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Résumé de l'article

La spiritualité autochtone est souvent détournée et déployée pour soutenir les valeurs des colons blancs qui possèdent et dépossèdent les savoirs, la matérialité et les relations sociopolitiques autochtones. Comme l’explique Kim TallBear, ce régime de propriété des colons maintient un exceptionnalisme colonial qui justifie la naturalisation des territoires autochtones par les colons. La spiritualité/religion autochtone représente des connaissances et des relations sociopolitiques situées qui ne peuvent être abstraites des relations collectives et co-constitutives. LeBlanc et Gareau se tournent vers leurs communautés respectives pour expliquer comment les relations sont essentielles à la compréhension de la spiritualité/religion autochtone. LeBlanc utilise l’analyse érotique de Savage (Tracy) Bear pour voir les relations spirituelles/religieuses des femmes mi’kmaq dans les archives des colons et pour se situer elle-même dans ces relations par le biais de l’autoportrait photographique. Gareau décortique les relations spirituelles/religieuses du violon métis dans l’histoire de Maria Campbell intitulée « La Beau Sha Shoo », où un violoniste métis meurt et va au ciel pour boire et rendre visite à Jésus. Dans l’ensemble, la spiritualité/religion représente l’autodétermination de nations/peuples distincts mais apparentés, collectifs et co-constitutifs.

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Our Spiritual Relations

Challenging Settler Colonial Possessiveness of Indigenous Spirituality/Religion

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Abstract: Indigenous spirituality is often appropriated and deployed in support of white settler values that possess and dispossess Indigenous knowledges, materiality, and socio-political relations. As Kim TallBear explains, this settler property regime maintains a colonial exceptionalism that justifies settler naturalization to Indigenous territories. Indigenous spirituality/religion represents situated knowledges and socio-political relations that cannot be abstracted from collective and co-constitutive relations. LeBlanc and Gareau turn to their respective communities to articulate how relations are central to understanding Indigenous spirituality/religion. LeBlanc employs Savage (Tracy) Bear's eroticanalysis to see Mi'kmaq women's spiritual/religious relations in the settler archives as well as situate herself in these relations through photographic self-portraiture. Gareau unpacks the spiritual/religious relations of the Métis fiddle in Maria Campbell's Road Allowance story of "La Beau Sha Shoo" where a Métis fiddler dies and goes to heaven to drink and visit with Jesus. Throughout, spirituality/religion represents the self-determination of separate but related collective and co-constitutive nations/peoples.

Keywords: Indigenous spirituality/religion; white possessiveness; eroticanalysis; Indigenous feminisms; research creation; self-portraiture; archives; nationhood/peoplehood; kinship governance; Mi'kmaq Nation; Métis Nation

Résumé : La spiritualité autochtone est souvent détournée et déployée pour soutenir les valeurs des colons blancs qui possèdent et dépossèdent les savoirs, la matérialité et les relations sociopolitiques autochtones. Comme l'explique Kim TallBear, ce régime de propriété des colons maintient un exceptionnalisme colonial qui justifie la naturalisation des territoires autochtones par les colons. La spiritualité/religion autochtone représente des connaissances et des relations sociopolitiques situées qui ne peuvent être abstraites des relations collectives et co-constitutives. LeBlanc et Gareau se tournent vers leurs

communautés respectives pour expliquer comment les relations sont essentielles à la compréhension de la spiritualité/religion autochtone. LeBlanc utilise l'analyse érotique de Savage (Tracy) Bear pour voir les relations spirituelles/religieuses des femmes mi'kmaq dans les archives des colons et pour se situer elle-même dans ces relations par le biais de l'autoportrait photographique. Gareau décortique les relations spirituelles/religieuses du violon métis dans l'histoire de Maria Campbell intitulée « La Beau Sha Shoo », où un violoniste métis meurt et va au ciel pour boire et rendre visite à Jésus. Dans l'ensemble, la spiritualité/religion représente l'autodétermination de nations/peuples distincts mais apparentés, collectifs et co-constitutifs.

Mots-clés : spiritualité et religion autochtone ; possessivité blanche ; analyse érotique ; féminismes autochtones ; création de recherche ; autoportrait ; archives ; nation/peuple ; gouvernance de la parenté ; nation mi'kmaq ; nation métisse

Introduction

Spirituality and religion are problematic concepts when discussing Indigenous experiences, ways of being and knowing, and socio-political sovereignty. As will be discussed, the conventional definition of Indigenous spirituality is as more flexible, based on individual, lived experience, in contrast to religion as institutional, authoritative, and hierarchical. By virtue of this differentiated definition, Indigenous spirituality has become a hotspot for settler appropriation that drives towards possessing and dispossessing Indigenous ideas, knowledges, bodies, cultures, politics, and relations.

This article explores the appropriation of Indigenous spirituality through white possessiveness, settler exceptionalism, self-indigenization, and the settler property regime, and then situates Indigenous spiritual/religious relations in each of the authors' personal/positional and community/collective experiences. The first is LeBlanc's deployment of Savage (Tracy) Bear's eroticanalysis as a means of looking at and responding to the spiritual/religious relations of Mi'kmaq women in the colonial archive and through photographic self-portraiture. The second is Gareau's exploration of Métis values and socio-political relations in the Road Allowance story of "La Beau Sha Shoo," where a Métis fiddler goes to heaven, and drinks and visits with Jesus. This article is a critical engagement and exploration of how the concepts of Indigenous spirituality/religion can be framed, not as a commodity of white possessiveness,

but through collective, socio-political kinship relations for the sake of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

Co-Opting Indigenous Spirituality: White Possessiveness and the Settler Property Regime

