

**Negotiating life within the city:  
Social geographies and lived experiences of urban Metis peoples in Ottawa**

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**ABSTRACT**

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The majority of Indigenous peoples in Canada are now living in urban centres. Following the publication of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996, academics and policy makers were encouraged to further research the heterogeneous experiences and realities of urban Indigenous peoples living in Canadian cities. This thesis responds to this call and seeks to explore the social geographies and lived experiences of urban Metis peoples, a segment of the urban Indigenous population that has to date been largely left out of the literature. This work relates specifically to Metis living in Ottawa, representing the first study of its kind in eastern Canada. Although Ottawa is not a traditional Metis community and is located outside of the traditional Metis Homeland, the city does represent an important Metis meeting place and space where various understandings of Metis identity from across the country come into contact with one another. The ways in which urban Metis identities are formed and maintained, the movement and strategies Metis peoples utilize to create a sense of place and home, and the ways in which individuals and the community at large come into contact with power at the municipal level are explored at length. Utilizing Henri Lefebvre and Iris Marion Young's concepts of right to the city and unassimilated otherness, this thesis argues that urban Metis peoples in Ottawa merit greater recognition primarily through the creation of a permanent fixture, such as a Metis house, within the city's urban landscape.

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## INTRODUCTION

### INDIGENOUS LIFE IN THE CITY

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Contemporary cities are experiencing tremendous changes at all levels. From evolving physical layouts and networks to changing demographics and economies, urban areas are active and dynamic environments. Citizens of urban environments undoubtedly compose the very fabric of cities, forming their political, social, cultural, economic, and demographic structures. Moreover, there exists a reciprocal relationship between cities and city dwellers in that they both greatly influence one another. The city cannot separate itself from its residents, as its residents cannot separate themselves from the city, unless of course they physically leave. In the Canadian context, urban areas are home to the majority of the country's population and dominant sectors of activity as today, more than 80% of Canadians live within urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2011). As a result, the majority of Canadians are developing strictly urban identities as their daily lives are centred within urban environments. Geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and social scientists of all kinds have paid close attention to the development and transformations of cities and the impacts of cities on their residents over the past century. Furthermore, they have begun to focus upon the experiences of particular social, cultural, and ethnic groups, and the ways in which they develop a sense of individual and communal identity within an urban setting. One such group that merits more attention in the current literature are Indigenous peoples.

Urbanity and Indigeneity have historically been depicted as being mutually exclusive, due in large part to colonial attitudes and practices that actively sought to displace Indigenous peoples from burgeoning urban centers under the guise that cities would corrupt, demoralize and ultimately destroy Indigenous cultures (Peters & Andersen, 2013). As a result, Indigenous

populations were coerced into living on lands, often reserves or remote communities, far away from urban centers. Today, Indigenous peoples and urban environments are far from being mutually exclusive.

According to the 2006 census, the majority of self-identifying Indigenous peoples in Canada, over 54% (Statistics Canada, 2009b), reside within an urban area. There are large populations of Indigenous peoples in Western Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, in addition to sizeable communities in Eastern Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montréal and Ottawa (Statistics Canada, 2009b). This demographic phenomenon has not gone unnoticed by researchers. Starting in the 1960s and 1970s, social scientists began studying the experiences and conditions Indigenous peoples faced in cities, focusing primarily on the challenges Indigenous peoples confronted such as inadequate housing, unemployment, poverty and substance abuse. Laliberte (2013, 111-112) notes that the literature from this era characterized Indigenous peoples “as consisting of abject poverty as a result of racial discrimination, lack of employment, and poor housing, which, in turn caused their marginalization”. Peters (1996), in a literature review of the available sources from this period, states that Indigenous peoples residing within the city faced considerable pressure to fit within the social categories defined by the dominant settler society. This meant either assimilating and adopting the customs and beliefs of the dominant settler society, compromising their Indigeneity and rendering them invisible in the fabric of urban life, or facing discrimination and unsuccessfully integrating into the dominant settler society, often resulting in marginalization and complete destitution accompanied by substance abuse and homelessness (Peters, 1996). With the publication of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), in 1996, academics and policy makers started to consider the relationship between

Indigenous peoples and cities in a different light. Instead of equating city life with assimilation or failure, urban areas began to be interpreted as spaces of Indigenous resilience and cultural innovation. Those who have dealt with this subject have provided an important framework for studying the relationship between Indigenous peoples and cities; however, they are unanimous in their calls for further research (Peters and Newhouse, 2003; Guimond, 2003; Peters and Andersen, 2013; Andersen, 2013). The experiences of Indigenous peoples within cities are heterogeneous and differ depending on one's self-identification as First Nations, Inuit or Metis, and the urban area in which they live. These different and unique experiences merit more scholarly attention.

Recognizing that the experiences of Indigenous peoples are much more complex and do not easily fit within these colonial constructions of successful vs. failed urban citizens, this thesis is a direct response to calls for further research by focusing on the social geographies and lived experiences of Metis<sup>1</sup> peoples residing within the city of Ottawa, of which there are several thousand (Statistics Canada, 2009c) and seeking to identify the social and cultural structures in place that enable urban Metis peoples to develop a sense of individual and communal identity in Ottawa. Ultimately, it was found, through detailed analysis of participant interviews, that a strong, vibrant, and diverse urban Metis community exists within Ottawa. The city is a microcosm of divergent ideas about Metis identities simply because the Metis individuals in Ottawa come from so many different places. These expressions of identity are primarily rooted between a conception of a Metis peoplehood, which forms a historically distinct Nation, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Before continuing, the researcher wishes to clarify the use of terms for the purposes of this thesis. As Brenda Macdougall (2012) suggests in her chapter "The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence within Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility and History", the term 'Métis' tends to be used uncritically and ahistorically. In this study, while 'Métis' designates those born at Red River during the first half of the century who formed a distinct political entity, who were mostly of French Canadian and Indigenous descent. The term 'Métis' at the time did not include those who were of Scottish or English, and Indigenous descent, who were instead referred to as Halfbreeds, in addition to those who did not live in the area of Red River. Since this research addresses a wide range of Metis peoples, the term 'Metis' will be adopted throughout the remainder of the thesis.

idea of Metis as all those of mixed Indigenous and settler ancestry. It will be argued that Ottawa is not a Metis city, as it does not constitute a historical Metis community and is located outside of the traditional Metis Homeland. It will, however, advance that Ottawa constitutes an important Metis meeting place because of its political importance as Canada's national capital and, additionally, the educational and employment opportunities available there. The experiences of Metis individuals and the broader Metis community will be considered through the lenses of identity, movement, and power. In so doing this thesis illustrates how cities can be, and currently are, spaces of Indigenous resilience and cultural innovation as opposed to spaces of cultural assimilation, corruption, and destruction.

In 2003, Evelyn Peters and David Newhouse, two of the leading Canadian researchers on urban Indigenous issues, published *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, which brought together several in-depth chapters from various researchers regarding the mobility, identity, and institutional capacity of urban Indigenous peoples. They acknowledged that,

City life is now an integral component of Aboriginal peoples' lives in Canada. Aboriginal people are now a part of the urban landscape and will remain so, most likely in increasing numbers over the decades to come. Understanding this complex reality in sufficient detail and depth is a major research challenge. (Peters & Newhouse, 2003, 5)

The field of urban Indigenous studies is gaining greater recognition and attention within academia and policy-making. Following the publication of RCAP's Final Report, discourses exclusively focused on the social and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples living in cities have been replaced by studies examining the resilience and cultural innovation of urban Indigenous communities. Although over the last two decades a considerable amount of academic work concerning urban Indigenous populations has been published, generalizes the experiences

of urban Indigenous peoples and too often focuses primarily on urban First Nations residents. Acknowledging the need for further research, these publications have called for more attention to be paid to the heterogeneous experiences of different Indigenous populations in various cities across Canada and in other countries around the world.

However, while the research on urban Indigeneity is moving forward, the Metis, have, to date, largely been left out of the current literature on Indigenous peoples and urban areas, even though they are the most urbanized Indigenous population in Canada with nearly 70% of Metis peoples today live in urban areas (Guimond, 2003; Gionet, 2014). Yet, there are currently few studies pertaining to the experiences of urban Metis peoples; however, there does exist a certain number of studies looking at the experiences, both past and present, of Metis peoples living in western Canadian cities that serve as effective starting points for understanding general trends concerning urban Metis life in Canada. This thesis seeks to identify the factors influencing the nurturing, growth, and resilience of positive urban Metis identities while establishing the institutional capacity and networks of Ottawa's urban Metis community. Following my participation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Halfbreed Hustle in Ottawa, an event marking prominent historical Metis figure Louis Riel's execution in November, I was deeply interested in how the community came together especially considering that members of the Metis community were arriving from across the country and were now located in a place outside of the traditional Metis Homeland. The community was lively, welcoming and diverse, bringing together music, food, dance, and much more. This thesis therefore stems from that initial exposure to the community and will strive to capture the energy and diversity portrayed on that November evening two years ago. It is my desire as a researcher that this, in addition to addressing the gap of knowledge present in the current literature, this research can potentially help guide future initiatives in relation to

policy-making and program development for urban Metis communities in Ottawa and elsewhere in the country.

Three main sections constitute the body of this research. Following an overview of the methodology, key concepts and theories utilized in this thesis, three chapters comprising the major themes of the urban Metis experience in Ottawa will be presented. Each chapter will consider a set of themes that arose from a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with self-identifying Metis residents of the city. These include, expressions of identity in an urban place and space, movement and creating home in a city outside of one's traditional territory, and finally, experiences of power over space and the challenges facing Metis individuals and the larger community within a colonial city. A brief overview of these chapters will be provided following a detailed explanation of the methodological approach adopted for this research.

## **METHODOLOGY**

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As Indigenous scholar Robert Innes states, "American Indian Studies must be an undertaking held to the highest of ethical standards" (2004, 131). This is of central importance for any researcher seeking to conduct research with Indigenous peoples no matter their level of study. Historically, research has been conducted on and not with Indigenous peoples, and often meant breaking cultural protocols such as trust and reciprocity, being disrespectful of values, and dismissing the importance of elders (Smith, 2012). As a result, as Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out, the word "research" is considered to be one of the dirtiest words for many of the world's Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2012). Therefore, in order to challenge, and ultimately transform the imperial and colonial underpinnings of the Western academy, it is necessary to adopt research methodologies that structure assumptions, values, concepts, orientations and

priorities that reflect the needs of Indigenous peoples, which can be achieved through the development of an Indigenous research agenda as laid out by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) in *Decolonizing Methodologies*. As Smith explains:

The research agenda is conceptualized here as constituting a programme and set of approaches that are situated within the decolonization politics of the indigenous peoples' movement. The agenda is focused strategically on the goal of self-determination of indigenous peoples. Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. (2012, 120)

This thesis seeks to adapt such a research agenda that promotes a better understanding of urban Metis peoples and that ultimately contributes to the ongoing process of decolonization while arguing for measures of self-determination such as the control of a specific Metis space in the city. Since this particular study seeks to better understand a specific Indigenous community, it was therefore paramount to adopt a research methodology that emphasized both respect and reciprocity, in addition to clearly articulating the responsibility and accountability of the researcher towards the community, as laid out by Innes (2004). This thesis strives to provide a greater understanding of a particular urban Indigenous community while engaging in a process of decolonization, a process rooted in recognizing the harm caused and perpetuated towards Indigenous peoples, both past and present, and to build capacity towards healing, reconciliation, and development (Smith, 2012). It is therefore important to centre the research agenda around respecting both individual community members and the community as a whole, in addition to ensuring that the overall findings be accessible and of use to the Ottawa Metis community while contributing to the advancement of research in geography and Indigenous studies. In order to accomplish this, the participants were not asked to provide proof of their Metis citizenship and were recruited based solely on their self-identification as Metis. Furthermore, in order to

contribute to the community, the researcher volunteered within one of the city's Indigenous organizations that serve the urban Metis population. Finally, once compiled, it is the researcher's intention to share the findings with the community at one of the annual gatherings within the city.

### **ADOPTING AN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND AGENDA**

In order to develop an appropriate Indigenous research methodology and agenda, it is of utmost importance to structure the study around the community's assumptions, values, orientations, and priorities. As Smith (2012) suggests, research is to be done 'with' and not 'on' Indigenous peoples, with a particular emphasis on 'reporting back' and 'sharing knowledge' with the community or communities, which assumes a principle of reciprocity and feedback. This is not simply asking for consent and providing the final results after the study has been concluded but involves an active effort on the part of the researcher to develop strong, trustful, and lasting relationships with the community. As Smith stipulates, "In indigenous frameworks, relationships matter. Respectful, reciprocal, genuine relationships lie at the heart of community life and community development." (2012, 125). This is also echoed within the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research Ethics which governs Canada's university-based research. The Statement stipulates that, "Engagement with community is an integral part of ethical research involving Aboriginal peoples" (2014, 111). Details concerning the measures taken to develop and nurture these relationships with the Metis community in the Ottawa-Gatineau area such as volunteering and participation within the community will be discussed at length in the following section. In addition to maintaining a reciprocal relationship with the community, it was essential to gain the trust of the community and the participants of the study. As Kathryn Besio states, "Trust is

something unequally given and gained in research settings, is not necessarily reciprocal, and in a constant state of negotiation” (2010, 561). In relation to Smith’s work, this is clear as the relationship between Indigenous peoples and researchers has often been fraught with disrespectful, dishonest, and untrustworthy actions. In the context of this particular study, trust was attained through clear and constant communication with individual participants and active involvement within the community at large, both of which will be detailed at length in the following section.

A final consideration to take into account in the context of this research is the positionality of the researcher. As Besio suggests, “Researcher’s expression of positionality and their reflexivity/reflectivity about their emplacement in research projects, have come to be important ways to contextualize research findings” (2010, 562). She found that it was important to identify her place along the colonized-colonizer continuum when conducting research with Indigenous communities in Northern Pakistan. Identifying as a White woman, more along the colonizer end of this continuum, she continues to clearly establish her research intent which is to, “destabilize the binaries of colonialism while remaining attentive to colonialism’s violence and violent legacies, and to write and work against their perpetuation in the colonial present” (2010, 564-565). In the context of this study, I identify as a white male who has been raised within and has benefited from the privileges of settler society, and as a result, I am situated on the colonizer end of the continuum. Be that as it may, I understand my responsibility in contributing to the decolonization of my chosen discipline of geography. I acknowledge my role in the settler colonial project that is the country of Canada, in addition to my responsibility of contributing to the dismantling of settler colonialism’s legacy of discrimination and violence. In order to achieve this, several important precautions and research methods were considered, which will be

described at length in the following section regarding data collection, notably through ensuring continued communication with research participants and contributing to the larger community in a constructive and reciprocal manner through a considerable amount of volunteer work.

Drawing on the works of Innes, Smith, and Besio, I can clearly state that the intent of this thesis is to adopt an Indigenous research methodology and agenda that seeks to elaborate an in-depth study of an academically and socially underrepresented urban Indigenous community Ottawa urban Metis community's structures, needs, challenges, and aspirations. It is my desire as a researcher that this study contribute to the process of decolonization within the discipline of Geography and help garner attention for both urban Metis peoples and the broader Indigenous communities in urban settings across Canada. It is important to state that this study does not strive to speak on behalf of all Metis peoples in the Ottawa-Gatineau area, it is merely an attempt to explore the realities, issues, and views important to them. As Robert Innes suggests, researchers taking part in Indigenous research, "are not giving voice to Native people; they already have a voice. These researchers are participating in an ethical research endeavour that leads to greater understanding of Native people, their history, and their culture from a Native perspective" (2004, 136).

## **DATA COLLECTION**

The overarching purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of urban Metis peoples in Ottawa, with a particular emphasis on their relationship to urban space as self-identifying Indigenous citizens. In order to achieve this, an emphasis on the collection of qualitative data was privileged. As Smith, Pain, Marston, and Jones III observe in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Geography*,

Qualitative research [...] focuses on direct engagement with the meaning and interpretation of complex social and spatial relations; it uses inductive theory emergently and reflexively, attaching value to logical or substantive, rather than statistical, significance, and using detailed case studies or extensive interviews to illustrate the breadth and depth of human experience. (2010, 11)

As no previous case studies have focused on the experiences of the urban Metis community in the Ottawa-Gatineau region, extensive semi-structured interviews were seen as the most effective method of collecting qualitative data for the purposes of this study. Conversely, there does exist a handful of available studies concerning Metis communities in other Canadian urban centres such as Ron Laliberte's 2013 study of the Saskatoon Metis community and Joanna Seraphim's 2012 study of Metis women in Winnipeg. The former provides in-depth descriptions of methodological practices which included conducting 42 semi-structured qualitative interviews where participants were asked to describe their cultural identity, how they maintained their Metis identity, and what reinforced their identity in the urban environment (Laliberte, 2013). This interview structure served as an excellent starting point for a similar study within the context of Ottawa.

Therefore, 15 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted from October 2015 to April 2016. The main purpose of the interviews was to establish how Metis in the city maintained their Indigenous identity within the city in addition to understanding the challenges and opportunities present within the urban context. The question guide was comprised of 16 questions divided into four main themes, which included cultural identity, cultural institutions/organizations/services, social and kinship networks, and finally, personal experiences within the city (a copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix A). In terms of the quantitative data pertaining to the collection of interviews, approximately 16.5 hours of discussion was digitally recorded, with interviews ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours in length.

The average duration of the interview was 1 hour and 10 minutes. Participants were found using the ‘snowball’ method which initially began with the researcher’s social networks within the University of Ottawa student and staff communities and then branched out to urban Indigenous organizations. Three main spaces were accessed that enabled this snowball to form, notably the University of Ottawa campus, the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, and finally multiple spaces utilized for Metis community events throughout the city. In addition, as was the case in Laliberte’s study, an honorarium was offered to each participant in order to acknowledge their contribution and for sharing their knowledge. Participants had the choice of a \$30.00 honorarium or a gift of equal value.

In terms of the demographics of the 15 participants, 8 were women and 7 were men, ranging from 21 to 55 years of age. Although the researcher had many informal conversations with Metis community members, including those over the age of 55, one of the limitations of this particular study was not interviewing a greater number of Metis elders, important knowledge keepers within Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, this study sought to garner a diverse set of views and experiences from a small yet representative segment of the urban Metis population residing in Ottawa. A final consideration regarding identifiers was the option to choose one’s own pseudonym was afforded to the participants and the majority chose to do so, which will be of interest as discussed further in this study because some chose to be identified by their own name while others used Indigenous names as identifiers.

As stated previously, community engagement was considered to be an essential part of the study. Not only does it provide a unique opportunity to gain valuable participant-observation data, it also embodies the notion of reciprocity. In order to achieve this, I participated in several large-scale events such as the Halfbreed Hustle and the Summer Solstice festival held annually to

celebrate National Aboriginal Day on 21 June. Additionally, in order to be of service to the community, I volunteered at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health located in Vanier, a neighbourhood to the east of downtown Ottawa. Wabano offers both key health services and cultural programming to First Nations, Inuit, and Metis members of the community. The volunteer position consisted of assisting bi-weekly with Culture Night, a gathering with drumming, songs, and teachings open to all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members alike, and with the Seniors' Arts and Crafts group. The position not only provided me with an opportunity to have many informal discussions with Metis residents of the city, some of which were followed up with formal interviews, but also allowed me to become an active member and contributor of the community. Having completed over 250 hours of volunteer work, I developed rich and meaningful relationships with community members of all ages and gained valuable insight into the everyday lives of Metis and other Indigenous residents of Ottawa, information extremely enhanced the overall quality of this research. Although, this study is centered around the results of the 15 formal interviews that took place over the course of the past year, participation in community events and nearly a year of volunteering were indispensable experiences that broadened the researcher's understanding and appreciation of both the Metis and broader Indigenous communities in Ottawa.

## **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This thesis will employ a variety of concepts and terms throughout the following chapters. A brief definition of each of these main concepts and terms will now be provided. It is first important to state that 'Metis' and 'Indigenous' will be used interchangeably throughout the entirety of this thesis. Indigenous in the Canadian context refers to all First Nation, Metis, and

Inuit peoples. As Metis are Indigenous, there are many instances where the participants and the Metis community are referred to as Indigenous in the text. The term itself internationalizes the experiences, issues and the struggles of many colonized peoples. In addition, it is important to note that the 's' in 'peoples' indicates that Indigenous peoples are diverse and do not form one homogenous group, in addition to symbolizing the right of peoples to self-determination (Smith, 2012). As such, this thesis refers to urban Metis peoples, highlighting the fact that there exist many different Metis individuals within the broader urban community and across the country.

Related to the term Indigenous is the concept of 'Indigeneity,' a term coined by Maaka and Fleras (2000) who defined it as, "the politicisation of 'original occupancy' as a basis for entitlement and engagement" (89). Peters (2005) further suggests that Indigeneity can be understood as the right of Indigenous peoples to govern their affairs and that this is of central importance when understanding this concept. As such urban Indigeneity can be understood as the right of urban Indigenous peoples to govern their own affairs whether it be through urban controlled lands or services. The concept of 'decolonization' will be referred to at length throughout this thesis. Decolonization itself is a highly contested concept and is often conflated with other civil or human rights projects. Tuck and Yang (2012) clearly state that decolonization is distinct from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects. As this study considers a settler colonial city, it is important to consider decolonization in a settler colonial context. Settler colonialism is the process through which settlers come to a place, move to supplant the original Indigenous societies, and build a new home founded on the assumption that settler sovereignty must be held over the entirety of 'their' new place (Tuck and Yang, 2012). They continue by stating, "Decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already

been differently understood and enacted; that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically. This is precisely why decolonization is necessarily unsettling, especially across lines of solidarity” (Tuck and Yang, 2012, 7, emphasis in original). Therefore, if decolonization involves rethinking the entirety of settler colonial society’s relationship to land, it implicates and unsettles everyone (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Smith (2012) echoes this view of decolonization by stating, “it is not enough to hope or desire change. Systemic change requires capability, leadership, support, time, courage, reflexivity, determination and compassion” (25). Decolonization in the academy is paramount, considering most Western disciplines have in some way been influenced by imperialism and colonialism (Smith, 2012). Simpson (2011) suggests that academics, must increasingly, “center Indigeneity in their analysis and offer critiques of state power, force, and occupation whether they be Indigenous or non-Indigenous that take critical analysis seriously and in doing so position readers as witnesses to the painful and spectacular life of US/Canadian settler colonialism” (212). This will in turn contribute to the decolonization of academic disciplines.

If decolonization can be seen as a process of undoing, the concept of ‘reconciliation’, can be considered as a process of rebuilding. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), sought to identify how Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada can move forward following the intergenerational trauma and impacts caused by the Residential school system that, through a policy of cultural genocide, attempted to assimilate over 150 000 First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students between the 1880s and 1990s (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). The final report of the TRC clearly lays down a framework for understanding reconciliation by stating:

Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential

schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours. Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, vi)

Although this thesis does not directly address the history and contemporary impacts of residential schools, many participants shared their thoughts regarding the TRC and the fact that some of their family members and people they know have been impacted by residential schools. Reconciliation as a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect will be privileged and as the TRC makes abundantly clear, it is a process that involves all Canadians, including academics of all disciplines. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, the use of the concept of reconciliation will relate specifically to Metis peoples residing in the city of Ottawa.

As this study situates itself within the field of human geography, the terms of place and space are central to the exploration of Metis within Ottawa. As such, it is important to provide a brief overview of what they are, and the theoretical underpinnings of place and space when considering the experiences of Metis peoples in the urban context of the city of Ottawa. Tim Cresswell's *Place: a short introduction*, provides a highly detailed account of place arguing that place is a process and not a fixed entity, and is imbued with many different meanings. Cresswell summarizes this view by stating, "The most straight forward and common definition of place is 'a meaningful location'" (2004,7). Citing political geographer John Agnew's work, Cresswell outlines the three fundamental aspects of place — location, locale, and sense of place. Location relates to the 'where' or the specific geographic coordinates of a particular place, locale consists of the material setting for social relations, and sense of place embodies the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place (Cresswell, 2004). The understanding of place within the context of this thesis considers all three of these fundamental aspects. The study itself is centered around the location of the city of Ottawa, in and around the precise geographic

coordinates of 45.4215° N, 75.6972° W, focusing on the locale which is this area's urban canvas, the backdrop of social interactions between Metis peoples, other Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, and finally, it explores the sense of place a number of Metis individuals have within this urban environment based on their attachment, or lack thereof, to this city.

Places are constantly being created, changed, and renegotiated. This particular study strives to understand how a certain group of Metis individuals are negotiating their place within the urban environment of Ottawa. As Cresswell suggests, "Places are never finished but always the result of processes and practices" (2004, 37). As such, it can be argued that places do not remain static but are constantly transforming although at different rates for different people. Place and space will occupy a central focus within this chapter and throughout the entirety of this thesis. Through the use of concepts including locale and sense of place, this thesis will analyze the diverse responses from Metis individuals in the city, and attempt to illustrate their understandings of place in the particular urban context of Ottawa, focusing on the influence of place on their identity, and vice-versa.

A final concept highlighted within this research is that of 'home'. Mallett (2004) provides an effective overview of the many interpretations of home. As most of the participants interviewed in the context of this research originate from outside of Ottawa, home is a complex and complicated term for many of them. As Mallett states,

A vast literature on cross-cultural notions of kinship, place and belonging also suggests that the nuclear family and the nuclear family house are of limited relevance to the meaning of home and family for many people. For example, the family comprises extended family members and home might encompass the places where these extended family members reside. (2004, 74)

This conception of home extending to immediate family members and broader kinship networks was present in the participants' responses. For many, home is where they are originally from and

that will always be the case. However, Ottawa itself was expressed as a ‘home away from home’, which over time appears to provide an increasing amount of comfort. Relating to home is also the notion of ‘homeland’, which is of central importance to Metis peoples, who often relate their identity directly back to the ‘Metis Homeland’. As Mallet (2004) explains, the idea of homeland relates to the land of one’s forbears. She continues by suggesting that, “The concept of homeland was appropriated by the ruling classes to promote a form of nationalism and patriotism aimed at protecting and preserving their land, wealth, and power” (Mallet, 2004, 65). Interestingly, the Metis Homeland embodies these desires to protect and preserve land and power, and their associated wealth, and the fact that the Metis have adopted the term of homeland to refer to their traditional territory, a concept of the ruling classes, is a clear and direct response to settler colonialism.

