

Michael Marker Dialogues with Francis on Primacy of Place: Advocating for Papaschase First Nation

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Article abstract

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Michael Marker Dialogues with Francis on Primacy of Place: Advocating for Papaschase First Nation

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In short, what if scholars took the narratives of Elders and traditional Indigenous knowledge holders seriously about an intimate vastness of wisdom that percolates through the layers of physical and metaphysical time and space in sentient landscapes.
—Michael Marker (2018, p. 454)

Abstract

This article begins from Michael Marker’s methodological invocation to center *place* and “the consciousness of landscape” (2018, p. 453). The places at issue are *manito sakahikan* (aka Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta) and *amiskwaciwaskahikan* (aka Beaver Hills House of Edmonton, Alberta). Both places were in the news in 2022 when Pope Francis made his historic and tardy apology on behalf of the Catholic Church and its members for their role in the cultural genocide of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Both places hold spiritual significance for the Papaschase First Nation, whose traditional territory encompasses them, as well as for practicing Catholics. As a means of advocacy for the Papaschase First Nation, I trace the breaking of their treaty, in part, to the Church’s role in, and the dire consequences of, *terra nullius* and the Doctrine of Discovery. I contrast the Western view that one can own the land with a traditional Indigenous emphasis on the importance of sharing and caring with and for the land. I present my arguments via an imagined three-way dialogue among Dr. Michael Marker, Pope Francis, and myself. To create this dialogue, I draw on: Marker’s scholarly work, particularly on the primacy of place; Pope Francis’s homilies, statements, and earlier papal bulls (decrees). As a Métis from *manito sakahikan*, I share memories of the place of my ancestors and childhood that bring forth an Indigenous Métissage (Donald, 2009, 2012), underscoring place-based and sacred traditional relationships to “sentient landscapes” (Marker, 2018, p. 454). The dialogue takes place in three places: Ancient Gathering Places, At the Vatican, and An Imagined Place of Care and Share. The results of the conversation suggest the importance of an Indigenous perspective on the sacredness of place as a possible educational path toward a renewed future.

Introduction

Michael Marker’s (2018) epistemology holds that “respectful Indigenous research methods should engage with the landscape as the beginning point for inquiry” (p. 453). As a measure to help keep Marker’s innovative and effective work alive, I begin by exposing the vile concept of

terra nullius, which was rooted by custom in Roman law before and during the Middle Ages and authorized by “the church and the Holy Roman Empire” (Iurlaro, 2021, chap. 1). The originating term was “the law of *ferae bestiae*—literally, the law of wild beasts—in which the word *nullius*, ‘nobody’s’, was employed” (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 6). Moreover, “*ferae bestiae* states that anything, such as a wild beast, that has not been taken by anybody becomes the property of the first taker” (Fitzmaurice, 2007, p. 6). This law has been used as a justification for settlement and colonization of land supposedly owned by no one. But this law was unjustly applied. For Indigenous people, our law was care and share, not own.

Terra nullius (in Latin, “the earth is empty” or “vacant land”) came to mean that land not populated by Christians, and it was an element of what became known as the Doctrine of Discovery, which gave license to European colonial powers to claim so-called vacant land in the name of their sovereigns. I will contrast the Western view that one can own the land with a traditional Indigenous emphasis on the importance of sharing and caring with and for the land to demonstrate the role of the language and culture barrier in treaty negotiations.

As a Métis from *manito sahahikan*¹ (aka Lac Ste. Anne), as well as one in collateral kinship with many of Papaschase’s First Nation members, I find it relevant and imperative to show the dire consequences of the Doctrine of Discovery for the Papaschase First Nation specifically. Their traditional territory was in Treaty Six, and the reserve was in Beaver Hills House/*amiskwaciwaskahikan* (Edmonton, Alberta). Furthermore, following the broken treaty and “unlawful surrender of IR 136 in 1888” (Papaschase First Nation, 2020, Home section), many from the nation relocated to Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta (Highlights of Papaschase history section) as Métis people.

I will present my arguments via an imagined three-way dialogue among Michael Marker, Francis, and myself, which was triggered by the tardy and historical 2022 visit by Francis to *manito sahahikan* and *amiskwaciwaskahikan*. Indigenous people recognize “a kind of kinship or ancestral relationship with” (Marker, 2018, p. 453) these two landscapes. The lake also holds spiritual significance for practicing Catholics; on its shores rests a shrine to Saint Anne, and it has been a pilgrimage site since the late 1800s for Métis and Cree as well as other Catholics, while *amiskwaciwaskahikan* was a place of ceremony for the Indigenous Peoples.

To understand the encounter that I imagine among Michael, Francis, and myself, it is important to bear in mind some key events. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s 58th

¹ The spelling for *manito sahahikan* varies within the community. The Lac Ste. Anne Métis Community Association use the *mānitow sākahikanihk*. The suffix “ihk” is a locative suffix such as a preposition: in, on at (*nēhiyāwēwin* / Plains Cree, 2019, nouns: case locative). Moreover, “no capitalization is ever used in writing in Cree” (Okimâsis & Wolvengrey, 2008, p. 10). The “lactsteannepilgrimage.ca” website cites the Cree spelling as Manito Sahkahigan. LeClaire and colleagues (1998) spell lake as sahahikan, spirit as manito, and define manito as “the basic mysterious quality in the universe.” Also, I inquired with a Lac Ste. Anne Elder as to why there are the varying spellings, and she said “don’t know...depends on the speaker, I guess.” Lastly, the Alexis Nakota Sioux (2023), whose reserve is at Lac Ste. Anne, spell it in their language as Wakamne, which means God’s Lake. The spelling can become complex, I think, due to the importance of relationship within the Indigenous languages. Until there is a consensus, I prefer *manito sahahikan*. See Jarvis (2023) for more explanation of manito.