A central problem for understanding Indigenous experiences of spirituality/religion stems from how spirituality and religion are defined through a settler possessiveness that is distorted by colonial logics. The impact of settler colonialism is a core theme in the long-standing and active debate on the application of the terms/concepts of spirituality and religion when understanding Indigenous knowledges and lifeways as "Indigenous religious traditions" (see Bassett and Avalos 2022). We define Indigenous spirituality/religion broadly as a socio-political framework focused around an ethos of relationality, contextualized and deployed by different collective Indigenous communities/nations, which are formed by co-constitutive relations between other nations/peoples, human and more-than-human. Indigenous spirituality/religion is based on situated knowledges (Haraway 1988; TallBear 2017) in shared storied places and overlapping territories (Million 2015) in a personable universe (Deloria and Wildcat 2001), shaping collective understandings of self in terms of nationhood ("those who are us") and diplomatic peoplehood relations with other nations/peoples ("those who are not us") (Andersen 2021), which are human and more-than-human (Kimmerer 2013). Though deeply critical of "spirituality" due to conceptual slippage, and issues of colonial power and dichotomous logics, David Delgado Shorter (2016, 444) asserts that Indigenous spirituality is instead intersubjective kinship relations or "relatedness" and cannot be abstracted from these relations. In other words, Indigenous spirituality/religion without collective, co-constitutive relations between sovereign nations/peoples is meaningless. One can never be spiritual/religious alone.

However, within a settler colonial context, Indigenous spirituality is often framed as a cultural element that stands in contradistinction to Western definitions of religion as a transcendent, metaphysical framework that is teleological, institutional, hierarchical, and authoritarian. Craig Martin (2017, 6) explains that this differentiated definition is based in the post-Reformation and Enlightenment era, where the separation of Church and State excised religion from the political sphere and relegated it to governing the soul, while spirituality was a matter of personal experience, prerogative, and choice. This

led to a modern attitude of "cultural chauvinism" and colonial expansion where, paradoxically, both Christianity and scientific rationalism stood as ideal types to measure "other" religions, cultures, and races on the standard of white, Christian, Western European civilization (Martin 2017, 10–12; see L. T. Smith 2006, 92–97). It is in this context that Indigenous spirituality is conventionally defined, in contrast with institutional and transcendental religion, as an immanent framework naturalized to territory(ies), shaped by circular logics in traditional stories and metaphysical characters, supernatural connection to plants, animals, and spirits, availed by sacred medicines, ceremony, and ritual experts, and governed by decentralized and equalitarian authority structures (see D. G. Smith 2011 as representational depiction). Though there is truth to this general description of Indigenous spirituality, the problem lies in how this definition frames the misrecognition of Indigenous collectivities, kinship governance, and co-constitutive relations as spiritual/religious.

The goal of this article, however, is not to introduce new terminology or alternative concepts, but to unpack how settler colonialism shapes and reifies the definitions of spirituality and religion, and "focus on how Indigenous peoples deploy relational values using these concepts" (Gareau and LeBlanc 2021; see Gareau 2021b). In this article, "spirituality/religion" is understood and deployed as a joint relational concept that is inherently plural speaking of socio-political, co-constitutive, and situated kinship relations that make up Indigenous nationhood and peoplehood governance. With that said, the "conventional" definition that links religion to institutional power and spirituality to individual prerogatives and experiences is problematic. It allows many non-Indigenous people to co-opt Indigenous spirituality on a personal (often individualistic) and cultural level and, with it, Indigenous identity politics related to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination—that is, a vision of Indigenous spirituality divorced or extracted from its proper context in kinship relations. This relates to a history of romantic primitivism and the idea of the noble savage (Ellingson 2001), settler prohibition, and appropriation of Indigenous spiritual/religious practices as "playing Indian" or self-indigenization (V. Deloria [1973] 2003; P. Deloria 1998), and the rise of "the Rainbow Tribe" and "plastic shamans" of the New Age and/or alternative health movements (Aldred 2000; Arregi 2021; Vizenor 1999). This appropriation represents a systemic assimilation of Indigenous traditional knowledges as a means of extracting and deploying Indigenous authenticity for settler colonial identity formation that seeks to justify white settler presence on Indigenous traditional territories. Indigenous

spirituality becomes a commodity that white settlers trade to transmute ethno-cultural settler categories and represent themselves as native to this land.

A current and strangely ironic example of this commodification, co-opting, and settler self-indigenization is the "Trucker Convoy" that took place across Canada in January and February of 2022. This convoy was a far-right populist, political response to the Canadian federal government's attempt to enact COVID-19 restrictions including mandatory vaccinations for people crossing the Canada/US border (Tasker 2022). For weeks, chaos unfolded as thousands of people and hundreds of semi-trucks descended on Ottawa's urban core, unimpeded by Ottawa city police. In the crowd of largely white settler protestors were symbols of American far-right conservatism and hate groups (Dysart 2022) as well as some Indigenous individuals who came to communicate their frustrations with the current federal government (Forester 2022). The tone of the protest was one of underlying resentment of federal control over the healthcare mandate, which was communicated with an overbearing and domineering Canadian patriotism/populism and ideas imported from the American culture war.