In addition to the use of several important concepts from both human geography and Indigenous studies, certain theories will be privileged to explain the current realities of urban Metis peoples in Ottawa. The two primary theories utilized in this thesis are Henri Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ and Iris Marion Young’s ‘unassimilated otherness’. Lefebvre (1996) outlines the right to the city in *Writings on Cities*. As a French Marxist geographer, Lefebvre’s concept of *right to the city* embodied a transformation of the social and economic structures of cities, taking away their focus on processes and practices of accumulation, competition, and profit maximization, instead moving towards another type of urban social structure (1996). He thus calls for a complete reimagining of the city, stating that it should be envisioned as something other than a central node of the capitalist system, freeing itself from the unequal social structures and geographies produced by this type of system. Once again, adopting a Marxist orientation for his theory, Lefebvre adamantly states that the right to the city requires that:

The proletariat has this historic mission: only it can put an end to separations (alienation). Its mission has a double facet: to destroy bourgeois society by building another society – abolish philosophical speculation and abstraction, the alienating contemplation and systematization, to accomplish the philosophical project of the human being. (1996, 91)

Lefebvre's theory applies well with the experiences of urban Indigenous peoples as cities have historically been oppressive places and as such a radical transformation of urban space is required if we are to truly decolonize cities. Indigenous political scientist Julie Tomiak provides an effective framework for utilizing Lefebvre's theory of the right to the city. Tomiak (2011) highlights that Lefebvre's right to the city necessitates the, "restructuring and re-creation of social, political and physical spaces by marginalized populations" (183). These marginalized populations, such as urban Indigenous peoples require mechanisms of autogestion or self-management as part of a renewed right to the city, which is not necessarily a right to inclusion, but rather a right to difference. This right to difference is paramount and as Tomiak states, "With respect to Indigenous peoples, difference forms the basis of efforts to decolonize social relations and spatial structures and to remake the real and imagined geographies of what is now Canada" (2011, 184). Tomiak brings forth two examples of processes that work towards realizing the right to the city, in the form of re-territorialization and place making. The former involves negotiating urban land claims that can, albeit partial, provide physical, symbolic, and political space for Indigenous peoples in urban contexts. Place making on the other hand, is a process that can occur within small Indigenous operated spaces within the city. She provides the example of the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg as a place where Indigenous peoples have achieved a collective effort to reassert urban space, and by extension have embodied Lefebvre's concept of autogestion, or self-determined space (Tomiak, 2011). Tomiak argues a right to the city for Indigenous peoples requires us to think about the city in relation to Indigenous sovereignty, and to reframe cities as crucial sites of decolonization. As a result, an Indigenous right to the city,

challenges the very idea of the settler city, and embodies Lefebvre's calls for a complete transformation of the city (2011). Evidently, this thesis will utilize Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city as laid out by Tomiak as it relates specifically to the experiences and aspirations of urban Indigenous peoples in a present day Canadian context. As such, processes of re-territorialization and place making, with an emphasis on the latter will be considered in regards to the urban Metis community in Ottawa.

The second theory that will be utilized in the context of this thesis is Iris Marion Young's unassimilated otherness. Young (1986) emphasizes that we must develop a politics of difference rather than strive for the ideal of community in urban areas. This politics of difference relates well with Tomiak's assertion of a right to difference as a central tenet of Lefebvre's right to the city. Young states that:

The desire for community relies on the same desire for social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism, on the one hand, and political sectarianism on the other. I propose that instead of community as the normative ideal of political emancipation, that radicals should develop a politics of difference. A model of the unoppressive city offers an understanding of social relations without domination in which persons live together in relations of mediation among strangers with whom they are not in community. (1986, 2)

Young continues by stating that the unoppressive city is defined as openness to unassimilated otherness, where city dwellers are free to live out their lives as they see fit, free of oppression and demands for cultural, economic and social uniformity (1986). City life can thus be interpreted as the 'being-together' of strangers. Young emphasizes that a politics of difference based on the concept of unassimilated otherness lays down institutional and ideological means for recognizing and affirming different groups within the city in two primary ways by, "giving political representation to group interests and celebrating the distinctive cultures and characteristics of different groups" (1986, 22). This model of the unoppressive city is of central

importance when considering urban Indigenous communities. A clear connection can be drawn from Young's theory of unassimilated otherness to an indigenized right to the city. By utilizing both of these theories, this thesis will seek to consider the ways in which a Metis right to the city can be imagined and put into practice, ideally within a realized model of the unoppressive city. As Ottawa occupies the rank of Canada's capital city, it has immense potential to serve as an example of the decolonized unoppressive city; however, by not realizing this ideal it also has the potential to continue perpetuating a legacy of settler exploitation and Indigenous oppression.

## **SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

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Chapter 1, *Expressions and understandings of Metis identity rooted in urban place and space*, considers the many ways Metis peoples live out their culture and maintain a sense of community within the city of Ottawa. The chapter seeks to understand, specifically in regards to the study's participants, how Metis ways of life and worldviews adapt to Ottawa's urban environment. In addition to considering how culture is lived out and the associated social geographies that are formed through these expressions of culture, the chapter will unpack the different understandings of Metis identity and how they interact and often collide with one another within the city. It was found that Peterson and Brown's (1985) categories of Big 'M' and small 'm' Metis were both highly present with Ottawa. Although a more detailed explanation of these groupings of Metis identity will be provided, it is important to acknowledge from the onset of this thesis that Metis identity is understood in many different ways according to many different people.

Big 'M' Metis refers to those who identify as belonging to the Metis Nation, which developed in and around the Red River Settlement, or present-day Winnipeg, at the beginning of

the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Peterson & Brown, 1985). It embodies peoplehood, a collective self-consciousness, and a distinct set of values and practices as discussed by Andersen (2014), and refers to the distinct Indigenous nation that was formed in what is now known as western Canada. Little ‘m’ Metis, on the other hand, refers to all those who claim a Metis identity based on their mixed Indigenous and European ancestry, and do not have a historical connection to the historic Red River Metis. As Peterson and Brown (1985) suggest, this wide usage of the term ‘Metis’ poses certain problems. These include tensions over space, at events and gatherings for instance, where Big ‘M’ Metis are often frustrated that individuals of mixed ancestry claim a Metis identity and proudly wear cultural symbols such as the Metis sash. This interplay between diverging definitions of identity and how they occur over the social spaces present within the city will be a central topic of the chapter.

Finally, the chapter will conclude with an exploration of the presence and role of urban Indigenous institutions in Ottawa, and the ways in which they build social and cultural capacity for the city’s Metis community. As of right now, a specific Metis gathering space, such as a community center, does not exist within the city and, as a result, the community must utilize spaces open to the broader Indigenous community for events and large gatherings. Places such as the Odawa Native Friendship Centre and the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health are excellent examples of Indigenous spaces within the urban environment that serve as important meeting places for Metis peoples in the city, and as effective locales for interactions with First Nations, Inuit, and also non-Indigenous peoples. In line with Newhouse (2003), it was found that these urban Indigenous institutions play a fundamental role in developing, nurturing, and maintaining positive urban Indigenous identities, especially for young people.

Chapter 2, *A home away from home – life outside of the Metis Homeland in Ottawa*, considers Metis peoples moving to and from the city. Using Cresswell and Merriman's (2011) concept of spatial stories, the ways in which Metis peoples' movements between places create spaces and stories will constitute the central focus of the chapter. The Metis, historically, have been a highly mobile people, occupying large regional geographies in the interests of pursuing economical activities such as buffalo hunting and trading. Although these pursuits are no longer economically viable, the Metis continue to be a people on the move. Considering Norris and Clatworthy (2003), and Guimond (2003), both "push" and "pull" factors that influence these movements will be discussed. Generally, it was found that Metis peoples who choose to move to Ottawa do so based on important pull factors such as educational and employment opportunities. As Ottawa is the country's capital, the city is a major node of governance and many of the employment opportunities relate to work within government, in addition to work with non-governmental organizations such as national and provincial representative bodies like the Métis National Council and the Métis Nation of Ontario. As a result, Ottawa attracts Metis peoples from across the country even though it is not located within the traditional Metis Homeland, thus it is not a Metis city but rather a Metis gathering space. The effects this has on the Metis community will be analyzed. Overall, there are certain challenges, such as maintaining a strong membership and organizing large scale events and gatherings due to the high level of movement of Metis peoples to and from the city.

It was found that Metis in the city are constantly negotiating a series of ephemeral geographies. This is to say that the Metis community has to continuously reinvent spaces such as the Odawa or Wabano centres, for events or gatherings, and imbue them with a sense of Metisness for a limited amount of time. The spaces become Metis for the duration of the events

and after they conclude, they return to their everyday usages. As such, the Metis community is always on the move within the city, creating ephemeral hubs of Metis cultural and social space. This constitutes a major challenge for maintaining a permanent presence within the urban landscape. Many of the participants suggested that a small community centre, even in the form of a ‘Metis house’, be created so as to provide a space where representative bodies such as the Ottawa Regional Métis Council, which currently does not have a space, can meet, but also a space for Metis, both young and old, to spend their evenings interacting and learning with one another. It was suggested by the majority of the participants interviewed that having such a space would provide a certain level of physical permanence for the community and alleviate the challenges associated with navigating a series of ephemeral social geographies within the city.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ways in which Ottawa’s urban Metis peoples ground themselves within the city’s urban environment. Metis peoples, especially those arriving from distant places, find spending time within green spaces to be an important component of their everyday lives. Often referred to as reconnecting with the land, the participants spoke of the healing qualities of natural spaces, whether it be parks within the city or larger wooded spaces such as Gatineau Park on the outskirts of the urban environment. They shared that these spaces enable them to disconnect from the highly mobile and active dynamics of city life and its built environment. Frequently accessing these spaces and ensuring their protection was of central importance and speaks to the sense of environmental stewardship present within Metis and other Indigenous cultures.

The third and final chapter, *Struggles of power over space – achieving a Metis right to the unoppressive city*, delves into the influence of power on the daily movements of Metis peoples and the community within the city of Ottawa. A Foucaultian understanding of power

relations is utilized, one that considers power as a productive force that makes it possible to understand and relate to ourselves, others, and the world around us (Sørensen, 2014). Relations of power are omnipresent and Metis peoples often find themselves in hostile situations where their identity is directly challenged. It was shared by all participants that when they say they are Metis, they are often asked to provide the First Nations family relation or an Indigenous blood quantum so as to legitimize their claim to Indigeneity. This is highly problematic and speaks to an ongoing legacy of colonialism. Using Iris Marion Young's (1990) five faces of oppression, it was determined that cultural imperialism, in this case society's dominant culture demanding for justification of Indigeneity while holding the right to determine whether or not a Metis person is Indigenous or not, continues to be present in the city and is a continued form of oppression. Education was identified as a critical method of directly challenging this injustice which originates from non-Indigenous peoples but also, on occasion, from other Indigenous peoples as well.

From a community perspective, it was found that the Metis are commonly relegated to a third rank of recognition within the Indigenous community, especially when it comes to relations with the municipal government. Although there is a significant community in the city, interactions between Metis and the municipal government are virtually non-existent, and when they do occur, they are often negative, as was the case with the last-minute cancellation of a Metis flag-raising at City Hall to recognize Louis Riel Day in November 2015. Many of the participants shared that funding mechanisms for local representative bodies such as the Ottawa Regional Métis Council were not effective and inhibit important capacity building that could bring the community together. A common sentiment amongst the participants was that available funding for Metis programs and organizations is inferior to that of First Nations and Inuit

programs and organizations. Substantial funding represents an important component of reconciliation as envisioned by the federal government. More effective funding mechanisms must be created so as to increase the capacity of the community, while acknowledging the past wrongs and injustice committed against Metis peoples. This will contribute to the project of reconciliation in addition to granting greater recognition to the Metis community.

Finally, whether or not the Metis are granted what Henri Lefebvre (1996) defines as the ‘right to the city’ is considered. It was found that currently, many Metis do not feel as if they are full citizens of the city in the sense that both individuals and the community face continued hostility from their fellow urban citizens. For a Metis right to the city to be achieved, there must be greater awareness of the presence of the Metis community in addition to an improved understanding of Metis culture, especially in regard to the historic Metis Nation. This must be accompanied by greater access to safe spaces where Metis peoples can gather and share their culture with one another, and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The Halfbreed Hustle, which occurs annually in November around Louis Riel Day, is an excellent example of an instance when a Metis right to the city is achieved. Extending this right to the entire community for more than one day a year is an essential endeavour that will promote social justice and reconciliation within the city of Ottawa and could surely serve as an effective example of decolonization for cities across Canada.

### **THE WAY FORWARD FOLLOWING DANIELS V. CANADA**

Before delving into the body of this thesis, it is important to provide a legal backdrop to issues surrounding Metis rights and recognition within present-day Canadian society. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada laid down its ruling in *Daniels v. Canada*, a case that

sought to end a jurisdictional tug-of-war between the provincial and federal governments over which level had legislative authority over Metis and non-status “Indians” (McIvor, 2016). The Supreme Court ruled that “Indians” under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act is a broad term referring to all Indigenous peoples in Canada (Supreme Court of Canada, 2016). As a result, Metis and non-status Indians are now recognized as “Indians” for the purposes of section 91(24) that identifies the federal government’s responsibility and jurisdictional authority over Indigenous peoples (McIvor, 2016). Up until now, Metis from across Canada have dealt primarily with provincial governments, and even though they were recognized as one of Canada’s three Aboriginal peoples for the purposes of the Constitution, in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, to date there has been virtually no effort on the part of the federal government to follow through on this recognition through program and policy development. As the Supreme Court’s trial judge states, “Both federal and provincial governments have, alternately, denied having legislative authority over non-status Indians and Métis. This results in these Indigenous communities being in a jurisdictional wasteland with significant and obvious disadvantaging consequences” (Supreme Court of Canada, 2016, paragraph 5). The Court continued by stating that it would be anomalous for Metis to be recognized as an official Aboriginal people under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, yet to be excluded from section 91(24) of the Constitution Act (Supreme Court of Canada).

The Daniels ruling represents an important step forward, although what exactly will come from the decision is still unclear. As Bruce McIvor, a lawyer with the First Peoples Law Corporation states, “The *Daniels* decision is likely one of the most misunderstood decisions ever released by the Supreme Court of Canada” (McIvor, 2016, paragraph 1). The decision does not require the federal government to pass laws specifically concerning the Metis nor does it state

that the federal government owes a fiduciary duty towards Metis peoples; however, it does clarify who has responsibility and jurisdictional authority over Metis and non-status Indians. The Supreme Court's declaration guarantees certainty and accountability in that Metis peoples should turn to the federal government to address historical grievances and rights-related issues (McIvor, 2016).

The next challenge following this ruling is considering who may be considered Metis for legal purposes. As of now, it is thought that to be Metis, one must meet the definitional criteria set out in *R v. Powley* (2003). The criteria state that to be considered Metis, and have access to rights such as hunting and fishing rights, an individual must identify as a Metis person, be a member of a present-day Metis community, and have ties to a historic Metis community (INAC, 2016). Furthermore, to be considered a historic rights bearing community, the Metis community must prove that members formed a distinctive collective social identity, that they lived in the same geographic area, and that they shared a common way of life (INAC, 2016). Exactly how the government will exercise legislative authority remains to be seen; however, following the Supreme Court's ruling, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, current Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, stated that, "There is much work to be done. We are committed to working in partnership with Métis and non-Status Indians on a nation-to-nation basis, along with other partners, to ensure we are following the court's direction in implementing this decision" (Government of Canada, 2016). With the Supreme Court's ruling and statements like these, it appears that both the judiciary and legislative branches of the Canadian state governing apparatus are transitioning into a new period of Metis-government relations, one that will strive to work with Metis on a nation-to-nation basis. As the Supreme Court trial judge in the Daniels case summarized,

The constitutional changes, the apologies for historic wrongs, a growing appreciation that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are partners in Confederation, as well as the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, all indicate that reconciliation with all of Canada's Aboriginal peoples is Parliament's goal. (Supreme Court of Canada, 2016, paragraph 9)

Today, it is anticipated that greater recognition and a renewed relationship with the federal government will have significant impacts on policy and program development for Metis peoples and communities. These initiatives will surely impact the lives of urban Metis peoples and it is therefore of considerable relevance and importance to produce a more substantial body of research regarding the experiences of Metis peoples living in contemporary Canadian cities. This thesis strives to describe and analyze the experiences of one particular urban Metis community, residing within the country's capital, Ottawa, a place located outside of the Metis Nation's traditional territory. Addressing themes such as identity, place, space, movement, and power, it will be argued that granting a full right to the city to Metis peoples living in urban areas, and by extension other urban Indigenous peoples, involves taking reconciliation seriously and committing to an ongoing process of urban decolonization at multiple levels, from individuals to governments. Only then can a true and renewed right to the city be granted to Metis peoples.

## CHAPTER 1

### EXPRESSIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF METIS IDENTITY

#### ROOTED IN URBAN PLACE AND SPACE

#### INTRODUCTION – INTERSECTIONS OF PLACE AND IDENTITY

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The intersections between place and identity have been the subject of considerable research in human geography and Indigenous studies, in addition to the wide array of other disciplines in the social sciences. This chapter will contribute to furthering this ongoing discussion that seeks to demonstrate the influence of place on identity, and vice-versa. Generally, this study focuses on the intersections between place and Indigenous identity in an urban context. As Peters (2011) suggests in her overview of the current available urban Indigenous literature, there are, “Strong arguments that success in the urban milieu is not incompatible with the retention or emergence of positive Aboriginal identities and communities” (96). The responses of this study’s research participants, support Peters’ statement. By examining the relationship Metis individuals and the community at large have with place in Ottawa, the ways in which they have created and maintained positive Indigenous identities in the urban environment will be explored.

This is not to say that Indigenous peoples, specifically Metis peoples in the context of this research, do not face challenges and obstacles in maintaining their identity in the city. These will also be explored at length within this chapter and those to follow. Nevertheless this chapter is focused on their positive efforts within three sub-themes identified from the responses of research participants that relate back to place and identity—Metis identity, multiple understandings of Metis identity in Ottawa, and the institutional and organizational capacity of the Metis community. Prior to the discussion of the research participants’ responses, it is

important to review the theoretical implications of place and identity, and how they will be contemplated in this chapter, in addition to reviewing the current available literature in urban Indigenous studies pertaining to these themes.

Fifteen interviews were undertaken with self-identifying Metis residents of the Ottawa area from a variety of backgrounds and age-groups, and have been in Ottawa for varying amounts of time ranging from a couple years to their entire life. It is important to note that the participants were able to choose whether or not they wanted to be identified by a pseudonym or not. Many chose to go by their actual names, while some chose a pseudonym. In the context of this chapter, the responses relating specifically to identity and place were collected, analyzed, and separated according to three sub themes including Metis identity, different understandings of identity, and community and institutional capacity. Each theme will be thoroughly discussed from the viewpoints of the participants and will bring to light the multitude of lived experiences and social geographies of Metis urbanites.

### **URBAN METIS: THE EXISTING LITERATURE**

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As Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (2013) suggest, Indigenous peoples have often been excluded from the urban consciousness based on a colonial construct that sought to distance Indigenous peoples from cities both in theory and practice. But, as Kermoal and Lévesque (2010) argue, Indigenous peoples have always been involved in urban life. They provide the examples of Metis women working in Saint-Boniface households in the late 1800s and Haudenosaunee ‘Skywalkers’ who helped build the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City and the Mercier and Victoria bridges in Montreal as clear and irrefutable examples of Indigenous labour contributing to the development of North American cities (Kermoal and Lévesque, 2010). Recognizing these

contributions and acknowledging that Indigenous peoples are not recent migrants to cities is essential. Kermoal and Lévesque argue that through this recognition, Indigenous peoples will be included in a more accurate and enlightened urban historical consciousness (2010). It is therefore important to consider the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples in cities in order to effectively understand the realities they face in urban areas today.

Currently, there exist few studies into the experiences of Indigenous peoples living in urban areas prior to the 1960s and 1970s, when a body of urban Indigenous literature began to develop. One such study is David Burley's (2013) study of Rooster Town, a neighborhood south of Winnipeg's downtown core that was home to many Metis in the city until the 1960s. The study offers a glimpse into the historical circumstances of Metis people living within a particular neighborhood in Winnipeg's urban centre. As Burley describes, the living conditions were challenging in the neighborhood, which consisted mostly of shacks. White residents of the city wanted the shacks of Rooster Town removed and the Metis residents dispersed because of aesthetic appearances and the belief that their children were being exposed to contagions from the children of Rooster Town (Burley, 2013). As Burley explains, "In the case of Rooster Town, suburban anxiety was reinforced by a deeply embedded sense that Aboriginal people did not belong in the city and by a history of municipal efforts, from the city's incorporation, to remove their visible presence" (2013, 4). Rooster Town was identified as one of 26 fringe settlements by Jean Lagasse, who had conducted a study of Manitoba's Indigenous population in 1959. (Lagasse, 1959). Because of a lack of services and opportunities in rural areas, many Metis moved to the fringes of urban areas and took whatever form of employment they could find. Settlements such as Rooster Town were spaces that harbored interrelationships of marriage and work which created a strong support network for Metis residents. A strong sense of community

was present within Rooster Town and kinship ties and social relationships offered a strong support system for its residents. Despite the positive benefits to the social well-being of residents,, however, the city's municipal government and white residents wanted the fringe settlements like Rooster Town vacated, destroyed, and neighbourhoods rebuilt. Employing Stranger-Ross' concept of municipal colonialism, which describes the inherent colonial nature of urban institutions and practices, Burley explains, "Municipal governance and urban processes generally in Winnipeg remained inextricably connected to the colonizing origins of the city and perpetuated the colonialism that, intermittently but relentlessly, dispossessed indigenous peoples of land they had occupied historically or that they had been pushed onto" (Burley, 2013, 20). As a result, by the early 1960s, Rooster Town was disbanded and its Metis residents were forced to relocate elsewhere both within, and outside of, the city.

Nevertheless, places such as Rooster Town are testament to the long-term presence of Metis, and other Indigenous peoples, in cities across Canada. Although, there is no historic equivalent of Rooster Town in Ottawa, the experiences of Winnipeg's Metis speak to the municipal colonialism present within that city and serves as an effective example to compare with the treatment of urban Metis peoples in other Canadian cities. Therefore, even though Ottawa's Metis community may not be as entrenched as that of Winnipeg's, considering the historical experiences of other urban Metis peoples can help us better understand the contemporary challenges they face and how instances of municipal colonialism can be rectified. Additional studies looking into historical urban Indigenous populations and communities would contribute significantly to a greater understanding of the Indigenous roots present within cities and would undoubtedly answer Kermaol and Lévesque's (2010) call for a renewed urban historical consciousness. The following section will consider the body of contemporary research

that has been completed concerning urban Indigenous peoples residing in contemporary Canadian cities.

According to Peters (2011) who reviewed the state of available urban Indigenous literature, there is an emerging body of work that explores the opportunities urban areas offer for the construction of positive Indigenous identities while also describing the continuing gaps in this burgeoning field of urban Aboriginal studies. Prior to exploring the available research in this emerging field that has many links to important themes in human geography, it is of interest to note the gaps and tensions Peters lists in her review, as they serve as effective guidelines for carrying out further research regarding urban Indigenous peoples, because they inspired this thesis. As Peters explains, research thus far has emphasized description rather than theory, and continues by suggesting that it would be useful to compare the experiences of urban Indigenous peoples and communities with other cultural groups in urban areas. As Peters states, “This is not to say that Aboriginal people are like immigrant or other urban cultural groups, but it is important to begin to theorize how and why they are the same or different” (2011, 96). This will be of particular interest especially in the following chapters because urban Indigenous migrants are often compared to immigrants arriving from outside of Canada, a process that completely erases their historical relationship with Canadian state in addition to nullifying its responsibilities towards Indigenous peoples.

The second gap Peters identifies is that the diversity of urban Indigenous populations within a single city is under-researched arguing that much of the existing work either generalizes the experiences of urban Indigenous peoples or focuses primarily on the experiences of First Nations people and therefore, urban Inuit and Metis studies are under-represented (Peters, 2011). Finally, she notes that there is a lack of scholarship that explores the experiences and realities of

Indigenous communities in specific cities. There does exist a substantive body of research regarding certain urban contexts in Canada, especially in Western Canadian cities such as Winnipeg; however, as Peters suggests, “comparative work that explores how particular urban histories and characteristics shape Aboriginal identities in different cities would make a solid contribution to our knowledge” (Peters, 2011, 96). This thesis will strive to address each of the gaps identified by Peters within the context of Ottawa’s urban Metis community. The following review will highlight the main bodies of research of urban Indigenous research that focus on identity, urban Indigenous institutions, and the small segment of research regarding urban Metis peoples. This will then be followed by an in-depth analysis of the responses of the research participants in the context of this thesis, specifically in regard to intersections between identity and place.

A good starting point for considering the experiences of urban Indigenous peoples is the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) from 1996. Between 1991 and 1996, RCAP held met with thousands of Indigenous individuals from nearly 100 communities across the country (INAC, 2010). Its main purpose was to gain a better understanding of the realities and challenges Indigenous peoples faced, and to ultimately propose recommendations on how the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler society could be realigned and restructured, following the events at Oka in the summer of 1990 (RCAP, 1996). The Commission culminated with the release of a five-volume 4,000-page report accompanied by 440 recommendations on how to accomplish this task (Hurley & Wherrett, 2000).

Though urban Indigenous peoples were not its main focus, “RCAP brought to the forefront the desire of many Aboriginal peoples to live good lives within cities, to maintain and develop a distinctive Aboriginal culture which is more than a heritage and to exercise significant

governance over their daily lives, both as individuals and as communities” (Peters & Newhouse, 2003, 8). Urban Indigenous experiences were explored at length within ‘urban perspectives’ in Volume 4, Perspectives and Realities, of RCAP. The section accurately represented the discourse on the urban Indigenous experience as one of tension between loss and opportunity (Peters & Newhouse, 2003). As Alan Cairns notes, urban Indigenous peoples, “should have just as much claim on the attention of policy-makers and other Canadians, as do landed nations practising self-government” (2007, 119). Urban Indigenous participants of RCAP stressed the fundamental importance of retaining and embracing their cultural identity while living in urban centers, as a self-validating pursuit (RCAP, 1996). The report recommended that both federal and provincial governments needed to be involved in urban Indigenous policy and program development, and that governments should encourage the development and participation of representative urban Indigenous organizations (Peters & Newhouse, 2003). Though, many researchers point to the ineffectiveness of RCAP because recommendations were not fully carried out (Cairns 2007), it was instrumental in presenting the experiences, challenges, and successes of Indigenous peoples living in cities to researchers and policy-makers alike. Though the latter have not adequately responded to the need of urban Indigenous peoples, the former have ushered in a new field of urban Indigenous studies that seeks to illuminate the positive features of the urban Indigenous experience, rather than focus on the discourses of marginalization present in the pre-RCAP period.