Call to Action was for an apology from the pope on Canadian landscape “for the Roman Catholic Church’s role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools” (TRC, 2015, vol. 6, p. 101). In May, 2021, the unmarked and undocumented graves of 215 residential school children were unearthed at Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc, a BC residential school. Later in 2021 Indigenous leaders and residential school survivors from Canada went to visit Francis at the Vatican to petition for an apology. Finally, on July 26, 2022 the pope visited Canada to apologize.

One of the places he chose to visit was *manito sakahikan*, which means “Spirit Lake” in *nêhiyaw*. “Man'tow Sâkahikan [*manito sakahikan*] has been an important First Nations gathering ground for (at least) hundreds of years, a place where enemies could, and did, meet in peace” (Anderson-McLean, n.d., p. 11). Moreover, this place holds spiritual significance for the Papaschase First Nation and my family. “[I]n 1843, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Thibault o.m.i. visited Man'tow Sâkahikan for the first time and chose it as the site for the first Oblate mission in Alberta” (Anderson-McLean, n.d., p. 15). It was renamed “Lac Ste. Anne” in 1844 by Father Thibault (b. 1810, d. 1879). The first recorded people whom Father Thibault baptized at this Catholic mission were my Métis great, great, great Mosom, Jacques L’Hirondelle (1759-1864), and Kokum, Josephette Pilon (b.1783).

In this paper, I will be using an activity called “Talking Heads: A Dialogue in Three Acts,” borrowed from Pierre Walter’s (2022) EDST 503: Foundations of Adult Education course at the University of British Columbia. It is a narrative between Sharon Jarvis and two other actors that takes place in three different locations. Since ceremony is how one begins Indigenous methodology (Marker, 2004, 2018), we begin our conversations at Ancient Gathering Places, where ceremonies took place for the Indigenous of Treat Six and beyond. Next, in the name of fairness, we go the place of religious significance to the Roman Catholic Church--the Vatican. Lastly, we finish in An Imagined Place of Care and Share, which is the place I hope we could be.

To create this dialogue, I will be drawing from the late Michael Marker’s scholarship and with Francis’s homilies, statements, and earlier papal bulls (decrees). At the same time, I will be focusing on “[p]lace-based and sacred traditional relationships to landscape” (Marker, 2011, p. 205) as I mark the complexity of our Métis community that has been enculturated in Catholicism by the patriarchy and Indigenous spiritualism by the matriarchy. This complexity is echoed by Couto (2003) in an interview for the *Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral Histories Project*: “Rossdale Flats [a sacred area in the centre of Edmonton, Alberta] is where Christianity met the Sun Dance” (as cited in Pelletier, 2004, Appendix D, p. 11). This complexity will be highlighted in the three-way dialogue I imagine.²

² Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) borrowed the concept of *chronotope* from science and applied it to literature. Essentially, chronotope in literary terms means “in speaking a language we appropriate the words of others, make them our ‘own’ and populate them with our own intentions, accent and meaning” (as cited in Lerner, 2015, p. 155). Given this aspect of human nature, for us to have ethics in imagined dialogue, we must be conscious of this aspect of human development and that “the first voice must be heard before a dialogue can begin” (Todorov, 1994, xiii). I draw inspiration, too, from Dr. Michael Marker (2003), who cautions scholars against

Introducing the Participants in the Dialogue: Dr. Michael Marker, Pope³ Francis, and Sharon Jarvis

Dr. Michael Marker unexpectedly died in 2021. He was Arapaho and also a Knowledge Holder in the Lummi Nation and a highly respected Indigenous scholar at UBC since 1997. He oversaw the Ts'Kel concentration in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. His work focused on awareness and acknowledgement of, and respect towards, land, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, place, and the Coast Salish Peoples. He is sorely missed.

Francis was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on December 17, 1936 and has been the incumbent of the Roman Catholic Church since 2013. He is the first pope from the Americas and the Southern Hemisphere (Argentina), although his parents were Italian immigrants to his home country. He had employment as a janitor and even a bouncer, but later became a chemist. After suffering illness, he joined the Jesuits in 1958. He supports women's roles in church leadership and speaks out against social and environmental injustice and capitalism.

My work focuses on Indigenous/*nêhiyaw*/Métis holistic motivational concepts: *otipemisiwak* (selves-governing), *wâhkôhtowin* (nurture of relationships with everything), and *manito* (maintain a good vibe)⁴ (Jarvis, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023). These terms are used to identify the worldview of the Métis people (Devine, 2004; Gaudry, 2014; Ghostkeeper, 1995; Jarvis, 2021; Macdougall, 2006).

unself-reflexive “ventriloquism.” To illustrate the problem, he cites the critiques by Indigenous scholars Daisy Sewed Smith and Jo-Ann Archibald of non-Indigenous anthropologists' misinterpretations of the Indigenous communities they were studying. Dr. Marker (2003) calls for greater awareness of the lens we bring to our interpretive work; he argues that we need to be ethical, respectful, self-reflective, and responsible. Larner (2015) urges us to “engage the narrative voice of others through a process of relational empathy and the dialogic imagination endeavoring to see the world through their eyes...[and] language is a dialogical, intersubjective and ethical event that exists on the border between self and other” (Larner, 2015, p. 155). Therefore, as I engage in imagined ethical dialogue, my interpretation cannot be the same as Michael Marker's and Francis's voices because I bring my differently informed worldview. But as I attempt to listen respectfully, attentively, and empathically, I try to speak their voices ethically and in a responsibly manner. To the extent I could, I relied on Marker's and the Pope's published work. Where I have had to imagine what they might say, I acknowledge the possibility that I may have misinterpreted them.

