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Wiisaakodewininiwag ga-nanaakonaawaad: Jiibe-Giizhikwe, Racial Homeopathy, and “Eastern Métis” Identity Claims

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Abstract: *While Justice Dallaire was of the opinion that it would be “easier to nail Jell-O to the wall” than draw any conclusions about the existence of a “Métis” community in Maniwaki, the Séguin affaire is nevertheless scheduled to go to trial in 2020. The lawyer for the accused in the Tremblay affaire has asked for a trial novo due to “new evidence” that has come forward. This “new evidence” is partly from Dr. Sébastien Malette’s expert witness report and testimony in the Séguin affaire as well as from Guillaume Marcotte’s M.A. thesis that was recently published as a monograph. Malette and Marcotte also published an article together in which they claim that a certain Marie-Louise Riel of the Gatineau region was Louis Riel’s aunt and that she hid him from Canadian authorities. This article seeks to evaluate both of these claims, as well as to contextualize certain quotes from Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont and Valéry Havard that they mobilize as further “evidence” of the existence of historical “Métis” communities in eastern Canada.*

The perennial question of “Who is Métis?” ever since the term was included in s. 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, shows no sign of abating in the near future. As sociologist Darryl Leroux (2019,140) has shown, “the number of individuals identifying as Métis in Québec nearly doubled between 2001 and 2006, from 15,850 to 27,985.” This surge corresponds with the court victory *Powley* (2003), in which the hunting rights of a Métis community in Sault Ste. Marie were recognized under s. 35. This trend is expected to continue following the *Daniels* decision in 2016, whereby the Supreme Court of Canada established that the federal State has jurisdiction over both Métis and “non-status Indians” under s. 91(24) of the *Constitution Act*, 1867. As the *Powley* case illustrates, the effect of court decisions is not limited to the juridical field (Bourdieu 1987), but extends into the political field and shapes policy (Andersen 2014, 59–74). Moreover, the logic of the juridical field itself is no longer centred on the penal logic of prohibition, but of managing populations (Foucault 2007).

To be sure, after twelve court decisions in New Brunswick, three in Nova Scotia and seventy-nine or so in Québec,¹ the so-called “eastern Métis” have failed to prove the existence of a contemporary Métis community. Among them is the *Séguin* case, which is slated to be heard in the fall of 2020. Previously, Royal Séguin and the *Communauté métisse autochtone de Maniwaki* applied for costs in order to pay for expert witnesses to prove “Métis” hunting rights in the area around Maniwaki. In *Québec (Procureure générale) c. Séguin* (2016), Justice Dallaire remarked that “the genealogical elements submitted [...] bring out that in

¹ To be clear, I am referring to decisions and not cases. A single case may involve several court decisions. <http://www.raceshifting.com/court-decisions/> (Retrieved December 29, 2019).

the case of the majority of the members of the community, one must often go back ten or twelve generations to find the presence of an Aboriginal [ancestor], sometimes thousands of kilometres from the region of Maniwaki, without for so much being able to make a finding of a subsequent integration into a Métis community” (para. 143). Based on the evidence before him, he stated that it would be “easier to nail Jell-O to the wall” than draw any conclusions about the existence of a “Métis” community in Maniwaki (para. 158).

Three of the expert witnesses for Royal Séguin and *La communauté métisse autochtone de Maniwaki*, Michel Bouchard, Sébastien Malette, and Guillaume Marcotte, recently published their research in a monograph form as *Les Bois-Brûlés de l’Outaouais. Une étude ethnoculturelle des Métis de la Gatineau* (2019). In it, they rely on certain quotations from the 19th century Métis political leaders Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont as well as Valéry Havard, a Frenchman who emigrated to the U.S. and served as army surgeon in Montana in 1877, to support their arguments both with regard to Métis identity and to the presence of Métis in eastern Canada. These same quotations and arguments can also be found in previous publications, such as *Songs Upon the Rivers* (Foxcurran, Bouchard, and Malette 2016) and “Marie-Louise: Protector of Louis Riel in Québec” (Malette and Marcotte 2017).² For the benefit of an English-language audience, I will focus here on Malette and Marcotte’s article with occasional reference to Foxcurran et al. (2016) and Bouchard et al. (2019).

All the while accusing others of putting forward a notion of Métis identity based on blood-quantum, Malette in particular promotes a variation on blood-quantum known as hypo-descent. This is particularly apparent in how the authors instrumentalize quotations from Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. When one provides an appropriate context for the quotations from Riel, Dumont, and Havard that Malette and Marcotte fail to provide, their (mis)use of Riel’s thought in particular reveals how specious their interpretations are. The authors also make use of Violet Lalonde’s manuscript, which is based on her father’s (Wilfred McGregor) recollections (Lalonde 1980s, 17, 23). In it, Lalonde claims that her great-great-grand-mother, Marie-Louise Riel, is the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Riel and Marguerite Boucher, and therefore the sister of Jean-Louis Riel, Louis Riel’s father (which

2 Much of the article’s contents was previously penned by Malette in “The Eastern Métis and the ‘Négationism’ of Professor Leroux: ‘Aibitawisidjik wi mikak,’” which appeared on the *Voyageur Heritage* website. <https://voyageurheritage.com/2017/11/13/the-eastern-metis-and-negationism-in-the-academy/> (Retrieved March 7, 2019). It is a translation of an original French version that appeared in *Trahir* (<https://trahir.wordpress.com/2017/10/21/malette-metis/>) (Retrieved March 7, 2019) as a reply to Karina Chagnon’s review of Darryl Leroux’ presentation at the Université de Montréal: <https://trahir.wordpress.com/2017/10/09/chagnon-leroux/> (Retrieved March 7, 2019). In the text that appeared on the *Voyageur Heritage* website, Malette mentions a letter that the Métis Federation of Canada wrote to protest Leroux’ presentation, accusing him of “historic negationistic denial” and “incitement to hatred” and asking the university to withdraw its support (in other words, to cancel the presentation). See endnote 6 in his text for the link. While Malette had resigned at the material time, he was on the MNC’s inaugural board and its “Director of Métis Rights”. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150223154511/http://www.metisfederationofcanada.ca/pc---inaugural-board-of-directors-and-councils--e.html> (Retrieved March 7, 2019). This version of the article with Marcotte essentially adds an analysis of Violet Lalonde’s manuscript.

of course would make her Louis Riel's aunt). I will first evaluate the evidence with regard to the claim that Louis Riel's grandfather, Jean-Baptiste Riel, is Marie-Louise's father. Second, I will look at the evidence with regard to the "oral tradition" that Marie-Louise hid Louis Riel in the Gatineau Hills north of Ottawa, particularly in the period from late 1873 to early 1874. Finally, the reference to Marie-Louise Riel and her descendants as "Métis" relies on a rejection of endogamy as a necessary criterion of ethnogenesis and, in doing so, essentially relies on the logic of hypo-descent or the "one drop rule" blood quantum. As this will be submitted as evidence for Séguin's trial in November 2020, it is timely to examine the authors' claims.

Racial Homeopathy: "One Drop of Blood"

Malette and Marcotte (2017, 36 n16) assert that the argument against "the remoteness of Indigenous ancestry in Québec [...] essentially rehash[es] the blood quantum argument." Similarly, Bouchard, Malette, and Marcotte (2019, 34) also maintain that claims of Métis identity should not be rejected due to the distance of one's First Nations ancestry—in other words, no matter how little "Indian blood" they have. In order to do so, they rely heavily on the facts in the *Powley* case. It is true that Steven Powley only had one Indigenous ancestor born in the 1790s (30) and that all subsequent generations married non-Indigenous partners (30 n1). It is, however, disingenuous to claim that Counsel for the Crown made an argument in favour of blood quantum. On the contrary, J.T.S. McCabe and Peter Lemmond cited the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, 201) according to which Aboriginal identity "comes down to two key elements – ancestry and *culture* – and *their acceptance by the individual and the people*" (Ontario 1999, para. 71). After noting that the "respondents gave no evidence to their way of life, family customs and traditions, or interaction with other persons and families in Sault Ste. Marie and vicinity who identify as Métis" (para. 22), the Crown prosecutors claimed that there was "no evidence of *social and cultural connections* between the respondents and any aboriginal community" (para. 74). They then put forward that the trial judge had disregarded "the essential element of *cultural connection*" and that "in a case where there is no evidence of cultural ties to an aboriginal community, 1/64 and 1/128 aboriginal descent cannot serve as a sufficient 'aboriginal ancestry' to establish Métis identity for the purposes of Métis aboriginal rights" and that this was "especially so in a case where the aboriginal ancestry of the claimants is traced solely to one individual" (para. 77). The argument that is being put forward is not that the remoteness of their ancestry is *sufficient in itself* to bar any claim to Métis identity. It is rather that claiming Métis identity must be based on *something more* than just a single, remote Aboriginal ancestor. In other words, theirs was an argument against the one-drop rule and blood quantum as a *sufficient* criterion to establish Métis identity under s. 35, which is undoubtedly why Malette in particular takes issues with it.