In this cauldron of patriotism and neoliberal/libertarian frustration, a "pipe ceremony" took place on 2 February at Confederation Park near Parliament Hill (APTN National News 2022). Dubbed the "Day of Peace" pipe ceremony (King 2022b), one of the main actors at this event was Pat King, a symbolic leader of the protest movement who claims to be Métis. [The Métis are a post-contact Indigenous nation recognized by the Crown under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 (Minister of Justice Canada 1982, 56). See Gareau's section below for a more detailed explanation.] In one of the videos of this event, King is seen standing at the centre of the action, holding a Métis sash that he was gifted by Métis citizens from Medicine Hat, Alberta (King 2022a). This gift came with a message that linked the mandate of the Trucker Convoy to the struggles of the Métis in the 1885 Batoche Resistance to the encroaching, colonizing Canadian state. The "Day of Peace" pipe ceremony event was met with immediate scorn and demands to cease and desist by the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, Algonquin-Anishinabeg Nation, and Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation (CBC News 2022) for non-consensual appropriation of the pipe ceremony. This response was also supported by separate statements from the Métis Nation of Ontario (Métis Nation of Ontario 2022) and the Manitoba Métis Federation (Manitoba Métis Federation 2022) pointing to the unacceptable use of Métis symbols to justify the protest. On 2 February, Pat King put out a statement of "extreme apology" to the "Algonquin Nations" for the event and

for not following ritual protocol (King 2022c), but King still held to his claim of Indigenous identity as Métis, despite the lack of any genealogical evidence or community connections to substantiate this claim (Helwig 2022). After his arrest for his role as a protest organizer, King made a statement in a video that was submitted as court evidence, saying the following: “Every person who was born here in Canada, in North America, you are indigenous. People don’t realize that. If you were born of the land, you are indigenous of the land” (Helwig 2022).

King’s actions and this statement are indicative not of a man alone waxing right-wing and populist political ideals of Canadian identity, but of a long-standing and embedded discourse of white settler exceptionalism, based in settler colonial ideology and structural racism that frames Indigenous identity through spirituality. Broadly, King’s statement reflects a settler discourse of self-indigenization or “race shifting” where white settlers claim an imagined or fictitious Indigenous ancestry and/or genealogically distant ancestor (Gaudry and Leroux 2017; Sturm 2011). And there are many examples of race shifting in Canada alone linked to arts and culture, and academia; such as Joseph Boyden, Michelle Latimer, Carrie Bourassa, and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. Two prominent examples on the political spectrum of left and right are US Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren (2019) and United Conservative Party leader and Premier of Alberta Danielle Smith (2022), each claiming to have Cherokee ancestry (see Sturm 2011 for a discussion on race-shifting and the Cherokee Nation). As mentioned above, King’s claims as Métis clearly justify his racial naturalization to this land and his sense of settler Canadian exceptionalism (Leroux 2019). The settler landscape was conditioned for the “Day of Peace” pipe ceremony to happen, where Indigenous identity politics are co-opted as a means of socially ascribed racial identity through the cultural appropriation of, in this case, the pipe and tobacco diplomacy. This ceremony, therefore, helps make a claim of authenticity and moral justification for the rights and political outlook of the far-right in Canada against an “immoral” federal government acting as a hegemonic power denying their inherent rights, sovereignty, and self-determination through vaccination mandates. Within this political discourse, it is clear that the protestors are co-opting the inherent rights for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination—that are inherently spiritual/religious (Starblanket 2020)—to justify their settler exceptionalism.

Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson frames this phenomenon as *white possessiveness*, which serves settler colonial needs and worldview by disrupting, misrecognizing, and erasing Indigenous sovereignty. Moreton-Robinson

(2015, xxiv) writes, "white possession is a discursive predisposition servicing the conditions, practices, implications, and racialized discourses that are embedded within and central to white first world patriarchal nation-states." She writes, "[t]he existence of white supremacy as hegemony, ideology, epistemology, and ontology requires the possession of Indigenous lands as its proprietary anchor within capitalist economies" (2015, xix). White possession thus works through Indigenous dispossession, where racial hierarchies are imposed as a means of possessing land and bodies, and effectuating nation-state governance structures. This is a settler problem and is related to structural racism, Indigenous erasure, and settler self-indigenization.

Sisseton Dakota scholar Kim TallBear (2019) amplifies Moreton-Robinson's work on white possessiveness and Sturm and Leroux's discussions on race shifting as a core framework for understanding the socio-political dispossession of Indigenous peoples. TallBear looks specifically at the ethos of the "American Dream" or "American Dreaming" as an expression of settler exceptionalism that possesses and dispossesses Indigenous lands, bodies, and relations (human and more-than-human). TallBear (2019, 24) writes,

> While the foundation of Indigenous elimination is one of white supremacy, it is not only white people in power who work to eliminate or erase Indigenous peoples. Dreaming, even in inclusive and multicultural tones, of developing an ideal settler state implicitly supports the elimination of Indigenous peoples from this place.

This is a key component of Indigenous experiences of structural racism in the US and Canada—that the nation-state itself is invested in and built on stolen land and relations, which speaks to both sides of the political spectrum, as discussed above with Warren and Smith. But even in a country like Canada that deploys an aura of tolerance through multiculturalism, TallBear remarks that to invest in the American Dream (that is, fantasies of settler naturalization) is to perpetuate an ontological discourse of anti-Indigenous racism that implies Indigenous elimination, and a disruption or dispossession of Indigenous socio-political kinship relations.

TallBear (2019, 32) points out two forms of disruption based on settler colonial ideology regarding American dreaming. The first involves the "dispossession of Indigenous peoples" and kinship relations (human and more-than-human), undercutting socio-political relations through extraction, genocide, and erasure. The second is the co-opting of "Indigenous histories and

identities" through the appropriation of social representations, like settler self-indigenization, DNA ancestry and race shifting, sports team mascots, etcetera. Within the frame of white possessiveness, TallBear defines this ideology of Indigenous elimination as a settler property regime. Ascribing to the assimilative colonial adage, "kill the Indian, save the man" (2019, 25), this discursive regime is built on the premise of Indigenous elimination and genocide in order to possess Indigenous lands, knowledges, bodies, and relations. It maintains and reifies the idea that Indigenous peoples are no longer alive or present in settler society, or are morally incapable of managing their lands, their lives, their resources, and their relations.