³ “Latin... ‘Pope’-*papa*...head of the church” (Dwyer, 1985, p. 118). Here, Dwyer is describing *papa* as the head for non-Roman churches, too. Years later, “proceedings of the synods of 487-8, 495 and 499 introduce the bishop of Rome at the head of the list of participants by the word *papa* followed by a personal name” (Moorhead, 1985, p. 339). Given that pope is a title and a colonial power dynamic, for the dialogue titles will not be used.

⁴ *otipemisiwak*, *wâhkôhtowin* and *manito* (*owm*) is a conceptual framework that was formed from *nêhiyaw* terms that drew from the Métis literature to describe the Métis worldview. These three *nêhiyaw* terms also connect with Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory (*autonomy, relatedness, and competence*), and Maslow's (1954) top three hierarchy of motivational needs (*self-esteem, love and belonging and self-actualization*), but from a non-anthropocentric, holistic, respectful, and fluid perspective.

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Act One: Ancient Gathering Places

Sharon: Francis, almost ten years after the 2015 “Call to Action [number] 58]” that’s found on page 15 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, aka the TRC, you finally came to Canada to fulfill the call and apologize on July, 25, 2022. Two places you came to, in Alberta, hold deep spiritual meaning for us Indigenous people, and both were renamed by the colonizers: Beaver Hills House was *amiskwaciwaskahikan* and Lac Ste. Anne was *manito sakahikan*. Afterwards on March 30th, 2023 you addressed the TRC calls 46ii and 49 to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, according to Holy See Press Office in 2023. But some argue, according to Boyagoda in paragraph 29 on July 26, 2023, that there have been “repeated calls for the Vatican to rescind offending bulls” from both the “Indigenous and non-Indigenous” people. To *repudiate*, which you did and were the TRC calls, amounts to saying no wrong has been committed, meaning the Roman Catholic Church is infallible. To *rescind* the Doctrine of Discovery would amount to admitting fallibility of the Church.

Michael: Sharon, the Doctrine of Discovery began in the 1430s by the Roman Catholic Church and Pope Eugene IV’s supporting Spain to regain the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslims, according to García-Sanjuán in 2015. Then in 1436 Pope Eugene IV’s papal bull allowed the Portuguese to take land of the Canary Islands from non-Christians. This enabled and legitimized the colonization of lands outside of Europe by European powers. Miller (in 2012 on page 11) said in this case, the Canary Islands were granted to Portugal to control and convert any non-Christians of the Canary Islands because “allegedly, they did not have common religion or laws, lived like animals, and lacked normal social intercourse, money, metal, writing, and European style clothing”. After this came the *Inter Caetera* bull issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493: “[t]he Bull stated that any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be ‘discovered,’ claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers,” according to Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2009-2023, paragraph 2.

Francis: Yes, and we changed, Michael. On March 30, 2023 (in the Holy See Press Office, para. 8), I cite a subsequent bull, *Sublimis Deus*, issued by Pope Paul III in 1537, which opposed the enslavement of Indigenous peoples. I reaffirmed that “Indigenous peoples should not be deprived of their liberty or possession of their property, ... nor should they be in any way enslaved.” However, I say, I think what transpired earlier in the colonies was due to the “manipula[tion] for political purposes by competing colonial powers” (para 6).

Sharon: Francis, I believe the “colonial powers” were aided in their “political purposes” by the powerful organization of Roman Catholicism as well as by its hermeneutics of non-Indigenous ideology, and this connects to the distinction Michael makes (in 2015 on page 479) between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Michael, when you echo Gregory Cajete and Oscar Kawagley, you noted that there’s an “ontological distance between the two knowledge systems” on page 479), and you were referring to the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous scientific epistemologies and pedagogies as well. The Christian worldview that the church propagates is imperialism, and colonialism was imperialism’s outpost, as Smith said in 1999. The imperialist worldview began with the Catholic and Protestant churches of Europe, which was their

interpretation of Christianity as the only truth (I say their “interpretation” because the Bible has only been canonized from a western worldview). Almost the whole globe has been colonized by Europe with this imperialism and hegemony, which is a devaluing of norms and values inconsistent with the ruling worldview, according to Gramsci in 1971. The church negates any other perspective but its dominance of what it means to be a follower of Christ Jesus. While “the just shall live by faith” in Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17 is about fairness. This was not employed by the church by any means. This is the root that the Vatican must acknowledge--they are among the *colonizers* and *political powers* who condition disrespect and unfairness towards place and its people.

Francis: Well, Sharon, you do know the Roman Catholic Church began after the Schism of 1054, when it broke with the Church of Constantinople, and it doesn’t embrace that verse as the Protestant churches do. The Roman Catholic Church excommunicated Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism for his interpretation of that scripture. Then King Henry VIII left the fold to create what is known as the Anglican Christian Church, and so the Christian story goes.