By making "one drop of blood" a sufficient basis for claiming Métis identity, it is in fact

Malette and Marcotte who are provocatively misappropriating what is without a doubt the harshest application of blood quantum. As Jessica Bardill (2011, 11) reminds us, “[b]lood quantum has also led to the idea of hypodescent, or the ‘one-drop rule,’ which is used mostly in reference to African Americans.” The “one-drop rule” was a result of racist theories used to explain what were then believed to be inherent behavioural and moral aptitudes of different “races” through “blood” (Doerfler 2015, xxvi). As Ojibwe author Gregory Gagnon (2019, 197) puts it, one “should remember that blood was thought to convey behavioural traits that could not be overcome.” This was not only a racist assumption, but became the basis of the legal definition of who qualified as African American (Doerfler 2015, xxvii). In the case of Blacks in the United States, it was determined that one-drop of “negro” blood was sufficient to transmit certain stereotyped character traits associated with the “negro race.” This was initially to maintain the descendants of slaves in a state of slavery (as chattels or personal property) and later to enforce segregation under the “Jim Crow” laws. As Patrick Wolfe remarked, “*Race for black people became an indelible trait that would survive any amount of admixture*” (2001, 887).³

However, as Lauren Besson (2008, 43–44) points out, the “notion of blood quantum also led to different definitions of race, depending on the racial group in question. The ‘one drop’ rule, which defined anyone with a single drop of ‘black blood’ as black, did not apply in the same way when ‘Indian blood’ was in question.” In effect, the former was a logic of *hypo*-descent (classifying an individual of mixed ancestry in the more socially subordinate ‘race’) whereas the latter is one of *hyper*-descent (classifying an individual of mixed ancestry in the more socially dominant ‘race’). As Besson (2008, 44) notes, strenuous “legal debates took place over how much Indian blood was required for someone to be declared Indian rather than white.” These debates did lead to at least one occasion when a *hyper*-descent version of the “one-drop rule” was effectively applied to a Native American tribe, which is the case of the Ojibwe of the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota.

What is particularly interesting about White Earth is that Red River Métis “settled at White Earth in sizable numbers” (Kugel 1998, 120). According to Melissa Meyer (1994, 89), “these ‘French-Canadian mixed-bloods’ as they were termed,” were Métis who “shared cultural roots with the nationalistic Canadian Métis” (92) as is evident by their “capitalizing on the bustling Red River ox-cart traffic” (89) and “[b]oundary maintaining mechanisms [that] were reflected in marital choices as those of mixed descent tended to marry within their own group” (91). More to the point, the Métis “were among the first to claim land allotments under the 1867 Treaty,” which created the White Earth Reservation, and, all told, “received more allotments of land than any other category of Indians” (Meyer 1994, 89).

Melissa Meyer (1994) and Anishinaabe scholar Jill Doerfler (2015) have explained how, on the White Earth Reservation, blood quantum logics were used to disenfranchise and dispossess Indigenous peoples further. Initially, individual allotments were included in treaties on a case-by-case basis, such as art. 7 of the *Treaty with the Chippewa of the*

³ Emphasis added.

Mississippi, 1867 (16 Stat. 719). Much like the contemporary *Indian Act* in Canada, it provided for the surveying of lots in severalty and location certificates. In terms of individual sales, lots could only be sold to other members of the Chippewa tribe. However, in 1887 Congress adopted the *Allotment Act*—also known as the *Dawes Act*. It essentially allowed for the division of all communally-owned reservation lands into allotments in severalty (McDonnell 1991). In the particular case of reservations in Minnesota, in 1889 Congress passed *An act for the relief and civilization of the Chippewa Indians in the State of Minnesota* (25 Stat. 642), otherwise known as the *Nelson Act*. It provided for the surrender of all but two reservations and the division of the surrendered reservations into lots in severalty.⁴ Then in “1906, Minnesota lumber baron and senator Moses A. Clapp attached a rider to the annual Indian appropriations bill that stated that adult ‘mixed-bloods’ who were ‘competent’ could sell their land at any time” (Doerfler and Redix 2016, 185). However, as Melissa Meyer (1999, 239–40) explains, because it failed “to define ‘mixed-blood,’ the law created a quagmire of uncertainty that spilled over into complex land fraud claims. In 1914, the U.S. Supreme Court essentially applied the ‘one-drop rule,’ establishing that any amount of white ‘blood,’ no matter how minute, made an Indian a mixed-blood.” The effective result was that the “legal definition of ‘mixed-blood’ was a person with one drop of white blood” (Doerfler and Redix 2016, 185). Similar to what Andersen (2014) has maintained about the racialization of Métis-as-mixed, this “one-drop” hyperdescent rule involved a “racialization of Ojibwe identity [that] would have significant and lasting consequences” (Doerfler and Redix 2016, 185).

Far from escaping the logic of blood quantum, Malette and Marcotte’s (2017, 40) claim that “one drop of each ‘blood’” in one’s genealogy (or in a DNA test) “would suffice” to claim Métis identity is simply a variation of the blood quantum logic. Despite the fact that they are making a claim based on hypo-descent and that Métis identity is essentially an “indelible trait that would survive any amount of admixture” (Wolfe 2001, 887), I agree with Darryl Leroux (2019) that, as a sociological phenomenon, it is more akin to Circe Sturm’s idea of “racial homeopathy” than the one-drop rule such as it was applied to Blacks in that it involves both individual choice and “an attempted shift *away* from whiteness” (27). As an ideological manoeuvre, what it shares with both hypo- and hyper-descent is that no matter what version of blood quantum is applied, it is always to the advantage of white settlers and always to the detriment of subordinate ‘races.’

The objective is neither new nor original in Canadian history. For example, after the Conquest, First Nations in the St. Lawrence Valley constantly petitioned British authorities about French-Canadians squatting on their lands (Beaulieu 2002). The *Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of Indians in Lower Canada*, 1850, was amended on the insistence of the Iroquois and Abenakis to exclude French Canadian settlers who

⁴ In law, “severalty” is a real property term that refers to private (usually individual) title without specifying the type of estate. The title-holder may have interests that are less than a fee simple estate, such as a life estate or a fee tail estate.

married Indigenous women from being legally considered “Indians” in order to prevent them from taking over lands reserved for Indians (495).

Métis Identity and the “One-Drop” Blood Quantum

In order to illustrate that Malette and Marcotte evoke the “one-drop of blood” rule and thereby promote a notion of Métis identity based on blood quantum, I will take a closer look at how they manipulate two quotations from Riel and one from Dumont. Throughout their text, Malette and Marcotte contrast what they see as “Louis Riel’s inclusive vision of Métis nationalism” (2017, 61) with an alleged “exclusionary Métis neo nationalism” (62) that they claim emanates principally from certain contemporary Métis scholars. Malette and Marcotte base their claim that Riel’s Métis nationalism was inclusive of the so-called eastern métis on two quotations from him in addition to a quotation from Gabriel Dumont. The first of the two Riel quotations is instrumentalized in order to refute the scholarly argument that “eastern Métis” claims are a form of “self-indigenization” counter to Indigenous peoples (Andersen and Gaudry 2016).

Des gens très polis, très gentils d’ailleurs, viennent dire parfois à un Métis : « Vous n’avez pas l’air métis du tout. Vous n’avez pas beaucoup de sang sauvage assurément. Quand même, vous passeriez partout pour un blanc pur ».

« C’est vrai que notre origine sauvage est humble, mais il est juste que nous honorions nos mères aussi bien que nos pères. Pourquoi nous occuperions-nous à quel degré de mélange nous possédons le sang européen et le sang indien? Pour peu que nous ayions de l’un ou de l’autre la reconnaissance et l’amour filial, ne vous font-ils pas une loi de dire : « Nous Sommes Métis ». (Riel 1985c, 278–279)

Very polite and amiable people may sometimes say to a Métis, “You don’t look at all like a Métis. Surely, you don’t have a lot of Indian blood. You could get by anywhere as a pure White.” [...]