TallBear (2019, 32) writes further that "these aggressive, persistent disruptions are ownership claims. They aid non-Indigenous people in their desire to belong to this land." TallBear sees this regime acting upon all levels of settler society: governance and law, education and academia, social and moral normativity, and heteronormativity and monogamy (TallBear 2013, 2021). As pointed out by other critical Indigenous scholars and scholarship, this type of possessiveness is endemic to Western European onto-epistemological frameworks—ethos and worldview—where even truth is a matter of possession (L. T. Smith 2006; Million 2015; Moreton-Robinson 2016). But as discussed above with King and the Trucker Convoy, we see this property regime fully deployed through the appropriation of Indigenous spirituality as a means to justify white settler values and worldview on Indigenous lands while erasing Indigenous history and sovereignty. Not only is this an oppressive attitude that works to eliminate Indigenous identities through appropriation in romantic and idealized forms, this paradigm "undercuts co-constitutive relations between beings. Possessiveness and property literally undercut Indigenous kinship and attempts to replace it. It objectifies the land and water and more-than-human beings as potentially owned resources" (TallBear 2019, 32). This is the underlying logic behind King's statement, "If you were born of the land, you are indigenous of the land" (Helwig 2022). But, TallBear (2019, 32) states, "Within an Indigenous logic of relationality, this makes settlers very bad kin."

Within the settler property regime, Indigenous spirituality cannot represent co-constitutive relations between sovereign nations/peoples that are human and more-than-human. Settlers deploy an anti-relational understanding of Indigenous identity for the sake of settler naturalization and exceptionalism. In this property regime, truly, settlers are engaging in Indigenous spirituality alone. In order to disrupt settler appropriation and possession of Indigenous

spirituality/religion, we will look at two different "unconventional" examples from a Mi'kmaq and a Métis perspective that speak to Indigenous collectivity and relationality. These examples or case studies provide an exposition into how we can interpret spiritual/religious relations as a matter of co-constitutive relations and nationhood/peoplehood self-determination.

Engaging Mi'kmaq Erotic Relations through Self-Portraiture

"If this is my body, where are my stories?"
(Savage Tracy Bear 2016, ii)

When we think of Mi'kmaq relations to spirituality and religion, we often think of the religious syncretism between institutional Catholicism and Indigenous traditional spirituality (Gareau and LeBlanc 2022; Wallis and Wallis 1955, 184). However, as we have discussed above, this bifurcated and racializing understanding of religious syncretism or hybridity is not reflective of Indigenous socio-political kinship relations. Within a settler property regime, Mi'kmaq sovereignty goes ignored and unrecognized with regards to situated land-based knowledges, relational ethos and worldview, kinship governance, and understanding the Mi'kmaq Nation in co-constitutive peoplehood relations with other nations/peoples, human, and more-than-human on traditional territories. Indigenous women's roles and self-determination as leaders in relational governance are further diminished in this possessive framework for the sake of justifying white settler dominance and heteropatriarchy.

In order to circumvent and resist these deeply embedded logics, I, Jeanine LeBlanc, as a Mi'kmaw epit/woman, turn to Nehiyaw scholar Savage (Tracy) Bear's concept of *eroticanalysis* to disrupt the white possessive gaze on Indigenous women and to situate this discussion on relational spirituality/religion in Mi'kmaq women's sovereignty as a means to represent the governance of Mi'kmaq nationhood/peoplehood relations. In looking at photographs of Mi'kmaq women in the colonial archives, I actively decentre conventional settler colonial understandings of religion and spirituality, and representations of "Indigenous subjects" as objects. I engage in photographic self-portraiture to facilitate a re-constitution or "re-relatedness" of Mi'kmaq relations as a form of deploying spiritual/religious governance. In this case, I argue that as an Indigenous person, you cannot be the subject alone; you are always embedded in intersubjective and co-constitutive spiritual/religious kinship relations with

humans and more-than-humans, in storied and overlapping territories, and across time and space.

The archives produce, collect, organize, and interpret archival materials and data for the purposes of the settler state and its projects. The archives are sites reflecting the settler property regime through a continued representation of Indigenous peoples as subjects/objects disconnected from socio-political, co-constitutive relations that are human and more-than-human. This is done by what Kanien'kehá:kan/Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2016, 3) terms those who embody the state (state agents), such as anthropologists and ethnographers, church and government officials, and photographers and other settlers invested in supporting settler state sovereignty or statehood. As a result, archival photographs are produced and read through a lens of heteropatriarchal white possession that objectifies Indigenous nations/peoples and relations, and ignores the sovereignty and self-determination of collective sovereign nations/peoples, human and more-than-human persons, depicted in these images. My role as a Mi'kmaw epit is to disrupt this racializing and sexist discourse in the colonial archives to recognize and connect with my kin.

To produce embodied knowledges and point to relations as the basis for Indigenous spirituality/religion in this article, I will engage in an eroticanalysis of an archival image of a Mi'kmaq woman named Janet Gould (Marshall), where I look for erotic embodied relations in the photograph, and then respond to it via photographic self-portraiture. Eroticanalysis is an Indigenous feminist theory/method rooted in situatedness that helps us make claims to corporeal sovereignty through a focus on our expressions of sensual and physical pleasure in and with all our relations. Bear (2016, 22) observes that an eroticanalysis of "poems, short narratives, and visual art demonstrates the practice of the erotic," and links this approach to Indigenous self-determination over our bodies. Black lesbian feminist scholar Audre Lorde (1984, 53) offers a strong definition of the erotic, stating, "the erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling." Emerging from our lived experiences, an Indigenous erotic is located in our sociopolitical kinship identities. It is embodied in Indigenous lived experiences of the sensual and physical in everyday life in nationhood/peoplehood relations with collective sovereign peoples, human and more-than-human.