Sharon: Yes, and that is also around the same time as this new bull, *Sublimis Deus* of 1537, that you cite to shift blame. The Doctrine of Discovery, the cause of the atrocities, has been cited in the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 21 U. S. 543 (1823), which Professor Robert Miller in 7GenFund in 2016, determined that the United States was settled, primarily by the English, on the Doctrine of Discovery and Conquest. This severely limited Indigenous groups’ tribal land rights as well as their sovereign powers—all without their consent, consultation, knowledge, and without compensation. With this single US Supreme Court decision, Indigenous peoples lost land rights and full ownership of their land under Anglo American and English and American property law. They also lost the right to interact in international diplomacy and international trade, which are examples of sovereign powers. The Doctrine of Discovery is “about law and probably the first form of international law that was developed,” which is defined as an agreement that “the international community develops about how governments will interact with governments,” according to Miller (quoted in 7GenFund, 2016). This *Johnson v. McIntosh* case has been cited in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the English Privy Council, which is the highest Supreme Court in the United Kingdom. Those events hurt us Indigenous peoples so unfairly.

Francis, coincidentally, your visit on July 2022 was on my Métis family’s traditional lands called *amiskwaciwaskahikan* and *mantio sakahigan*. Your visit, I believe, made a difference to the Indigenous Peoples of *amiskwaciwaskahikan* and surrounding areas, who have faced such invisible hardship; they were seen, and now I hope, heard. I would like to talk about what happened to the Papaschase people because of the Doctrine of Discovery. For there to be true reconciliation, settlers would need to acknowledge a different orientation to the land, which is a share and care relationship.

Michael: Yes, Francis, this means “awareness of the interconnectedness of plants, animals, and humans, geologic forms along with the stories that tune and shape cognition of a landscape that is also conscious of human beings,” which I wrote in 2018, on page 454.

Sharon: Michael, your 2018 work has shown (and guided me as an Indigenous person) that “Indigenous groups have always recognized a ... kinship or ancestral relationship with entities such as rivers and mountains” (on page 453). Also, you pointed out in 2006 that “ways of understanding [for Indigenous Peoples] have always been inseparable from their web of relationships in the natural world” (on page 483). You personally guided me to hear and listen to the voice of the natural world. *otâwask* (cattails) was who you introduced me to in 2017. Then *otehimin* (strawberry) in 2019 spoke, and in 2021 it was *manito* (spirit, good vibe). Thank you for waking me to the dimension of our ancestors.

Michael: Sharon, Kawagley in 2005, Battiste in 2002, and Cajete in 2000 all knew that Indigenous knowledge and land are synonymous, and Hare and Davidson in 2015 echo our knowing that “meaning and identity are constructed through landscapes, territory, and relationship with place and the natural world...our knowledge systems include processes that are intergenerational, experiential, and tied to narrative and relational way of ensuring the continuity and relevance of our knowledge systems” (on page 206).

Sharon: Yes, for me, this is our responsibility to share and care with and for the land, place, the natural world, and our systems.

Michael: Yes, Sharon, in 2018, I wrote that
[p]lace and place-ness then take on two intertwined methodologies...opening to an ontological multidimensionality that is a kind of flux zone...[and] an intellectual delaminating of colonial categories of *truth* and *reality*--embossed onto the landscape. This is closely related to Cynthia B. Dillard’s (2008) notion of remembering what we’ve learned to forget. Asserting that this is “the work that the ancestors have left for us to do.” (that was cited on page 462).

Sharon: Do you agree, Michael and Francis, that the Imperialist reality and truth is that land can be stolen because of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* concept that Fitzmaurice in 2007 on page six articulates as “not been taken by anybody becomes the property of the first taker”? I think this owning concept brings forth harsh concepts like “theft” and is a colonial way of thinking. Francis, although your citing of *Sublimis Deus* was commendable from a colonial perspective, “liberty or possession of their property and were not to be enslaved” is not an Indigenous meaning, or relationship with, the land or people. It is a harsh colonial relationship--“own and possess.” For Indigenous, it is “care and share,” and that is Indigenous culture and freedom. The dismantling of treaty brought disconnect of culture and relationship with the land for the Papatashash First Nation.

Michael: Yes, the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* are a colonial ownership versus a care and share worldview. As I said in 2018 on page 462, we need to begin “remembering what we’ve learned to forget.” Francis, for Papatashash’s healing it is remembering the relationship with the land that has been forgotten because of cultural genocide. They need land for the community to reattach the culture of care and share.

Sharon: Here are two photos which, I think, really bring home what I am talking about (see Figure 1). Michael and Francis, what is so poignant about what is called Rosssdale Flats also known as *amiskwacy* is its sacredness. It is an ancient gathering place that held, and still holds, a strong spiritual presence for Christians and Indigenous peoples (as mentioned earlier, this is where “Christianity met the Sundance” as said by Pelletier in 2004 in Appendix D on page 11), but, above all, for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous descendants, because it was a former burial site first for the Indigenous of the area, and later as a Fort Edmonton cemetery.

Figure 1: *Indians’ encampment on Rosssdale Flats at foot of McKay Avenue School in Edmonton circa early 1900s.*



Note (circa 1900s). Edmonton Maps Heritage.