One major challenge that RCAP identified for Indigenous people residing within urban areas is maintaining cultural identity and developing urban institutions that reflect traditional Indigenous values (1996). With this in mind, the report emphasized the importance of strengthening the institutional capacity of urban Indigenous communities in order to address

these challenges and to play a central role in fostering the development of strong and vibrant urban Indigenous identities (RCAP, 1996). The presence of these institutions undoubtedly contributes to the strengthening of urban Indigenous communities while actively contributing to the decolonization of contemporary urban environments, providing non-Indigenous peoples with opportunities to come into contact with Indigenous peoples and realities.

As Peters and Andersen explain in their book *Indigenous in the City*, “The association of “authentic” Indigenous identities with non-urban locations position urban Indigenous cultures and lifeways as inauthentic and less legitimate” (2013, 1). The Indigenous ‘idyll’ of settler colonial society has relegated “authentic” Indigenous peoples and cultures to non-urban spaces far from metropolitan centres in distance and history, characterizing them by savagery and wilderness, in complete contrast to modern Western society which is characterized by progress and civilization (Peters & Andersen, 2013). This view continues to be firmly entrenched within mainstream Canadian society and as Peters and Andersen (2013, 5) suggest, “The conceptual and physical removal of Indigenous people from urban spaces that accompanied colonial urbanization reinforced perceptions about the incompatibility of urban and Indigenous identities”. As a result, many researchers and policy-makers consider urban life to be synonymous with assimilation (Peters & Andersen, 2013). However, this negates the cultural vitality of many urban Indigenous communities across Canada who have successfully created and maintained strong and well-connected social and cultural networks within cities. As Peters and Newhouse propose,

What is important is that we begin to see urban Aboriginal peoples both as individuals and as communities, with interests, aspirations, needs, goods, and objectives that they wish to pursue within the urban landscape rather than as objects of public policy or victims of colonization or displacement. (2003, 9)

Andersen (2013) further affirms that ‘urban Aboriginal’ should be recognized as a distinctive and equally legitimate form of Indigenous identity, and goes as far as suggesting that it be incorporated as an ethnic affiliation category within the census. Referring to the work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall, Andersen explains that identity can be positioned as an ‘essence’ underlying an authentic presence that binds a people together, in addition to being understood in terms of what we may become (2013). When considering Indigenous peoples living in urban areas, the production of an authentic urban Indigenous identity becomes possible and even natural considering that over the course of recent history, many Indigenous peoples have become urban citizens. As Hall (1993, 225) suggests, “identities are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power”. As a result, much like spaces and places, identities in a constant flux of change and represent processes rather than fixed entities. Therefore, in a contemporary urban world, as Andersen suggest, an authentic Indigenous identity within the city is possible and has as much legitimacy as non-urban Indigenous identities.

Newhouse (2003) provides a comprehensive study of the history and importance of Indigenous institutions in Canada in “The Invisible Infrastructure: Urban Aboriginal Institutions and Organizations.” Although Indigenous peoples had always resided in and around Canadian cities, it was not until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Indigenous institutions and community centres began to appear within the urban landscape of Canadian cities. This process started with emergence of “Indian clubs” in the 1950s which fostered a sense of community, provided a meeting place and began to create a visible Indigenous presence within the city (Newhouse, 2003). The clubs gave way to the Aboriginal Friendship Centre movement beginning in the 1960s, with centres experiencing exponential growth within Canada going from 3 centres in 1960 to 117 centres in 2002 (Newhouse, 2003). As Newhouse explains, “In many

cases, the centres serve as important community centres, fostering the development of an urban Aboriginal community ethos and spirit” (2003, 244). Institutions, such as the Friendship Centres, are viewed as being at the heart of the urban Indigenous community, gathering people, services, knowledge, and traditional practices and beliefs, regardless of legal status, age, socio-economic background, or Indigenous affiliation. David Newhouse captures the importance of these institutions in the various urban contexts by summarizing in his chapter,

This institutional presence is almost invisible to public policy-makers [...] This invisibility is not surprising as it indicates the presence of urban Aboriginal peoples who are interested in creating and participating in healthy vibrant communities and who see the city as an opportunity and renewal rather than a place of cultural erosion [...] The experience of urban Aboriginal life is mediated through community institutions. Participation in them gives a sense of community, a sense of history and a sense of shared values. (2003, 251-252)

Newhouse concludes by stating that the idea of an urban Indigenous community has not been sufficiently explored in the research literature and that questions such as, “Who constitutes them? How is life experienced in urban Aboriginal communities? How do communities develop and change? What is considered a healthy urban Aboriginal community? How are decisions made in a community? [And w]ho participates[...]” (2003, 252). These questions should be taken into consideration by researchers and policy-makers in regards to the heterogeneous experiences of urban Indigenous peoples from various Canadian cities. Andersen (2013) echoes this call for further research a decade later by stipulating, “data that capture the nuance and specificity of different urban Aboriginal communities will prove crucial to providing effective (i.e. responsive and accurate) and cost-efficient policy” (63). The current literature is clear in that further research into the social geographies and lived experiences of urban Indigenous peoples is necessary.

Two important resources compiled within the last ten years that are of particular importance are the Urban Aboriginal Task Force (UATF) Final Report published in 2007 and the Environics Research Urban Aboriginal peoples study published in 2010. The former focuses on the context of Ontario's cities while the latter is a comprehensive study of 11 cities across the country including Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Montréal, Toronto, Halifax and Ottawa, based on over 2 600 interviews with urban Indigenous residents (Environics Research, Inc., 2010). The studies establish general trends and offer concrete recommendations in order to support the development of urban Indigenous communities. However, they address a large number of broad issues and do not capture the specific characteristics of different urban Indigenous communities and the sub-groups within these cities.

As stated by numerous scholars (Norris & Clatworthy, 2003; Guimond, 2003; Peters & Newhouse 2003; Newhouse, 2003; Peters & Andersen, 2013; Andersen, 2013; Peters, 2011), research that studies the demographic, social, cultural, and institutional characteristics of diverse urban Indigenous communities is needed. Up until now, most of the literature has focused primarily on the experiences of urban Indigenous citizens who identify as First Nations. In the case of the Urban Aboriginal peoples study, only Inuit citizens were interviewed in Ottawa (Environics Research Inc., 2010). Largely ignored are the experiences of urban Metis peoples who are the fastest growing urban Indigenous population (Norris & Clatworthy, 2003; Guimond, 2003), with over two-thirds, or close to 275,000 individuals living in Canadian cities, making them the most urbanized Indigenous peoples within Canada (Laliberté, 2013). This chapter, and this thesis as a whole, seek to address this research gap by focusing on the urban Metis

community situated in Canada's fifth largest metropolitan area, Ottawa-Gatineau, which comprises of several thousand self-identifying Metis individuals (Statistics Canada, 2009c).

As will be argued, this comprehensive study of Metis identity and social geographies with the Ottawa area, accompanied by an assessment of the institutional capacity of the community, can provide valuable insight into the region's urban Metis community, and as Andersen (2013) suggests, help guide effective and cost-efficient policy. In addition, aside from the fact that over 14,000 individuals self-identify as Metis within the Ottawa-Gatineau area which comprises the National Capital Region (Statistics Canada, 2015), a population which is comparable in size to urban Metis communities in western Canada, Ottawa is home to various Metis representative bodies such as the Métis National Council, Métis Nation of Ontario, and Ottawa Métis Council. These organizations, in addition to the large number of governmental employment and educational opportunities constitute pull factors for Metis peoples from across the country, a theme that will be explored in the following chapter. Furthermore, Ottawa is home to several important Indigenous institutions such as the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, acting as important meeting places for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis urban citizens, and represent visible Indigenous landmarks within Ottawa's urban landscape with specific Metis-programming mandates.

The following section will consider the limited, but growing, body of literature relating specifically to experiences of urban Metis peoples residing in Canadian cities. As previously stated, the literature is primarily rooted in the experiences of Metis peoples residing in western Canadian cities. Cheryl Lynn Troupe's 2009 thesis "*Métis Women: Social Structure, Urbanization and Political Activism, 1850-1980*" and Ronald Laliberte's 2013 chapter "*Being Métis: Exploring the Construction, Retention, and Maintenance of Urban Métis Identity*",

provide effective frameworks for carrying out research with urban Metis peoples in Saskatchewan. Troupe (2009) focuses specifically on the historical role of Metis women in developing institutions within Saskatoon acknowledging that Indigenous women in general have, “facilitated urban development and adaptation to a urban environment” (22). As Indigenous women have historically been instrumental in the development of urban Indigenous communities (Lawrence, 2004), Troupe’s work serves as a model that identifies the types of roles Metis women played in fostering the creation and sustaining of a sense of community

Laliberte (2013), like Troupe, focuses on Saskatoon, where there is a community of over 9,000 Metis individuals, seeks to explore the ways in which urban Metis residents maintain their cultural identity. As Laliberte suggests, an important consideration to take into account before conducting research is the question of ‘Who is Metis?’ (2013). The Métis National Council states that, “Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and is accepted by the Métis nation” (Gionet, 2013). However, as Laliberte suggests, there are other broader definitions of Metis which consider all those of “mixed” ancestry, Indigenous and other, to be Metis and that consequently, “Such diversity of identities and realities among those who identify as Métis not only reinforces the complexity, ambiguity, and fluidity of Métis identity formation but also creates tension and dissention around who qualifies as Métis” (2013, 111).

Historically, the term Metis is associated with the French word ‘Métis’ that referred to those belonging to the culture that emerged from the union of French and First Nations cultures in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in and around the Red River Settlement, today known as the city of Winnipeg. In addition, ‘Metis’ also refers to those known as ‘Halfbreeds’, a culture that arose from those of mixed Scottish (and other immigrants from the British Isles), and First

Nations descent in western Canada. Furthermore, in the case of Ontario, the term 'Metis' has been used for the culture that emerged from the marriages between primarily Euro-Canadian fur traders and First Nations women. Finally, for many, the term 'Metis' has recently come to mean anyone who may have mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry. As a result, simply stating the word 'Metis' can bring up a plethora of questions, concerns, and misunderstandings. Peterson and Brown (1985) addressed this ambiguity in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*. They state that, "By the 1970s, the term Métis came to be understood as any person of mixed Indian-white ancestry who identified him or herself and was identified by others as neither Indian nor white" and that such a broad usage poses problems (Peterson & Brown, 1985, 5). Peterson and Brown note that the term "Métis" was most closely associated in the scholarship (but also lived experience) with peoples who traced their ancestry and history to the Red River Settlement. But things began to change in the 1970s when people without this connection began using the term Metis to describe themselves. As a result, the problem Brown and Peterson pointed to was that the differences between Metis who are associated with the historic Red River settlement and its associated social geographies, and those who call themselves Metis based solely on their mixed ancestry, created two main types of people—what they called Big 'M' Metis and small 'm' metis. The Métis National Council provided an official statement on these groupings at a meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva in August 1984, stating, "Written with a small 'm,' métis is a racial term for anyone of mixed Indian and European ancestry. Written with a capital 'M,' Métis is a socio-cultural or political term for those originally of mixed ancestry who evolved into a distinct indigenous people during a certain historical period in a certain region in Canada." (Peterson & Brown, 1985, 6). Peterson and Brown conclude by stating that disagreement continues over the

use of the terms ‘metis’ and “Métis” by and for individuals of mixed ancestry. As Laliberte (2013) noted, this distinction has caused certain tension amongst Metis in Saskatoon. This will be explored at length within the urban context of Ottawa as there are a substantial amount of both Big ‘M’ and small ‘m’ Metis.

Understanding the difference between Big ‘M’ and small ‘m’ Metis is of central importance in the context of this thesis, especially within the following chapter. Chris Andersen addresses this fundamental difference in *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* very clearly arguing that if an individual or group lack a historical connection to the Red River Settlement and its associated geographical core, that they cannot identify as Metis (2014). This is controversial statement for all those who claim a Metis identity based solely on mixed ancestry but as Andersen explains:

If we base métisness on mixedness, it reproduces a racialized hierarchy of indigeneity premised on a chain of logic that includes two elements: (1) if Métis are mixed then First Nations and Inuit must not be (because, if we were all mixed, the term would lose its distinguishing power); and (2) if Métis are mixed and First Nations and Inuit are not, then, ipso facto, Métis must be less Indigenous. (2014, 7)

Accordingly, the use of the term should refer exclusively to “the history, events, leaders, territories, language, and culture associated with the growth of the buffalo hunting and trading Métis of the northern Plains, in particular during the period between the beginning of the Métis buffalo brigades in the early nineteenth century and the 1885 North West Uprising” (Andersen, 2014, 24). So for Andersen, being Metis is about nationhood and that together, historically and contemporarily, the Metis form a distinct Indigenous nation. He states, we must consider “Métis as Nation because of (1) our ability to force the Canadian government to halt, however briefly, its annexation of territories now known as western Canada, (2) our earlier treating with the Sioux and other Indigenous collectivities, and (3) our collective self-consciousness as Métis”

(Andersen, 2014, 198). The overall argument Andersen makes is that using Metis as a title for all mixed ancestry individuals undermines the Metis' claim to nationhood, perpetuating a colonial construct of simply labeling all "Non-Indian" and "Non-white" peoples as Metis and mixed. He concludes by stating, "In short, "Métis" is not a catch-all term for anyone who is Indigenous-but-not-First-Nation-or-Inuit" (Andersen, 2014, 24).

Conversely, Peters (2011) suggests that urban Indigenous peoples are extremely heterogeneous in both their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and that this is certainly the case for urban Metis, stating that "Métis populations are similarly diverse with different kinship affiliations and different sources of identity" (88). Citing Andersen (2008), she continues by stating that, "Self-identification in some cases [is] associated with 'mixed' Aboriginal and settler ancestry; in other cases, it derives from linkages with the historic Métis Nation or the Prairie provinces" (2011, 88). Furthermore, in his study on Metis in Saskatoon, Laliberte (2013) suggests that Metis identity although complex and often ambiguous, has undergone transformations when adapting to the urban environment. Today there is the presence of different understandings of Metis identity in the city, primarily an understanding of Metis as peoplehood and nationhood, and on the other hand, an understanding of Metis as being of mixed ancestry. As he explains, identity is a social construct and that urban Indigenous identity can be defined, "through a combination of ancestry, appearance, cultural knowledge, and Aboriginal community participation" (2013, 114). This is to say that urban Indigenous identity involves much more than simply having an Indigenous background. Finding one's place within the community in a city setting involves considerable effort, mainly through active involvement in the community through frequenting certain places and taking part in events and activities.

To reach these conclusions, Laliberte conducted 42 semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews conducted in Saskatoon exploring urban Metis identity by asking participants to describe their cultural identity, how they maintained their Metis identity, and what reinforced their identity in the urban environment (2013). The results illustrated the diverse definitions of Metis identity as either belonging to a historic Metis community or simply of being of mixed ancestry (Laliberte, 2013). Furthermore, the participants identified that Metis identity was learned through their parents, and in most cases through female parents and grandparents thus highlighting the extremely significant role Metis women play in, “the retention, maintenance and persistence of urban Métis identity” (Laliberte, 2013, 122). In addition, echoing David Newhouse’s findings (2003), Laliberte found that urban Indigenous organizations played a fundamental role in the maintenance of Metis identity through the Friendship Centre and the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc., a local organization of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, in the Saskatoon urban context (2013). These institutions and organizations provide a meeting place for Metis in that particular urban context, and have proven to be important spaces of interaction between community members, especially between Metis seniors and youth who are seeking out cultural teachings. The importance of these social and cultural mechanisms was identified by RCAP, which recognized the importance of urban Metis institutions in its report by stating, “Métis [peoples]... have [a] need, as do all urban-dwelling Aboriginal persons, for easily accessible communal land bases, for cultural, social, recreational, governmental and commercial purposes, in the cities where they live” (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 4, 371). The use of cultural traditions and practices within these institutions through food, language, commemorative events, dancing, music, and dress were seen as central elements of urban Metis identity.

Laliberte (2013) concludes that most urban Metis people in Saskatoon possess a strong Metis cultural identity and that an inclusive Metis community exists in the urban environment, one that goes beyond strict definitions and historic affiliations. This strong sense of identity is directly related to a knowledge of family histories, positive interactions with other Metis in the city, and spaces that cater to the Metis and broader urban Indigenous community in Saskatoon. These factors have favoured the development of a new Metis space which speaks to the adaptability of Metis peoples as their culture has proven to be compatible with an urban setting. Even though historically Metis were not an urban people and living in urban areas directly contradicts the misconception held by settler society has concerning Indigenous cultures, today the fact remains that over half of all Indigenous peoples in Canada are urbanites. Using Laliberté's framework, this chapter will strive to explore the identity, social networks, institutional capacity, and relationship with the urban environment that Metis peoples have in Ottawa, in order to further research within the emerging field of urban Indigenous studies and gain valuable insight into the most urbanized Indigenous population in Canada.

### **DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF METIS IDENTITY IN OTTAWA**

What was revealed through the participants is that this issue of terminology that appears to be an academic exercise is replicated out in their everyday lives and experiences as Metis people. The city of Ottawa is not considered to be within the Metis Homeland since, arguably, there was no historic Metis settlement in the area. Nevertheless, there are several thousand self-identifying Metis individuals in the Ottawa-Gatineau area and that number continues to grow. Why Metis are here and where they are coming from will be the topic of the following chapter; however, for the purpose of this chapter, it is important to understand that Metis are arriving

from multiple places and bring with them a diversity of cultural understandings, practices, and worldviews. Ottawa is an excellent example of a place where these multiple definitions both clash and coexist. The participants had a great deal to say concerning the issue of self-identification and community, and their responses will be analyzed in full within this section. The participants reflect this diverse set of self-identifying Metis and they all had something to say concerning these multiple understandings in Ottawa. Charlie, 23, who has Metis roots that stem from a historic community in Saskatchewan, has come to understand these multiple definitions in the context of his university studies. He states that, “I know how contested the term Metis is. I guess being Metis is being a descendant from the Metis Nation [...] I understand Metis as obviously not just mixed blood, but like having sort of a lineage to those self-governing colonies in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and also I guess northern United States, around the Great Lakes area. That’s what Metis means to me.” He continues by sharing that growing up, he didn’t grasp what it meant to be Metis, a theme that arose with many of the participants, but has since come to better understand this often contested term. Although he does not want to necessarily exclude people claiming a Metis identity based on recent mixed heritage, he feels strongly that doing so erases the legitimacy of the historic Metis Nation. Referring to the fact that many people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, believe that Metis means mixed, he shares, “I’ve since come to understand that that’s really not, it’s like really erasive, and to my mind not historically accurate in terms of how new identities came to be constructed that weren’t either White or Indigenous, and how Metis people came to occupy this third space.”

Crystal, 25, who is originally from Alberta, also believes adamantly in the importance of being connected to a historic Metis community. She states that, “obviously you have to be from a historic community [...] I think as long as you have that connection to those communities, you’re

a Metis person [...]” She also feels that it is important to acknowledge the difference between Metis and mixed ancestry, something that became apparent to her when moving to Ottawa. She observes that, “there’s a lot of people here in Ottawa that aren’t Metis but say they are, and I don’t want to be mean, right, but they’re sort of not the same as ours. It certainly does not mean that you’re mixed [...]”. Other Big ‘M’ Metis participants were quite clear that Metis are exclusively from western Canada. Genevieve, 31, who just recently arrived in Ottawa states that, “Metis people don’t really, well they act like they exist, but they don’t really exist outside of the Prairies very much.” Benny, 33, who has been actively involved in the Ottawa Metis and broader Indigenous communities recognizes there’s a plurality of understandings of the term ‘Metis’ and also believes there’s a need to differentiate between attachment to historic communities and mixed ancestry. She shares that being Metis is much more than being mixed, stating:

I think that that’s the general misconception that people hold, and that makes sense that people feel that way based on what’s been taught in the curriculum [...] If somebody tells me that they are Metis and then I find out that they identify that way because they have you know a French mother and a Cree father, then my follow up question is usually, who in your family is Metis, and if what they tell me is I’m the only person in my family who is Metis, then that’s a red flag for me.

Evidently, there is a difference between so-called Big ‘M’ Metis who have an acute understanding of their roots and attachment to historic Metis communities, and little ‘m’ Metis who are of mixed ancestry and have no known connection to a historic Metis community. As Andersen (2014) suggests, Metis identity, Big ‘M’ Metis identity in this context, is linked to a discourse of nationalism and involves a historical and cultural consciousness based on shared history, values, and beliefs, rather than exclusively on mixed heritage. However, it is important to recognize that there is no blanket understanding of Big ‘M’ Metis as there are certain divides within the Big ‘M’ understanding of Metis, notably between Metis from the Prairie provinces and Metis from Ontario. For instance, a lot of Metis from western Canada, such as Genevieve,

don't feel as if there are Metis east of Red River. To them, there may be Metis individuals living outside of the Metis Homeland, but certainly no historic communities. Dickason (1985) comments on this misconception of Metis being exclusively from western Canada. She states, "This reluctance on the part of Canadian historians to acknowledge mingling of the races in the Northeast becomes all the more anomalous in the face of their ready acceptance of the phenomenon in the Northwest" (Dickason, 1985, 20-21) This lack of awareness concerning the experiences of Ontario Metis was brought up by many of the participants. As Crystal, 25, discusses, she was not aware of Ontario's Metis culture and history until she moved here. She explains that:

[S]ince I've moved over here, I've learned about the Metis community in Sault Saint Marie, in Sudbury, in Penetang, and you know the Drummond Islanders, I didn't know about that. Out West, everyone, in Alberta, all Metis think that like it's only the Prairies, which isn't actually true [...] it's not fair to leave them out in the cold because of the colonial boundary of Ontario, like it's stupid [...] understanding that there's a diverseness within our Nations and that's actually really good, it's not a bad thing, I don't know why people think it's a bad thing, I think it's a good thing, it means that we have a diverseness of knowledge, and diverseness of stories, and you know were all about the sharing and caring so what's the issue?

Adele, 28, who is also originally from one of several Metis Settlements in Alberta, also learned a great deal about the Eastern extremity of the Metis Homeland and Metis history in Ontario when she moved here. She highlights that, "it's really important too that people understand that Metis in Ontario are very different from Metis from Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba [...] a lot of Metis who lived in Ontario had to completely deny who they were in order to survive" She's referring to the period following the 1885 Resistance when Metis across Canada, and especially in Ontario experienced widespread discrimination for the uprising against the Dominion government. Kelly, 21, who originates from a community in northwestern Ontario, but who also has roots to the historic Red River Settlement, highlights this important difference

between Big 'M' Metis from western Canada and Big 'M' Metis from Ontario. She feels that Metis from western Canada, i.e. west of Red River, incorporate more elements and cultural practices, such as ceremonies, from their First Nations roots than Metis in Ontario who focus perhaps more on the legacy of the *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* of the fur trade. She explains that, "I find that in Ontario, a lot of people have a hard time accepting that they have First Nations ancestors, or like Metis to a lot of people in Ontario means fur trading and *voyageurs* and then kind of the First Nations narrative is lost." Two of the participants, Matthew, 28, and Rose, 25, echo this perspective, both of whom originate from the Penetanguishene region along the shores of Lake Huron's Georgian Bay. Matthew, is confident in who he is and his culture, saying that, "I don't have to shout it from the rooftops [...]", he also feels particularly attached to the legacy of the Metis in the fur trade, stating that, "we were the *coureurs de bois*, we were the workforce of early Canada and for me that's my attachment, I think of Metis as entrepreneurs, I think of Metis as drivers of the community [...]" Rose too, identifies strongly with the Big 'M' Ontario Metis identity. Her ancestors were Drummond Islanders who migrated to the Penetanguishene area in the 1820's following the formal establishment of the US/Canada border in the Great Lakes which made Drummond Island American territory. She confidently states that, "I identify as Metis and like Big 'M' Metis with the understanding that I also come from a really mixed background, but I think that there's also a difference in like the historic community [...] that's the reason that there is Big 'M' Metis, because there was a new culture that emerged, and so I guess I strongly identify with that historic aspect."

As Crystal pointed out earlier, the colonial border of Ontario is not the outer wall of the Metis Homeland and should not exclude Ontarian Big 'M' Metis from claiming a historic Metis identity. Although, Ontario Big 'M' Metis culture appears to be lived out differently than Red

River or western Canada Big 'M' Metis culture, the former heavily influenced by the legacy of the fur trade, it does remain a legitimate branch of Metis identity with geographies, histories, and communities of its own. It seems that it is not until Western Metis have moved to Ontario, and have spent some time in the province, that they acknowledge the existence of Big 'M' Metis east of the Prairies. The third expression of Metis identity in Ottawa is little 'm' Metis identity and comes into stark contrast with the two other expressions of Big 'M' Metis identity.