As a Mi'kmaw epit, I am invested in socio-political, spiritual/religious relations with collective sovereign peoples, human and more-than-human.

Like Métis/Metis historian Brenda Macdougall (2021, 240–41) claims, I see the archives, in terms of source documents and photographs, as relatives. When I encounter Mi'kmaq people in the archives, I see *our* relations. However, within a dominating paradigm of the settler property regime, these are classified as objects, artifacts, and bodies that are dehumanized, decentred, and abstracted from Indigenous relations and collective sovereignty. As Indigenous nations/peoples that embody the Indigenous erotic in our relations, it is problematic when we engage archival images as representing subjects/objects alone. Ignoring relations in these images is a clear example of the need to possess and dispossess Indigenous relations rather than recognizing Indigenous self-determination. As I deploy this method, these sensorial and vibrant experiences become the heart of this work and its outcomes pointing back to experiences of the collective. My response, through self-portraiture, offers a means to participate in collective and co-constitutive relations.

Self-portraiture for me is an important method that helps the photographer understand individual experiences while pointing to those of the collective community. Today, we hear the neologism "selfie" attached to photographs of the self taken by the self, often on smartphones posted for a global audience on social media platforms. Self-portraiture, however, has a lengthy history that should not be minimized. In particular, self-portraiture has been used by women in order to construct their own representations and record their subjectivity (Solomon-Godeau 2017, 179). Self-portraiture is a means for Indigenous women, like myself, to reflect the diverse subject and relational positions we inhabit. Through self-portraiture, we challenge and disrupt heteropatriarchal and heteronormative impositions on our bodies and identities rooted in colonial ethics and values based in the settler property regime. Inspired by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2012, 20) acts of "writing back" as a decolonizing process, I am engaged in acts of "photographing back."

The photograph above is of a Mi'kmaq woman named Janet Gould (Marshall). The photograph below is located in the Frederick Johnson Collection housed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Frederick Johnson was a white male anthropologist who photographed the Mi'kmaq, Innu, Algonquin, Potawatomi, Montagnais, Abenaki, Anishinaabe, and Mistassini Cree peoples of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Quebec from 1924 to 1931. Using an eroticanalysis when looking at this image, we can ask questions that challenge the interpretive and reifying power of settler colonialism, and seek out the Indigenous socio-political kinship relations. How is the erotic embodied

Figure 1. Portrait of Janet Gould (Marshall), Frederick Johnson Collection, NMAI, 1930

in this photograph? How does this expression of the erotic, within implicit or explicit settler-colonial context, help point to relations with collective sovereign peoples, human and more-than-human, as the basis for our relations with the world around us? How do we challenge and resist the settler property regime through this eroticanalysis?

Looking at this image, we are tempted to interpret it as a colonial representation of a traditional Mi'kmaw epit; a perfect Indigenous subject/object. After all, such photographs were taken for a white audience to codify ways of seeing Indigenous peoples as pre-modern and different or standing outside of modern Western values and worldview in order to further white possession and dispossession of Indigenous lands and territories (Tonkovich et al. 2003). You could imagine how Gould (Marshall) may have been arranged in a profile pose—an aesthetic reference historically used to indicate racial differences in support of white supremacist pseudoscience (Bishop-Stall 2018, 13). Eroticanalysis, instead, asks us to engage with Janet Gould (Marshall) in another way that does not ignore, and yet does not centre, settler-colonialism and white possessiveness. We are challenged to see her embedded in co-constitutive kinship relations.

As I look at the image of Janet Gould (Marshall), I acknowledge her situatedness and engagement with the relational ethos of "All My Relations." In other words, as I engage with this image through the Indigenous erotic, it points me away from the possessive voice of settler colonialism that produces

knowledge *about* the "Other" toward the "erotics of lived experiences" (Bear 2016, 57). When I view and read the image of Janet Gould (Marshall), I become aware of other elements in the photograph. First, I recognize and acknowledge that she is not alone—she is not the sole, nor the most important being in the photograph. There is no hierarchy of being here and this photograph is not serving a human-centric perspective of the world. Other beings/peoples exist simultaneously and relate with her in this image on the traditional territory of Mi'kma'ki. Next, I see the strength of her body engaged in a self-assured stance and dressed in her regalia. I see her expression of ease and confidence that you might imagine emerges from being situated in place and in relations with the more-than-human relatives surrounding her in the photograph—not in a landscape but with the Land. As I practice this way of seeing, I celebrate Gould's corporeal sovereignty and self-determination in her more-than-human relations, enfolding her in their embrace. This is communicated in the image as she stands firmly planted on her relatives the Grass and Earth, is embraced by her relatives the Sky and Air, and is surrounded by her relatives the Trees and the Ancestors. They are standing with her as relatives. This photograph bears witness to a distinct sense of Gould's "wholeness of being (in which all aspects of our lives are felt deeply and recognized as our cohesive whole)" (Bear 2016, 53). These are significant representations of self-determined embodied erotic engagement that would be missed if read through a white possessive lens highlighting solely settler-colonial power, Indigenous suffering, objectified landscapes, and ignoring socio-political, collective, and co-constitutive kinship relations.