It is true that our Indian origins are humble, but it is right that we honour our mothers as well as our fathers. Why would we preoccupy ourselves with the degree of European and Indian blood we have? For so much as we have for the one and the other gratitude and filial love, do they not make it a duty for you to say: “We are Métis.” (My translation.)

Malette and Marcotte (2017, 40) explicitly attribute to Riel the idea that “one drop of each ‘blood’ *would suffice* to make someone a ‘Métis’ *if that person chooses*.”⁵ While Riel did not actually use the expression “one drop” in this quotation—as we will see, it is Dumont who explicitly evokes it—one might reasonably infer it. However, in doing so, Malette in particular seems to have strayed from his earlier agreement with Foxcurran and Bouchard that “Peterson and others are correct in affirming that being of mixed ancestry does not make one necessarily ‘Métis’ (an affirmation of identity which is linked

⁵ Emphasis added.

to collective dimension)” (2016, 49).⁶ This completely subjective criterion and the absence of any community belonging or recognition recalls Patrick Wolfe’s (2001, 264) comment that the “sound made by the clap of the Wannabe Indian’s solitary hand is its very silence: the lack of acknowledgement from community and, with it, the resounding absence of a tie to the invaded land.”

Whatever position Malette and his collaborators are now taking,⁷ there are indications in Riel’s expansive writings that “mere mixed ancestry” (Andersen 2014b, 280 n1) and subjective self-identification were not sufficient to allow one to claim a Métis identity. To provide but one example, in a petition for the Métis of Montana, Riel wrote that the Métis “are *closely related* with the several tribes of *the northwest*, owing to which fact we indirectly exercise some influence and from the Indian blood in our veins, we are included to believe that Indians will listen to us more favourably than to the majority of those who are not connected *by family ties* with them” (1985b, 224). While Riel does mention “Indian blood” as a *necessary* criterion, it is clearly not a *sufficient* one. When Riel mentions being “closely related” and having “family ties with them,” he confines these relations and ties to “the several tribes of the northwest” with whom the Métis maintained on-going kinship relations. He does not extend them to Indigenous peoples living along the Atlantic coast, for instance. In other words, although cherry picked quotations read in isolation from the rest of Riel’s writings might give the impression that he endorsed a pan-Métis identity where a combination of a purely individual desire and any-old-Indian-ancestor-no-matter-how-remote would do, an intertextual analysis of his writings reveals that this was not in fact Riel’s understanding of the Métis as a distinct people. Evidently, having a remote Mi’kmaq ancestor ten generations back would not provide the necessary cultural, social and symbolic capital to exercise diplomatic influence within the immediate inter-Indigenous political field of the First Nations of the western plains. If this was true of *external* relations with First Nations, it was all the more true of *internal* relations among the Métis themselves.

Be that as it may, let us come back to Malette and Marcotte’s contention that the previous passage should be interpreted as Riel offering the “choice” to “people of mixed Indigenous and Euro-Canadian heritage to embrace the Métis identity” (2017, 40). To better understand the intention of Riel’s text, one must refer to an earlier draft version that Riel wrote.

6 For example, art. 33.1 of the *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* stipulates that: “Indigenous peoples *have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions*.” Emphasis added.

7 To be fair, in Bouchard, Malette, and Marcotte (2019) the authors do attempt to apply community criteria. I suspect that this largely due to Bouchard’s influence as an anthropologist. On the TFO program “Cause Daniels: la bataille des Métis” (2016), Malette refers to this same quotation and claims that Riel stated: “Si vous avez une goutte de chaque héritage dans votre veine, et vous désirez vous appeler fièrement Métis, eh bien, faites-le.” (“If you have a drop of each heritage in your veins and you wish to proudly call yourself ‘Métis’, well then, do so.”) While Malette uses the term *héritage*, the reference to *veine* makes it apparent that he is talking about blood. Riel himself does not use the word *héritage*, but to blood (*sang*).

Il y a beaucoup de gens très polis et très gentils qui souvent diront à un métis, mais vous n’avez pas l’air d’avoir grand sang sauvage; on dirait que vous êtes blanc. Oh! vous n’avez presque pas de sang sauvage. – ces personnes parlent sous l’influence des préjugés qu’ils ont vis-à-vis les indiens, *et leurs compliments* semblent partir de l’idée qu’un métis devrait rougir de ses ancêtres indiens et *c’est probablement pour lui aider à porter le poids de sa honte qu’on se dépêche de lui dire : oh! vous n’avez pas presque pas de sang sauvage.* [...] Pour peu qu’il ait de l’un ou de l’autre, il dit, je suis métis, et c’est fini, *ses enfants le sont jusqu’à...* (Riel 1985c, 273)

There are many very polite and kind people who often say to a metis, but you don’t look like you have much Indian blood; one would say you’re white. Oh! you hardly have any Indian blood. – These individuals speak under the influence of prejudices that they hold toward Indians, *and their compliments* seem to come from the idea that a metis should blush due to his Indian ancestry and *it is probably to help them carry the weight of their shame that one quickens to say to him: oh! You barely have any Indian blood.* [...] For so much as he has one [and] the other, he says, I am metis, and it is done, *his children are so until...* (My translation.)

While Malette and Marcotte appeal to Riel’s authority to assert that claims to a Métis identity cannot be refuted due to a “remoteness of Indigenous ancestry,” this draft version suggests Riel was doing something completely different. His comments are intended as a reply to well intentioned, albeit misguided, people who believe that mixed-blood individuals like Riel must surely be “ashamed” of their Indian ancestry. Riel clearly states here that the remark that he “doesn’t look Indian” is meant by them as a *compliment* not a *denial* of his ancestry—they are reassuring Riel that he could get away with passing himself off as “white.” Confronted with this invitation to “hide in plain sight” or to “pass as white,” Riel’s response is to *refuse to deny his ancestry*. In other words, even when invited to deny his Indigenous ancestry, Riel declined to do so in a manner that in fact opposes Malette and Marcotte’s contention that the “eastern métis” were forced to “hide in plain sight” for generations. Even if this were true, it’s not surprising that Indigenous peoples would question claims to Aboriginal status and rights on the part of individuals who essentially admit they and their ancestors have enjoyed white privilege for some three hundred years. In fact, Riel can be read as *admonishing* rather than *excusing* their ancestors for doing so. Moreover, Riel’s unfinished sentence, “and his children are so until...” leaves one wondering whether he believed that one’s Indian ancestry would, at some point, become too remote if one did not exercise Métis cultural and political practices. We may never know, but if he did, it would make him, in Malette and Marcotte’s view, an “exclusionary Métis nationalist” (which he in fact was, as he excluded from the Métis *canadien* anyone who did not have French or French-Canadian ancestors).

The second quotation that they use as evidence for past Métis leaders’ support of the “eastern métis” comes from Gabriel Dumont in December 1887. In citing Dumont, Malette and Marcotte fail to provide the context for Dumont’s statement: it is addressed to Georges Demanche, the editor-in-chief of *Revue française et d’exploration*, a French magazine of some repute. Demanche travelled to the Canadian Northwest to report on the Métis revolt in 1885 and published two articles in *Le Figaro*, which Dumont had only just had the opportunity to read. To put the letter in its larger context, I have included two sentences that Malette and Marcotte left out in italics.

Je me fais un devoir, mon cher Monsieur, de vous présenter, tant en mon nom, qu'au nom de tous les Métis canadiens-français du Nord-Ouest, nos remerciements bien sincères [...]. Je regrette vraiment de ne pas eu l'occasion de vous serrer la main lorsque vous êtes venu jusqu'au Montagne Rocheuses en 1885. [...] Ce n'est pas la première fois que les Métis français ont fait trembler [la nation anglaise], et tant que nous aurons une goutte de sang français et indien dans les veines, nous revendiquerons les droits pour lesquels nous avons combattu et pour lesquels ils ont assassiné juridiquement feu Louis David Riel. (Combet and Toussaint 2009, 238)

[I make it my duty, my dear sir, to present to you, as much in my own name as well as in the name of all the French-Canadian Métis of the North-West, our very sincere thanks. [...] I really regret not having the opportunity to shake your hand when you came out as far as the Rocky Mountains in 1885. [...]]
It's not the first time that the French Métis have made [the English nation] tremble, and as long as we have a drop of French and Indian blood in our veins, we will claim the rights for which we fought and for which they have judicially assassinated feu [*the late*] Louis David Riel. (My excerpt and translation in italics; Malette and Marcotte's excerpt and translation in normal face.)

