically."[55] By not making visible the collections they hold, museums are maintaining ownership of material culture while supporting the state in its ownership of Métis.

Repatriation Frameworks

This study found that while most research participants (seven out of nine) saw a need to have a written agreement to advance Métis repatriation in Alberta, there was no consensus on the ways in which that could be achieved. Some research participants highlighted the role that the Métis Nation of Alberta could play in advancing a repatriation framework for Métis in Alberta, while other research participants expressed hesitancy in having Métis governing bodies represent the interests of all Métis in Alberta.

The findings of this study are consistent with current scholarship on the ability of Métis organizational bodies to accurately represent the interests of Métis. The skepticism about Métis governing bodies is not necessarily based on a belief that such bodies cannot represent Métis; rather, it is because Métis governing bodies are required to distort Métis ways of knowing to fit western knowledge systems. Moreton-Robinson argues that "Indigenous Knowledge systems and

[54] Tayac, "Authoring Indigenous Studies in Three Dimensions: An Approach to Museum Curation," 231.
[55] Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 20.

Western knowledge systems work off different theories of knowledge";[56] as a result, Métis scholars are critical of the ways in Métis governing bodies are required to "[govern] ourselves under our own laws drawn from our own constitution rather than by the bylaws of non-profit societies."[57] As Dubois and Saunders suggest, "The incorporation of Métis governing bodies under not-for-profit legislation is one of the many consequences of Canada's colonial system."[58] For Chartrand, this consequence of colonial systems means that governments can never support Indigenous sovereignty, because the tools made available to support Indigenous sovereignty are "tainted by racism and are founded on the belief that Indigenous peoples are inferior and uncivilised."[59] Within this system, a Métis framework based in Métis relationality is impossible.

> The work that we do is heart work and we can't explain it any other way … It's just who we are as a people. We are protecting our history. Preserve, promote, and protect. So, this is part of that, in helping that process, so that we don't get lost in the world of Indigenous definitions. Keep that Otipemisiwak. (Sharon)[60]

This chapter analyzed the findings presented in the previous chapter through the lens of white possession and situated them within the greater context of the literature surrounding repatriation and museum decolonization. In the next chapter, I draw my conclusions about this study and outline my recommendations and areas for further research revealed by this study.

[56] Moreton-Robinson, 20.
[57] Chartier, "Toward a Métis Nation Constitution," 3.
[58] Dubois and Saunders, "Rebuilding Indigenous Nations through Constitutional Development," 887.
[59] Chartrand, "Mapping the Meaning of Reconciliation," 49.
[60] Morin, Morin, and Ball, Focus Group.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta to further repatriation of their material culture held in collections. It is anticipated that this study will be utilized by Métis organizations, such as the Métis Nation of Alberta, to further repatriation on behalf of Métis in Alberta. It was hoped that this study would (1) open dialogues surrounding Métis material culture repatriation; (2) create a better understanding of the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta to further repatriation efforts; (3) help to define the obstacles to repatriation; and (4) serve as a foundation for a Métis-specific framework for repatriation, care, and control.

The first major finding of this study was that all participants believe that it is of paramount importance that museums and collection institutions be in good relation with Métis. At present, museums are not in good relation with Métis and are not practising Métis relationality—the keystone to Métis repatriation. While museums are espousing their commitments to further Indigenous repatriation, they evince no desire to give up the power, ownership, and control that they currently have over Métis material culture. Before Métis repatriation frameworks can succeed, museums must take the steps necessary to be in good relation, or practise wahkotoowin, with Métis communities.

This study found that all participants believe that there is a historical and contemporary misunderstanding of Métis identity. This finding confirms the conclusions of scholars such as Isaac, Racette, and Macdougall. What this study demonstrates is that these misunderstandings need to be continually challenged. Before Métis relationality can be considered, museums must critique their colonial understandings of Métis identity, histories, present realities, and futurities. To rectify their misunderstandings, museums must relinquish control over knowledge production and collaborate with Métis on the interpretation of their material culture.

This study also found that participants view museums as places of learning and that, as such, museums should be held accountable for the knowledges they reproduce. While this study confirms that museums need to recognize the roles they play in knowledge production and dissemination, it concludes that museums must incorporate Métis narratives into their interpretation in order to educate the public about Métis histories, realities, and futurities. To do this, museum professionals must be in good relation with the Métis. This includes being educated in Métis methodologies for interpreting material culture and upsetting the colonial power structures that perpetuate the objectification of Métis in museums. Museums can begin pushing against power structures by engaging in research projects that recover the narratives of the material culture they house, consulting with community, and challenging colonial ideas of the ownership of material culture by practising true stewardship. This also means that museums must acknowledge their role in the continued dispossession of Métis from their material culture and engage in repatriation.

Finally, this study concludes that repatriation is very important to Métis in Alberta and that most participants believe there should be a framework for Métis-specific repatriation. A Métis-specific repatriation framework should be centred in Métis relationality and further the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta to exercise care and control over their material culture. As a result, this study concludes that museums should immediately enter negotiations with Métis to create a framework for the repatriation of Métis material culture in Alberta that is centred in Métis relationality.