<https://www.edmontonmapsheritage.ca/location/rossdale-flats-archaeological-site/>

Rosssdale Flats Edmonton circa 1900 - October 2020 [photograph]. (2020). Reddit.

https://www.reddit.com/r/Edmonton/comments/jmj2or/rossdale_flats_edmonton_circa_1900_october_2020/

Michael: Sharon, your photo of the tipis in the 1900s and the tents in 2020 in Rosssdale demonstrate the behaviour and worldview of “othering” by the European worldview that Said in 1978 uncovered. This cultural hegemony, which is the imposition of values and customs on the colonies, represents an imperialistic, individualist perspective instead of a holistic perspective and fairness. I have written, for example, about “a holism that adheres humans, animals, plants, and geologic forms in visible and invisible dimensions of reality. The metaphysical imperative for understanding place is an essential intellectual position for acknowledging the completeness of an Indigenous cosmology,” as I wrote in 2018 on page 457. The Papaschase treaty was

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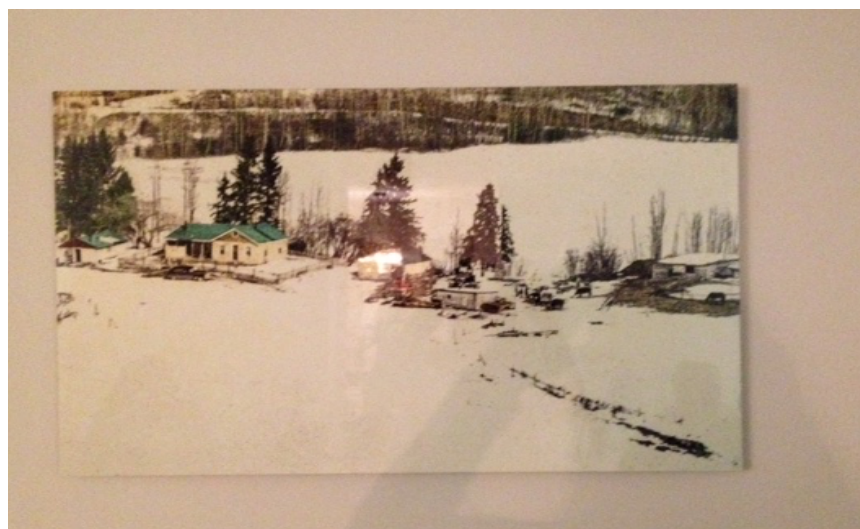
illegally broken because the settler colonizers and Western culture categorized Indigenous people and their cultures as different and inferior. The politicians and businessmen saw the Indigenous behaviours and practices as lacking value, so they undertook unscrupulous measures to remove the Papaschase First Nation from their treaty land.

Francis: I think what I said in my 2022 Homily in paragraph seven, at Lac Ste. Anne, is appropriate for Rossdale Flat too: “[i]n this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the disharmony of our experiences, the terrible effects of colonization, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children.”

Sharon: Given the repercussions of cultural genocide, cruel diaspora, and cunning dismissal and exclusion, healing is needed, and it begins with a reconnection of “kinship” with the land that is profoundly deep (since time immortal), loyal (otipemisiwak), intimate (wâhkôhtowin), and affectionate (manito). I am going to reconnect by sharing a story, Michael and Francis.

I have fond memories of more than half a century ago. We would turn off the highway just past Gunn and then down the dirt road for about two blocks, passing the driveway of Papaschase’s direct descendants’ home (whose home was on Kokum and Mosom’s land, so to speak), to a milky light chocolate brown dirt road between the woods of the poplar trees. As we get to the top of little hill, we begin to see paradise. We enter heaven. It is full of 20 or even 50 or more brown people, depending on the day and time, receiving us with open arms and huge smiles. The land of unconditional love. The land of acceptance. So much laughter. Still, we faced a great deal of death. I can remember at my young age of under twelve, a great grandfather, a grandfather, two uncles, my mom, her seven cousins, and her cousin’s daughter dying, and many more kin. So many close relations as young as a few months (Mosom, left us almost 20 years before Kokum). Heart disease (broken hearts) was the biggest killer.

Figure 2: *Kokum and Mosom’s place at Lac Ste. Anne. Circa 1950 or 60’s. This is a photo of the original painting.*



I remember the house fires all before I was six years old. My younger siblings and I have escaped from two places, one next door to Kokum and Mosom's in *manito sakahikan*, the other in *amiskwaciwaskahikan*. This triggered remembering my mom's cousins, who died in the house fire in the little yellow house across the street from the Gunn store. That happened in the 1970s. *I hear the voice of iskotew* (fire in *nehiyaw*) and *wâskahikan* (house in *nehiyaw*). I hear their voice by theme. As you posit Michael in 2018 on page 455, one would call this "recognition of the Indigenous experience of place and the contrasting Enlightenment minds that divided and obscured this deeper reality could generate new conversations about relationships between natural ecologies and our ways of perceiving/experiencing them." Although *iskotew* and *wâskahikan* would be metaphoric by "Enlightenment minds," in Indigenous-oriented minds, it is spiritual. Being struck by *iskotew wâskahikan* followed by learning of its center-ness, solidified its contribution as a speaking voice. *wâskahikan iskotew* most commonly happen because heat is needed. *iskotew* provides heat.

The first *wâskahikan iskotew* happened when my mom was drying clothes at night in front of our wood stove while we were sleeping, and they caught on *iskotew*. Not only did we need heat to keep warm in the minus 30° winters, but we needed it to dry our laundry, heat water for our baths, and for cooking.

The second time *wâskahikan iskotew* came was when my brother and I were playing with the furnace and left paper to catch *iskotew*. The heat we needed was the warmth of attention, our mom and family who were busy with our newly born sibling.