First of all, as a politically astute leader, it appears that the main reason Dumont emphasizes his "French blood" was because he was addressing himself to a Frenchman who placed the Métis revolt in a larger struggle with the English (for example, Demanche even raises the spectre of Jeanne d'Arc in his reporting). In terms of identity, Dumont doesn't just mention having a "drop of French and Indian blood," as Malette and Marcotte would have us believe, but presents himself as speaking in the name of the French-Canadian Métis of *the Northwest*. When Dumont stated that "*we* have a drop of French and Indian blood" and outlines the "rights for which *we* fought," he was neither promoting a pan-Métis identity nor rights based on the one-drop rule. Rather, his notion of Métis identity, struggles and rights are all temporally and geographically situated in a specific territory primarily spanning today's three prairie provinces. Why would Dumont write about the "French-Canadian Métis of the North-West" if his intention, as Malette and Marcotte presume, was to include the "Eastern métis"? Although Malette & Marcotte admonish Vowel and Leroux (2016) for making "hasty generalizations" (2017, 36 n16), they themselves don't hesitate to extrapolate from a single reference to French blood in a book of some 308 pages and conclude that it lay at the core of Dumont's as-yet undiscovered expansive vision of Métis nationhood.

Valéry Havard on the "French Half-Breeds"

In order to further shore up their argument that the Métis did not only emerge in the Northwest, Malette and Marcotte cite Valéry Havard (1880) with regard to certain ethnonyms that were used to identify Métis and the "continental distribution of the Métis populations from the coast of Oregon, to the Midwest, to the Eastern provinces of Canada" (39). In doing so, they stress in italics the following passage: "The designation of French is often indifferently applied to [French-] Canadians, métis of all grades, and even pure Indians who associate with métis and speak their *patois*" (Havard 1880, 314; qtd. in Malette and Marcotte 2017, 39). As with Dumont, they read into this passage an emphasis on the French

ancestry and language of the Métis. While this is partly true, it is entirely unnecessary given that one need look no further than the title of Havard’s article, “The *French* Half-Breeds of the Northwest.” Havard’s own emphasis here is in the two preceding sentences: “The term mixed-blood is *too vaguely comprehensive*” (314). For its part, “the designation of French is often *indifferently* applied” to people who are not “French half-breeds,” properly speaking. Havard was of the opinion that the “usual name of half-breeds used by English and Americans presupposes blood from the paternal and maternal ancestors, mixed in equal proportion; but [...] this is not often the case” (1880, 314). Havard came to the conclusion that “Métis, when referring to the French mixed-bloods, seems the most appropriate name” (ibid.). Havard’s reflection on the use of the term “Métis” is strikingly similar to a second quotation from Riel that Bouchard, Malette, and Marcotte (2019, 22) mobilize in order to claim that Riel embraced “an inclusive vision of Métis identity, rejecting the idea of a minimum degree of ‘Indian’ blood.”⁸

Tout appropriée que l’expression anglaise correspondante, Halfbreed, fût à la première génération du mélange des sangs, maintenant que le sang européen et le sang sauvage sont mêlés à tous les degrés, elle n’est pas plus assez générale. Le mot français, Métis, exprime l’idée de ce mélange d’une manière aussi satisfaisante que possible; et devient par là même un nom convenable de race (Riel 1985c, 272)

As appropriate as the corresponding English expression “Half-Breed” was for the first generation of the mixing of blood, now that the European blood and the Indian blood are mixed in various degrees, it is no longer general enough. The French word, Métis, expresses the idea of this mixing in as satisfactory a manner as possible; and becomes by that very fact a suitable name for a race. (My translation.)

As we can see, Riel *is* in fact arguing in favour of a minimum blood quantum insofar as *some degree* of ‘Indian blood’ is a condition *sine qua non* of Métis identity. Again, the authors are not claiming that *no* ‘Indian blood’ whatsoever is necessary, but rather that one only needs a minimal minimum to qualify – in other words, the ‘one-drop’ rule. To come back to Havard’s point, it was not to emphasize the “Frenchness” of the Métis – he was rather stating that the term “French” is too vague a term for the Métis since it includes many people who are not Métis. Moreover, contrary to Malette and Marcotte, Havard did not adhere to the “one-drop of blood” rule. He clearly recognized that mixed-bloods could eventually end up being absorbed and assimilated into the surrounding population, whether white or Indian.

If a district, inhabited by half-breeds or quarter-breeds, becomes settled by white people, and correspondingly abandoned by the Indians, *the reversion, naturally, will be towards the white race, and the red blood may become so diluted as to scarcely give traces of its presence* either in complexion or intellectual acquirements. *Such is the case in parts of the States of Illinois and Missouri, as well as in Eastern Michigan and other places about the lakes.*

⁸ My translation.

Again, if half-breeds live exclusively among Indians, *the reversion will be towards the red type*, so that a point is reached when it is impossible to discriminate between a mixed-blood and a pure-blood native. We find such individuals among the Northwestern tribes, *of which they are a component part*.⁹ Between these extremes is a large middle ground occupied by *intermarried mixed-bloods*, ranging from quarter-white to quarter-red and including many half-breeds. These *true representatives of the race are most numerous on the Red River of the North and the Winnipeg Basin* (1880, 314).

Clearly, Havard did not consider individuals with a single, remote Indigenous ancestor thirteen generations back to be anywhere near this “middle ground.” Such individuals evidently fall in the first class of mixed-bloods for whom “the reversion, naturally, will be towards the white race” and for whom “the red blood [has] become so diluted as to scarcely give traces of its presence” (314). Havard also clearly asserted that this “middle ground” necessarily involves *endogamy* when he mentioned “*intermarried mixed-bloods*.” Moreover, he used a minimum blood-quantum of “quarter-breeds” as a cut-off for individuals who belong to this “middle ground.” To be sure, when he enumerates the Métis population of Michigan, he also included “those who have *only one-eighth* Indian blood” to arrive at a “probable number [of] 1,000” (315). However, he also states that “in parts of the States of Illinois and Missouri, as well as in Eastern Michigan and other places about the lakes” that “the red blood may become so diluted as to scarcely give traces of its presence either in complexion or intellectual acquirements.” Havard was certainly not of the opinion that “one drop of each ‘blood’ would suffice to make someone a ‘Métis’ if that person chooses” (Malette and Marcotte 2017, 40). Moreover, Havard referred to the Red River Métis as the “true representatives of this race.” The centrality of the Red River Métis was also explicit at the beginning of Havard’s article, where he wrote that when one sails “down the Red River of the North into the Canadian province of Manitoba, the traveller finds himself at the headquarters [of the French Half-Breeds]” (1880, 309).

With regard to the “continental distribution of the Métis populations,” Havard is cautious about the numbers he provides: “Their *uncertain status* as to nationality, their scattering over large areas, and the constant shifting of many families from one place to another, make this no easy task” (314). Again, the reason why the “status” of the nationality of certain mixed-blood individuals is “uncertain” is because it can be difficult to determine at what point there is a “reversion” to either the European population or the First Nation population. In other words, for the outsider at least, many mixed-blood individuals in Havard’s day could be said to occupy what Giorgio Agamben (2005) termed a “zone of undecidability” (2), a “zone of indifference” (23) or a “zone of indistinction” (26). One thing is certain though: Havard did not intend to enumerate anyone with less than a one-eighth blood-quantum as members of this “middle ground.”

⁹ Further on, Havard (1880: 317–18) claims that “from Quebec to Vancouver’s Island there is scarcely a native tribe, from the Sioux to the Esquimaux, that has not been tintured with French blood.”

Of course, several passages of Havard’s article reflect the racial biases of the time, notably that cultural traits are biologically determined and a conception of the “Métis-as-mixed,” that is “*misrecognized* as a hybrid off-shoot of two races – ‘Indian’ and ‘white’ – rather than as an *Indigenous people*” (Andersen 2014, 6). It is nonetheless hazardous to solicit his aid to shore up an argument that he clearly contradicts. Finally, as interesting as his suggestion of a “continental distribution” of the Métis may be, Havard provides no sources for his estimations and there is no indication he ever actually visited these regions. He also speaks in such broad, sweeping geographical terms that it in no way allows us to identify the specific location of particular communities or the individuals who may have belonged to those communities.¹⁰ Something more than an appeal to Havard’s authority is required to verify such claims. One might nonetheless ask, even in 1880, how many of them would have been able to meet Havard’s double criteria of “mixed-blood” endogamy and a minimum one-eighth blood-quantum to qualify as “Métis”?