Of the 15 participants, 4 identified as Metis based on their immediate mixed ancestry, and thus fall under the umbrella of little 'm' Metis. Each participant was confident in their assertion of their little 'm' Metis identity and embody the literal meaning of the French word 'Métis' meaning mixed. Marie, 55, who is of mainly Algonquin and Ukrainian descent states, "I am a Halfbreed, and I'm proud of that, but I'm not half of anything, the Metis part of me is a whole part of me [...]" Another participant, Still Blanket Woman, 53, who wished to be referred to by her Indigenous name in the context of this research, shares a similar view. When asked about how she identifies, she shares that, "I embrace my Aboriginal culture and I am French mixed Algonquin, typical Metis." Alexandre, 25, originally from Sault Sainte Marie, a historic Metis community, also identifies as Metis, based on his mixed Ojibway, Austrian, and Scottish ancestry. Although he has inherited more of his European family's physical features such as red hair and a fair complexion, he feels that it is important to preserve his roots, he states that, "I'm kind of a melting pot of several things I suppose [...] Cultural identity changes where I am, when I'm in Ottawa I personally relate with First Nations, Metis culture." Seb, 32, also identifies as little 'm' Metis and occupies an active role within the broader Indigenous community through his work and personal life. Seb feels strongly about building good relationships between different kinds of Metis. Referring to an ongoing dispute between the Métis National Council, who

represents recognized citizens of the Métis Nation, and the Métis Federation of Canada, who recognizes all self-identifying Metis, Seb feels that, “The spat in the Metis community needs to stop, it has been tearing us asunder for a long time now, and it’s not helping anyone.” He strongly believes that there are new Metis cultures being formed continuously. Insisting on greater recognition for these new mixed cultures, Seb shares that:

[T]here are new Metis being formed every year with new alliances between Indigenous, Aboriginal men and women, and settlers. And they’re having offspring, and those offspring are Metis [...] And identity is fluid. Just like you can’t hold water in your hands, you can’t hold identity in your hands, it’s very fluid. And it comes from within the individual. So those new Metis that are formed with new alliances between men and women of divergent backgrounds, I’ll put it that way, their own identity needs to come from within. They identify as First Nations, or they identify as Metis, that’s up to them.

Seb’s views on the fluidity of identity are very interesting and echo much of what the other little ‘m’ Metis participants had to share on this subject. Pierre, 40, who did not grow up Metis but has ancestors from Red River, highlights the intriguing nature of the meeting of different Metis identities in the Ottawa area. He explains that, “Metis kind of got a little different when I moved to Ottawa, because you’re right on the Québec border and there’s people calling themselves Metis from there. It may be a French word meaning mixed, but it means something different in different parts of the country, you know.” Benny, 33, also finds that Ottawa is a unique place for Metis culture. Having lived here for over a decade, she states that, “Ottawa is a border town. It’s a place where Metis people gather from the West and from the East and it’s where a lot of these differences in understanding Metis identity collide and so it’s an interesting environment to be in, in terms of finding community, there’s a lot of dynamics at play.” The fact remains that depending on who you ask, Metis may mean one of several things. The participants certainly did not all agree on who is Metis and who can claim a Metis identity. These diverging

opinions have a direct impact on the community. These community dynamics will be the subject of further analysis in the following section.

When different definitions of Metis collide, say within an event or work setting, evidently certain tensions can arise. For Genevieve, 31, who is new to the city, and who mentioned that she does not feel there are Metis outside of the Prairies, has had a hard time grasping little ‘m’ Metis identity. She herself works within a First Nations oriented organization and has often seen young applicants looking for government jobs identify as Metis based on a distant First Nations relative, which, for her, is a source of frustration. Referring to Metis identity, she explains that, “Here everyone thinks that it means, and I don’t mean everyone, but the general consensus is that it means to be mixed, and I think that a lot of people use that to a negative advantage. I’ve seen it in government, where people are saying they’re Metis, but they just mean, my great-great-great grandmother was Mohawk or Algonquin [...]” Benny, 33, also believes there’s an important difference between Big ‘M’ and little ‘m’ Metis, and that it is necessary to acknowledge this, especially when it comes down to claiming certain rights and privileges associated with being Metis, especially in light of the recent Daniels’ Supreme Court ruling.

However, Benny does not see the need to be confrontational with those who claim a little ‘m’ Metis identity. She explains that most often, they are not claiming this identity in a challenging way in order to gain access to certain rights or resources. In her opinion, “They are also an Indigenous person that is looking for community, that has been impacted greatly by the process of colonization, so it’s good to be kind and gentle.” Rose, 25, also shares this view, and does not wish to police cultural identity. She shares that, “if people want to identify as being mixed and Metis, it’s not up to me to tell them how to identify [...]”, and referring to little ‘m’ Metis identity, she explains, “the community in Ottawa is a really welcoming community [...]

Like there's a difference. It's not the same, but it's awesome to see people out engaging, and they have every right to be participating in the community here as anybody else does." As Rose brought up, the Ottawa Indigenous community is a welcoming one, and many of the urban Indigenous institutions present within the city offer support and services to self-identifying Indigenous people, including a large number of Metis urbanites.

This section has demonstrated that there are three main expressions of Metis identity within Ottawa, that of Big 'M' Metis from western Canada, Big 'M' Metis from Ontario, and finally, little 'm' Metis who identify as being of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry. There exist some differences of opinions between both Big 'M' groupings; however, the most apparent contrast is between Big 'M' Metis who trace their lineage back to a historic Metis community or settlement, and little 'm' Metis who do not have this historic attachment and root their Metis identity within their experiences as mixed ancestry people. Although, it may be met with opposition from the latter, it may be of interest to propose the use of a new term for little 'm' Metis that better reflects their contemporary assertion of a Metis identity, perhaps use of the term mixed, "ginigawisin" from Anishinaabemowin, the Algonquin language (Nichols, 2015), would be appropriate. There may be other more appropriate terms that could be created, the researcher simply wishes to explore possible alternatives. With that in mind, although differing definitions of Metis identities often collide with one another in this particular urban context, they are able to coexist especially in the context of broader Indigenous programming and service provision within the city. The following section will look more closely into the importance of community and its associated social and cultural structures and capacity in providing positive and effective resources for Metis in the city.

## **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPACITY OF THE METIS COMMUNITY**

As Newhouse (2003) suggests, community life within the urban context is often mediated by the presence of urban Indigenous institutions. He emphasizes the important role they play in providing urban Indigenous residents a place to meet and gather, in addition to promoting the development of a positive sense of community, sense of history, and sense of shared values (Newhouse, 2003). In the context of this research, it can also be suggested that they encourage the development of a positive sense of place while also providing concrete locations that serve as important locales for Indigenous people to develop strong social and cultural ties with one another. This section will provide an overview of the different community organizations within Ottawa that provide services to the Metis and broader Indigenous community, in addition to analyzing the participants' responses in regards to the importance of community life and how it could possibly be enhanced.

There is a sizeable number of Indigenous people living within the Ottawa-Gatineau area and, as a result, there are a number of institutions that have been established over the past few decades within the city that cater specifically to the Indigenous community. The two most notable institutions that serve the broader Indigenous community composed of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis, within the Ottawa area, are the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, just west of the downtown core, and the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health which is located in the neighborhood of Vanier, east of the downtown core (they will be referred to as Odawa and Wabano respectively). Odawa provides primarily a gathering space and a wide range of cultural programming, and Wabano offers a similar space and programming in addition to a number of health and social services. Ottawa is also home to several Inuit specific organizations and centres such as Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI); however, as this study relates specifically to the Metis

community in Ottawa, organizations that offer services to the Metis community will be of central focus. Aside from Odawa and Wabano, there are several Indigenous resource centres destined for Indigenous students studying at the various postsecondary institutions within the city including the Aboriginal Resource Centre at the University of Ottawa, the Ojigkwanong Aboriginal Centre at Carleton University, and the Mamidosewin Centre at Algonquin College. These centres are reserved for students and as a result do not necessarily cater to the Indigenous community as a whole; however, for many students just arriving in Ottawa, these centres serve as their first point of contact with the urban Indigenous community. In addition to cultural institutions, there are also a large number of Indigenous political organizations within the city of Ottawa that actively work to represent Indigenous peoples not only within the city but from across the country.

The primary political organizations that represent Metis within the city are the Ottawa Regional Métis Council (ORMC) and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). The Métis National of Council (MNC), which represents all citizens of the Métis Nation, has an office in downtown Ottawa; however, it does not directly provide services to Metis residents of the city. The same can also be said for the Métis Federation of Canada (MFC), which represents all self-identifying Metis and do not have a physical office in the city. Both the ORMC and the MNO offer services and programming directly to Metis residents in the city. The ORMC is one of 29 community councils across the province that in turn make up the Métis Nation of Ontario. The MNO's head office is located in the central Ottawa neighborhood of Lowertown, and thus has a presence within the city's Metis community.

Several of the participants are involved in urban Indigenous institutions and the Metis representative organizations in Ottawa. For example, Benny, 33, who has served as president of

the ORMC, explains the objectives it seeks to achieve in the Ottawa area: “Our Council has identified as important to host regular opportunities for Metis in the city, whether or not they’re citizens of the Métis Nation of Ontario, to connect, so whether that be through moccasin making workshops or political events, like recognizing Powley Day in September.” Although, the MNO provides a wide range of programs and services to Metis throughout the province, the ORMC accounts for the bulk of community planning within the Ottawa area. It is important to highlight that the ORMC is primarily volunteer based and does not have a physical location within the city. With these several institutions and organizations in mind, the responses of the participants will be analyzed in order to understand the role these service providers and representative bodies play within the Metis and broader Indigenous communities.

The majority of the participants identified the institutions and organizations above as occupying an important role for them and the community in general. Cody, 25, who is quite active within the city’s Metis community states that, “I think they’re key, they’re imperative to having our culture and our community present in, especially in an urban landscape [...] They kind of give us, a safe place to identity, for one.” Benny, 33, also highlights the importance of these institutions as places where Metis in the city can meet and interact with one another, she explains that, “they provide spaces for Metis people to gather which allow us to interact with the broader community.” Marie, 55, also recognizes the importance of urban Indigenous institutions as places where Indigenous residents of the city can develop and nurture their culture. Referring specifically to Wabano, she explains that, “they give a place where our community and our people can come and feel that they belong. A meeting place, but it’s also a place of health. Because health for us is not just medicine, culture is the key, so you can’t really divide it, so when you come here, you’re also getting good health.” Genevieve, 31, who volunteers at Odawa,

feels that urban Indigenous institutions are important for the development of positive Indigenous identities within the city. She explains that, “I really think they help to keep Indigenous people proud to be Indigenous, and as a resource, I think it’s really a unique thing to be like an urban Indian.”

Genevieve is correct in saying that it is quite unique to be an urban Indigenous person. Places such as Odawa and Wabano, which act as Indigenous landmarks within the city, enable urban Indigenous people to gather, meet, and interact, creating and strengthening relationships between people who may not have otherwise met. Cody, 25, speaks to the importance of having strong friendships with people in the community. He feels that having strong friendships has helped him reaffirm his identity and has pushed him to become an active and contributing member of the community. He shares that, “I really think having those friendships is so key to being able to strongly identify as a Metis person and to contribute positively to our presence, especially in an urban landscape.” Kelly, 21 also speaks to the importance of friendships and how they have played an important role in creating a positive sense of community for her since she moved to Ottawa. She states that, “being in contact with other Metis people within the community. I have really good friends, even if they’re not young, that’s the thing, being Metis, you can be best friends with someone who’s like 30 years older than you, and you’re still great friends.” She also shares that she is becoming more attached to the community here because of the availability of resources and the connections she’s made over the four years she’s spent here in Ottawa.

Rose, 25, also acknowledges the importance of positive and inclusive social relationships when it comes to developing a strong Metis identity within the city. She also sits on the ORMC and knows the community quite well. She acknowledges that there’s certain challenges

associated with keeping the community connected, especially when the ORMC is heavily volunteer-base. She explains that, “there is a really strong Metis community in Ottawa, I don’t always think that they’re well connected [...] We’re consistently trying to reach out to people. There’s a ton, there’s like I think 3,000 Metis people living in the Greater Ottawa Area, there’s no shortage of members, and that’s only people that are citizens of the MNO.” Benny, 33, who is the president of the ORMC, speaks to the challenge of adequately serving the urban Metis community. The following excerpt summarizes her views on the lack of funding available to urban Indigenous organizations, and specifically urban Metis organizations:

Canadians generally, I think when they think of Indigenous people in Canada, they’re thinking of First Nations people living on reserve and in remote communities, and the reality is that the majority of us live in cities and support for urban programming is not sufficient [...] we do not have as Metis people, as Metis communities, a substantial amount of funding coming from the, an adequate amount of funding, that is the word I’m looking for, an adequate amount of funding coming from the federal government, because they resist that, and things may change with the Daniels decision, we will see, but right now no [...] the reality is that we are not given the opportunity to be present because we are not afforded the same funding as Inuit and First Nations organizations.

As described in the introduction of this thesis, the Daniels decision to which Benny makes reference to consists of the Supreme Court ruling in April 2016 that recognizes Metis as ‘Indians’ for the purposes of section 91(24) of the Canadian Constitution (Supreme Court of Canada, 2016). Generally speaking, this means the federal government will have to make similar financial resources and policy making mechanisms offered to First Nations and Inuit available to Metis communities and citizens across the country. This decision will likely have a significant impact on urban Metis peoples, as the majority of Metis live in cities today. In any case, Benny’s acute understanding of the challenges concerning funding for Metis organizations speaks to the obstacles in place for developing strong and easily accessible Metis places within the city of Ottawa. As a result, many Metis people in the city access services available to the broader

Indigenous community. Although Odawa and Wabano are considered as highly welcoming places where Metis can come and meet others in the community, it is sometimes difficult for those who are not highly involved in the community to access these places. Charlie, 23, who lives out his Metis culture primarily through interactions with his father, rarely frequents Indigenous institutions outside of campus. He shares that, “it never occurs to me that Wabano or Odawa are places I can go being Metis. I always feel that those are places for First Nations people, which is wrong.” It is clear that Charlie understands that these places are open to all Indigenous people, but sometimes it seems that Metis occupy the third place after First Nations and Inuit when it comes to programming and services. This is not to say institutions such as Odawa and Wabano don’t offer specific Metis programming and services; however, some of the participants did highlight that Metis needs are perhaps different than those of First Nations and Inuit peoples. Crystal, 25, reflects on this question by stating, “sometimes our needs look a little different than what a lot of other Aboriginal peoples’ needs are. I’m not sure what it is exactly but I don’t think it’s exactly the same. So it’s hard to kind of figure what exactly we need and what kind of support we need.” Bruno, 39, who has lived in the city for several years but has not used the services available to the Indigenous community states that, “For me, if I was to use them, it would be cultural programming [...] I’d love to have access to more Metis specific programming, that sort of teaches identity, unpacks the identity a little bit better.” Charlie also shared what he would like to see from a Metis organization such as the ORMC if it had access to greater funding. He explains that cultural revitalization through increased educational activities would be useful in addition to political representation through greater lobbying efforts and representation, especially since the community is in the Canadian capital. Once again, it is anticipated with increased attention and allocated resources that will come in the wake of the

Daniels Supreme Court ruling, the needs of the Metis community will be better understood and perhaps much of what the participants would like to see occur will indeed take place.

Even though there appears to be a lack of Metis specific programming in the city there are a few notable events that occur annually that bring out the Metis community in Ottawa. These events include National Aboriginal Day, Powley Day, and the Halfbreed Hustle. As per one of RCAP's recommendations, June 21<sup>st</sup> is celebrated each year in Canada as National Aboriginal Day. In Ottawa, there is a Summer Solstice festival organized around National Aboriginal Day where First Nations, Inuit, and Metis cultures are showcased. Although it is not a specific Metis event, there is a large tent that is set up every year for the Metis community, and Metis specific activities and workshops are held there throughout the 3-day festival. Powley Day is held every September 19<sup>th</sup> and celebrates the 2003 Supreme Court ruling in R. v. Powley which granted official recognition of Metis hunting and harvesting rights. The ORMC often organizes gatherings to celebrate this important event for Metis across the country. Finally, the Halfbreed Hustle is held every November at the Wabano Centre in order to commemorate Louis Riel's execution which occurred on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1885. This annual event brings out the largest number of Metis in the city at any given time during the year, attracting hundreds of people since the inaugural Halfbreed Hustle in 2013 (Figure 1 in Appendix B provides last year's Halfbreed Hustle poster). These events serve as important opportunities for Metis in the city to gather but also as instances where people can live out their culture, something that can be challenging when occasions to be with other Metis are few and far between. Cody, 25, captures this sentiment by stating that, "Whenever we have Powley day or the Halfbreed Hustle, that really helps you reaffirm your identity because you get to see other people, you get to experience the culture, and you get to see other people jigging and for once it's not just me because no one

else knows how and then you see other people doing it, and you're like I'm not the only one!" Crystal, 25, also appreciates the opportunity to gather and interact with other Metis in the city. After participating in this past year's Halfbreed Hustle, she shares that, "it was a lot of fun. And like my Metis spirit was great after that."

Pierre, 40, enjoys participating in these events as it brings not only the Metis community out but also the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as well. He explains that, "in the Metis community when there's an event and people come to it, it's really cool, like you see that people are happy to be there and it's good to be Metis with Metis, but it's also good to have, because there's always people there that aren't Indigenous, and it's good that we're sharing what we have and what we are with others as well." Matthew, 28, also feels that events like the Halfbreed Hustle are important occasions for the Metis community to create links with the non-Indigenous community so that these events can become even bigger. He feels that, "it's important to create links with non-Aboriginals so that these events can be bigger. Sometimes that view is not necessarily supported within the community broadly speaking and I think that that's probably one of the main issues that we have to kind of get over. I think that it's important to have non-Aboriginal support." As mentioned before, Matthew believes that he and other Metis should embody the entrepreneurial side of his Metis heritage and does wish that these events continue to grow in years to come, and hopes that these events can serve as opportunities for Metis to not only gather but also as opportunities for non-Indigenous urbanites to better understand the culture and create lasting ties with the community. That being said, it was emphasized by many participants that these events should still be organized by Metis for Metis. The Halfbreed Hustle is itself a grassroots event organized by several members of the community and held at Wabano. As Kelly, 21, explains, these events happen not because of large

organizations but because of people who care. Referring to the Halfbreed Hustle, she explains, “that event is basically all we have, it’s a really awesome thing [...] I mean all these things that happen aren’t because of an organization, they’re because of people who care [...] That’s something I want to see happen more often.”

Events such as the Halfbreed Hustle serve as important opportunities to experience one’s Metis culture and also as good occasions to interact with the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Benny, 33, feels that these are important occasions to showcase that Metis culture is alive and well, and not a thing of the past. She states that, “I think it’s really important that the Metis community is represented as being a part of that Indigenous community in the city [...] it reminds people that we have a contemporary presence, that we are not just a historical people that existed in the 1880s and died with the hanging of Riel.” Even if it is only a few times a year, it is clear that the Metis community does occupy a place within the urban landscape of the city of Ottawa. Whether their ‘right to the city’ as envisioned by Henri Lefebvre (1996), is being respected, at this point, it is important to recognize that there is a strong community presence although it is sometimes difficult to maintain. Organizations such as the ORMC and the MNO are vital in representing the needs of urban Metis while institutions such as Odawa and Wabano provide spaces for Metis in the city to meet and interact with one another, in addition to creating links with the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. As discussed by the participants, increased cultural programming would be beneficial for the community as a whole.

## **CONCLUSION**

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It is clear that the experiences of Indigenous peoples living within urban areas are heterogeneous and multi-faceted. This chapter has analyzed the experiences of one particular urban Metis population, within the specific context of Ottawa. In so doing, this research responds to calls by academics such as Evelyn Peters (2011) to better understand the experiences of Indigenous peoples within particular urban contexts, especially regarding the Metis who are largely underrepresented in the current available literature. The intersections between place and identity demonstrate that overall, many Metis people have a positive attachment to the Capital's urban environment with opportunities to meet and interact with other Metis, and physical places in the city where they can engage with the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. As a result, many of the participants spoke of a positive sense of place within the urban context, although there still exist a number of challenges associated with identifying as an Indigenous person in the city. Locations such as Odawa and Wabano provide important locales where Metis social relations and experiences are lived out. As discussed, there is a number of different understandings concerning Metis identity within the Ottawa, including Big 'M' Metis from western Canada, Big 'M' Metis from Ontario, and little 'm' Metis of mixed ancestry. Although there are certain tensions with competing claims to identity, the three groupings, which represent at times subdivisions within the larger community, do coexist and engage with one another at the city's Indigenous institutions. Overall, the majority of the participants shared positive experiences and have been able to develop and maintain their Metis identity within the urban context of Ottawa, even though it is located outside of the traditional Metis Homeland, because programs and services catered for Metis in the city, and large-scale events such as National Aboriginal Day, Powley Day, and the Halfbreed Hustle.

## CHAPTER 2

### A HOME AWAY FROM HOME –

### LIFE OUTSIDE OF THE METIS HOMELAND IN OTTAWA

#### INTRODUCTION: METIS SPATIAL STORIES

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Cities are excellent examples of spaces dominated by forms of movement where at any given time you may find people travelling to work, shopping for groceries at a 24-hour supermarket, or simply going for a leisurely stroll. Geographer Percy Crowe defined movement as having three essential components: origin, destination, and an effective will to move (cited in Cresswell & Merriman, 2011). With this in mind, we can begin to see cities as nodes that attract people from different places for different reasons. This attraction creates movement as people move from node to node because of a variety of factors and for varying amounts of time. As Cresswell and Merriman (2011) share in *Geographies of mobilities: practices, spaces, subjects*, mobility creates spatial stories based on our movements through space and time. Historically, the Metis have been an extremely mobile people travelling great distances and occupying varied regional geographies as a result of economic pursuits such as the fur trade and the buffalo hunt. Although these two pursuits are no longer economically viable, the Metis continue to be a mobile people in order to pursue educational and employment opportunities in large urban areas. As a city, Ottawa is certainly a governance hub for many important Indigenous representative bodies and organizations such as the Métis National Council (MNC) and Métis Nation of Ontario and many others that attract Indigenous workers to the city. It is also an educational hub for many people who come to pursue an education at one of the many postsecondary institutions located within the city. This chapter will focus on the movement of Metis peoples to Ottawa, taking into

account the reasons why they moved to the city, the impacts of a highly mobile population on the community, and finally, the ways in which Metis anchor themselves in the urban area, primarily through a continued connection with the land. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that, while Ottawa itself is not a historical Metis community and is not situated within the traditional Metis Homeland, it represents an important Metis gathering space for contemporary Metis today. So although, it is not a historical Metis place, Ottawa represents a crossroads for many Metis who are pursuing educational and employment opportunities and as a result represents an important Metis space.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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In order to grasp the social geographies and lived experiences of urban Indigenous peoples, it is important to understand how and why Indigenous peoples are moving to cities. Norris and Clatworthy (2003) analyze the migration patterns of primarily Indigenous individuals across four different types of areas including First Nations reserves and Metis settlements, census metropolitan areas (CMA) with an urban core of at least 100,000, census agglomerations (CA) with a population of at least 10,000, and finally, rural areas. They identify those who moved between areas, for example from one CMA to another, as migrants, and those who moved between residences in the same area as residential movers. Norris and Clatworthy (2003) found that the most urbanized Indigenous groups were non-status First Nations and Metis people, with an urbanization rate of 73% and 66% respectively. In addition, they found that the mobility of Indigenous peoples is especially high within Canada's CMAs (2003). They also identified a high rate of residential movers, especially for Metis, with 70% of Metis moving residences between the 1991 and 1996 period. This is to say that Indigenous peoples living in cities have often

moved from other cities, and they continue to experience high levels of mobility within the city by moving from residence to residence. This trend is highest among young adults, especially for young Indigenous women. Comparing the experiences of this study's participants, this trend is reflected by Metis in Ottawa as well. Norris and Clatworthy conclude by stating "The urban Aboriginal population is in a high state of flux. Statistics suggest it is one that is highly mobile, characterized by family instability and dissolution, with a high proportion of female lone-parent families; economically marginalized with low incomes and experiencing high victimization and crime rates." (2003, 69) Although these trends are still prominent in Canadian cities today, they are by no means the realities of all urban Indigenous peoples.

There are evidently a wide variety of factors associated with the contemporary mobility of Indigenous, particularly Metis, peoples. These factors can be identified as "push" factors that encourage people to move away from certain locations, and "pull" factors that entice people to move towards certain locations. Major push factors for Indigenous peoples moving from reserves or rural areas to urban areas include lack of employment opportunities and difficult social conditions, while pull factors include access to better housing, employment, and educational opportunities, in addition to the dynamic and diverse culture of the city (Norris & Clatworthy, 2003). Aside from these factors, it is also important to consider another form of mobility, that of ethnic mobility.

Eric Guimond (2003) explores the implications of ethnic mobility and suggests that the spectacular growth of Indigenous populations in cities, which surpassing 600,000 individuals (Statistics Canada, 2009a), is largely attributed to this phenomenon, which consists of the change of ethnic affiliation by individuals and/or families. Guimond identifies two types of ethnic mobility, intergenerational ethnic mobility where parents and children do not have the same

ethnic affiliation, and intragenerational ethnic mobility, which reflects an individual's change of ethnic affiliation within their lifetime (2003). An example of both these types of mobility would be the child of a First Nations mother who chooses to identify as Metis later in life, representing intergenerational ethnic mobility, as opposed to a person who grew up not aware of their Indigenous heritage and upon discovering their Indigenous relatives, began to identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit, thus representing a form of intragenerational ethnic mobility. Since 1986, self-identification has been used by Statistics Canada's censuses for individuals who define affiliation with an Indigenous group, whether it be First Nations, Metis or Inuit (Guimond, 2003). The spectacular growth of the urban Indigenous population, a population which experienced a relative 10-year increase of 55% to 60% between 1986 and 1996, compared to a 14% increase of the non-Indigenous urban population during the same period, cannot be explained by recent migration from reserves or rural areas, and is due in large part to ethnic mobility, which accounted for close to half of the growth experienced within that 10-year period (Guimond, 2003). Guimond suggests several reasons for the increased self-identification of urban Indigenous peoples,

Socio-political events and their media coverage, spontaneous (Oka) or organized (RCAP), have all served to heighten the awareness of the public, and, most importantly, to restore the image and pride of Aboriginal peoples. The increased public attention and the improved general self-perception of Aboriginal peoples could have influenced individuals to self-report as Aboriginal (2003, 44).

A concrete example of ethnic mobility in the context of this study would be little 'm' Metis who may not have self-identified as Metis until discovering their mixed ancestry, which is a common experience among the young adults of this study. Interestingly, Guimond notes that the urban Metis population experienced the highest growth rate among Indigenous groups, and that, "one area of further research which will certainly require attention is the demographic

implications of the policy and legal landscape regarding the Métis” (2003, 44). Norris and Clatworthy (2003) echo this statement by identifying the same trend and qualifying the Metis, “as a largely urbanized population, with more than two-thirds living in urban areas” (74).