The third time was when one of my cousins, I'm not sure who, but I do know when my one cousin opened the window, that is what fueled the *iskotew* and led to their demise. In this instance, they were not literally seeking heat, they were trying to get away from it. One of my cousin's fell asleep smoking. But I think what *wâskahikan iskotew* are saying is, *iskotew* is in the centre of the medicine wheel. It also represents the *wâskahikan*, the tipi and the community (Lee, 2006). One might say we are being called to restore our place and our territory and begin to rebuild our community--this is a core need. Through personal communication, a Papaschase Elder in 2023 shared a heartfelt opinion:

the return of our land is the beginning of reconciliation. Not returning it is continued genocide. It is more than cultural genocide. It is the genocide of us. It is wiping us out. The descendants of Papaschase will disappear if they do not get their land returned to them.

Michael: In 2003 on page 362, I said that "Tribal people have, since contact, tried to tell their stories in ways that have made sense to them, but the colonizers – of all types – who heard these narratives often dismissed them as irrelevant ramblings of the uncivilized mind."

Sharon: Thank you, Michael, for that article that showed how the dismissal of our stories represented an act of symbolic and physical violence.

My sister received a brown doll and I received a white doll for Christmas. We must have been at the yellow house for a while. I remember, when under the age of six, sleeping in rollers, getting

the measles, and being outside when the weather was nice. I played the nail chicken game just outside the east door of the house with my cousins and siblings (it was a west window my cousin opened). I remember the nail went quite deep in my foot. Speaking of foot, I think we were in the house down the road at Kokum and Mosom's, just past the pond. I remember we had to drive through the bush for quite a while. Then, there was a clearing amongst the woods with a one-bedroom house sitting in it. It was there that I stepped on my brother or sister's broken baby bottle. I still have the scar today from the stitches. I remember it was there, out in the front yard in the warm weather with my brother, and we were eating the marrow out of the chicken bones we found in the yard.

The house fire by Kokum and Mosom's was in the winter. I remember complaining about my feet being cold while standing on the frozen snow in bare feet. I complained, and my immigrant Welsh dad said, you go in your bare feet at night to the outhouse all the time. You have a fire to keep you warm now. Seems *misit* (*nehiyaw* for foot) could be a voice, too. *misit* is synonymous with grounding. I often think of Mosom when I think of feet on the ground. This has to do with land and, yes, our connection with the land runs deep. The land is part of us. For some we go back to the land as dust. But this does not explain the spirit. We need this for our recovery from colonization and loss of our language, medicine, ceremonies, epistemologies, ontology, axiology, and ways of being. We do not have to stay or live there, but it gives us a footing. I think *misit* and *iskotew* and *wâskahikan* are like the three strands of a braid or, as Donald in 2009 and 2012 calls it, Indigenous Métissage. I hear how critical it is for our place to be returned so we can "care and share" for it.

At Kokum and Mosom's are some farm buildings, a well, and to the east a pond. My cousin remembers Mosom encouraging her to play hockey on it. I remember in the evenings there were fiddlers and guitar players playing, and jiggers jiggling in the house in the winter, and outside in the summer.

Figure 3: *Mosom, Great Uncle Eddy, and Great Uncle George at Kokum and Mosom's. Our fiddler and guitar players.*



Standing at that weathered white fence by the pond is a small, thin, frail woman with long white hair, wearing a whitish leather dress to her calves. I am an adult now walking down the hill, from the houses at Kokum and Mosom's, towards her with a huge smile. I am anxious to greet this woman I do not know. As I get close to her, she begins to hand me something wrapped in what looks like white cloth. I begin to take it, but suddenly, I feel death and quickly pull my hand away, and at that instant I awake. It felt like I would die by taking what seemed like it might have been medicine. When I told a colleague about this concerning experience, she said it might be related to traditions. I think it might be. Our tradition of caring and sharing our land is so distant now because of colonization and to be that way again would be a near death experience, again.

My great, great grandmother (who I think was the one visiting me in the disturbing dream--and the one in the photo titled Figure 4) received \$250 to give up her treaty rights in the 1800s. My guess of the Indigenous position at that time suggests that she took the money so she could feed her family. This was after the Northwest Rebellion when sanctions such as taking our guns away were imposed, and our main staple, the buffalo, had disappeared. How can this be legal?

Michael: In 2018 on page 462, I wrote: "Elders knew that the experience of being in the place where the story exists is the transformative methodology and pedagogy." Also, Cajete wrote in

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1994 on page 68, “The Centering Place is where the soul and intention of the vision are formed. This is the place where the ‘soul of the dream is honored’.” Then, in 2004 on page 105 I said: “Dreams and meditative states can factor into knowledge acquisition,” and in 2018 on page 257, I wrote that “ancient conditions of consciousness...do not travel along positivist routes of knowledge.” So, yes, Sharon, I think your dream of the older Indigenous woman at the place of your Kokum and Mosom’s is an Indigenous way of knowing.

Figure 4: *This photo was likely taken at Kokum and Mosom’s because my Great Aunty Olivine, who is standing with her hand on my Great, Great Grandmother, told me she remembered the horrible journey (my guess from St. Albert to Lac Ste. Anne because these two communities used to buffalo hunt together) traveling when she was a young child. My Kokum and my grandmother are beside my great great grandmother and great aunt.*



Sharon: Yes, Michael, I think, Indigenous people have been taught by the schooling system and legal system that our traditions were wrong, so we were scared to receive them, and our ancestors were afraid to hand them down. The priests and the nuns, I believe, played a significant role in this fear and shame. For example, the generation before me did not receive even our language. I think this might be disturbing to one’s deep dispositions, even possibly our DNA: not engaging with your mother tongue. Bianca Jones Marlin, in a NOVA series by Alvarado and Sussberg in 2023 called “Your brain: Who’s in control? Dive into the subconscious to see what’s really driving the decisions you make,” reports that, according to her studies on rats, trauma changed the DNA of rats. Thereby, I am agreeing with Wenying’s 2000 findings found on page

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328 that “language and culture cannot exist without each other” and that the experience of not learning our heritage language and thus our culture put stress on our DNA.