Violet Lalonde’s “Oral History”¹¹

A concrete example that both applies a logic of racial homeopathy all the while recuperating the Riel name as symbolic capital can be found in Malette and Marcotte’s analysis of Violet Lalonde’s manuscript. While there are many fascinating aspects of Lalonde’s manuscript, it is not so much the manuscript itself I am interested in, but rather Malette and Marcotte’s instrumentalization of certain passages. There are two major points that are problematic from the point of view of historical proof. As mentioned above, Lalonde’s manuscript claims that Marie-Louise Riel is the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Riel and his wife, Marguerite Boucher, Louis Riel’s grandparents. Second, the manuscript claims that Marie-Louis hid Riel from authorities in the area north of the Ottawa River from the Gatineau River above the city of Ottawa to Papineauville, about midway between Ottawa and Montréal. I shall, however, begin with a third more fundamental point—the questionable claim on the part of Malette and Marcotte that Marie-Louise was a “Métis woman” (2017, 61) and that her descendants are “Métis.”

At one point Malette and Marcotte seek to explain the reason “why the surname Riel was not used at her marriage or baptism but rather the name Chipakijikwe” (47). What is revealing in this is that Malette and Marcotte have trouble conceiving of Indigenous names as being just as *real*, if not more so, than European ones. As Monique Giroux (2018, 145) pointed out with regard to *Songs Upon the Rivers* (2016), a book co-authored by Malette, the authors “fail to acknowledge the importance of female kinship networks which are so vital to Métis, focusing instead on French ancestors and a scattering of Indigenous

10 It is also questionable to accept Havard’s lumping of people from such different territories in the same ethnic category. See, for example, Zoe Todd (2016) for an account of the relation of the Métis in the Northwest to a specific territory.

11 Although I was in possession of the excellent report written by Serge Goudreau, Leila Inksetter, Jérôme Morneau, Louis-Pascal Rousseau (2018) for the Crown in the upcoming *Séguin* case, I did not read it until after I had submitted this article for evaluation. I subsequently discovered that Goudreau had written a strikingly similar critique of Bouchard et al.’s use of Vivian Lalonde’s manuscript.

women; in this way, maternal kinship ties largely disappear under a heavy emphasis on French lineage.” First of all, the name “Chipakijikwe” is clearly from Anishinaabemowin (possibly *Jiibe-Giizhikwe* in contemporary Fiero or double-vowel orthography).¹²

It is hardly surprising that she would have an Anishinaabemowin name since her baptismal certificate mentions that she is a “femme sauvage de la nation des Ojibwes, autrement dit les Sauteux” (Jobin, n.d.). Her marriage certificate also refers to her as “de la nation sauteux” (Jobin). While her birthplace is unknown, there are three rough indications in official documents: the Canada Census of 1861 has “born Western Canada” (i.e., Ontario),¹³ the Canada Census of 1871, “born in ON” and the Canada Census of 1891, “born in the U.S.” (Jobin, n.d.). However, Chipakijikwe’s first two children seem to have been born in Sault Ste. Marie. The eldest, Marie-Louise, who was born in April 1823, was baptized in Sault Ste. Marie (or *Baawitigong*, “the place of the rapids”) while her younger sibling, Marie-Anne, was born in the Sault in May 1825, but baptized in Oka, Québec.¹⁴ This suggests Chipakijikwe may have been from *Baawitigong*. It would also explain why her birthplace is listed as both Ontario and the U.S. The *Baawitigongwininiwag* (the People of the Rapids) lived on both sides of St. Mary’s River and the international boundary would have made little difference to them at the time.¹⁵

One may wonder why Chipakijikwe did not continue using her Anishinaabemowin name on official documents after 1840. Chipakijikwe’s descendant, Stéphane Jobin has compiled and translated all of the official documents that mention her.¹⁶ A more careful look reveals that Chipakijikwe was used in six documents between 1826 and 1840—notably in her own baptismal certificate (1826) and her marriage certificate (1826) as well as four of her children’s baptismal certificates—two in 1835 (one of whom was born in 1832), and one each in 1838 and 1840 (Jobin, n.d.). What is striking is that all these certificates were signed in the Parish of Annonciation in Oka, where Algonquins from other missions had

12 *Jiibe-Giizhikwe* means “spirit sky woman” or “ghost cedar woman.” Personal communication with Charles L. Lippert (11 February 2019). In the contemporary Fiero spelling system, a “g” can sound like either an English “g” or “k” while “j” can sound like an English “j” or “ch”. Some dialects will, therefore, pronounce *Jiibe-Giizhikwe* as *Chiipe-Kizhikwe*. *Giizhig* can mean either ‘cedar’ or ‘sky’ (day, heaven), while *jiibay* can mean either ‘spirit’ or ‘ghost’ (but not ‘soul’ or =*jichaag*). *Ikwe* means ‘woman’.

13 As this was before Rupert’s Land and the Northwestern Territory were annexed to the Dominion of Canada in 1870, “Western Canada” undoubtedly meant Canada West (Upper Canada) or Ontario.

14 For some reason, “Marie-Anne” is mentioned as being baptized in Pointe-Claire in Robert McGregor and Chipakijikwe’s marriage certificate. This is evidently the same Marie-Anne as she was three months old when she was baptized on 12 August 1825. This matches with her age as fifteen months old in the marriage certificate dated 14 August 1826.

15 For a very similar analysis, see Serge Goudreau, « Le récit de Violet Lalonde (vers 1980) : visite de Louis Riel en Outaouais, 1874–1878 », dans Goudreau et al. (2018).

16 There are 25 in the list, but on the Facebook page dedicated to her, a 26th one was also identified. It doesn’t contain any additional information on Chipakijikwe.

just moved.¹⁷ Furthermore, all of these documents either have witnesses, godmothers, or godfathers with Algonquin surnames. This is hardly surprising as both Ojibwe and Algonquins call themselves *Anishinaabeg* and share a language, *Anishinaabemowin*. Since Algonquin is a dialect of eastern Ojibwe (Rhodes 1982), Chipakijikwe would have easily comprehended it, which would have facilitated her integration in Algonquin territory.¹⁸ What is noteworthy here is that when Chipakijikwe found herself in a linguistic context where she had the choice of using her mother language, she chose to identify herself by her Ojibwe name, not a European one. Amable Chevallier, an Ojibwe from Arbre Croche on Lake Michigan who was one of the *ogimaag* at Oka, complained in a letter dated December 24th, 1827 that Chipakijikwe’s husband, Robert McGregor, was illegally exploiting his hunting grounds. In it, he referred to McGregor as being married to “une femme Sauteuse” (Goudreau 2018, 248). The very fact that Chipakijikwe used her *Anishinaabemowin* name in such contexts and was identified by others as an *Anishinaabekwe* (Ojibwe or Saulteaux woman) would seem to suggest that she self-identified as such.

Despite all this evidence to the contrary, Malette and Marcotte speculate that her “use of the Riel surname [...] may indicate her attachment to her Métis identity” (48). Yet, the Canada Census of 1881 lists her as “Indian” (Jobin, n.d.), not “half-breed.” In fact, none of the documents identify her as “métis” in French or “half-breed” in English. The only reason that someone who consults the official documents alone would believe she was of mixed-ancestry is that the Canada Census of 1891 indicates her father was “born in France” (Jobin, n.d.). This contradicts the claim that Jean-Baptiste Riel was her father. The latter was born in Berthier, Québec and his great-great grandfather (also named Jean-Baptiste Riel) came to Canada directly from Ireland, not via France. It also calls into question the appropriateness of qualifying her as a “Métis” woman (61). To be sure, in French one can quite legitimately say she was “métis”, in the standard French meaning of: “Qui est issue de croisement de races, de variétés différentes dans la même espèce” (Rey 1988, 800).¹⁹ It is another thing altogether to claim she belonged to a distinct Métis people.

17 In 1825, Algonquins from various missions around the St. Lawrence still resided in the predominantly Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) Oka Indian village mission at Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes where they had been brought in 1721 (McGregor 2004, 108–9). The Algonquin resided in Oka in the summer and returned to their hunting territories in the winter (152, 167). Almost all Algonquin who settled in Oka eventually moved to the reserve of Kitigàn Zibi after it was created in 1853 (184). See also Beaulieu (2002).

18 On this issue, Lalonde wrote that Chipakijikwe “could speak in five languages: French, English, Chipewyan, Gaelic and Cree” (1980, 5). Oddly, Ojibwe is not mentioned. It is possible that Lalonde confused Chipewyan (Dene) with Chippewa (Ojibwe) as Bouchard et al. (2019, 158 n4) claim, but this is unlikely since the manuscript alleges that her mother was Marguerite Boucher, who was of Chipewyan descent.