It is clear that, broadly speaking, Indigenous peoples are moving to cities and have been for quite some time. This is especially the case for the Metis who have been on the move since their ethnogenesis as a people. Although Red River carts may have been replaced with cars and trucks, there continues to be a high rate of movement among Metis, with young Metis people experiencing the highest rates of mobility. It is important to note that this is also the case for many people moving from rural areas towards urban centres. The fact is many opportunities, especially for young people, are located in cities. These movements are predominantly towards and between urban areas. The Metis who have arrived and stayed in Ottawa have spatial stories that span thousands of kilometres and encompass vast geographies and rich histories. As Cresswell and Merriman (2003) suggest, space place, and landscape are best approached as verbs rather than as nouns due to the fact that they are ongoing processes and not fixed entities. Metis social geographies are also an ongoing processes, continuously evolving and expanding. This study focuses on the social geographies and spatial stories of Metis who have established a community in the eastern hinterland of the traditional Metis Homeland. The area consists of an important educational and employment node, two major pull factors encouraging Metis and other populations to move to Ottawa. Before continuing, it is important to consider the history of the city and why it represents such a fascinating and important meeting place for Metis and many others.

The City of Ottawa itself is situated within traditional Algonquin territory and the region itself has served as an important gathering space and centre of economic trade since time

immemorial (Algonquins of Ontario, 2013). The site of what is today known as the city of Ottawa is at the confluence of the Ottawa and Gatineau rivers and as such is a highly strategic meeting place that has fostered extensive economic activity (Gilbert et al., 2014). Following the arrival and subsequent settlement of European settlers, the lumber trade became prominent in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and dominated the region attracting both French and English speaking immigrants (Ottawa River, n.d.). Following the selection of Bytown, which later was renamed Ottawa, as the capital of the Dominion of Canada by Queen Victoria in 1857, the city experienced a transformative shift which over the next century would essentially completely phase out its industrial roots and become the country's foremost administrative centre. As Gilbert et al. (2014) suggest, today the influence of the federal government in Ottawa is of such importance that it is difficult to perceive the industrial roots of the region which was dominated by the lumber trade up until the 1880s. Following the Second World War, the city began to embody its identity as the Canadian Capital through urban redevelopment initiatives such as the Gréber Plan that sought to push Ottawa to the rank of a world capital by creating an extensive series of green spaces, parkways, monuments, and government buildings to physically reflect its importance and character as the country's capital (National Capital Commission, n.d.). The city itself lies directly on the border between the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and more symbolically, on the border between English and French Canada. In addition to the linguistic diversity of the region, Ottawa has over the past 50 years also attracted a large number of immigrants from across the world, many of whom come from non-official language backgrounds.

As the 2011 Canadian Census captured, Ottawa is home to approximately 600,000 English mother tongue speakers, 385,000 French mother tongue speakers, and 205,000 non-

official language speakers (Statistics Canada, 2016). Considering the results of the 2011 National Household Survey, it is also important to note that of the Ottawa Census Metropolitan Area's 1.2 million residents, 968,000 are identified as non-immigrants and 235,000 are identified as immigrants, with significant amounts of immigrants arriving from Asia (94,000), Europe (68,000), other countries in the Americas (39,000), and Africa (34,000), which makes Ottawa a distinctly diverse capital city, both ethnically and linguistically (Statistics Canada, 2015). Juxtaposed with this diversity of recent immigrants is also an extremely diverse urban Indigenous population. The 2011 National Household Survey identified over 63,000 North American Indigenous residents living in the CMA of Ottawa. Of those 48,000 identified as First Nations, 1,450 as Inuit, and finally 14,000 as Metis (Statistics Canada, 2015). Although there are many issues related to the National Household Survey and the Census in terms of how the number of Indigenous peoples is determined and reported (Andersen, 2014), considering there is a population of 14,000 Metis in a non-traditional Metis territory is highly significant. As for many others who have recently arrived in the city, the prospect of educational and employment opportunities with governmental and non-governmental organizations are major pull factors that have attracted Metis from across the country. As a result, though it is not a historic Metis community, or a city on traditional Metis territory, the city of Ottawa has become an important Metis meeting place and gathering space.

This chapter, then, will consider the high level of movement experienced by Metis in the city, the challenges associated with the ephemeral spaces frequented by Metis, and finally, the continued importance of connecting with the land as a means of anchoring one's identity amidst an urban lifestyle and environment. Ultimately, the responses of the participants demonstrate the

considerable adaptability of Metis people in the urban environment and sheds light on their complex and wide-ranging spatial stories.

### **MOBILE METIS AND THE CAPITAL CROSSROADS**

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are three main groupings of Metis in the Ottawa area including Big ‘M’ Metis from western Canada, Big ‘M’ Metis from Ontario, and finally, little ‘m’ Metis who come from a variety of places in Canada. Although they may not all share similar cultural understandings, practices, and histories, they do share the common experience of having led highly mobile lives. Of the 15 participants, 13 (or 85%), have moved to Ottawa. They come from a variety of backgrounds and have made Ottawa their home for a variety reasons including education and work. Some of the participants have consciously made Ottawa their home temporarily while others plan to remain permanently. Furthermore, different push and pull factors are associated with the choice to move to Ottawa. Based on the responses of the participants, pull factors such as education and employment opportunities played a dominant role in their decision to relocate to Ottawa. A total of 11 participants, or approximately 75%, decided to move to Ottawa area to pursue some form of postsecondary education or for work related purposes. The remaining three participants were either born and raised in Ottawa, or moved here at a young age with their families. The length of time the participants have lived in Ottawa ranges from 2 years to over 50; however, the majority of the participants have lived in Ottawa for a period of 4 to 15 years.

The majority of the participants, two-thirds plan on staying in Ottawa primarily due to opportunities in their respective fields in government and healthcare work or for education. The remaining one third of participants either plan on moving shortly to pursue education elsewhere

or to be closer to family. It is important to note that although the vast majority of participants interviewed in the context of this study have moved to Ottawa from elsewhere, most of them plan on staying, which suggests that the community will create stronger roots in Ottawa. Genevieve, 31, echoes many of the participants by stating, “I think I’m going to stay just because of the opportunities out here for an Indigenous person [...] I see myself wanting to stay here permanently.” This is very interesting because Genevieve has spent the least time in Ottawa, approximately 2 years and has yet to meet any other Metis in the city. This attitude may also reflect certain push factors associated with moving to Ottawa. Genevieve moved here from Winnipeg, a city with one of the largest urban Indigenous populations. Although urban Indigenous peoples generally face a large number of challenges, such as those highlighted by Norris and Clatworthy (2003) including economic marginalization, difficult social conditions, and violence, Winnipeg is known to be an especially challenging city to be Indigenous. As Genevieve shares, “Coming from Winnipeg, there is a lot of Metis people, but the situation in Winnipeg is very unique because it’s a very very racist city, and so it’s kind of hard to be involved in Indigenous or Metis activities in Winnipeg because it’s a very racist place.” This is not say that Winnipeg does not have a vibrant Indigenous community or Indigenous institutions and services; however, it appears that the racism experienced by Indigenous peoples is more overt than in Ottawa.

Adele, 28, who is originally from the Fishing Lake Metis Settlement, one of several Metis settlements in Alberta, spent a lot of time in Edmonton as a young girl. She also speaks to the more direct forms of racism present in western Canada. She states that, “growing up out west, there was a lot more segregation, people weren’t interested in who I was and where I came from, they were like ok you’re Native and you can stay over there.” Racism certainly represents

a major push factor for many of the Metis that moved to Ottawa from western Canada. Conversely, all of the participants shared experiences of racism in Ottawa as well, a theme that will be explored in greater detail in the final chapter. Another important push factor is difficult social conditions. Although not experienced by most of the participants, it was brought up and represents a common experience for many Metis but also First Nations and Inuit moving from either rural areas to cities, or between cities. As mentioned above, Adele is originally from one of the Metis settlements in Alberta, which are essentially the equivalent of reserves in terms of geographic location. This includes 1.25 million acres of land allocated to the Metis by the provincial government of Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2016). Lack of economic opportunities and difficult social conditions, such as substance abuse and violence, are present on the settlements as they are on First Nations reserves and remote communities in the Arctic, and evidently, in many cities. Adele speaks to the difficulty of the situation and the legacy and ongoing processes of colonialism that have been the root cause of many of the problems experienced in these communities:

[...] I don't think I'll ever go back. It kind of sucks. But I think that's the same story that a lot of Inuit and First Nations have as well, you know the situation on reserves or on remote communities, or on settlements is so bad that we can't go back, you know it's too hard to go back, and that's one way that the government continues to remove us from our traditional territories, is making sure that we can't go back to where we're from.

Although pull factors such as educational and employment opportunities have played more of a role in attracting Metis to the Ottawa area, it is important to consider the push factors involved as well, such as racism and challenging social conditions, as highlighted above by Genevieve and Adele. With an understanding of the push and pull factors that have brought Metis to Ottawa, the impact of high mobility on the community will now be explored by analyzing the responses of the participants.

High levels of movement can be challenging as they mean the community is constantly undergoing changes in membership which can make gathering together and organizing events difficult. Benny, 33, who has been in Ottawa for most of her adult life, is quite aware of these challenges and how it can be easy to lose oneself in the urban environment, she explains that, “it’s very easy in an urban centre like Ottawa to feel disconnected and so for me I maintain my identity by nurturing and encouraging those relationships that I’ve made with other Metis people in the city and recognizing that Ottawa is a really transient place.” She recognizes that Ottawa is outside of the traditional Metis Homeland and that there are different Metis from a wide variety of backgrounds who come and go, to and from the city. Rose, 25, also highlights the challenges associated with creating a strong sense of community in the city when so many of its many of its members are moving to and from the city, and can also hard to identify. She states that, “it’s so hard to track Metis down in Ottawa because it’s like we’re a bunch of displaced Metis people roaming around the city, and we’re not always easy to identify either [...]” Crystal, 25, speaks to this as well, comparing Ottawa’s Metis community to historic communities such as Lac La Biche, Alberta or Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario. She explains that, “it’s a lot easier in those communities because they’re historic communities, not historic communities but there’s more of an actual Metis community. Here we’re all kind of like transplanted Metis folks.” Still Blanket Woman, 53, although she does not associate with a historic Metis community, also feels this way. When asked if Ottawa is home for her, she shares that, “I’m a transplant, so not really.” Many of the participants who have moved here from long distances feel this way; however, though a highly mobile population can be challenging for maintaining a strong sense of community, it can also lead to the creation of a highly diverse group of people that bring together different traditions, teachings, and worldviews from a variety of contexts and backgrounds.

Bruno, 39, appreciates the high mobility associated with life in Ottawa. Although outside of the Homeland, he has met many Metis from all over the Prairies living and working in Ottawa. He feels that Metis identity has historically been a mobile identity with important cultural symbols such as the Red River cart, the buffalo hunt, and horses. He shares that, “we’re lucky that we’re in Ottawa, and that a lot of people move here. So it’s a city filled with like migrant people, you know what I mean? High mobility. So a lot of Metis, the people that I’ve seen, just by going around, were people from Saskatchewan area, from the Red River social geography, which takes up the whole Prairie region.” Adele, 28, is not surprised that Ottawa is a meeting place for Metis and for Indigenous peoples from across the country. She shares that, “what I’ve been taught about Ottawa and its history is that this has been a sacred gathering location for thousands of years so I think that reinforces my identity to learn all of these different teachings from all across Canada.” Rose, 25, speaks to this diversity and shares that, “I know of people from all over the place, and so the Metis community is definitely here [...] the one really cool thing about the Metis community in Ottawa is that it’s so diverse [...]”. She then goes on to name Jamie Koebel who is a well-known Metis dancer and jigger from Alberta, Christi Belcourt, an accomplished painter and beader from Northern Ontario, and Dr. Brenda Macdougall from Saskatchewan, a Chair of Metis research at the University of Ottawa, as all having contributed to this diverseness of Metis culture in Ottawa.

Kelly, 21, has come to appreciate the community here and is happy to have made so many close Metis friends. She shares that “it’s like this little family of Metis people that have come from out West that’s kind of like over the years migrated over to Ottawa [...]” She also adds that her network does extend well beyond Ottawa to Sault Sainte Marie and further west. Referring to the distance between friends outside of the city, she explains that, “it’s funny

because those boundaries kind of disintegrate when you're talking about your social network and your friends who are Metis as well." Many of the Metis participants in the context of this study, maintain strong connections with their original homes and with other Metis friends they have made throughout their lives. This has led to complex and multiple understandings of home, some of which will now be explored.

The concept of home can have many different definitions for different people. The idea of creating a sense of home in a highly mobile world is especially interesting because people are often having to reinvent home within short periods of time. Most of the Metis participants did not identify Ottawa as their primary home for a variety of reasons. In most cases, the participants' families live outside of the city, and home is therefore associated with their immediate family wherever they may live. Charlie, 23, who is originally from Yellowknife and has family across western Canada, shares that home is, "probably somewhere out West. It's like a funny answer, but probably wherever my family is." Benny, 33, feels like home is where her ancestors' stories are located. She is attached to Ottawa; however, for her, simply living somewhere does not make it home. She shares that, "Home is where my heart is, and my heart is where my stories are, and so for me, I feel a deep connection to Saint Boniface, and to Winnipeg, and to the Prairies, but this is where I live, so it's home for now. It's a part of home, it's a part of what constitutes home." For others, Ottawa has been home for most of their life and wish to stay here due to work and family. Seb, 32, who works at one of the postsecondary institutions in Ottawa and has a young daughter shares that he'll be staying in Ottawa for good. He states that, "I personally don't feel I have a choice [...] My wife works for the House of Commons, and there's only one place in the world where that is, and this is where my daughter was born, this is where her land is [...] her roots are here, they're starting to grow [...]" For Adele, 28, Ottawa is

her second home, she shares that, “I’ve had to create my own home here, through friends and those few friends that I’ve had that supported me, that’s my family. So yea, I do, and I’ve created my own home away from home.” For many of the participants, Ottawa is their second home and they try to visit their first home where their family is located as often as possible. Crystal, 25, tries to get out to the Calgary area at least 3 or 4 times a year. Although, she feels that the Ottawa city life is not necessarily meant for her, she values the relationships she’s come to form here, and although she does not see herself living here forever, she’ll maintain those relationships once she leaves. Although, Ottawa may not be home, it does represent a home away from home. The city is an important node in their own personal social geographies and a good place to learn and work, even if only for a limited period of time.

How people relate to within this context Ottawa has proven to be both challenging and beneficial in terms of community and relationship building for its members. An important consideration is the fact that there is no specific Metis space or fixture, such as a community centre, within Ottawa’s urban landscape. Matthew, 28, feels that this is an interesting reality based on the fact that Metis are always on the move. He shares that, “the fact that there’s not a Metis specific area, it’s an interesting representation of our culture broadly speaking, we were always transitory as a group. We migrated and kind of went around. So from a historical perspective we don’t really have our own spot which is fine, we adapt to our surroundings.”

Cody, 25, also speaks to this, stating that:

We’re still I guess the travellers on the land. I guess it’s kind of weird to say that. And I think that did hinder us as far as land settlements, the constant travelling and not having our lands and things like that. But do I think that still has an effect now as far as city landscape? I’m not sure. But it’s interesting to see that we haven’t like created a space for ourselves or created a kind of a static presence in the city.

Although there are several thousand self-identifying Metis in the city and several Metis specific events that occur annually, there is still no community space for the Metis, who are constantly having to occupy space ephemerally, before having to pick up and go.

### **CONSTANTLY REINVENTING SPACE: METIS EPHEMERAL GEOGRAPHIES**

Ottawa is home to a variety of Indigenous institutions that provide a wide range of services and programs to the broader urban Indigenous community. Both Odawa Native Friendship Centre and the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health play vital roles in maintaining a strong Indigenous presence in the city while offering spaces for Indigenous peoples to meet and interact with one another. It is important to note that all self-identifying Indigenous peoples are welcome, including First Nations, Inuit, and Metis, these spaces focus on catering to the broader Indigenous community and rarely distinguish between these three branches of the Indigenous community. Aside from the offices of the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Métis National Council, which are purely administrative spaces for these representative organizations, there are no permanent Metis cultural spaces within Ottawa's urban landscape.

As a result, Metis are constantly having to invent or reinvent existing spaces in order to make them their own, and this for a fleeting amount of time. An example of an ephemeral space would be Wabano where the annual Halfbreed Hustle is held in November. For one evening, the space is transformed into a hub of Metis culture and festivities adorned with Metis Nation flags, an impressive spread of traditional foods, arts and crafts vendors, and lively entertainment including fiddle players and jiggers; however, by midnight, the space is returned to its original state—the centre's main hall—and is rented out to other groups and organizations. This section will consider the participants' views on the lack of permanent spaces for the Metis community,

demonstrating that the community is in a constant state of mobility within the city and will ultimately argue that there is a viable need for a permanent space for Metis in the city.

Many of the participants felt that the Metis continue to be the travellers on the land, leading to highly mobile lives that often take them across vast geographies. Although Metis appear to be on the move, the majority of the participants' responses suggest that they are planning on staying in Ottawa either permanently or for a considerable amount of time. Cody, 25, would like to see more Metis spaces within the city. He explains that there is no building or place specifically for the Metis where he can go, nothing written in Michif (the Metis language of mixed Cree and French), or notable sculptures or art within the city's public spaces. He names a few notable examples of Metis related exhibits or events passing through the city such as artist Christi Belcourt's art exhibit and *Walking with Our Sisters*, an event dedicated to remembering all missing and murdered Indigenous women; however, he speaks to the ephemeral character of these montages, stating that, "they're there but even then I feel like there's nothing permanent, or nothing like omnipresent that's like there. So yea, I don't know, it's tough." Genevieve, 31, who is the most recent of the participants to arrive in Ottawa has not seen the presence of the Metis community in Ottawa. Referring to Indigenous space in Ottawa, she shares that, "it's mostly for First Nations and Inuit, and I don't know of Metis spaces in Ottawa."

This statement demonstrates that new Metis arriving in the city are finding it difficult to connect with the community because there are no permanent spaces reserved primarily for Metis to gather and associate with one another. Adele, 28, who is an active member of the Metis and broader Indigenous community, is very aware of the lack of culturally appropriate spaces available within the city. She feels that institutions, organizations, and governments should be focusing on creating more places within the urban landscape for Metis and Indigenous peoples.

She states that, “I mean they really need to focus on creating safe spaces. Safe spaces is something we don’t have a lot of [...] actual spaces where we can just gather, they’re very limited, like try booking a room at Wabano if you don’t have any money, you know, it’s like next to impossible. You need that, you need places where you can just gather.” By safe spaces, Adele is referring to spaces where Metis and other Indigenous peoples can go and practice their culture free from scrutiny or discrimination. It’s been 20 years since the RCAP final report recommended that there needed to be easily accessible communal land bases for Metis in the cities where they live (1996). These land bases could be in the form of a centre that provides a space for Metis cultural, social, recreational, governmental, and commercial purposes (RCAP, 1996). As the overwhelming majority of participants suggested, this land base could take the form of a community centre or a Metis house.

Currently, the Ottawa Regional Métis Council (ORMC) does not have a permanent space where they can meet and organize events and activities. If greater funding were allocated to the organization, volunteers could be paid, and a space could be maintained. The ORMC would constitute the ideal group to operate such a communal land base as proposed by RCAP. Benny, 33, who serves as the ORMC’s president, is arguably the member of the Metis community best understands the challenges associated with not having a permanent space and constantly having to move around the city when planning events. She explains that there is no space that is solely dedicated to the Metis community in Ottawa at this point. Benny brings up the example of the Metis club in Winnipeg that has been a permanent fixture in that city’s urban landscape for decades. Although the club is frequented primarily by seniors, she explains that it is a good location to meet with seniors and elders of the community, especially for young people who are seeking out the stories and teachings of their culture, as seniors and elders are the knowledge

keepers of the community. Benny then goes on to reflect on the current situation in Ottawa, highlighting the fact that Metis people do not have a place where they can simply drop in and spend an evening with other Metis people in the city. She states that:

Whereas in Ottawa it's very difficult because there is no space that has been allocated just for us. We try to create spaces but they're not, we utilize spaces for our community when we have events and different things like that, but in terms of a place where people can spend their Friday or Saturday night to just socialize and be with other Metis people, but we don't have that.

Based on the participants' responses, it appears that having such a space would be beneficial for Metis in the city. There is no need for a multi-million-dollar centre or a prime building along Wellington Street in front of Parliament Hill; however, what would be of use is a modest space such as a small centre or even a residential property, somewhat centrally located, that could serve as a hub for Metis activities and events in the city. Large-scale events such as the Halfbreed Hustle could certainly continue to be held at Wabano as they do bring out hundreds of participants and strengthen ties with the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. That being said, a smaller space reserved solely for the Metis community would be extremely helpful in building capacity for the Metis community and providing a permanent space where representative bodies such as the ORMC could organize activities and events, and better serve the diverse and wide-ranging Metis community in Ottawa. Such a space would be the true embodiment of place making as suggested by Tomiak (2011), which would grant the city's Metis community an important measure of autogestion or self-determination in creating, managing and strengthening a permanent Metis space in Ottawa. Conversely, there are a number of challenges associated with creating and maintaining a space in the city. It would take much more than a modest amount of funding and a small group of dedicated people to run such a

space. Some of these potential challenges were brought up by the participants and will now be considered.

The major challenges brought forward by the participants concerning creating a permanent Metis space in the city were long-term vision, available resources, and the social atmosphere. Crystal, 25, who has been an active member of the urban Metis community for quite some time, acknowledges that having a Metis centre would be great; however, there would be many concerns that would need to be addressed before such a space could be created and maintained. For Crystal, such an endeavour would require an immense amount of planning, including the securing of continued funding and support, and that at this moment no one within the community has the means or time to take on such an ambitious project. Another concern is regarding who could frequent and use the space if it were to exist. Crystal explains that, “like say theoretically it existed, who’s going to police who comes and goes, like we have a lot of Metis people here who we might call little ‘m’ Metis, are they going to be welcome in that space? Who’s going to be the person at the door who says no you’re not us [...] I could see that being an issue [...]” Although she does not mean to question the identity of little ‘m’ Metis, Crystal does bring up an important consideration when contemplating creating a Metis space in the city. Is it a question of obtaining a citizenship card based on a proven record of your Metis ancestry, similar to what the MNO requires, or is it a question of upholding an open-door policy such as Wabano or Odawa for participation in events or use of certain services? Evidently, if the right funding mechanisms were in place for the creation of a space these considerations could be taken into account by a body such as the ORMC who may choose to offer different events and services. Perhaps there could be an event such as ‘Culture Night’ at Wabano, open to the public, Big ‘M’ and little ‘m’ Metis alike, and then other events or activities reserved for card-carrying members.

Although this is purely hypothetical, as Crystal points out, it is important to consider the potential issues that may arise with having a permanent Metis space in the city.

Matthew, 28, also brings up the issue of social atmosphere when contemplating whether to invest in having a fixed space for Metis in the city. He feels that as of right now, the vast majority of Metis in Ottawa are not connected with the community. For him, building up social relationships and improving Metis locales, or spaces where Metis social relations may unfold, is most important. He explains that, “I think that what’s more important is making sure that you build community and having like kitchen parties, or just kind of building the social connections first before you can really move towards having a place. I feel that we don’t really have that social atmosphere yet so we can transition towards having a physical place.” Kitchen parties are another great example Metis social geographies that transform households into ephemeral Metis gathering spaces for an evening at a time. Matthew is right to say that any space such as a community centre must have the proper social foundation to be able to serve the community as best as possible. Though many Metis are not currently connected to the larger urban Metis and urban Indigenous communities, having a space would perhaps increase the likelihood and ability of people to reach out and become active members of the community. As stated above, this is not to suggest that a community centre needs to be built. For example, if a house in the downtown core were to be acquired and designated as an urban Metis centre, it could serve as a permanent location to hold Metis kitchen parties every so often for the community. Once again, there may be issues regarding who can attend these parties and how many people may end up participating; however, having a permanent place would enable the Metis community to spatially solidify itself, easing the challenges associated with constantly having to navigate ephemeral geographies.

The way in which Ottawa Metis citizens create their ephemeral geography is through their sense of relationships and collective responsibility to build an environment that validates their identities. Whether it be with a few close friends, or the community-at-large, fostering good relationships with other Metis individuals is vital to keeping one's own culture alive and developing a positive sense of identity. Crystal, 25, speaks to the importance of relationships built on trust, respect and reciprocity. She states that, "a lot of my friends, they know that they can come to my place whenever, and like that's an open door policy, a friendship and a trust that I've built with people here, and I think that's really important. And that goes back to what I've been taught about reciprocity and respect. That to me is what Metisness is." Relationships play a big role when it comes to fostering a sense of community, and for some historic relationships, between families across the Homeland cement one's Metis identity. Benny, 33, whose family originates from Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg captures this sentiment:

But for me, being Metis means being connected to other Metis families across the Homeland, being connected to very specific places in Canada [...] the thing that makes me a Metis person is that my story is connected to the stories of other Metis people across the Homeland and our experiences, we have a shared history, a shared understanding of ourselves, a shared experience in terms of how the process of colonization has impacted us, we share all of those things.

Understanding this shared history and the shared experiences of colonialism and its effects on Metis identity and the Metis Nation, were brought up by several participants. For a long period of time following the 1885 Northwest Resistance, Metis individuals went into hiding for fear of persecution and violence. Approximately half of the participants, particularly those from Western Canada and northern Ontario Metis spoke about this history. That being said, it is common to hear from participants that the Metis have always known who they were, and though they were faced with many challenges, obstacles, and hardships associated with colonial rule,

they maintained a strong sense of who they were in addition to preserving their culture. Many feel that they are part of a cultural reawakening, as recently increased media coverage of Indigenous issues and social movements such as Idle No More, which took place in 2013, have galvanized Indigenous communities across the country and have brought a greater awareness to mainstream Canadian society. Kelly, 21, a student at one of the postsecondary institutions in Ottawa, is proud to be involved in this movement towards education and greater understanding of Indigenous issues and cultures but also of Metis issues and culture. She explains that, “I really like being a part of the awakening of our voice, like I’m really happy I was born in this time because I think it’s our responsibility as youth especially, to pick up where our ancestors left off [...] I love educating people through my art, I love being that voice and helping others around me, and just being a part of a time where people are becoming more aware [...]”. Her art not only helps others understand Metis culture and history, but has helped her unpack her own identity as a Metis person. “My recent series talks about reclaiming my culture through beadwork and then within them, there are these hidden animals or hidden teachings that we have lost over time [...] I mean a lot of what I do in my paintings has made me more comfortable like being me, being Metis.”