Francis: Michael and Sharon, I support you as I said in 2022 paragraph seven, “What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies.”

Act Two: At the Vatican

Sharon: As a child in the United Kingdom, I used to hear quite often “when in Rome do as the Romans do” to remind me that I was living in the UK now, and it was UK ways I needed to abide by. Marvin in 1922 said this originated with St. Ambrose of Milan (c339-c397) to Augustine of Hippo (354-430) when he encountered different fasting days between Rome and Milan. What a different Canada we would have had, if Indigenous ways had been honoured when the (colonizing) immigrants came.

Michael: In 2006 on page 503, I wrote: “The old people, our ancestors, tried to teach the European newcomers about how to live properly and respectfully in the places that they knew deeply and had inhabited for generations,” but “[t]he colonizers frequently dismissed these understandings as primitive or savage.”

Sharon: So, it sounds like the Romans (colonizers) were the only ones who didn’t adapt to the places of others, thereby imposing Imperialism. I think this is at the root of what happened in Canada by the Vatican. They came here not thinking fairly. For example, during a tour I participated in at a Coast Salish First Nation’s place, elders brought to our attention that the Medicine Wheel is not part of their belief system. However, one will see the Medicine Wheel represented in schools, organizations, and so on in areas all over the Coast Salish Peoples’ Territory. The problem with this is that it causes confusion, deterioration, and assimilation of non-Coast Salish belief systems. Educators need to beware of this when teaching. They should seek permission from the local territory to bring in non-Coast Salish teachings, for example. This would be fair.

Francis: Point taken. We were unjust by disrespecting Indigenous traditions, and we should have been showing the same respect. We need to be the example of respecting territorial practices.

Sharon: Francis, on March 20th, 2018, Fernie Marty, the grandson of Papaschase, said Father [Albert] Lacombe⁵ (b. 1827, d. 1916) signed the treaty for the Papaschase people because Chief Papaschase couldn’t read or write English. Also, the Elder said at the time of the signing that Chief Papaschase was not present. He and others went hunting and trapping at that time of the

⁵ An anonymous reviewer pointed out to me that Father Albert Lacombe, a French-Canadian Roman Catholic missionary, played a role in the “agreements” with Indigenous peoples in relation to the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway through lands they cared for. This provides the wider context of the conjuncture between the Canadian state, the Catholic Church, and colonization.

year. Apparently, the Nation was starving for food and did not understand that they were surrendering their land for food. Moreover, Donald in 2004 on page 24, wrote that the people of Edmonton, as led by “Frank Oliver (a journalist and politician),” put pressure on the government to remove Papaschase from the area. On page 35 he said the politicians and other settler leaders argued that the Nation’s location was “deny[ing] the settlers access to valuable resources and fertile land.” This is a clear *terra nullius* frame by treating Papaschase’s people as if they were not inhabiting the place because they were not exploiting it, yet they were in Rossdale Flats, prior to the arrival of Oliver and other settlers.

In more legal terms, of settler treatment, found in the Judicial Centre of Edmonton in 2023 on page two, section 12 from an injunction document:

The Papaschase First Nation (PFN) signed Treaty 6 in 1877 and held reserve lands in the vicinity of part of present-day Edmonton (IR 136). By about 1886, reserve members lost access to food. The federal government did not provide rations or relief that would prevent starvation. Chief Papaschase and other members of the PFN took Métis scrip. They surrendered their treaty rights and land rights for money or land so they could survive. Eventually, by 1888, the federal government seized the reserve and the PFN members were forced from the reserve lands.

When reading the legal document, one can see how one-sided (i.e., patriarchal) it is for the Crown because the voting required only men—in a matriarchal society—to vote. According to Fiske in 1991 on page 509, whose research was with Tsimshian women in Northwest British Columbia, Indigenous women throughout the nineteenth century had “access to and control over household and lineage property.” Women, before colonization, had “political influence” and played “key roles in the decision-making process” in areas where they controlled “critical resources and property.”

Michael: According to the so-called “Royal Proclamation,” Aboriginals of Canada can only give up their land to the Crown. McNeil, in 2002 on page 473, writes: “inalienability only prevents Aboriginal nations from transferring Aboriginal title itself to private purchasers”, and on page 475 writes, “other than by surrender to the Crown, [inalienability] is a central tenet of the common law...judges have often referred to the Royal Proclamation when affirming the inalienability of Aboriginal title, it is nonetheless clear that a common law basis for the rule exists as well.” “Inalienability of Aboriginal title, other than by surrender to the Crown, is a central tenet of the common law.”

The land of Papaschase could not be given up because, according to McNeil in 2002, under the Canadian law of-inalienability, it was not illegal for the Crown to put the Métis and those of the Papaschase tribe in a position of alienability to settlers by giving out individual forms of scrip. Could not this be another layer of the illegal land grab from the Papaschase tribe on top of the Doctrine of Discovery?