The second thing an eroticanalysis asks us to do is consider our embodied responses as materials for the production or experience of knowledge as embodied narratives. In response to the archival photographs of my relations, I engage in research-creation through self-portraiture. This is a process through which "artistic production is no longer solely an object of scholarly inquiry but is itself a legitimate form of research and dissemination" (Loveless 2019, 12). One reason for my use of research-creation is that it provides opportunities to engage in a deep exploration of how the erotic embodied in the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples can be a decolonial force. It helps us point to the sensorial, reciprocal, and co-constitutive (that is, "becoming-with") socio-political relations, human and more-than-human. We carry a reciprocal responsibility to be ethical in the relating ("what and how we touch and are touched") (2019, 30). My photography disrupts settler-colonial interpretations of Mi'kmaq women's actions and thought, and reinforces the self-determination of Mi'kmaq women

Figure 2. "Msit No'kmaq # 1" (all my relations) series (I), Vancouver, on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh

in *all* our relations. I have included one of the images from my recent series of photographs entitled, "Msit nokmaq #1" (All My Relations) as a response to the image of Janet Gould (Marshall).

In the photograph, I use a photographic technique called double exposure that produces a layering effect between the first exposure and the final exposure on the same negative. Here, double and multiple exposures represent layers of engagement between myself, as one of the beings in the photograph, and more-than-human relatives.

This photograph emphasizes and intentionally exaggerates the deep and erotic relational engagement I experience as a Mi'kmaw epit with

more-than-human relatives. It acts as a representation of the multisensorial lived experiences of reciprocal relations Indigenous women engage in with more-than-human relatives like Land, Waters, Trees, Flowers, Sky, Saints, Ghosts, God(s), and Goddesses. Like Janet Gould (Marshall), my body is positioned in a profile pose mirroring her strength, sovereignty, relational connection, and self-determination. It also points to the historical colonial violence behind photographing Indigenous peoples in profile and reimagines the pose in terms of strength and erotic embodied relations with more-than-human relatives.

This image disrupts static possessive interpretations of Mi'kmaq women's thought and actions that are disconnected from relations in the archive. It points to our self-determination and helps to decolonize assumptions about Indigenous gender and sexuality by reclaiming corporeal sovereignty in our intimate relations with the world. In this image, I engage in acts of photography that produce visual remembering and re-relating of our spiritual/religious experiences, perspectives, identities, and histories in storied places. Here, we feel our relative the Wind caressing our skin, the Sand's gritty touch against our leg, smell the pungent dampness of the Leaves in the Autumn, and inhabit space with Ghosts, Ancestors, and Saints.

Through an eroticanalysis and research-creation, I deliberately seek to disrupt conventional, settler colonial understandings of Indigenous spirituality/religion by focusing on recognizing Indigenous relations, and the role that women play in situating and manifesting these relations. Instead of seeing Indigenous spirituality/religion as a commodity readily available to anyone with the wherewithal, privilege, and position to attain its power and insight (that is, white possessiveness), an eroticanalysis asks us to situate and position ourselves with our kin in order to recognize co-constitutive relations in traditional territories. This is not about understanding religion as institutional and spiritual as personal, but expounding the spiritual/religious, transcendent and immanent, or the sacred nature of relational governance. This is done by recognizing Indigenous personhood as the intersection of collective nationhood/peoplehood kinship relations with other nations/people who are human and more-than-human, which include plants, animals, and minerals, lands and waters, creator beings and onto-epistemological stories, ghosts and monsters, and spirits and ancestors. To do an eroticanalysis of Mi'kmaq women helps me recognize and remember women's roles in Mi'kmaq governance, and re-relate to those religio-spiritual relations that never exist alone or in silos, but as kin living and negotiating storied place together in Mi'kma'ki.

Visiting dah Jesus Chrise: Métis Perspective on Spiritual/Religious Relations

> "'Yes Sir dah Jesus Chrise he give me dis song.' He say 'Jonas you call dis song La Beau Sha Shoo an you play it for all dah peoples when you get home.'"
> *(Maria Campbell 2010, 63).*

At the *Mawachihitotaak* ("Let's Get Together") Métis Scholars Conference that took place from May 3 to 6, 2022, there was a virtual jam session with Métis fiddlers from Manitoba. During the session, one of the main organizers asked the question in the chat, "Does anyone have any stories to share about fiddle music? What does it mean to you?" Alone in my kitchen in Edmonton, Alberta, I, Paul L. Gareau, a Métis/Michif man who grew up in the Batoche Homeland, was filled with the joy and transcendent spirit of the music. I could not sit down! In the chat, I spontaneously responded, "For me, the fiddle is our deep spiritual/religious relation that calls our ancestors and honours their spirit." Though this is something that I have long felt about the fiddle, it was the first time I had articulated it as a "spiritual/religious" instrument. It struck me in that moment of being alone yet in connection with this music that the fiddle and these tunes are linked to the same energy, love, and dedication that my father Rémi Gareau felt listening to this same music. For my dad, or "paapaa" enn Michif, this instrument and the music was a relation, a relative that he loved and was always willing to make the time for. This was sacred music and a sacred instrument because, as Métis, we want to perform with it, to hear it, and take the time to be with the music as a collective nation/people (see Gareau 2021c, 137–138 for a discussion on the concept of Indigenous sacredness). It is sacred because we show up and make it central to our collective identity as a Métis Nation.