19 It is worth noting here that in a book review of *Great Lakes Creoles* (Murphy 2014), Malette (2016) takes issue with the author’s use of “Creole” instead of “Métis” and with her making a “distinction between little ‘m’ versus big ‘M’ Métis”. Malette incorrectly attributes this to “the product of recent Red River politics and néo-nationalism,” in particular Métis scholar Chris Andersen. See also Foxcurran, Bouchard, and Malette (2016, 364). However, albeit for diametrically opposite reasons, Andersen also rejects this distinction (2014, 44–54), and its use can be traced to scholarship going as far back as the 1980s. Malette essentially invites historians to throw the principle of precaution out the window and to anachronistically substitute the word “Métis” without explanation or justification wherever they find any indication of mixed-ancestry.

A further problem with claiming Chipakijikwe as a Métis woman is that she was, at most, the first and only generation of mixed ancestry. The literature on Métis ethnogenesis is unanimous that a single individual with a European father and First Nations mother is insufficient to establish a Métis lineage. It is only when there is intermarriage between second-generation individuals of mixed-ancestry—or endogamy—that one begins to see a distinct Métis community emerge (Ens and Sawchuck 2016, 47, 50, 54, 65–66). However, once Métis communities *already* exist, it is possible for individuals who might otherwise have been “merely mixed” to grow up in those communities and to acculturate. This is precisely the case of Louis Riel, for example. Unsurprisingly, Bouchard, Malette, and Marcotte (2019, 27, 33) reject endogamy as a condition *sine qua non* of ethnogenesis. While they evoke the *Powley* case to justify this (29–30, 33–34), they nevertheless recognize that it was Powley’s grandmother who lost her status when she married a non-status man (30).²⁰ What they fail to mention is that Powley’s ancestors joined the Ojibwe Batchewana band and lived on or near the Garden River band’s reserve (*Gitigaan Ziibi*) right up until his grandmother’s generation. In other words, they lived in a social environment *where Ojibwe language culture would have been predominant*. This is the complete opposite of Chipakijikwe’s descendants, who not only married non-Indigenous partners, but were also born, raised, educated, employed and died within whitestream society for several generations.

Oddly enough, the first thing Malette and Marcotte do to Lalonde’s account is to *discredit* its reliability.²¹ As mentioned, Lalonde’s manuscript claims that Marie Chipakijikwe is the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Riel *and* Marguerite Boucher. Malette and Marcotte (2017, 47) quite rightly question whether she could have been the daughter of Marguerite Boucher. In effect, it is well established that the latter was the daughter of the French-Canadian, Louis-Étienne Boucher, and his unnamed Chipewyan (Denesuline) wife. Since Chipakijikwe was by all accounts Ojibwe, if she was indeed the child of Jean-Baptiste Riel, she would have had to be born of a different mother. In order to support their hypothesis, Malette and Marcotte (2017, 47) claim that “we know that Jean-Baptiste Riel’s involvements in Michilimakinac match Marie-Louise’s approximate conception date—this according to the evidence suggesting that Marie-Louise is around 30 years old in 1826.”²²

20 This is not to say that the finding of law in the *Powley* case is not problematic. Now that the federal government is granting Indian status back to matrilineal descendants who lost it through marriage since 1869, the Powleys may now be eligible to reclaim Indian status.

21 One of their more bizarre claims is that “different accounts of the kinship connection between Louis [Riel] and Marie-Louise tend to confirm the authenticity of transmission based on oral tradition” (2017, 49 n29). They offer no evidence for their claim here.

22 It is not clear why Malette and Marcotte refer to Michilimackinac—there is nothing in Lalonde’s narrative or in the 25 documents that mention Chipakijikwe that make any mention whatsoever of Michilimackinac. Moreover, citing Havard (1880, 326), Malette and Marcotte (2017, 45 n29) acknowledge that the surname Riel “was recorded at the end of the 19th century as one of the common Métis surnames at ‘Mackinac and other places on the Lakes’ (Havard 1880, p. 326).” It is possible that voyageur routes to Michilimackinac involved passing through Sault Ste. Marie or vice-versa, but the authors don’t make a case for this.

Malette and Marcotte are referring here to the fact that when Chipakijikwe’s first daughter, Marie-Louise, was baptized on 25 March 1826, the priest mentioned that she was around 30 years old, putting her birth year at *circa* 1796. However, Jobin argues that Chipakijikwe’s date of birth “remains a mystery: according to her birth [baptismal] record she was born in 1796, but her burial records rather suggests a birth year of 1792. The three federal census that mention her (those of 1861, 1881 and 1891) provide birth years of 1804, 1798 and 1789 respectively” (Jobin 2013).²³ These dates would have her age vary from anywhere between twenty-two and thirty-seven years old when she was baptized in 1826.²⁴ We do know that Jean-Baptiste Riel was born in 1785 and that he had his first child with Marguerite Boucher in June 1817 at age thirty-two. If we match this with four of the five different birth years for Chipakijikwe’s birth, Riel would have been four years old in 1789, eight in 1792, eleven in 1796, and thirteen in 1798. We can certainly eliminate the first four dates.²⁵ The only plausible date that leaves us with is 1804, when Jean-Baptiste Riel was 19 years old.

Malette and Marcotte (2017, 45 n29) mention twelve voyageur contracts between 1752 and 1818 “with the name of Jean-Baptiste Riel” in the Voyageur Contracts Database. However, while Malette and Marcotte admit that “matching perfectly any of the ancestors of Louis Sr. to any of these contracts is close to impossible” (*ibid.*), they don’t even attempt to go through a process of elimination. Admittedly, this would have been fruitless as none of these are *the* Jean-Baptiste Riel who is Louis Riel’s grandfather since the contracts in the Voyageur Contract Database do not include those from the region of Berthier.²⁶ Jean-Baptiste Riel *de Berthier*’s initial contract was signed on November 27th, 1802 (Goudreau 2018, 246 n717). One might match this with Chipakijikwe’s birthdate in 1804, but Riel’s contracts took him out to Thunder Bay, Kakabeka Falls and Fort Frances before wintering in the Northwest (246–7). It would seem highly unlikely that he is Chipakijikwe’s biological father. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that her father was *a different* Jean-Baptiste Riel, or simply someone with the surname Riel.²⁷ It is entirely possible that her father was one of the Jean-Baptiste Riels in the Voyageur Contracts Database who signed any of the

23 These various dates are strange given the commonplace Ojibwe capacity to give one’s age in terms of winters. The Ojibwe term for winter is *biboon*. To ask someone’s age is “aaniin endaso-biboonagizid?” – literally “how many winters is s/he?”

24 To make matters worse, Lalonde’s narrative suggests three additional birth dates. On the same page she first has Chipakijikwe at 8 years old in 1817, which would put her birth date at 1809, then fourteen in 1822, which would put it at 1808 (3). With regard to her marriage, Lalonde claims that she was fifteen at the time, which would put her birth year at 1811 (4). However, on her baptismal certificate, the priest indicated that she was “aged approximately thirty years”. Is it unlikely the priest mistook a fifteen-year-old girl for a thirty-year-old woman. In any event, Malette and Marcotte do not try to make a case for any of these dates.

25 While the fourth is biologically possible, it is rather unlikely that Riel was hired as a voyageur at thirteen.

26 Personal communication with Serge Goudreau, November 5th, 2019.

27 Chipakijikwe is first referred to as “Marie Riel” in the baptism certificate of her daughter in 1825. The spelling is initially inconsistent—the baptism record of one of her sons in 1829 has her name as “Marie Real” and another in 1842 as “Marie Rail”.

three contracts dated 1797, 1798, and 1799.²⁸ But even this hypothesis doesn't explain why her father is listed as being born in France. Suffice to say, the identity of Chipakijikwe's biological father remains a mystery.

Chipakijikwe: Protector of Louis Riel?

Malette and Marcotte end up resorting to the "symbolic" importance of Lalonde's narrative after they discredit its factual basis. According to them, one could maintain that even if Chipakijikwe was not biologically related to Riel, the "oral tradition" of her helping Riel to hide from the authorities could point to a sense of solidarity between the so-called "eastern Métis" and the Métis.²⁹ By definition, any such solidarity would have to be effectively shared, but Malette and Marcotte provide no evidence that a comparable "oral tradition" is also to be found among the Métis of the Northwest, and most notably among Riel's family's contemporary descendants. Unfortunately, when one compares it to Louis Riel's writings and the numerous biographies and articles written about his life or his thought, it is apparent that Lalonde's narrative is unreliable.³⁰ For example, the passages that follow Lalonde's father's claim that Chipakijikwe kept "Louis [Riel] on the move [...] in a circular formation" between "Hull, McGregor Lake, Buckingham, Notre Dame de Salette, High Falls, Val

28 Of course, the same person may have signed several contracts. <https://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/list?q=Jean-Baptiste+Riel&p=1&ps=20> (consulted 15 February 2019).