Sharon: Francis, what do you have to say about the key role Father Lacombe played in this injustice? Chief Papaschase faced cultural and language barriers because he did not speak

English. For example, Hall and Whyte, in 1960 on page six, found that a great deal gets lost in translation:

Culture includes the relationship of what is said to what is meant – as when “no” means “maybe” and “tomorrow” means “never”... even a well-informed national of another country is hard put to explain why, in his own land, the custom is thus-and-so rather than so-and-thus; as hard put, indeed, as you would probably be if asked what is the “rule”... you do not know and cannot explain satisfactorily because you learn this sort of thing unconsciously in your upbringing, in your culture, and you take such knowledge for granted.

Michael: In 2004, I have discussed these cultural misunderstandings that take place, but my focus was on the disciplines and controlling knowledge in the academy. For example, on page 104, I wrote, “Aboriginal students experience education as a good journey when they feel themselves gaining a deeper understanding of their own experience in the framework of a genuinely respectful comparative cross-cultural encounter that carefully considers advanced tribal knowledge alongside traditional academic knowledge.” I contrasted this pedagogy with one focused on “neoliberal sensibilities about hurriedly preparing students for competition in a globalized marketplace” on page 103.

Sharon: I think this huge gap in understanding was instrumental to the loss of the Papaschase First Nation’s land. In this context, Francis, I want to underscore the validity of what you said in your Homily to the world at *manito sakahikan* in 2022, paragraph seven:

In this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the disharmony of our experiences, the terrible effects of colonization, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children. Lord, help us to be healed of our wounds. We know, Lord, that this requires effort, care and concrete actions on our part; but we also know that we cannot do this alone.

And I think “concrete action” would be the Vatican coming forth and using whatever power it has to remediate the injustice that one of your priests, Father Lacombe, imposed on the Papaschase First Nation, however unwittingly.

Act Three: An Imagined Place of Care and Share

Sharon: Without the Doctrine of Discovery and conquest of Turtle Island that established Canada, what might the world have been like? If for our future we truly want wholeness, then we need the next *misit* to be one of becoming human, one where “the just shall live by faith”–equity–and in this equity, Indigenous people’s ways that are just, and “care and share” is a central teaching. One way towards this is correction–restoring justice to the Papaschase First Nation. This looks like fair negotiations that considers the Nation and immigrants. If they want a share, they need to care. Still, personally, I am a proponent of giving unconditionally, which I understand as an Indigenous way of being-sharing, and that is, paradoxically, probably how we got into this mess.

The *care and share* would look like us getting our community back and healed. By *healed*, I mean we know our traditional practices, knowledges, and culture again, but without any shame, but with a place. When I think about the *iskotew* voice that came through, I doubt whether this could be accepted as academic work, and this is where part of the shame arises. A way of knowing that has no validity; this is quite dismissive. Also, the knowledge from the dream, how can this, too, be evidence of the cultural genocide and show what has happened within our core and our lost identity?

Michael: I think a re-“re-namings of stolen landscapes” is a start, Sharon, as I said in 2018, on page 462.

Sharon: Ahh... yes, Michael. In your 2018 article, you discussed how the Indigenous landscapes all had names, *manito sakahikan* for instance, but were re-named by the colonizers, such as Lac Ste. Anne. The re-re-naming has a bit of tit for tat to it, but it is also just. Tit for tat because now everyone will have to learn the original names just like Indigenous people had to learn the new colonial names; the original re-naming was a means of erasing us.

Francis: “Therefore, I ask governments to recognize the Indigenous Peoples of the whole world, with their cultures, languages, traditions and spirituality, and to respect their dignity and their rights, in the knowledge that the richness of our great human family consists precisely in its diversity,” as I said in the Holy See Press Office on 2023, paragraph four. Here, I underscore “rights” for Papaschase’s treaty rights. And to close our conversation, “[m]ay the Lord [Creator] help us to move forward in the healing process, towards an ever more healthy and renewed future. I believe that this is also the wish... of our grandfathers and our grandmothers” (in 2022, paragraph 11).

Michael: Yes, and “[b]oth politicians and Indigenous leaders [need to] assert the urgency for healing and for restoring hope and vitality to Indigenous communities [including their rights]. Indigenous scholars and community leaders recognize that access to higher education is essential for reconciliation and renewal,” as I said in 2019 on page 501.

Epilogue

In this dialogue, we have explored the history of place. We have heard about my experiences as a child in *manito sakahikan*, and discussed needed negotiations for “share and care” of Papaschase’s land, the place(s) the Pope came to, to apologize as a means of reconciliation. We heard about the Roman Catholic Church’s role in the Doctrine of Discovery, its connection to the concept of *terra nullius*, and Francis’s later repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. And, most importantly, we have heard from Michael Marker and his scholarly works on traditional Indigenous perspectives and relationship with place.

I endeavored to advocate for Papaschase’s people by highlighting the history of the underhanded and inhumane way Canada came to be. I suggest this history and a new direction needs to be part of citizenship education, K to 12 schooling, and post-secondary education because as Francis

said, “[m]ay... [*manito*] help us to move forward in the healing process, towards an ever more healthy and renewed future” (Francis, 2022, para. 10). Lastly, and again, most importantly, Michael Marker proposed the Indigenous sense of place as a possible educational path toward this renewed future. He wrote: “The effects of bringing Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous methodologies into universities have the potential to nurture a paradigm shift recognizing the sacredness of places countering a pervasive view of land as strictly a soulless commodity” (Marker, 2019, p. 501).

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