Cody, 25, has also contributed to creating greater awareness of Metis culture through another art form, dance. Metis jigging is a big part of gatherings and celebrations, and Cody has been happy to share this with Metis and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the community. “I’m more than anything proud of how far I’ve come, as far as that to now, being able to be involved, to giving dance lessons, giving teachings about Metis history and Metis culture, in schools, universities and things like that [...]” Rose, 25, also shares this pride in being a part of this reawakening and reclaiming of her culture. She explains that, “I’m Metis in

everything that I do. I'm a teacher, when I teach, I'm a Metis teacher [...] we're not living where our family has lived forever, we're not in our original community, but like how can we still do the things that we would like to be doing at home, in a more modern setting.”

Rose brings up an interesting point, that of the modern setting. This setting for most Metis is urban. Although the participants come from a diversity of backgrounds, they all share a common experience of having lived in an urban environment for an extended period of time which itself raises the question, how then is Metis culture lived out in the urban setting? As previously stated, relationships play a crucial role in fostering a strong and positive sense of Metis identity. The participants in general spoke to the importance of being involved in the larger Metis community in order to cultivate and maintain their own Indigenous identity. Marie, 55, who is actively involved in the broader urban Indigenous community, speaks to the importance of providing cultural teachings to youth. “When they have their culture, they have those tools to help them have a better life. They will have health if they have these teachings and traditions, and they'll teach you.” The participants all talked about the challenges of maintaining a positive urban Indigenous identity, and discussed how this can be achieved. It appears that having strong cultural supports, especially for youth, is of critical for fostering positive cultural identity within the urban environment, one that can serve as an epistemological and ontological foundation for their entire life, giving them the capacity to navigate the challenges and obstacles they will face when engaging with the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. That being said, Kelly, 21, expresses her opinion on urban Metis identity explaining that although Metis in the city are not necessarily able to hunt or trap, something she grew up doing in northwestern Ontario, it is still possible and important to practice a Metis way of live as an urban Indigenous person:

[...] I grew up in a very Metis way, if someone else was about to judge me, if I told someone how I grew up, they'd be like oh that's Metis [...] here it's very different for me, I feel that I can't connect with that part of myself, but I can be a different kind of Metis. So these two ways of living kind of separate themselves and I have to live one way or another. So I guess the city prevents me from living a historically correct I guess way of life, but at the same time I have a bigger community and I'm able to communicate with other people, so it's a lot more of the politics that happens in the city.

Many of the participants share Kelly's view. They also speak to the resilience of their culture, something that brings a strong sense of pride to them. Even in the face of immense adversity over the course of the past 150 years, Metis culture has survived and continues to be practiced within a multitude of contexts, urban and rural. Crystal, 25 shares that, "I'm proud of the knowledge that my family has kept. We lost a lot, but you know we're still here, we're resilient." Adele, 28, also speaks to this resilience stating that, "I'm definitely proud to be a Metis woman, an Indigenous woman. Yea, I'm very proud, so that's, one thing I'm proud of. One thing I'm happy about, I'm happy that we've been able to maintain our identity even though we've gone through generations of people trying to remove it from us." To be Metis is to be resilient, as is the case for Indigenous peoples across the world. Marie, 55, feels that this has provided her with the tools to lead a good life, "I think it's because we've been through struggles, but we're resilient. You know, and we're happy, there's such a rich, like I have a bundle of tools that help me live a good life, and I think that's the happiest thing." It is clear that it requires effort to maintain one's Metis identity, especially within the urban context; however, what is clear, is that it is possible and can serve as a positive foundation for youth, adults, and seniors to carry out good lives supported by traditional teachings and the continued use of cultural practices such as artwork, music, dance, cooking, or simply fostering good relationships. The following section will explore the different understandings of Metis identity in the city. As mentioned previously, cities are undoubtedly multicultural spaces. In the context of this research,

Ottawa has also proven to be a space where multiple Indigenous cultures meet and mix, including multiple Metis identities.

This section has considered the varying spatial geographies of the urban Metis community in Ottawa. As the participants have stated, as of now, there are no permanent Metis fixtures within the urban landscape. Although, there are several Indigenous spaces regularly frequented by Metis within the city, there are still no specific cultural spaces reserved for Metis. With a growing community, it is believed that a permanent space, in the form of a small property such as a residential unit, may act as a suitable gathering place for Metis in the city. As of right now, Ottawa's urban Metis are constantly trying to locate space for themselves within the urban context. This movement comes in the form of a physical relocation to the city but also as social and cultural movement from space to space in the context of events and gatherings. This sentiment that is summarized by the President of the ORMC, Benny, 33, who, referring to Keith Basso's book, states that, "The space is not maintained. Every time you're reinventing something, you're started from scratch. That's hard. Because it's like that book 'Wisdom sits in places', wisdom sits in spaces [...]"

A space designated for Metis in the city represents a vital component in order to strengthen the organizational capacity of the community. If such a space were to be created, it would necessitate a great deal of planning, an adequate amount of funding, and the consideration of several potential challenges such as who could frequent the space and how greater participation could be encouraged. Nevertheless, with Metis reconciliation garnering a greater amount of news coverage in recent years, a permanent Metis space within the urban landscape would be a step in the right direction towards acknowledging Metis and broader Indigenous rights. The next and final section of this chapter will consider the ways in which Metis in the city

currently cope with the challenges associated with continuously occupying ephemeral geographies and the high amount of movement experienced in everyday urban life. This is done primarily through a continued connection and appreciation of the natural environment in and around the city.

### **CONNECTING WITH THE LAND: EMBRACING URBAN GREEN SPACES**

Since most of the people interviewed have moved to Ottawa from a variety of places, they each having their own specific spatial story. Although they may live away from their original homes and find themselves in a large urban environment, all of the participants spoke about the importance of maintaining a strong connection with the land, or the natural environment, in and around the city. This section will consider the importance of maintaining a strong connection with the land in terms of maintaining a strong Metis identity and the challenges of nurturing such a connection in an urban centre, and the available spaces in the city Ottawa and the greater National Capital Region that enable this connection.

Today, more than 80% of Canadians lead urban lives (Statistics, 2011), and frequently accessing spaces such as natural areas outside of the city can be difficult, especially without a personal form of transportation. As Tuan (1974) suggests, “In modern life physical contact with one’s natural environment is increasingly indirect and limited to special occasions” (95). Although the majority of Indigenous peoples in Canada now find themselves also living in urban contexts, maintaining a strong connection with the natural environment remains an important component of identity. The Metis are no exception. Having access to natural spaces, also referred to as ‘the land’, is essential and helps alleviate the fast pace of life experienced in an urban environment. Bruno, 39, who is still trying to figure out what being Metis means to him

cherishes a strong connection to the land, something that he learned to nurture when he was a child. He shares that, “I feel like as an Indigenous person that struggles with that level of authenticity, I’m most proud of my connection to the land [...] That’s something that was definitely inculcated in me as a kid by my father. That like there’s something spiritual in the land, there’s something that’s emanating from it you know.” Crystal, 25, was also taught by her parents about the importance of spending time on the land. Growing up in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, she explains that, “my parents were very careful about making sure that we had a connection to the land [...]” Matthew, 28, who also grew up in a rural area along the shores of Georgian Bay in Ontario, wants to have a house in a rural area one day, but also wishes to stay connected with the city. He shares that, “it’s not necessarily a Metis connection that I want a house in a rural area, I think it’s just, it feels good, it’s nice to get out and relax. Cities can be hectic which is fine, it’s nice to be able to go to a rural area and relax.”

Rose, 25, also enjoys getting out of the city and connecting with the land. However, when connecting with the land is not possible she draws from her relationship with community in the city to maintain her Metis identity. She suggests that, “being connected to the land, makes me feel more connected to my identity, but if I can’t connect with the land, then connecting with the people.” Still Blanket Woman, 53, appreciates having proximity to land and water. She finds the area she lives in is getting too condensed and wishes to move to a property that affords a greater amount of silence and proximity to nature. She says this may have to do with getting older; however, she feels that living by nature’s example is the most cost effective way to lead a good life. Referring to a strong connection to the land, she shares that, “it’s unfortunate that people don’t know it but that’s what helps me through. It doesn’t cost anything, so you can go put your tobacco down anywhere by a tree or water, just be thankful for the thing that you have [...] just

being around nature. It brings good out of everybody.” Still Blanket Woman’s desire to have proximity to the land is a common theme amongst the participants. As Tuan (1974) suggests, places such as natural environments can become the carrier of emotionally charged events and symbols. For many of the participants, the land thus becomes a symbol of their Indigeneity, a place where they can reconnect with their roots while distancing themselves from the fast pace of the city. Many of the participants however, find themselves living in the core of the city and cannot get out to the considerable expanses of nature available in rural areas. The challenges associated with getting a sufficient amount of time on the land will be further explored.

Ottawa is known to have a substantial amount of green space along major waterways, within the city, and on the outskirts of the city as well such as Gatineau Park. Be that as it may, it is difficult for many of the participants to access these spaces on a daily basis, especially for those who do not own vehicles. Cody, 25, really enjoys being able to hike and walk through the bush, stating that reconnecting with the land is a very important aspect of his Metis identity. When contemplating these walks through nature, he shares that, “I find they’re important within Metis identity, within Metis culture, but it’s a bit harder within an urban centre.” Reminiscing of his hometown Sault Sainte Marie, Alexandre, 25, misses being able to spend each day out in nature. He speaks to the difficulty of accessing these spaces in a metropolitan area, stating that, “I find it a lot harder here in Ottawa rather than in Sault Sainte Marie because day to day life doesn’t bring me anywhere really close to what I consider the land.” He continues by stating that, “Whenever I can, I like to be in the middle of the woods [...] You know if I can get out of town even if it’s just for the day, awesome.” Being able to temporarily escape city life and going into the woods or the rolling hills across the Ottawa River seems to be an important remedy for many of the participants.

As previously stated, many of the wooded spaces such as Gatineau Park are in large part only accessible by car and make it difficult for people without their own personal form of transportation to easily access these spaces. Marie, 55, does not drive, and although it is not impossible, she finds it challenging to connect with nature. She shares that, “The thing is going back to the land. Not having a place to, like a land where we can go where there is water, trees, and being one with nature. You can still do it here, but it’s a little harder.” Pierre, 40, would also like to get out of the city more often and suggests that, “It would be nice to see a way for people without their own transportation to get out of the city, that would be fantastic, like a bus.” Many of the participants spoke about the restorative qualities of spending time on the land and defined it as an important component of their identity. An interesting project, if funding and organizational capacity were available, would be to organize day outings to green spaces such as Gatineau Park where Metis and other members of the broader Indigenous community, without personal forms of transportation, could spend some well needed time on the land outside of the city.

Although getting outside of the city to spend time in nature is ideal, many participants still find it important to make use of the green spaces available within the city itself. As previously mentioned there are many parks within the city itself and many of the participants brought up the green spaces on Victoria Island, along the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers, and many municipal parks as good spaces to connect with the land within the city. Crystal, 25, points out that even just going for a stroll along the Rideau Canal can be a good way of grounding oneself in the busy urban environment. She shares that, “you know sometimes it sounds a little stupid I’ll go for a walk and I’ll put tobacco out, and like to me, I could be along the canal, I could be wherever, and to me that’s like connecting.”

Maintaining and ultimately increasing the amount of easily accessible green spaces within the city is not only important for Metis residents of the Ottawa area but for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous urbanites as well. Although having greater access to spaces such as Gatineau Park would be ideal, even just spending half an hour in a park or along a body of water is something that grounds the participants and affords them a break from the fast pace of the city.

## **CONCLUSION**

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The spatial stories of Metis peoples are incredibly rich and complex. For some, they span thousands of kilometres and incorporate vast networks of peoples and places that help ground and nurture their Indigenous identity. This chapter has sought to explore the movements associated with a number of urban Metis residents of Ottawa and the ways in which they create Metis spaces within the city in addition to the challenges associated with these place making strategies. Their responses spoke to the highly mobile nature of the Metis community present in Ottawa, a community that sees members come and go quite frequently; however, it appears that more and more, including the majority of the participants, are planning on staying in the area due to pull factors such as the considerable educational and employment opportunities the city has to offer. As a result, although the city of Ottawa is itself not a Metis city, it has become an important and non-negligible Metis gathering space.

In addition to the community being a highly mobile one in terms of its membership, the Metis occupy a series of ephemeral geographies within the city itself due to the lack of a permanent Metis space. The community is forced to constantly reinvent spaces for their own purposes, a process that requires both a considerable amount of time and effort. Although places such as Odawa and Wabano offer spaces where Metis can meet, they are sometimes difficult to

book and must be shared with the broader Indigenous community. In light of recent developments such as the Daniels decision, if greater support, in the form of funding, were to be allocated to Metis organizations such as the Ottawa Regional Métis Council, obtaining and maintaining a space in the central core of the city, according to the overwhelming majority of participants and recommendations such as those presented in RCAP would be beneficial. This could simply be a house in the downtown area where the community could hold activities and events such as kitchen parties, beading circles, or cultural gatherings. Although, certain challenges such as hiring staff to maintain the space and determining who may use the space would need to be considered, it is believed that having a space would benefit the community as a whole and make it considerably easier for Metis individuals to connect with the larger community. Furthermore, while many of the participants find themselves far away from their original homes, they find frequenting green spaces such as Gatineau Park or even small parks within the city beneficial. Spending time in nature or simply placing a small offering at the base of tree are effective ways of grounding oneself in the urban environment and affords a temporary break from city life.

The Metis have always been on the move, and will likely continue to be on the move for many years to come. Although, for many, Ottawa remains a non-Metis city and a transient place where they obtain educational degrees or complete work related contracts, many Metis residents have created a community of people who come from many different places and backgrounds and as a result have transformed the city into an important Metis meeting place and gathering space. Having a permanent space within the city represents a suitable endeavour to bring the community together and serve as a location where those who may have just moved to the city may meet, interact, and learn from those who have been here for quite some time.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **STRUGGLES OF POWER OVER SPACE –**

#### **ACHIEVING A METIS RIGHT TO THE UNOPPRESSIVE CITY**

##### **INTRODUCTION: CONTEMPORARY METIS RESISTANCE**

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This third and final chapter seeks to address the interplay of power and space regarding the experiences of urban Metis peoples in Ottawa. Foucault (1994), argues that relations of power are exercised, lived, and negotiated over space every day. All of the participants spoke about the influence of power from different levels, ranging from individual interactions with other urban citizens to dealings with governing bodies. In sum, power relations structure our lives from the confines of our homes to the streets we walk and the places where we work (Foucault, 1994). Ottawa itself represents an interesting and complex matrix of power relations. As previously discussed, it is a major node of governance, where power and politics are continuously at play for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. Ottawa is an extremely politically charged space where elected officials, private stakeholders, non-governmental advocates, and civil society constantly clash and coalesce. This is especially the case concerning Indigenous power relations. These relations occur at the government level between Parliament and Indigenous representative bodies such as the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and the Métis National Council, in addition to occurring on the street level where Indigenous and non-Indigenous urbanites come into contact with one another.

Historically speaking, Canadian cities have not welcomed or acknowledged the presence of Indigenous peoples (Kermoal & Lévesque, 2010). Ongoing processes of colonialism continue to play out in the urban environment through the form of daily interactions imbued in racist

undertones, or simply through the lack of recognition of the presence of an urban Indigenous community. In terms of Metis peoples, who are predominantly urban, this is no exception. Power struggles over urban space are frequent. This chapter will explore the dynamics of power and space in relation to Metis residents of Ottawa. Three main topics will be addressed. The first, focusing on individual power relations, will address the experiences of racism participants have experienced and will assess how education can be used as a lever of power against this continued form of oppression. The following topic seeks to understand the power relations involved at the larger community level, including relations between the Metis community and several governance bodies such as municipal governments. The final topic will assess whether urban Metis are being afforded the ‘right to the city’ as proposed by Henri Lefebvre (1996). The ways in which Ottawa can embody the ideal of what Young (1986) proposes as the unoppressive city characterized by her concept of unassimilated otherness will also be considered. Several strategies, as proposed by the participants, that may promote and ensure that this right is respected. This chapter addresses concepts such as social justice, equality, and agency, but concentrates primarily on the interplay of power and space which affects each of these concepts. Ultimately, this chapter will demonstrate that Metis peoples continue to resist a colonial legacy that has sought to delegitimize their culture and history. The Cree word *Otîpimsuak*, meaning the “free people” or “their own bosses”, effectively summarizes Metis peoples’ historical and contemporary desire to govern their own affairs (Macdougall, 2012). This chapter argues that ensuring this is an important step towards true reconciliation and that cities, although colonial constructions, can and should embody crucial spaces of decolonization.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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As this chapter focuses primarily on the experiences of power over space, it is important to clearly define how the concept of power will be utilized. As previously stated, a Foucaultian understanding of power is adopted in order to understand how Metis peoples interact with power within the urban environment. Foucault (1994) defines power relations as being diverse and as having multiple forms. He states, “they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration - or between a dominating and a dominated class power relations having specific forms of rationality, forms which are common to them, etc. It is a field of analysis and not at all a reference to any unique instance” (Foucault, 1994, 128). He provides a clear distinction between two types of power, that of “juridical power” and “disciplinary power”. Juridical power implies that power is possessed, that it flows from a centralized source from top to bottom, and that it is primarily repressive in its exercise (Kelly, 1994). Disciplinary power, however, considers power as being exercised rather than possessed, that it comes from the bottom up, and that it is primarily productive rather than repressive (Kelly, 1994). Disciplinary power is especially useful in that Foucault identified it as a means of representing the myriad of power relations at the microlevel of society, or between individuals over space (Kelly, 1994). As such, power relations within the context of this chapter refer directly to exercises of disciplinary power primarily between Metis urbanites and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous urbanites in Ottawa. These expressions of power will now be considered in the broader context of urban Indigenous peoples in Canada as detailed by the current available literature.

Generally speaking, even though the majority of Indigenous peoples now live within urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2009a), a trend that certainly applies to the Metis (Gionet, 2014), urban Indigenous peoples face considerable challenges due in part to the colonial legacy of

cities. Julie Tomiak (2011), an Indigenous political scientist, assesses and challenges the colonial character of modern Canadian cities in *Indigeneity and the city: Representations, resistance and the right to the city*. Tomiak argues that we must first recognize and understand the colonial foundations of our cities in order to determine how they can be decolonized. She states that, “Attention to [the city’s] central role in dispossessing and marginalizing Indigenous peoples brings the city into view as a linchpin of colonialism – and a crucial site of decolonization” (2011, 164). Urban spaces can be effective centres of decolonization as they constitute areas where Indigenous peoples can assert symbolic space, reclaim physical space, and carve out political space (Tomiak, 2011). Prior to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Indigenous peoples were actively excluded from cities through practices of dispossession, relocation and confinement (Peters & Newhouse, 2003; Peters & Andersen, 2013; Kermoal & Lévesque, 2010). Although many First Nations peoples found themselves limited to the confines of reserves and excluded from city life, many Metis established themselves within and on the fringes of burgeoning urban areas in western Canada (Lagasse, 1959; Burley, 2013). Although they had a presence, ongoing persecution and discrimination denied what Henri Lefebvre (1996) describes as the right to the city explaining that, “the right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life” (1996, 158). With this in mind, the right to the city of Indigenous peoples cannot simply be a return to the city, it must be an active process of decolonization that firmly entrenches Indigeneity within the urban landscape and positions urban Indigenous peoples and communities as important and unique. This must be supported by mechanisms of self-governance and representation through access to communal land bases as put forward by RCAP (1996). Although Lefebvre (1996) focusing primarily on class distinctions adopted a Marxist view that

supplanting of the capitalist city to create a new society, his concept of right to the city applies directly to Indigenous peoples living in urban areas, an applicability which is emphasized in large part by Tomiak (2011). Lefebvre suggests that in order to overcome the challenges and inequalities of urban life, change must come directly from the groups involved, in this case urban Indigenous peoples. Referring to this process, Lefebvre (1996) states that, “Only groups, social classes and class fractions capable of revolutionary initiative can take over and realize to fruition solutions to urban problems [...] It is from these social and political forces that the renewed city will become the oeuvre” (154). This is of central importance when considering urban Metis peoples and their right to the city. Even though greater attention is being paid to the country’s colonial legacy and active efforts and resources to achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are increasing, the fact remains that cities continue to be hostile environments for many Indigenous peoples. Keeping Lefebvre’s concept in mind, it must therefore be Indigenous peoples themselves who negotiate and secure their right to the city.

Tomiak (2011) touches on how Indigenous peoples are fighting for a right to the city by destabilizing the status quo of the settler city through processes such as reterritorialization and place making. Re-territorialization involves the actual reclamation of land in urban areas, in the form of urban reserves or settlements, whereas place making is embodied by what Tomiak identifies as self-determined spaces, which relate specifically to Lefebvre’s notion of autogestion (2011). Place making can be achieved through organizations such as Freindhsip Centres and other Indigenous providers that represent collective efforts to reassert Indigenous space in the city. Through these practices, assertions of symbolic space, the reclaiming of physical space, and finally the carving out political space for Indigenous peoples in urban areas is rendered possible (Tomiak, 2011). Examples of these assertions would be the Idle No More movement, a

grassroots initiative that garnered extensive support and media coverage beginning in 2012 that brought Indigenous issues directly into the heart of cities across Canada. Its founders state that, “Idle No More calls on all people to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water” (Idle No More, n. d.). The movement seeks to reframe the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples while striving to strengthen sovereignty within Indigenous communities and to pressure government and industry to protect the environment and respect Indigenous rights (Idle No More, n.d.). An example of an event that asserted symbolic space, reclaimed physical space and carved out political space in the context of Idle No More was a round dance protest that occurred in the main administration building, Tabaret Hall, of the University of Ottawa in January of 2013. As part of Idle No More, a couple hundred students and community members, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, occupied the three floors surrounding the building’s circular rotunda and performed a round dance in order to acknowledge the fact that the University of Ottawa itself is in unceded Algonquin territory and to bring to the forefront the many issues Idle No More was addressing such as poor economic and social conditions in Indigenous communities, both rural and urban, across the country. Events and actions such as these represent effective exercises of power over space. Although events such as those that transpired during Idle No More are effective ways of raising awareness of the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples, in and outside of cities, the fact is they are ephemeral movements and do not necessarily grant Indigenous peoples a continued right to the city. A final consideration of this literature review will address the role patriarchy plays in city life and how it affects the agency of Indigenous and Metis women.

In the previous chapter, some of the participants identified city life as being especially challenging for Indigenous women because of the legacy of violence and oppression they have

experienced. The *Walking With Our Sisters* exhibit, which is a commemorative art installation that raises awareness to the pressing issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women (Walking With Our Sisters, 2016). The exhibit was held in Ottawa last October and will be travelling to over 25 locations across North America in order to honour the Indigenous women who were taken away or murdered and to demonstrate the continued legacy of colonialism and injustice experienced in cities and rural areas alike. Wilson (1991) argues that historically the sphere of city life has been associated with men while women were often left to the confines of home both within the urban consciousness and in practice. Conversely, she advances that the city has also provided many women with an escape from the private sphere often dominated by patriarchal values, stating, “urban life, however fraught with difficulty, has emancipated women more than rural life or suburban domesticity” (Wilson, 1991, 10). Although Wilson speaks about women in general, this also applies directly to the experiences of Indigenous women. The fact is cities are both spaces of oppression and opportunity, and as Wilson suggests, we must strive to make all social groups, including women and minorities, such as Indigenous peoples, full citizens of the city. Wilson proposes that, “We need a radically new approach to the city. We will never solve the problems of living in cities until we welcome and maximise the freedom and autonomy they offer and make them available to all classes and groups (1991, 9).

Nearly 25 years after Wilson’s publication, this has yet to be accomplished. The reality is that many Indigenous peoples, and especially Indigenous women, face continued injustice within urban environments. Young (1990) advances that injustice is composed of two disabling constraints, those of oppression and those of domination. The former inhibits a group from developing and exercising their capacities and expressing their needs, thoughts, and feelings, which is ultimately a structural phenomenon that immobilizes or diminishes a group (Young,

1990). In *Justice and the politics of difference*, Young sets out to develop a set of criteria for evaluating the degree of oppression different groups face within society (1990). She advances that this is an important exercise but states that this is not meant to render the oppression of one group superior or more important than another group's oppression (Young, 1990). Young establishes the five faces of oppression in order to evaluate the degree to which groups are oppressed including exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (1990). In terms of contemporary city life in Ottawa, all five of these faces manifest themselves; however, based on the recent moves of governments of all levels, reconciliation and social justice, specifically in regards to Indigenous peoples is of central importance. This intent for realigning the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples also has the potential to make cities safer while granting a greater measure of social justice, embodying what Young (1986) defines as unassimilated otherness.

The opposite of injustice, and by extension oppression, for Young is social justice and this "requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression" (Young, 1990, 47). Achieving social justice must be the driving force behind making city life free, safe, and autonomous for Indigenous peoples, and really all groups, experiencing injustice in the urban environment. A goal that can be achieved through building educational and social capacity through awareness campaigns and the creation of safe spaces within the city such as cultural gathering locations while decolonizing urban space to ensure that Indigenous peoples do not face continued oppression. By achieving this, cities such as Ottawa can strive to embody what Young (1986) identifies as the unoppressive city. The unoppressive city is a place where political emancipation is granted to each and every group through a politics of difference. The unoppressive city and

social justice rest upon what Young identifies as unassimilated otherness (1986). In terms of relating unassimilated otherness to Metis and other Indigenous residents of the city, in addition to all minority groups living in urban areas, this would represent the ability to practice one's own culture free from oppression. Unassimilated otherness, as Young suggests, recognizes and affirms the differences of diverse groups within the city by granting them political representation while celebrating the distinctive cultures and characteristics of these different groups (1986). City life as a melting pot of community and difference is thus replaced by the 'being-together' of strangers, a space where people can live differently and interact free of oppression (Young, 1986). The following sections will consider how Metis peoples navigate city space and the forms of power and oppression they face on a quotidian basis. Community efforts towards achieving social justice and securing recognition will also be explored in addition to advancing why and how Metis peoples' right to the city in Ottawa may be secured and maintained.