29 It is abusive to label Lalonde's manuscript as "oral tradition" in the anthropological sense of the word. It is of course oral *history*. This is in itself an area of specialization and beyond the scope of this article to examine. See Rosenberg (1987).

30 In terms of corroborating evidence, it should be mentioned that Lalonde's narrative attempts to dismiss "historians" "experts" and "history books" out of hand (16). This renders the purely "oral" origin of the account suspect. Why would someone refute "history books" unless they had read them? This suggests that Lalonde (or her father) were familiar with *written* accounts of this period of Riel's life. This is *not* therefore 'oral history' *stricto sensu* since it is not situated within a culture with purely oral traditions. It is possible and even likely that the source of at least some of the historical dates, places or names mentioned therein come from written historical accounts. Interestingly, Malette and Marcotte would appear to disagree with Lalonde when they write that we "should not expect each element of an oral tradition to be in full compliance with empirically verifiable historical facts. However, the concordance of several important points with archival date gives *general* credence to the narrative of Violet Lalonde" (2017: 46 n26). In effect, Malette and Marcotte do not simply rely on the manuscript. They cite some archival material, such as a letter from Riel to his mother dated 22 May 1874 and a letter from LaRivière to Riel dated 17 October 1873 as well as voyageur contracts. They also notably cite the research of Stéphane Jobin, a descendant of Marie Chipakijikwe. Unlike Malette and Marcotte, Jobin attempted to find some corroboration in Riel's writings. He speculates that, in "a lengthy poem penned sometime around 1878, Louis Riel mentions two men who may have been nephews of Marie-Louise Riel" and cites a passage where Riel mentions tilling with "Georges and Régis" in Keeseville, New York (2013). However, Jobin admits that he was "unable to find any proof that the McGregor-Chénier family ever resided in the region." We have no idea who the "Georges and Régis" in Riel's poem are and even if they were indeed the same Georges and Régis as Chipakijikwe's nephews, all it would prove is that they met Riel in Keeseville. Nevertheless, Malette and Marcotte explicitly agree that it is necessary to corroborate Lalonde's narrative with the available primary and secondary sources, so there is no need to belabour the point further.

des Bois and Maniwaki” in order to hide Riel “her fugitive nephew, from the clutches of the law” (Lalonde 17; qtd. in Malette and Marcotte 51) indicate these events would have taken place in 1873–74. Riel’s age is correctly given as twenty-nine in these years (17).³¹ Malette and Marcotte claim these dates are corroborated by a letter that Riel wrote to his mother on 22 May 1874, which, according to them, indicates he stayed “in the Outaouais region [...] for what seems a period of at least 8–9 months” (50). They also cite a letter from a certain LaRivière dated 17 October 1873 advising Riel to “pass through the countryside at the north of the Ottawa [River], and then until reaching Hull” (51) as corroborating evidence. The authors also find confirmation of Lalonde’s narrative among contemporary descendants whom Malette interviewed. A certain “Mr. Benoît Guilbault and Mrs. Lilian Cyr (herself a descendant of Marie-Louise Riel) [...] described Louis as remembered for canoeing via the 31 Miles Lake and the Poisson Blanc [Whitefish Lake], pausing at Lac Sainte-Marie, to reach Maniwaki before going toward the city of Hull, Québec” (49). I will come back to these geographical references and consider whether it was plausible that Riel was canoeing or even simply moving in ‘a circular formation’ in these areas during the period when he was alleged to have been in Ottawa in 1873–74.

For the moment, it is important to specify that the reason Riel went into hiding was because Edward Blake, a member of the Liberal opposition in the Ontario Legislature, tried to push through a \$5,000 reward for Riel’s capture and arrest in December 1871 (Martel 1984, 139; Siggins 1994, 208–9). After the Liberals formed the government the following year, this \$5,000 reward was officialised on 9 March 1872 (Stanley 1985, 178; Siggins 1994, 210). While Riel had to be cautious about his movements in Manitoba following the Resistance of 1869–70, he did not actually go into exile until 22 February 1872, when he left for St. Paul, Minnesota (Martel 1984, 138). It was not until a warrant for Louis Riel and Ambroise Lépine’s arrest was issued on 14 September 1873 (Stanley 1985, 191–2) that Riel had to effectively go into hiding. When Member of Parliament, Georges-Étienne Cartier passed away on 20 May 1873, a by-election was held and Riel won the seat on 13 October 1873 (Siggins 1994, 223; Stanley 1985, 195). As Goudreau (2018, 249) has observed, this time line invalidates the claim in Lalonde’s manuscript that Riel “arrived at [Chipakijikwe’s daughter] Elizabeth’s home [in High Falls near Val-des-Bois] during the celebrations of the Feast of St. John the Baptist [June 24th]” (18).

Since Riel’s return trip in May 1874 took ten days, we can estimate that Riel did not arrive in Montréal until around 31 October. Upon arrival, Riel immediately met Alphonse Desjardins³² (editor-in-chief of *Le Nouveau Monde*) and politician Honoré Mercier (future premiere of Québec). The three then left for Ottawa (Martel 1984, 140; Siggins 1994, 224)

31 Lalonde gives Chipakijikwe’s age as sixty-four years, but this would make her birth year 1809. Earlier in the narrative, Lalonde’s wrote she was 15 when she was married à la *façon du pays* circa 1822 or 1826 (14), which would put her birth date between 1807 and 1811. Again, none of these dates correspond to the five dates in the archival records, the latest of which is 1804.

32 According to Linteau (1998), the Masson and Desjardins families were linked in numerous ways. The Massons were Louis Riel’s patrons and had sponsored his studies at the Collège de Montréal.

where they met at Hubert Paré's house in Hull (Stanley 1985, 197).³³ When they tried to cross the bridge from Hull to Ottawa, Riel lost his nerve and immediately returned to Montréal (Stanley 1985, 198). By all accounts, Riel was suffering from emotional and physical exhaustion at this point and retired to Plattsburgh, New York on 4 November to recuperate (Martel 1984, 140), where he would spend the month of November (Siggins 1994, 224–5; Stanley 1985, 198). He then spent December in Keeseville, New York (Siggins 1994, 225). This is also confirmed in a letter he wrote his mother from Keeseville (1985a, 287).

By 1 January 1874, we know that Riel had returned to Plattsburgh since he composed a letter to Archbishop Taché from there (1985a, 295) and another to Ignace Bourget, the Bishop of Montréal, the following day (in which he spoke of his “santé un peu faible”) (1985a, 297). He was still ill when he met Bourget on 8 January in Montréal and begged the latter to heal him (Martel 1984, 140; Siggins 1994, 225–6). He then briefly returned to Plattsburgh where he addressed another letter to Bourget sometime between 10 and 16 January (321). He returned to Montréal in late January where he first stayed with his uncle John Lee, then Alphonse Desjardins and finally Dr. Lachapelle (Martel 1984, 141; Siggins 1994, 226; Stanley 1985, 199). It was also during this period in mid-winter 1874 that Riel wrote and published two long tracts. The first, which was on the amnesty question, was written while in Keeseville (1985a, 317) and was published in *Le Nouveau Monde* on 4 February 1874 (317 n1). The second (1985a, 323–8, 328–346), a reply to J.S. Lynch on the amnesty question, was written in Montréal and published in *Le Nouveau Monde* on 12 March 1874 (346 n1).

Riel won his seat again in Provencher during a general election on 13 February (Martel 1984, 141; Stanley 1985, 201). On 25 March, Riel returned to Hull (Stanley 1985, 201). On 30 March, Riel crossed the bridge from Hull to Ottawa, in the company of Alphonse Desjardins and a former schoolmate, Jean-Baptiste-Romauld Fiset (Martel 1984, 141; Siggins 1994, 230; Stanley 1985, 202). He did not remain in the Ottawa area, but immediately fled to Montréal, arriving in L'Abord-à-Plouffe in Laval at 4am (Stanley 1985, 204). Riel's whereabouts in April are unclear, but he was definitely not skulking around the backwoods of the Ottawa River. Stanley has him in Saint-Hyacinthe for a short period (1985, 205) almost 300 kilometres east of the Outaouais. In any event, he left for St. Paul, Minnesota on 9 May and arrived on 19 May 1874 (Martel 1984 141; Stanley 1985, 205). This was three days before the aforementioned letter to his mother on 22 May. As this brief perusal of mainly secondary sources clearly illustrates, these are not at all “rarely discussed events [...] during a relatively obscure period of his life,” as Malette and Marcotte claim (2017, 45).