The Métis are a post-contact Indigenous nation whose traditional homelands span the prairie and parkland regions of what we now call western Canada and the northern United States. The Métis have long been misrecognized and racialized solely as mixed-race people emergent out of the fur trade when French Canadian voyageurs and Scottish Orkney traders married Neheyiwak, Anishnabeg, Ojibwa, and Dene women in country marriages or à-la-*façon-du-pays* throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Andersen 2014; Gaudry 2016). From these exchanges, for example, the Métis have claimed or made relations with cultural symbols like the sash, jigging, and the fiddle as well as beading, tufting, and quillwork that are unique and representative of

our situated knowledges and nationhood. Though this confluence of culture is part of the ethnogenesis of the Métis, the Métis Nation emerges as a political entity from the kinship structures and socio-political relations that inform Métis actions and organization, mixed economic engagements, mobility and storied place(s), and diplomatic relations as well as a Métis ethos and worldview. The Métis are not defined by their race but by their kinship relations as a nation ("those who are us") and by peoplehood relations with other nations ("those who are not us") (Andersen 2021, 29), who are human and more-than-human. This is also the case regarding questions or reflections on Métis experiences of spirituality/religion.

Métis have a complicated relationship with spirituality and religion (Gareau 2021a). According to the logics of racial mixedness, the Métis oscillate between institutional Christianity and Indigenous spiritual practices. Note that this is a deterministic understanding of Métis identity defined by categories of two "distinct" races, European and Indian. This "hybridity" then shapes the way we discuss Métis experiences of spirituality/religion as being between religion as Christianity and spirituality as being Native traditions. As discussed above, this understanding remains a problematic aspect in our definitions of religion and spirituality based on white possessiveness deployed through Western values and onto-epistemology. But more specifically, this relates to the power dynamics of whiteness and the imposition of those values. Religion and spirituality are concepts that remain entrenched in institutional definitions related to settler colonial values of sacred/profane, transcendence and teleology, and hierarchical institutional organization and racialized morality. Though these settler values and worldview, like that of material culture and technologies mentioned above, are part of Métis experiences and self-understandings, it is crucial to resist the orientation to centre whiteness in our understanding of Métis ways of being and knowing. Though the Métis love the fiddle and pray to "God/Creator, this does not imply that Métis are assimilated to white settler ways or that we are derivative of racial and cultural categories that we have inherited, or that the Métis are stuck in between whiteness and brownness (2021a). Rather, the Métis have made relations with the fiddle and with God/Creator in terms of relational governance determined by values of non-interference, self-determination, and diplomatic kinship relations.

These values and worldview are on full display in the Métis story of "La Beau Sha Shoo" in the book *Stories of the Road Allowance People,* translated by Métis elder Maria Campbell with paintings by Métis artist Sherry Farrell Racette

(Campbell 2010). This is a collection of stories that Maria heard growing up on the Road Allowance; that is, a time in the mid-twentieth century when Métis who still engaged in kinship-based organizing and mobility were forced to live on tracts of land allocated to building roads as settlers swept over Indigenous territories/homelands in the prairies and parklands (see Préfontaine 2006). This book covers the gamut of humorous to poignant stories that speak of Métis life, sensibilities, and values. These narratives represent Métis identity in so many implicit and explicit ways. Campbell and the Gabriel Dumont Institute decided to keep a distinctive Métis or Michif voice in what they call "village English" in the writing of these stories. This was to maintain their orality and to centre a Michif way of speaking in order to convey the Michif way of thinking and being. It is unique and incredibly authentic. As a Michif person who grew up in the village of Bellevue near Batoche, when I read these stories I hear the voices of my father, my uncles and aunties, and my grandmother speaking directly to me. This voice is particularly important today, for many Métis live outside of or out of contact with old communities or embedded kinship connections like that of the Road Allowance or more bounded Métis places with extended family bunches. These stories and that voice are indeed a call from our ancestors. Campbell says they are not her stories but those transmitted to her from her relatives and elders. And notably, she (Campbell 2010, 5) writes, "As Métis people, we have so much to celebrate, and our diversity is one of them, the other is our sense of humour."

Campbell told me that "La Beau Sha Shoo" is a story that was gifted to her by her dad for a dozen muskrat traps and a bowl of tobacco. "La Beau Sha Shoo" tells the story of a Métis fiddler named Jonah Arcand or Ole Arcand. He was tall and strong with shiny eyes, and a great big "moostache." He always wore his "Red River sash an a flat crown hat" (Campbell 2010, 51). He was a "good lookin ole man" who would laugh "all dah time" (51). Ole Arcand would often talk to the children, holding up a Métis sash, and say "dat dis was our culture" (52). He would tell them stories of the Batoche Resistance of 1885 where "Mooshoom Gabe he organize all da Halfbreeds and dey get Louis Riel" (53), and of the soldiers who arrested the Métis and took their weapons and sashes. "Boy dats funny issn it? why would dey take dah saches?" (53). Ole Arcand was also an incredible fiddle player. He could play any tune, would make up his own, and always had a good story about where he got these songs; one he says he got on the wind at Batoche, another he got from his horse. But one of his great songs was called "La Beau Sha Shoo."