### **POWER AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**

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As suggested by Low (2014), humans are mobile spatiotemporal units with feelings, thoughts, preferences, and intentions creating space as a potentiality for social relations while giving it meaning, form, and ultimately through the patterning of everyday movements, producing place and landscape. These movements and patterns are characterized by a complex matrix of power relations that influence our interactions over space on an everyday basis. This section will consider how Metis residents of Ottawa experience power, especially disciplinary power, over space on a daily basis. A particular focus will be placed on the power struggle between the ongoing project of colonialism and contemporary calls for decolonization, and how these are experienced on an individual level. The experiences of the participants echo the

continued existence of colonial practices and beliefs within the multicultural and cosmopolitan environment of the modern city but speaking to the presence of lateral violence between different Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, the participants proposed a variety of mechanisms to decrease the oppression they experience as Metis, while increasing the agency and by extension, power, of Metis and other urban Indigenous residents. These mechanisms are primarily rooted in educational and social capacity building.

All of the participants spoke of the challenges facing Metis and other Indigenous peoples within the city, especially at the individual level. It is important to understand that living in a city outside of the traditional Metis Homeland does have an influence on how the culture is lived out within the community. Pierre, 40, attests to this: “It’s very much different in the urban environment than it is traditionally. Like Metis culture in say small towns in the Prairies is much different than it is Ottawa [...]” Matthew, 28, highlights the fact that an active effort is required to get involved within the community and that perhaps more support is needed for Metis individuals trying to navigate the urban environment, especially for those who have just arrived within the city, “I think we have yet to really kind of find our identity in the city [...] I think that you lack that cohesiveness in an urban area, it’s a challenge, you can’t just go to a Metis version of a synagogue which can be a challenge.” Other spoke of the challenges of living out their Metis identity within the city. Genevieve, 31, who just recently moved to Ottawa has found connecting with her Metis identity in the city difficult, especially since she has yet to meet any other Metis in the area. “Yea, it’s kind of tough being a Metis person in the city.” Adele, 28, also speaks to this, but in the context of violence and discrimination towards Indigenous women. Originally from western Canada, she has found that in Ottawa her identity as a Metis, and by extension Indigenous, woman is met with more curiosity rather than hostility. Nonetheless, she feels that

women who have visibly Indigenous features such as a darker skin colour continue to face persecution and harassment because of their appearance. Adele shares that, “even today it’s not safe to be a Metis woman or a Native woman, you know, you’re still faced with a lot of shit [...] So, it’s definitely not easy being a young Native woman in the city. Especially, when you don’t have your identity and you’re not proud of it.” Adele’s statement is a painful reminder that Canada’s colonial legacy is not a thing of the past but rather an ongoing project, even within the multicultural space of the city. Taking into account Young’s five faces of oppression, cultural imperialism is experienced on a daily basis by many of the participants. As Young states, “the oppressed group’s own experience and interpretation of social life finds little expression that touches the dominant culture, while that same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experience and interpretation of social life” (1990, 60). As a result, the social norms of minority groups are denied legitimacy and its members are forced to adhere to what dominant society defines as acceptable ways of conducting everyday life.

In terms of Metis peoples living in the Ottawa, when they identify as Metis, they are often interrogated or challenged based on that assertion. Many of the participants have been called ‘White’, ‘Fake’, ‘Wannabee’, and other demoralizing terms directly tied to Canada’s colonial legacy by both non-Indigenous and other Indigenous peoples. Cody, 25, considers these terms to be direct attacks on the legitimacy and authenticity of Metis identity sharing, “there’s still an erasure, or a suppression of our identity, and I think that’s kind of anywhere, including here in Ottawa where, where you say ‘oh I’m Metis’, and people kind of just see that as a fake label of sorts and don’t really see it as a true identity or a separate culture.” Most participants felt that, as a Metis person, one had to constantly define, describe, and frequently defend their

identity to outsiders. Adele, 28, shares her thoughts on this and how she draws on her knowledge of her history to deal with these situations:

My cultural identity, see I find that I don't fit into a lot of boxes. I think as a Metis person that's just the way we are, you know that word that the Cree gave to us, Otipimsuak, you know that means governing yourself, for the Cree people, and I definitely live that, I find it really hard to fit into any boxes [...] I know where my roots come from, I know where my family comes from, I know my stories going back to like the 1700s and I'm proud of that. I've had to learn those stories in order to defend who I am so that's constantly, I think a big theme in being a Metis person, you're always defending who you are whether it's to your own Metis people, or whether it's to First Nations people, or whether it's to Non-Aboriginal people, you're always having to defend yourself unfortunately.

For Adele, 28, this is extremely frustrating because Metis have also experienced a great deal of trauma over the past 150 years. By discrediting Metis culture as not being an authentic Indigenous culture, and by extension an authentic nation, both the history and hardships Metis peoples have endured are erased. Adele shares that many of her older relatives are residential school survivors and explains, "Even though we're Metis we still experienced a lot of trauma and the thing that really sucks is a lot of Metis stories haven't been acknowledged or respected or even told, and so I come from that and we were taught to be ashamed of who we are." Benny, 33, feels that many non-Indigenous, and even other Indigenous, peoples often feel as if they can decide whether Metis are Indigenous or not. This is an expression of exclusionary power and is a source of injustice and oppression for Benny. When talking about these conversations, she states, "They will ask questions which would imply that they're looking for you to justify why you identify in that way to them, and then they will decide or determine whether or not you are indeed an Indigenous person, and that happens with non-Indigenous but it also happens with other Indigenous people [...]"

In large part this constant need to explain and justify Metisness to outsiders is because of preconceived notions about appearance and blood quantum. Pierre, 40, who has a fair

complexion shares that, “I’ve gotten the discriminatory kind of like, ‘oh you’re Aboriginal?’ and the face goes blank. I’ve gotten the ‘you don’t look Aboriginal. What does that look like?’ You know, I have blond hair and blue eyes [...]” Seb, 32, also deals with this on a daily basis when sharing that he is Indigenous, highlighting that racism is one of the biggest challenges he encounters living in the city. He explains, “I don’t look Indigenous, but I feel Indigenous and that’s something that is, our society is based on image, and that’s why I wear my little sash because that is my external proof that I am who I say I am [...]” Seb is referring to a sash keychain lanyard that he carries with him. Actions such as these were also carried out by other participants in a variety of forms. Some choose to wear pins or patches with the Metis Nation flag, while others have tattoos representing their cultural identity such as floral beadwork and the medicine wheel. These small acts of defiance vis-à-vis the dominant settler society are powerful ways of showcasing one’s cultural identity, especially in the face of oppression. Kelly, 21, faced a great deal of scrutiny when sharing that she is Metis. In the context of her university studies she was told by her professor that she could not do Indigenous styled artwork because she was not Indigenous. She explains that many Metis are invisible due to the lightness of their skin or lack of what some may call typical Indigenous physical features. Like Seb and other participants who express their identity through small gestures such as wearing lanyards, patches or tattoos, Kelly uses her artwork as a means of unpacking these unsettling encounters and to break down the barriers that inhibit people from accepting that Metis are Indigenous peoples as well. Unfortunately, encounters like these are not uncommon. Kelly shares an experience with another professor of hers, stating, “my teacher said ‘what race are you?’, and I said ‘well, I don’t know’, he said ‘come on, just say it, White, you’re White you know it, you’re White you want to say it’, and I was like ‘well I might look White but I am Indigenous’.”

This perception of Metis being somehow less Indigenous is directly tied to the issue of blood quantum. Many of the participants shared their experiences of people asking them how Indigenous they are based on their First Nations heritage. Cody, 25, explains that people are often fixated on one's percentage of First Nations blood. He states:

I find that quantum is huge when it comes to identity and like confirming people's identities and I think it's because that's how people were taught or at least maybe still are I'm not sure but in thinking you have to be a certain percentage of First Nations to identify as Metis. It's like, that's not how it works but people seem to still think that because I don't know how often whenever I say I'm Metis there like so, 'was it your father, your grandfather, are you one sixteenth?', I'm like I don't even know, I can't pull up a number out of my head.

Demanding to know 'how Indigenous' Metis people are by seeking the First Nations connection in the individual's family history represents a direct attack on the authenticity and legitimacy of Metis peoplehood and nationhood. This undoubtedly stems from previous government practices that sought to clearly demarcate the boundaries between 'White' and 'Indian' (Augustus, 2013). Referring to the treaty making process in western Canada in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Augustus explains, "the government's view about 'valid' Native participants continued to be shaped by a belief in race and the immutable categories that defined it. Métis had to choose between being classed as 'Indians' if they wanted to participate in treaty, or be 'ordinary citizens' and not be included" (2013, 108-109). Andersen (2014) also touches upon the government's attempt to clearly define Indigenous identity, stating "administrative categories such as "Halfbreed" and "Indian" historically were never as stable as they appear in government policy and literature today. These fixed categories or identity boxes are extremely frustrating for Metis because they do not afford them their own separate space outside of the White-Indian binary. Referring to this system of categorization, Kelly, 21, shares, "It's how we categorize people and how we fit into groups that are already determined for us, like where do you fit, you look white, you're going to

go in the white category, if you're dark you're going to be First Nations, there's nothing that exists in between, like absolutely nothing, and that is frustrating." Charlie, 23, believes that the view that Metis are in some way 'fake' is still very prevalent. He believes this is due in part to the belief that Metis are simply people with a certain percentage of First Nations blood. This, Charlie explains, fails to recognize that Metis had an attachment to a specific land base. In addition, basing Metis identity on blood quantum denies the existence of specific and unique set of cultural practices and political systems. He shares that, "that's how colonialism works, it works by assimilation, and then they'll still be like you're White, actually no, my family has this experience of being dispossessed, it's a relationship to a certain land base, it's not just like the colour of my skin, it's a relationship to a history that affects my experience[...]" He continues by explaining that education is an important avenue to remedy this misconception, stating "I think there's a lot to be done in terms of educating people about that, about why and how specifically Metis people constitute an Indigenous people, because that's something that I see amongst White people and Indigenous people. There's that sort of like fundamental misunderstanding." Charlie brings up an interesting point in this excerpt in relation to how other Indigenous peoples sometimes see Metis peoples as being different or perhaps even lesser Indigenous peoples. Andersen (2014) speaks to this, proposing that, "Given the tropes readily at hand that encourage thinking about Métis in this manner, it is equally unsurprising (though no less unfortunate) that other indigenous people also think of Métis as mixed" (23). As he explains, mixed is often interpreted as not 'full blooded' and thus somehow less Indigenous. In terms of power dynamics within the broader Indigenous community, on certain occasions, there appears to be the presence of lateral violence, a topic that will now be further explored.

Incidents of lateral violence, or dissent, within the Indigenous community were brought up by a number of the participants. Although incidents of racism occur primarily during interactions with non-Indigenous people, there appears to be, at certain times, the presence of certain tensions and misunderstandings within the broader Indigenous community as previously highlighted by Charlie. Adele, 28, who is an active member of the Metis and broader Indigenous communities has experienced this lateral violence first hand. She believes there is a strong Metis community in Ottawa but that it is small community. Many of her friends are not connected to the Metis and broader Indigenous community because of the presence of lateral violence. Referring to these friends, she explains, “they often tell me that they don’t want anything to do with the community, and the reason this is because of a lot of the lateral violence they see.” This may come in the form of people picking favourites and not welcoming others. She continues by sharing her thoughts on why this lateral violence exists, stating, “it comes from being disconnected from our traditional values, our traditional forms of governance, our traditional forms of community.”

Due to the historical legacy of colonialism, the colour of one’s skin or the presence of certain phenotypes or characteristics has often come to define Indigeneity in the eyes of non-Indigenous peoples. This conception, however, has also had an impact on the Indigenous community as well. As Genevieve, 31, shares, lateral violence may come in the form of discriminating against each other based purely on appearances. She shares that, “I think it’s something a lot of Indigenous people do, is judging the way the Indigenous person looks, it’s like they think they’re Aboriginaler or Nativer than you [...]” Bruno, 38, speaks about the fear of rejection that he might experience from the community due to the fact that he grew up in a predominantly French-Canadian setting although his Metis roots stem back to a historic

community in Saskatchewan. Interestingly, he feels that he can identify more easily as Metis here than back in western Canada, stating, “I realize that I can only be Metis here in Eastern Canada, away from my community [...] and that’s pretty interesting. It’s objective and far away. There’s lots of fear and lots of shame, and confusion, fear of rejection. It’s like 100 years of racialized politics in your bodies. What are you supposed to do with that?” Marie, 55, also comments on this fear of rejection, from the perspective of accessing Indigenous institutions in the city. She shares that, “because being Metis for a long time too, it wasn’t recognized as being Aboriginal, and we were never, you’re caught between two worlds, you know so, it’s a little tricky. And also, even within Aboriginal organizations, being Metis is not always accepted either, so you get it on both sides.”

These manifestations of lateral violence represent negative power relations within the broad umbrella of the urban Indigenous community. This is why grouping all Indigenous peoples, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis can be problematic as groups with a diversity of understandings and practices can often clash and even compete against one another when it comes to determining who is the ‘most’ Indigenous. Adele, 28, believes that instead of creating divisions within the community, it is important to acknowledge the differences that exist but to also draw strength from the common experiences they share. She states, “something that reinforces my identity is to understand that oppression and colonialism didn’t just affect my family and the Metis people, it affected all of us, and so we have a lot of mutual things in common.” The participants identified education as a crucial avenue to pursue in order to diminish the frequency of having one’s identity questioned and challenged, and to alleviate the lateral violence that can sometimes be present in the broader Indigenous community. The

prospects of greater education and increased awareness of Metis culture and peoples will now be briefly explored.

As discussed by the participants, having one's identity constantly challenged or analyzed is draining and makes expressing Metis identity in the city difficult. Many of the participants spoke about the need for greater awareness of Metis culture within non-Indigenous, but also other Indigenous communities. The current reality, in Ontario at least, is that aside from a few mentions in Grade 8 history books concerning Louis Riel and the Resistances, next to nothing is taught about Metis peoples and cultures. This became apparent to Kelly, 21, who worked closely with school children in the context of a summer Metis education project. She shares that, "I remember I asked a kid if they knew what being Metis meant, and they're like 'is that an astronaut?'. And then one of them was like, 'no', and then I said 'it's an Indigenous person, that's who we are', and then they said 'aren't Indians dead?'" Although they were young children, the fact that they think Indigenous peoples are dead and a distant relic of the past is extremely problematic. A lack of knowledge regarding Metis peoples and culture is also very prevalent in the adult world. Rose, 25, who is a teacher by profession, also works with people outside of the classroom. She encounters questions such as 'who are Metis?' and 'what is that?' on a daily basis and regularly finds herself giving mini-lectures. Benny, 33, also comes across this type of ignorance quite often. She shares her frustrations by stating, "we are either the person who spends our entire lives educating people who don't know anything about who we are or where we come from, or we're perceived as being angry Indians and Halfbreeds that don't want to engage in conversation." This is representative of a lack of awareness and Metis appropriate content within the current curriculum. However, the recommendations put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which sought to understand and share the experiences of

Indigenous peoples impacted by the Indian Residential School System, are seen as a positive step forward as they will provide greater awareness of Indigenous realities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, n.d.). In addition, an entire volume is dedicated to the experiences of Métis peoples who attended residential schools. As Rose, 25, explains when referring to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “the impact that they are having on the curriculum is good, like again, we have so far to go but we’ve come to such a better place.”

Education is also important for Métis themselves as a mechanism to achieve success, especially in modern city life. Pierre, 40, reminisces on the late William Commanda’s words, stating that education is the new buffalo. It is important to note that most of the participants have, or are currently pursuing, some form of postsecondary education. This for Matthew, 28, who is currently pursuing his doctorate, is his biggest source of pride and he wishes to see more Métis pursue graduate studies. Inspired by an entrepreneurial frame of mind, he believes that in order to strengthen the Métis community there needs to be an educated elite that can contribute their minds and their money to making it possible for Métis who come from low socio-economic status backgrounds to achieve success in the urban environment. Although he uses the term *elite*, Matthew believes there should be a strong network of mentors that can provide guidance and assistance to Métis who are new to the city. For example, people who can have students who have just moved to Ottawa over for dinner and who can share their experiences and best practices for life in a new city. Matthew hopes to be that kind of role model and mentor in the future. Many of the participants also spoke to the importance of having positive role models, especially for young Métis and Indigenous citizens of the city. Adele who has experienced many trying times during her adolescence as a young Indigenous woman in the city wishes to be a strong and positive role model, especially for young Métis and Indigenous girls. She shares:

If you don't have positive role models to tell you that that's not the right way, you have no idea, you don't even understand that there's a better way to live [...] like I mean actual people who are going to have coffee with you and talk with you, and are going to be like ok you don't have to do this, you can do this, you're good at this, I totally support you [...] I hope that I can do whatever I can to make sure that those young girls growing up don't have to go through what I went through, that's my motivation.

The fact that many of the participants are highly educated and are invested and involved in the community is promising. There continues to be a gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous urbanites who have a university degree. According to the 2006 census, 13% of urban Indigenous peoples aged 25-44 had a university degree compared to 33% with the non-Indigenous population (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010a). Extrapolating from the experiences of the participants, obtaining higher education increases the agency and power of individuals, and by extension, the community. These individuals can certainly become mentors and assist those who are grappling with issues of identity, especially young people, to learn and understand their culture and find their place within the community.

Up until now the ways in which Metis residents of Ottawa interact and engage with power relations, primarily through the form of disciplinary power, within the urban environment on a daily basis have been considered. It is clear that the city continues to represent a structure of colonialism. All of the participants shared their experiences of racism and oppression within the city, often under the form of cultural imperialism as defined by Young (1990). Metis identity continues to be challenged based on questions of blood quantum and skin colour, completely denying the historical and cultural authenticity of Metis peoples. These experiences occur not only in the context of non-Indigenous relations but also in the form of lateral violence within the broader Indigenous community. In order to remedy racism and lateral violence, the participants identified increased awareness and greater education efforts as fundamental courses of action,

whether it be in the form of changes to the curriculum so children are exposed to Metis and broader Indigenous issues from a young age, or in the form of increased media coverage and information campaigns. Such courses of action would undoubtedly contribute to the production of power for Metis peoples. In addition, it was established that the presence of positive Metis role models is essential especially for young Metis who are either growing up in the city or who have just moved to the city. Education and positive role models represent two effective strategies to decrease the tenuous and often repressive dynamics of power Metis face on a quotidian basis while increasing their own agency and power within the urban environment. The following section will continue to explore the power relations that occur over urban space in Ottawa, specifically in regard to the community as a whole and their interactions with governing bodies such as the municipal government.

## **COMMUNAL POWER RELATIONS**

The city of Ottawa represents a central node of governance and power within the Canadian state. There are multiple levels of government present within the city and a multitude of non-governmental organizations and lobby groups that advocate on behalf of a wide variety of interests and communities at every level. The previous section explored the ways in which Metis individuals experience and exercise power over Ottawa's urban space. This section will consider how the urban Metis community as a whole experiences power over space, specifically in regards to relations with different levels of government and with the broader Indigenous community as well. As Tomiak (2011) discusses, urban Indigenous peoples are increasingly destabilizing the settler city through assertions of symbolic space, reclaiming physical space, and carving out political space. The ways urban Metis peoples are striving to accomplish this will be

discussed. In terms of political space, many of the participants spoke of a lack of recognition within the city and a tenuous relationship with the municipal government. Reasons surrounding this lack of recognition will be explored, in addition to possible ways the community is seeking to decolonize urban space in Ottawa.

Many of the participants affirmed that Ottawa is a city with a rich presence of Indigenous peoples and cultures. As previously discussed, Canada's capital attracts a diversity of people for a multitude of reasons. There are many Indigenous peoples who have moved here due to the presence of educational and employment opportunities, often related to government and non-governmental organization work, a trend that was explored in the previous chapter. What is important to take from this is that there is a diverse set of peoples in Ottawa, all of whom are negotiating relations of power over space. Bruno, 38, really appreciates this diversity and shares that, "it's a very pluralistic, very diverse Indigenous city, you know? We're on Algonquin territory, but there's like Six Nations people, Northern Cree, Oji-Cree, living here, working here. Inuit, big time [...] It's really diverse, right? So in terms of Metis, how do they find their, how are they recognized in that context?" Bruno, who is originally from Saskatchewan and has lived in Ottawa for the past several years raises an interesting perspective regarding recognition of Metis in the city. As Ottawa is located outside of the traditional Metis Homeland, it is not recognized as being a Metis city even though there is a considerable number of Metis living here. Bruno continues by suggesting, "Metis have always been a third place kind of Aboriginal recognition, though the irony is that the Metis always knew who they were. That's what's really weird about this, why is it so hard to accept who they are, recognize who they are?" Benny, 33, who occupies a central role in the Ottawa Metis community, echoes this statement. She states that, "within the Indigenous community in Ottawa, we are recognized as being around and

having a contemporary presence. I think in the greater Ottawa community, non-Indigenous community, I think that we're still thought of last [...]"

Most of the participants shared this view that within the umbrella Indigenous community, although there are certain instances of lateral violence, Metis are accepted and are represented within the major Indigenous institutions and governing bodies. However, as Benny points out, within the non-Indigenous community, there seems to be a considerable lack of recognition. Interestingly, this sentiment was brought up by Laliberte (2013) in his study of urban Metis in Saskatoon. The majority of that study's participants felt as if they were not being recognized in the city to the same extent as were their First Nations counterparts, feeling excluded from economic and cultural initiatives. This is an important trend and the fact that it is not exclusive to one urban environment is revealing of the place afforded to urban Metis peoples across the country. This speaks directly to the lack of political space available to Metis peoples, something that can be significantly increased with greater recognition. Charlie, 23, shares, "The only time I hear about the Metis community is from other Metis people. Even when it comes to like protests on the Hill about Indigenous issues, very rarely are Metis people brought up." This lack of recognition has a direct impact on the relationship between the Metis community and the varying levels of government present within Ottawa. The views of the participants regarding these relationships, specifically in relation to the municipal government, will now be explored.

As stated before, Ottawa represents a vital node of governance. Political and judiciary bodies such as Parliament and the Supreme Court of Canada make Ottawa a hub of policy and law. As such, the city has a unique opportunity to embody the so-called national project of Canada by showcasing the country's vision. Although, Indigenous issues are frequently brought to the forefront of media coverage in the capital, the fact remains that Ottawa, along with all

urban centres in Canada, continues to be a predominantly settler environment. Many of the participants shared their thoughts on how Ottawa continues to be a settler city. Although, the city does not lie on traditional Metis territory, Ottawa is located on unceded Algonquin territory, a factor that plays into the relationship between the city and the broader Indigenous community. As Cody, 25, shares, “I don’t think it should be seen as Ottawa, Canadian land with Indigenous people, it should be Ottawa, Indigenous land where Canadians live [...]” Many Ottawans ignore this fact, and as a result, the colonial legacy of the city continues to be perpetuated. Although the City of Ottawa has attempted to improve its working relationship with Indigenous peoples, through initiatives such as the Aboriginal Working Committee, many Indigenous peoples, Metis peoples included, feel as if the city does not fully recognize their presence within the city, and when it does, it appears to be only for what participants called token Indigenous input or representation. For Cody, this is a source of frustration, especially since Ottawa is the epicentre of the Canadian Nation. He feels that the country’s history and colonial roots are often ignored, stating, “We don’t think of what happened before then, or even what happened at the beginning of that time. You know, whether it’s the genocide, or the residential schools. We don’t really think about those things, we just think like Canada, strong, free, multicultural.” As previously stated, Ottawa is home to a diverse Indigenous population and therefore has the potential to be a vibrant Indigenous space; however, as discussed by the participants, for this symbolic space to be created, maintained, and cemented within the urban consciousness, there needs to be a stronger relationship between Indigenous peoples and the municipal government. As Crystal, 25 shares, “I think if Ottawa were to be an Indigenous space, municipally speaking, the city of Ottawa would have to be serious of actually being aware of its colonial roots [...]”

Currently, many of the participants feel as if the City simply wants a token Indigenous presence. For example, having someone say an opening prayer at a gathering or to perform a smudge, but outside of that, it is felt that the City has no interest in its urban Indigenous population. Adele, 28, referring to the municipal government, shares, “They want that token person there to say that they engaged with Metis or Aboriginal people, but they’re not willing to change how they think about Aboriginal people, or Metis people, so that’s what I found out the hard way.” Adele gives the example of the closing of 510 Rideau which was a drop-in centre that many Indigenous people who were facing difficult circumstances such as homelessness. The centre was recently closed due to funding cuts from the municipal government. Although the Centre was able to reopen for a time thanks in part to certain community groups, Adele states, “So at the city level, there’s a lot of people playing politics with people’s lives. And so that’s very hurtful. My engagement with the city hasn’t been very positive.” Although reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is often talked about at the federal or national level, every day acts of reconciliation at multiple levels of government are crucial to promoting reconciliation. Seb, 32, proposes an ambitious project for reconciliation at the city level suggesting that there should be a permanent consultation committee within the municipal government for Indigenous peoples. He explains, “That to me would go a very long way into reconciliation. It would show the world that the City of Ottawa takes reconciliation and the First Peoples very seriously, and that committee could just be for consultation like I said.” Although, there currently exists an Aboriginal Working Committee within the municipal government, created in 2007, which seeks to address issues that impact Indigenous peoples in Ottawa while improving service delivery (City of Ottawa, n.d.), Seb feels like an actual seat on City Council

would entail greater recognition and respect. Such an endeavour would carve out a great deal of political space as envisioned by Tomiak (2011) for urban Indigenous peoples in Ottawa.

In terms of the relationship between the City of Ottawa and the Metis community, many participants shared that they felt the City does not recognize the presence of the Metis community in the city. There has been communication between both parties and this past year the City had approached the Ottawa Regional Métis Council (ORMC) regarding raising the Metis Nation flag on the occasion of Ontario's provincial Louis Riel Day in November; however, the event was cancelled by the City a few days before it was scheduled to occur. Rose, 25, was very disappointed with this, stating, "So like the Friday before the Monday that was Louis Riel Day, we got an email saying 'sorry it just won't happen', and again they had reached out to us, so it was like hey they know we're here, that's great but then nothing ever really happened so I don't know." Benny, 33, was also frustrated by this unfortunate turn of events, especially since many of the ORMC's members had arranged to take time off work to participate in the event. She also suggests that if the organizational capacity of the Metis community was increased, large-scale assemblies or rallies could be more effectively organized and coordinated. She shares that:

[E]very single leadership position, Metis leadership position in the province, is held by volunteers, people who work full time day jobs and it's very difficult to mobilize an entire community when your full time day job is not that because you get no funding so everything you do as leadership in the province for our communities, is on our spare time. So that is very difficult, and then you know often times, people say that 'you know if Metis people wanted to be recognized why weren't they present?', and the reality is that we are not given the opportunity to be present because we are not afforded the same funding as Inuit and First Nations organizations.