The conclusions and findings of this study, as well as the conversations that took place during the focus groups and interviews, have revealed multiple opportunities for further research. Two of the most urgent opportunities for further research relate to the implementation of a

Métis-specific framework and the recovery of object narratives from the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM). First, while this thesis highlights the needs and desires of Métis in Alberta to advance repatriation and lays out the historical context of repatriation in Canada, it is beyond the scope of this study to suggest how a framework should be negotiated. The opportunity exists to examine the legalities of creating a Métis-specific framework for repatriation centred in Métis relationality. Second, during this research, it was made clear that the RAM's knowledge about the Métis material culture held in the museum is incomplete. A "project naming" should be undertaken, with Métis leading the way, to recover the object narratives that are currently disconnected from their kin. Both of these opportunities for further research demonstrate the importance of Métis having care and control over their material culture and of exercising that care and control in Métis-specific ways.

Repatriation is important to Métis in Alberta. From a Métis perspective, repatriation includes the exercise of self-determination through the care, control, and repatriation of their material culture. For this to occur, museums must practise Métis relationality. First, museums must acknowledge their role in dispossessing Métis of their material culture and their role in perpetuating the white supremacist state. Second, museums must be actively anti-colonial by incorporating Métis knowledges into their collection management. This includes actively working to recover object narratives of Métis material culture, ensuring that Métis material culture is no longer mislabelled, and acknowledging that they are stewards, not owners, of Métis material culture. This also means that museums must acknowledge their role in knowledge production and create spaces in which Métis can exercise self-determination by telling their own stories that acknowledge the histories of Métis and honour present and future Métis culture and identity. In order to meet any of these requirements, museums must, first and foremost, begin the

process of building relationships with Métis in Alberta. It is only when museums in Alberta are in good relation with Métis, and when Métis have control of and access to their own material culture, that dialogues about physical repatriation can begin.

New relationships are developing between Métis in Alberta and federal governments. As stated in Chapter 1, on 16 November 2017, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) entered into an agreement with the governments of Canada and Alberta to negotiate Métis rights on a nation-to-nation basis in order to advance reconciliation, and on 27 June 2019 the MNA signed a self-government agreement with the government of Canada. These agreements hold the potential for Métis self-determination and sovereignty and, with them, the potential for multiple opportunities to promote reconciliation and to answer the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Furthermore, they may lay the foundations for negotiating a Métis-specific framework for the repatriation of material culture. As our research demonstrated, the time has come to do so. A Métis-specific framework for repatriation is urgently needed in Alberta.

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Appendix A
Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Project: Beading Histories: Reframing Métis Material Culture Repatriation

Question 1: Is the repatriation of material culture an important issue for you?

Question2: How have museums helped or hindered your connection to your material culture?

Question 3: How would museums enabling access to material culture encourage cultural connections and self-determination?

Question 4: What specific knowledges do museums need to be aware of when engaging with this type of work with you?

Question 5: How could repatriation work in a Métis context? What would the benefit on repatriation be? What hurdles do you see standing in the way?

Question 6: What are the objects, you would like to have access to? What type of access would you like to have exactly? Would you like to be able to have access to them in museums or that to have the object come to the community?

Question 7: What are the co-constructed activities that you would like to see museums take the initiative on? For example, a travelling exhibition that features Métis objects.

Appendix B
Protocols for Building Relationships with Métis Community Members

Museums and museum staff must:

1. Move away from "lip service."
2. Develop an Indigenous Advisory Panel with rotating board members.
3. Include Métis narratives and employ Métis interpreters.
4. Consult with Métis on interpretation.
5. Consult with Métis community on who to include as knowledge holders.
6. Utilize current fee schedules (CARFAC) to provide honorariums.
7. Incorporate Métis methodologies for research and interpretation.
8. Undertake research projects that give name to those who created the material culture they house.
9. Upset ideas of commodification of material culture and move to stewardship.
10. Address misconceptions of what it means to be Métis.
11. Acknowledge the distinct identity of Métis and acknowledge contemporary and future Métis.
12. Acknowledge and support the Métis right to exercise self-determination over their material culture.
13. Correct their misclassifications of Métis material culture.
14. Support Métis artists.
15. Acknowledge their role in supporting the white supremacist project.
16. Acknowledge their role in creating barriers between First Nations and Métis.
17. Acknowledge that reconciliation is their responsibility and that they must be the ones to foster steps toward reconciliation.
18. Co-create Métis youth specific programming.
19. Take the lead in building relationships with Métis in Alberta.
20. Create brave Métis spaces within museums.
21. Provide full-time, stable employment for community liaison.
22. Decolonize liaison roles by minimizing office time, understanding the value of visiting, and creating manageable workloads.
23. Ensure succession planning to ensure that relationships with community are maintained by liaisons.
24. Provide transparency in budgeting for Métis-specific programing.
25. Provide access to Métis material culture collections.
26. Co-create exhibitions that represent contemporary Métis.
27. Disclose the material culture they hold to the communities of origin.
28. Build relationships with communities of origin that will allow for open and honest dialogues about recovering object narratives.
29. Understand that Métis have unique needs and desires for repatriation that do not fully align with current legislative frameworks (i.e., FNSCORA).