Figure 3. Ole Jonas Arcand, painting by Sherry Farrell Racette

Ole Arcand tells of the time he got really sick for five days, received the last sacramental rites from the priest, died, and went to heaven. He did not even stop at the gates, he just went right in. "Boy, he say, he was shore a nice place" (Campbell 2010, 57). Half a mile up the road, he saw "Jesus Chrise" sitting on the side of the road. "Dah Jesus" asked ole Jonah to sit and have a drink with him. Jesus poured the most amazing wine into beautiful jewel-encrusted golden goblets. Jonas obliged, saying, "Who am I to say no to dah Jesus Chrise" (57). Jesus turned to Jonas and thanked him for sitting together to have a drink because most people are too scared to sit and visit. Jonas was confused, thinking that he died and was there to stay. Jesus called the angel Gabriel over, who looked very much like the priest back home because he too wore round glasses. Gabriel looked in the big book and said, "Jonas your not in dah book. Your jus visiting" (60). Jesus was relieved and so was Jonas; Jonas still had to go home,

Figure 4. Ole Arcand Drinks with dah Jesus Chrise, painting by Sherry Farrell Racette

raise his young boys, and work on the farm. But Jesus still had a half jug of wine, so they went back to drinking and visiting. Jesus turned to Jonas and said (62),

> Your a damned good fiddle player.
> Me I always wan to play dah fiddle
> But I never had a chance.
> When da Lucifer he get kicked out
> he take all dah fiddles wit him an all we got now is harps.
> But me Jonas
> I got a hell of a song I been hearing in my head.
> I'll give it to you
> an you learn to play it when you get home.

Jonas and Jesus finished the wine, and Jesus started humming out the tune. At this point in the story, Ole Arcand would pull out his fiddle from a flour sack and start playing. It was beautiful! "Ooh he was a hell of a song! He was kinda wile, full of high stepping and growling, and we could shore dance to him" (62). Ole Arcand would finish his song and say "'Yes Sir dah Jesus Chrise he give me dis song.' He say 'Jonas you call dis song La Beau Sha Shoo an you play it for all dah peoples when you get home'" (63).

This story is pregnant with meaning for Métis experiences of spirituality/religion that are linked to meanings that make up the contours of Métis

nationhood/peoplehood. At first glance, it seems like an irreverent tale poking fun at institutional Catholicism. But it is a story of kinship relations, and of embodied and emotional knowledge. The story foregrounds the history of Métis resistance at Batoche in 1885, the material culture and socio-political symbolism of the Métis sash, and Métis relations with Catholicism and the institutional Catholic Church. Ole Arcand is an invited and cherished guest to share in a drink and visit with dah Jesus Chrise, who is a relative. This speaks to the governance principles of visiting or what Métis/Michif scholar J. Cindy Gaudet (2019, 60) names *keeoukaywin* "as the main artery of our family systems, our mobility, and our way of thinking, doing, and taking care of one another, or its influence on our political decisions." Here Jesus Chrise is not motivated by possessive logics, but by a genuine care and enthusiasm to visit with Jonah. Even the inclusion of Gabriel as a priestly analogue linked to the Batoche community is significant in recognizing this as a Métis engagement in a moment of sacred visiting with the institutional Church that is located in kinship and relational homeland. Note that this is not an expression of a possessive institutional Church and a moralizing deity. These are Métis relations with religious structures, not a separate or singular event.

This story also affirms, unequivocally, that the fiddle is a sacred relative for the Métis. Ole Arcand plays tunes that represent the storied place of Batoche, and the wisdom imparted from non-human relatives like the wind and his horse. Even dah Jesus Chrise is invested in the spiritual/religious significance of the fiddle, for he longs to hear Métis music—because the devil took all of the fiddles from heaven, leaving only boring harps—and to visit with Métis people. So much so that he gifts Ole Arcand with the sacred tune, La Beau Sha Shoo, for the Métis people to listen and dance to as a community/collectivity. Even the personified language describing the song speaks of La Beau Sha Shoo as a relative: "He was kinda wile, full of high stepping and growling, and we could shore dance to him" (Campbell 2010, 62). Jesus knows of the importance of co-constitutive kinship relations and how the fiddle helps Métis people come together to share in these collective stories, knowledge, values, and experiences.

Like LeBlanc's eroticanalysis of Mi'kmaq women in the colonial archive, this story of Métis spirituality/religion does not reflect settler values of institutional hierarchy, paternalism, authority, and possessiveness. It represents an embodied or erotic, relational, and situated knowledge of Métis values that remains relevant today. It speaks to the importance of visiting as an instrumentalization of Métis relational governance, the nature of self-determination and

non-interference with our relatives like the fiddle and dah Jesus Chrise, and the power of story and storytelling in communicating knowledge and socio-political identity. Crucially, this story recognizes that these relatives truly care about the Métis as a collective, Indigenous nation, and not a racialized group of individuals. Métis spiritual/religious knowledge is formed by our materiality and collective experiences, sensorial, vibrant, and personable like La Beau Sha Shoo. It is sacred knowledge to the Métis because we care about it and, together, make it sacred. And the fiddle is a person who helps us remember, connect, and explore our peoplehood relations, which in turn help shape who we are as a Métis Nation.

Conclusion

Indigenous spirituality is often appropriated as a commodity to deploy values of settler possessiveness over Indigenous knowledges, materiality, and socio-political relations. The settler property regime permeates colonial societies as a form of exceptionalism and justification for white possessiveness and Indigenous dispossession. By focusing on a definition of Indigenous spirituality/religion as relatedness, LeBlanc and Gareau each were able to highlight the kinship, relational aspects of religious/spiritual experiences within the distinct Mi'kmaq Nation and Métis Nation. The purpose of this work is to question representations of Indigenous cultures and worldviews as objects, critically examine the co-opting of Indigenous identity politics through spirituality, resist the influence of colonial logics of racialization and possessiveness, and situate definitions of religion/spirituality within Indigenous material, erotic/sensorial, and situated knowledges. These examples represent insights into embodied, emotional, and relational knowing, and collective and co-constitutive socio-political identities. Indigenous spirituality/religion therefore is nothing without these situated embodied and erotic knowledges, socio-political kinship relations, and collective/co-constitutive engagements with other nations, human and other-than-human. Only together as separate/distinct nations but related peoples can we be spiritual/religious. Never alone.

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