As previously discussed, this lack of funding represents a major challenge for the Metis community, and as Benny explains, it represents a considerable obstacle when trying to plan events and gatherings which are important instances that showcase the Metis' contemporary

presence in the urban environment. They serve as opportunities to assert symbolic space, reclaim physical space, and carve out political space, processes that necessarily garner greater recognition.

This lack of recognition is undoubtedly fuelled by historical factors such as the tenuous relationship between the federal government and Metis peoples. As Crystal, 25 explains, the federal government has always neglected its relationship with Metis people. As a result, Metis-government relations are negotiated at the provincial level and rarely at the federal level. Crystal explains, “it’s kind of fallen on the lap of the provincial governments. So hopefully with Daniels that kind of changes. So that will be interesting, the changes.” As discussed in the second chapter, it is believed that the Daniels’ Supreme Court decision will realign the federal government’s relationship and commitment to reconciliation with Metis people.

Many of the participants offered suggestions about how to improve the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the city. Aside from Seb’s proposal to create a permanent Indigenous committee within the municipal government, Adele, 28, believes that everyone, especially at the municipal level, should take part in the blanket exercise, an activity that teaches participants about the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada over the course of the past 500 years. Participants stand on a number of blankets spread out across a floor and as the exercise progresses, blankets are taken away, representing the removal of traditional territories, and participants are asked to step off of the blankets in order to represent the Indigenous peoples that succumbed to diseases, those that were taken to residential schools, and many who lost their Indian status for example. Adele believes this would help non-Indigenous Canadians learn and recognize the troubled history of this country that promotes itself as strong, multicultural, and free. She shares, “I think that they all should do a blanket exercise. That’s like

my number one solution to having things get better. If everybody just understood the story, because you know, so many Canadians have missed the opportunity to learn the true history of this land, so that's where racism comes from, that's where misunderstanding, that's where ignorance comes from [...]" She also believes that implementing documents and recommendations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), represent effective steps towards accomplishing reconciliation. Interestingly, Marie, 55, who is involved with one of the city's Indigenous institutions echoes the sentiment of the Cree word otîpimsuak, which translates into the 'free people', or 'their own bosses' (Macdougall, 2012). She suggests that Indigenous peoples, and by extension Metis peoples, want to be self-reliant, especially within the urban environment and have the desire to govern their own affairs. By increasing recognition and carving out political space, the Metis community will have greater agency within the urban environment and a strong lever of power in relation to governing bodies such as the municipal government.

It is clear that the Metis community engages with power over space in a multitude of ways within the city of Ottawa and with different levels of government. It was conveyed by the participants that Metis peoples are often thought of last, occupying a third place type of recognition amongst Indigenous peoples. Although the municipal government maintains a connection with Indigenous peoples in the city, which many of the participants consider to be a token relationship, there is virtually no recognition of the presence of a Metis community in the city by Ottawa's municipal government. Once again, possible recommendations to remedy these tenuous relations include education, through activities such as blanket exercises, and larger scale endeavours such as the creation of a permanent consultation seat for Indigenous peoples on City

Council. These examples of initiatives would increase the disciplinary power of the community, going from the bottom up, or in other words from Metis themselves to the different levels of government, thus granting the community greater power and recognition within the city while directly combatting forms of municipal colonialism.

Although such measures would change the dynamic of power relations presently at play within the city, the fact remains that funding for Metis organizations, as with many other Indigenous organizations, is insufficient and makes organizing and coordinating gatherings that would garner greater recognition difficult. These gatherings are vital components in exercising disciplinary power as they are instances where power is produced and where individuals can channel this power from the grassroots community level directly up to governance bodies, as was the case with the Idle No More movement. The capacity to meet, rally, and effectively communicate a community's beliefs, needs, and aspirations, while being able to carry out a way of life according to their worldview are all necessary elements to grant Indigenous people a right to the city. Metis have yet to be fully granted their right to the city in Ottawa. By granting greater recognition, allocating more substantial resources and increasing the disciplinary power of urban Metis peoples, a Metis right to the city can be achieved, an endeavour that will be the focus of the next and final section of this chapter.

### **FOR A METIS RIGHT TO THE UNOPPRESSIVE CITY**

Lefebvre's right to the city embodies the transformed and renewed right to urban life (1996). This right should be available to all urban citizens regardless of socio-economic, cultural, political, or physical circumstances. Although Lefebvre's *Writing on Cities* focuses on class distinctions, the dynamics of urban capitalism, proposing a complete overhaul of capitalist urban

society, the concept of right to the city is an effective tool for considering the experiences and agency of Indigenous peoples residing in urban areas. This final section will consider how the right to the city can be fully granted to Metis peoples living in Ottawa. Drawing from the Cree word Otîpimsuak meaning ‘the free people’ or ‘their own bosses’, it will be argued that in order for Metis to fully access their right to the city there must be greater recognition and the allocation of adequate support so as to facilitate cultural gatherings and establish greater educational opportunities for Metis and non-Metis in order to reduce the racism and oppression they face due to the legacy and ongoing project of colonialism. This section will consider the participants’ responses regarding Indigenous life in the city while exploring the ways in which the city can grant a true and continued right to the city for Metis and other Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, it will be argued that Ottawa has a great potential to become an inclusive Indigenous space. Although this section will focus on the experiences of urban Metis peoples in Ottawa, it is argued that by fully extending the right to the city to all Indigenous peoples, cities can make great strides towards decolonization while promoting what Young (1986; 1990), considers as true social justice, what she calls unassimilated otherness, to peoples who have faced continued oppression.

The modern city is far from being an Indigenous creation. Many of the participants spoke about the challenges associated with urban life including the lack of access to natural areas, distance from traditional territories, and also racism and lateral violence experienced due to ignorance and misunderstanding. Benny, 33, believes that although the city is not an Indigenous creation, cities are located on Indigenous land and as such they must be welcoming and inclusive spaces for all Indigenous peoples. Reflecting on whether or not the city is currently an Indigenous space, she shares, “I think that the city is on Indigenous land. I think like flickering

Christmas lights, every once in a while, we can create Indigenous spaces within the city, but they are often not permanent and that is a problem that needs to be addressed by our communities, by people outside of our communities who are allies, because the city itself is not Indigenous.” Benny brings up several interesting points in this statement. She advances that it is important for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples to work together to create Indigenous spaces, spaces that are not necessarily exclusive to Indigenous peoples but rather spaces that embody Indigeneity, that are also open to non-Indigenous peoples to frequent, learn, and ultimately decolonize their views and practices. The other important point she brings up is the fact change must come from the community itself which echoes Lefebvre’s belief that only oppressed groups themselves can realize to fruition solutions to urban problems (1996).

Crystal, 25, recognizes the importance of fighting for one’s right to the city. She states, “to me, it’s little tiny pockets of Indigenous spaces, and a lot of the time we fought hard for those spaces to kind of claim them as our own [...]” Fighting for these spaces applies both to communal and individual experiences of Metis and other Indigenous peoples. Adele, 28, speaks to the challenges of negotiating space within the city. She explains, “It took me about 10 years to find myself within the city, and I had to dig for it and search, you know not everybody has that will power to start digging and searching but the city has potential to definitely be a place where Indigenous people can see themselves.” As discussed within the previous two sections of this chapter, as of right now, Indigenous peoples, and in the context of this research, Metis peoples, face a great deal of oppression in terms of the legacy of colonialism under the guise of cultural imperialism as defined by Young (1990). If the right to the city is to be fully extended to Metis and other Indigenous peoples, the city must become an inclusive space, and furthermore, must

recognize that it is founded on Indigenous land and that Indigenous peoples occupy a distinct and important role as urban citizens.

All of the participants agreed that there is a great deal of potential for Ottawa to achieve decolonization. As the country's capital, this process would demonstrate the importance of decolonization to other cities across Canada, and embody the national project of reconciliation. Seb, 32, feels strongly about this decolonization process, and shares, "I believe there's a tremendous potential for the City of Ottawa to be an Indigenous space." Pierre, 40, echoes this statement by stating, "I think Ottawa really is an Indigenous city, has an Indigenous current running through it, and I think that's a really fantastic thing and it's one of the things that I'm glad I moved to Ottawa about, it wasn't something I was expecting to gain when I moved to the city, but it's made Ottawa home for me." Spaces such as the Odawa Native Friendship Centre and the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health are effective starting points for creating Indigenous spaces in Ottawa. Benny, 33, feels that Wabano is an excellent example of a space designed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people, referring to Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal who also designed the Canadian Museum of History located in Gatineau, Quebec. She shares, "Yea I think that Wabano is a great example of an Indigenous space. There was quite a bit of consultation in the lead up to that being developed and upgraded [...] I think that that's a good example of an Indigenous space in the city [...]" Marie, 55, also speaks to the impact an Indigenous space such as Wabano can have for both an individual and the community. She explains, "When you walk in here, it's a total world, it's a total different world than out there [...] Sometimes you need a place of belonging too, there's a lot of pressure, there's a lot of stress. You always have family here." The right to the city is a right to spaces such as these,

spaces of belonging that are welcoming and safe, spaces that allow Metis to be who they are, spaces where they can be their own bosses, as embodied by the Cree word Otîpimsuak.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Metis are often negotiating a series of ephemeral geographies for the purposes of creating Metis specific spaces for short periods of time. Although, having to constantly claim and reinvent space can be a tiring process, the right to the city also entails that spaces that are non Indigenous must be welcoming and open to being Indigenous, even if only for a limited period of time. A good example of this was *Walking With Our Sisters*, which promoted awareness, recognition, and remembrance of missing and murdered Indigenous women. When the exhibit was held in Ottawa, it was located on the Carleton University campus but the space it occupied became an Indigenous space. These instances for Crystal, 25, are important as they bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. They are good occasions for building community, strengthening support networks and increasing power and recognition. She shares, “it’s important to know where you come from, because when you know where you come you know who accepts you, and who supports you, and support is a two-way street, you don’t just expect someone to support you, you have to put some work into that, right? So yea. That’s goes with building relationships.” Relationship building is a vital component of creating strong communities which in turn strengthens one’s right to the city.

As of right now, there are no specific Metis spaces in the city, and this was conveyed by the participants in various ways throughout their interviews. Of course there’s a focus on a physical space to gather as Rose, 25, who sits on the Ottawa Regional Métis Council (ORMC) states, “I think having a space for people to like get together is really important, that’s one of the hard things about being on Council, we don’t actually have a physical location [...]” and Kelly, 21, explained, “we all live together but we really need to be able to express ourselves and be

recognized within that kind of environment and I think that there's so many opportunities to give us a space to even have new traditions, or new ways of living. I think that there just needs to be a space for us, through recognition." Such an endeavour embodies the strategy of place making as outlined by Tomiak (2011), which reclaims physical space and carves out political space. In addition, such an action is also about non-Metis embracing difference and accepting an openness to unassimilated otherness as explained by Young (1986). Pierre, 40, speaks to asserting symbolic space by suggesting the creation of statues and/or murals that depict Metis and broader Indigenous history. He states, "we live in a city with a lot of history so we see a lot of plaques and stuff like that, so why can't we see a plaque or a monument to Louis Riel or Gabriel Dumont somewhere in Ottawa?" These represent interesting projects for the community. However, as Charlie, 23, states, simply putting Indigenous art around the city does not represent decolonization and does not necessarily signify a right to the city or acceptance of unassimilated otherness. He contends, "one thing I have a lot of problems with is token Indigenous art [...] I hate that because it's very tokenistic, it's like the minimal thing, it's taking the good while using that good to disregard all the bad." Therefore, it can be argued that extending a true and lasting right to the city requires a three prong approach that ensures possibilities of asserting symbolic space, reclaiming physical space, and carving out political space within the city's urban environment.

Lefebvre's right to the city and how it relates to the experiences of Indigenous peoples living in Canada's urban centres has been the focus of this section. Specifically, in regards to the Metis community in Ottawa, it was determined that considerable efforts must be undertaken to fully extend the 'right of the city' to both Metis individuals and the community as a whole. Relating back to previous comments, many of the participants feel that having a specific and

permanent space for Metis peoples in the city, through the form a community center would clearly entrench the Metis community within Ottawa's urban landscape. Furthermore, creating greater awareness through education represents a viable course of action to decolonize urban space while combatting oppression, something that Metis, and other Indigenous peoples, continue to face on a daily basis, even within the multicultural spaces of Canadian cities.

Conversely, the participants all agree that Ottawa has a great potential to become an Indigenous space. Whether it be through creating a permanent space for the community to gather, ensuring there are spaces that can become Indigenous such as parks for rallies and events, and creating symbolic expressions of identity over space through monuments or murals, they all represent effective strategies for promoting a Metis right to the city while increasing the power, organizational capacity, and agency of the community and its members.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Space and power are deeply interconnected. In an urban environment, there is a continuous interplay of these two elements. This chapter has explored how Ottawa's Metis peoples experience and negotiate power over space. Utilizing a Foucaultian understanding of power, primarily through the concept of disciplinary power, both individual and communal power relations experienced by individual Metis urbanites and the community as a whole were considered. Participants shared a wide array of both positive and negative experiences as urban Indigenous citizens. It was made clear that oppression and injustice are still highly prevalent within this country's urban spaces. In Ottawa specifically, Metis peoples must confront racism and lateral violence, often through the form of direct challenges to the authenticity and legitimacy of their cultural identity. At the city level, there continues to be a serious lack of

recognition of the presence of a sizeable Metis community, which relegates Metis to a third place rank of recognition within the Indigenous community. Strategies to increase the power of Metis individuals and the community as a whole were identified by the participants and included educational reform, a stronger relationship with the municipal government, and greater recognition through increased awareness and support. These initiatives would greatly increase the organizational capacity of the Metis community at large, which would undoubtedly facilitate newly arrived Metis in the city to access services and become involved within the community. As a result, Lefebvre's right to the city could be granted and maintained for Metis peoples living in Ottawa.

As the Cree word *Otîpimsuak* describes, Metis have always and wish to continue to be their own bosses. In order to achieve this in urban environments where considerable populations of Metis peoples reside, such as Ottawa, the right to the city must be extended and secured. By respecting and upholding this transformed and renewed right to urban life, the decolonization of cities and the true realization of social justice become possible.

## CONCLUSION

### METIS IN THE CITY

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Urban Indigenous studies is a dynamic and burgeoning field of research. Following the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), which culminated with the release of its Final Report in 1996, researchers and policy makers began considering the opportunities and potential of urban Indigenous communities in Canada in response to their rapid growth, marking a significant shift from the pre-RCAP literature that focused predominantly on the negative aspects of urban life for Indigenous peoples. This thesis has sought to answer Peters' (2011) call that more attention be paid to the unique experiences of urban Indigenous populations within specific urban contexts. In addition, this study has attempted to address the current lack of literature concerning urban Indigenous peoples who do not identify as First Nations. As such, the main focus of this thesis has been to identify and explore the experiences of urban Metis peoples residing in Ottawa. Although Ottawa is located outside of the traditional Metis Homeland, which spans most of what is now referred to as western Canada, there is a significant population of self-identifying Metis peoples numbering over 14,000 (Statistics Canada, 2015), that reside within the Ottawa-Gatineau area, in addition to several important representative organizations that represent Metis peoples from across the province and country such as the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Métis National Council. The main research question has sought to identify the social and cultural capacity of the Metis community in Ottawa, while establishing the degree to which life in the city affords opportunities for personal and communal growth. In addition to identifying the challenge associated with being Metis in the city.

Adopting an Indigenous research methodology (Smith, 2012) based on continued interactions with the Metis community through volunteering at an urban Indigenous community health centre and participating in events organized by the Metis community, while promoting initiatives of self-determination, the researcher has emphasized a research process conducted with and not on the urban Metis community in Ottawa. Several key concepts and theories were utilized throughout the course of this thesis, including but not limited to Indigeneity, decolonization, reconciliation, place, space, home, Henri Lefebvre's (1996) right to the city, Tomiak's (2011) indigenization of this concept, and Iris Marion Young's (1986) unassimilated otherness. The available literature regarding urban Indigenous peoples in Canada was consulted and a major theme present in the majority of the literature was that further research concerning the experiences and realities of Indigenous peoples living within Canadian cities is paramount, especially in light of the federal government's renewed call for reconciliation with the country's Indigenous peoples. It was found that urban life for Indigenous peoples is often manifested as a tension between loss and opportunity. Urban Indigenous institutions such as Friendship centres and community health centres played an essential role in increasing the opportunities present to urban Indigenous peoples, notably by nurturing the development and maintaining of a positive Indigenous identity within the city, especially for youth. They are also significant organizations that strengthen the social and cultural capacity of the broader urban Indigenous community. As previously stated, a common theme within the literature is a call for more research regarding specific urban Indigenous communities, research as Andersen (2013) points out, that can ultimately guide effective and cost-efficient policy and program development.

Currently, there are few studies that focus on the experiences and needs of urban Metis peoples in Canada, even though two-thirds of Metis in the country live within an urban area

(Gionet, 2014). Inspired by Laliberte (2013), the interview schedule of this thesis sought to better understand cultural identity and its expressions within an urban context, specifically in relation to Metis peoples living in Ottawa. Employing Cresswell's (2004) concept of sense of place it was found that Metis peoples have a dynamic and complex relationship with the city. Participating in cultural events and activities such as annual gatherings, with traditional foods, music and dancing, such as the Halfbreed Hustle which honours Louis Riel, a pivotal figure in Metis history, were seen as important instances of creating social spaces while nurturing one's Metis identity. Furthermore, especially amongst young adults, engagement with art in the form of painting, beading, and dancing, was an important way of expressing cultural identity and educating others. This embodies Louis Riel's statement following the 1885 Resistance when many Metis had to go into hiding out of fear of persecution, that, "our people will sleep for 100 years, and when they awaken, it will be the artists who bring their spirits back" (Andersen, 2014, xiii).

An important consideration that was raised through the interview process was the fact that there are different understandings and definitions of who Metis are in Ottawa, something that was also present in Laliberte's (2013) Saskatoon study and these expressions of Metis identity were found to be prominent within the city of Ottawa, a reality that was represented by the participants. Although many Big 'M' and little 'm' Metis attend events together and frequent urban Indigenous institutions such as the Odawa Native Friendship Centre and the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, there are certain tensions that exist between both groups due to competing claims of Metisness. In addition to these groupings, it was found that within Big 'M' Metis, there was a slight distinction between Metis from western Canada and Metis from Ontario. As Ottawa is home to the Metis Nation of Ontario's head office, there are many Big 'M'

Metis from Ontario residing within the city which adds to the diversity of the city's Metis community. With this in mind, it is evident that the Metis community in Ottawa is highly diverse and, recognizing different understandings and experiences of Metisness is essential to simply grouping all Metis, and by extension all First Nations and Inuit peoples, into one pan-Indigenous category. Differences in understanding aside, all of the participants spoke to the importance of having opportunities to meet and gather within the city.

Because Many Metis come to Ottawa from across the country due to a variety of pull factors, as identified by Norris and Clatworthy (2003), such as educational and employment opportunities. Most of the participants interviewed in the context of this study have lived in Ottawa for a period between 4 to 10 years. Many considered the city to be a transient place, a node of activity that attracts people for a certain period of time, primarily in order to obtain a postsecondary degree or to complete an employment contract, after which they move to the next place where they can further their education and/or career. That being said, it appears that more Metis are deciding to make Ottawa their home away from home, due to the available opportunities within the city, especially for Indigenous people. As a result, even though Ottawa is not a Metis city considering the lack of historical Metis settlement in the area, the city does represent an important and non negligible Metis meeting place and gathering space. Conversely, although more Metis are beginning to call Ottawa a home away from home, the fact remains that the community itself is in a constant state of flux and as a result, there are no permanent Metis spaces within the city outside of the administrative offices of the Métis Nation of Ontario and the Métis National Council.

Consequently, the Metis community navigates a series of ephemeral geographies which continuously requires reinventing space for events and activities. This speaks to the adaptability

of the community; however, the overwhelming majority of participants suggested that having a specific Metis fixture, such as a small community centre or a Metis house, within the urban landscape would greatly increase the organizational capacity of the Metis community in addition to providing a space for Metis peoples of all ages to simply meet and gather, and interact with one another. Centres like these exist elsewhere, in urban centres such as Winnipeg and have shown to increase the strength of community ties and support networks while embodying what Tomiak (2011) identifies as self-determined spaces.

Many participants also shared that maintaining a strong connection with nature, often referred to as 'the land' was an effective way of escaping, even if momentarily, the concrete environment of the city. It was found that many green spaces exist within and in close proximity to the city, such as Gatineau Park, which provide respite from city life. It was determined that many Metis have cultivated a strong connection with the city's green spaces, as over time and through frequent visits, they have come to create affective ties with these places, which in turn become carriers of identity. Whether it is going for a hike in the woods, or simply placing a tobacco offering at the base of a tree along the Rideau Canal, connecting with the land was seen as an important practice, especially for those who have moved to Ottawa from distant places.

The types of relationships, spaces, and places the Metis have created for themselves within Ottawa exist, in part, to counteract the forms of cultural imperialism they experience that challenge Metis identity on a daily basis. As such, many Metis find themselves having to prove their Indigeneity based on colonial identity constructions based on blood quantum or the presence of certain physical traits such as skin colour. This not only originates from interactions with non-Indigenous individuals but also, on occasion, with other Indigenous peoples. This demonstrates the presence of lateral violence within the broader Indigenous community, a direct

consequence of previous colonial policies that sought to clearly demarcate “Indian” from “white”, leaving no room in between. The participants agreed that increased educational initiatives and efforts to teach all children from a young age the diversity of Indigenous, and by extension Metis, cultures in addition to an increase in positive role models, especially for Metis youth so they can better navigate these instances of racism and cultural imperialism, would be highly beneficial in addressing these forms of oppression.

Taking both individual and communal power relations into account, the degree to which Metis are afforded what Lefebvre (1996) identifies as the right to the city was considered, notably through Tomiak’s indigenization of the concept (2011). It was established that currently Metis peoples in Ottawa are not granted their full right to the city based on continued oppression in the form of racism and a lack of space for the community. With the recent Supreme Court ruling the Daniels case that clearly places legislative authority of Metis peoples on the federal government, it is anticipated that the federal government will finally begin to respect its relationship with Metis peoples, putting an end to a jurisdictional tug-of-war over Metis rights between federal and provincial governments. As Tomiak (2011) states, the city represents a crucial site of decolonization, and granting a ‘true’ right to the city must come in the form of being able to assert symbolic space, to reclaim physical space, and to carve out political space, primarily through processes of re-territorialization and place making. This would represent concrete steps towards achieving unassimilated otherness as suggested by (Young 1986). These potential projects all represent effective methods in challenging municipal colonialism and contributing to urban decolonization. If achieved, a Metis right to the city can truly be granted and maintained for urban Metis peoples living in Ottawa.

As the Cree word for the Metis, Otîpimsuak embodies, Metis have and continue to be the free people and their own bosses. Metis culture has undergone significant changes and mutations over the past 150 years; however, the fact remains that they still constitute a distinct Indigenous nation, and as such, deserve to be recognized and treated with respect on a nation-to-nation basis. Although Ottawa itself is located outside of the traditional Metis Homeland, it is now home to several thousand self-identifying Metis, a number that continues to grow. This thesis has sought to provide a better understanding of the experiences of a particular Indigenous community within a specific urban context, directly responding to calls for greater understanding of the specificities of urban Indigenous peoples from both academics in geography and Indigenous studies.

If Canada is to fully embrace the national project of reconciliation, completely acknowledging the colonial legacy and foundations of the country in addition to embracing the decolonization of its structures and policies represent two essential pursuits. This is not an impossible task and as the participants shared, there is great potential for cities across the country, especially Ottawa which occupies the rank of national capital, to become spaces where Indigenous peoples, such as the Metis, can fully access their right to the city while nurturing and maintaining a distinct, authentic, and positive urban Indigenous identities.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

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#### **Theme 1: Cultural identity**

1. Please describe your cultural identity.
2. What does “Metis” mean for you (relation to historic Metis homeland, person of mixed ancestry, etc?)
3. How do you maintain your Metis identity?
4. What reinforces your identity within the city/urban environment?

#### **Theme 2: Cultural institutions**

5. What institutions (organizations, groups, service bodies) are important to you/within your community?
6. Do these institutions provide Metis specific cultural programming and/or services?
7. What role do these institutions play within the community?
8. In your opinion, do they receive enough support?

#### **Theme 3: Kinship and Social Networks**

9. Do you believe there is a strong Metis community within Ottawa, that is well connected?
10. Do kinship and social networks play an important role within it/for you?
11. Where are you originally from? If from outside Ottawa, do you still maintain a strong relationship with your original community?

#### **Theme 4: Personal experiences within the city**

12. What are some of the challenges you face individually as an Indigenous person in the city?
13. Do you believe the urban Metis community is recognized within the city?
14. Do you consider the city to be your home?
15. What are you most proud of as an Indigenous person?
16. Do you believe the city is an indigenous space?
17. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

## APPENDIX B: FIGURES

Figure 1: Halfbreed Hustle poster

AN EVENING  
IN HONOUR OF  
*Louis Riel*

The  
Third Annual

*Halfbreed*  
**HUSTLE**

∞






**MÉTIS MUSIC, DANCE  
& CELEBRATION**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2015**  
**6 TO 10 P.M.**  
*Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health*  
**299 MONTREAL ROAD**

*Live Music, Refreshments & A Great Selection of Vendors*  
*Admission is Free*

**BENNY.T.MICHAUD@GMAIL.COM**  
**613-859-9969**

"We were railroaded by some steel tracks that didn't last  
and some settlers who wouldn't settle  
and it's funny we're still here and callin' ourselves halfbreed"  
*— Marilyn Dumont in a Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald*

Source: Halfbreed Hustle. (2015). Retrieved from <http://allevents.in/ottawa/halfbreed-hustle/1631982700389388>