Coming back to Riel's letter to his mother dated 22 May 1874, he did in effect inform his mother that, since the autumn of 1873, he had spent almost all of his time in the vicinity of Ottawa (1985a, 351–2). However, according to at least two of his biographers, Riel did not leave St. Vital for Montréal until 21 October 1873 (Siggins 1994, 223; Stanley 1985, 195) and probably arrived around 31 October 1873. Riel's health problems, his immediate return to Montréal after he arrives in the Ottawa region, the short time frame (fifteen days) of his known travel between St. Vital (Manitoba), Montréal (Québec), Ottawa (Ontario), Mon-

33 Alphonse Desjardins was married to Justine-Virginie Paré, daughter of merchant Hubert Paré (1803-1869) (Linteau 1998). The Hubert Paré here was undoubtedly his son and Desjardins brother-in-law.

tréal and Plattsburgh (New York), as well as the fact that he was accompanied by Honoré Mercier and Alphonse Desjardins during his first trip to Hull in early November 1873, all combine to indicate that he could not possibly have canoed to Hull at this time “via the 31 Miles Lake and the Poisson Blanc, pausing at Lac Sainte-Marie, to reach Maniwaki before going toward the city of Hull, Québec” (Malette and Marcotte 2017, 49).

Similarly, according to the timeline provided in Stanley’s biography, Riel’s second visit to Hull at the end of March 1874 only lasted five days, and again given the amount of ice normally covering the entirety of Thirty-One-Mile Lake, Whitefish Lake and Lac Sainte-Marie at this time of year, it is doubtful that he canoed to Hull through these waterways or travelled in a circular motion. Given the proximity of Buckingham to Hull (37 km) and the ease of travel on a well-worn east-west road along the shores of the Ottawa River, it is unlikely that one would make a 282-kilometer detour straight north up the Rivière-du-Lièvre passing through Notre-Dame-de-Salette and High Falls (*Waaboos Ziibi*) all the way up to Val-des-Bois, then to Whitefish Lake—which would require continuing north to Notre-Dame-de-Laus. In addition, it makes no sense to pass through Lake McGregor if one is taking the Rivière-du-Lièvre from Buckingham to Val-des-Bois. There is no obvious canoe passage from Whitefish Lake to Lac Sainte-Marie and the hilly landscape would make for a treacherous portage through late winter conditions. Even if one could, it makes no sense to paddle up and/or follow the Gatineau River to Maniwaki only to double-back down south the Gatineau River to Hull. Furthermore, in order to descend the Gatineau River from Maniwaki to Hull at the time, one would have had to portage repeatedly in the snow to get past some twenty-three rapids and falls (McGregor 2004, 170). It is certainly possible that Riel followed the advice in the LaRivière letter cited by Malette and Marcotte to “pass through the countryside at the north of the Ottawa [River], and then until reaching Hull” and remained on the north shore (Québec side) of the Ottawa River to avoid passing through Ontario. But from there to suggest that he followed a frozen canoe route—one that would have included a couple of dozen major portages and a lengthy hike through the Gatineau Hills at a time of year that normally has the deepest snow cover—is impossible. While Malette and Marcotte seem perfectly aware that “Riel travelled to [...] Keeseville, Plattsburgh, Ottawa, Hull, Montréal, Québec, Trois-Rivières, and Beauport” (2017, 45),³⁴ they don’t seem to realize that he is in these very locations during the exact same time period that Lalonde has him roaming around the Outaouais region. It is certainly true that in “each location, friends, family members, priests, and communities supported Riel” (2017, 45). Indeed, Riel wrote to his mother: “We have friends in Canada, a lot of friends” (1985a, 352).³⁵ However, he stipulated that these friends asked Riel “to pay their respect to all of our family, to all the defenders of our rights, *to all the Métis whom they do not know personally* [...]”.³⁶ It is clear then that Riel did not consider any of the friends in Canada who were

34 It is a bit strange to assert that Riel “travelled” to Beauport when he was interned in an asylum there.

35 My translation.

36 My translation. Emphasis added.

supporting his cause or helping him to be “Métis” themselves. However, the inner circle of friends he was referring to were former schoolmates from the Collège de Montréal and the social network among Québec’s political élite that they and the Masson family opened up for him. Finally, Lalonde’s manuscript has Riel attending a wedding on October 22nd, 1874 (incidentally also Riel’s birthday), but as Goudreau (2018, 249) points out, Riel was in Keesville, New York from October 19th to the 26th (see Riel 1985, 267–268). The available archival evidence simply does not support Lalonde’s narrative that Riel was hiking through the woods and canoeing the waterways north of Ottawa in the period from November 1873 to May 1874. While Malette and Marcotte (2017, 47) do admit that “no document has been found that could establish a connection with the young Marie-Louise and the Riel family,” they nevertheless resort to the conspiracy theory tactic of reversing the burden of proof by asserting that “it is nearly *impossible* to [...] *disprove* a biological connection” (48).³⁷

Conclusion

Malette and Marcotte’s use of hypo-descent essentially reifies a tiny fraction of Indian blood to make an ontological claim that goes something like this: in the very moment that a French-Canadian’s spermatozoid enters any Indigenous woman’s egg, a Métis Being immediately crystallizes through an irreversible transubstantiation that is consequently and subsequently impervious to the world of becoming. In doing so, it is they who effectively represent “nations as natural, unchanging entities” and thereby condone the very “primordialist nationalism” that Malette (2016, 371) has accused other Métis scholars of. Their use of *métissage* as eternally “Métis” is precisely that of “an indelible trait that would survive any amount of admixture” (Wolfe 2001, 887). To put it otherwise, “once mixed, always Métis,” no matter how remote one’s Indigenous ancestry and no matter how tenuous the ties to a historical and contemporary community.

Despite openly promoting a “Métis” identity with very clear French-Canadian-Catholic boundaries, they accuse Métis scholar Chris Andersen of “exclusionary identitarian definitions,” “neo-nationalism” and “homogeneity.” Yet Andersen implicitly admits his peoplehood narrative “glossed over Red River’s division between ‘French-speaking Métis’ and ‘English-speaking Half-Breeds’ (2014, 132), and thereby *includes* the descendants of Scots Half-Breeds in his definition of “Métis” (see also 211, n1). He also explicitly states that, “historically, the Métis Nation was highly multicultural” (2014, 213 n21). Moreover, Andersen is of the opinion that members who “are admitted to Métis organizations under various racialized criteria” but who “cannot trace their genealogies back to Red River [...] should be grandfathered into the organizations new and more nationalist membership criteria” (213, n21). In other words, Andersen’s definition of Métis is arguably more inclusive than Malette and Marcotte’s as well as less homogenous than their Franco-Indian *métissage*, which would limit the definition of Métis to those of French ethnicity, culture and language.

37 Emphasis added.

It is also questionable to reprove Andersen's definition of Métis as "a closed-territorialized ideal of the Métis nation" (2017, 35) when their own definition is also territorially limited to the historical French-Canadian fur trade communities. While these fur trade communities may be spread over a larger geographic area than the Métis homeland, they only include fur-trade forts along rivers, not the entire territory. The Métis homeland includes a territory larger than the three Prairie Provinces, which alone make up a landmass of almost two million km²—roughly five and half times the size of the Federal Republic of Germany or equivalent to half of the twenty-eighty countries of the European Union (4.4 million km²). It is simply not a convincing argument to qualify such an immense geographical area as an "enclosed territory" (38).

As Patrick Wolfe (201, 265) pointed out with regard to Nandita Sharma's portrayal of Indigenous movements in Hawaii, to label them as "neo-racist" suggests not only that a form of "racism has fallen into abeyance" but that the Hawaiian Natives "depict it as requiring renovation." In other words, for something to be "neo-" it has to have first *lapsed* and then been *revived* – which is precisely the case with *neo*-liberalism or *neo*-fascism, for example. None of the contemporary Métis scholars that Malette and Marcotte accuse of "neo-nationalism" propose going back to some older, lapsed form of Métis nationalism. It is rather Malette in particular who, in attempting to *revive* what he sees as Riel's lapsed nineteenth century *French-Canadian* Métis nationalism, is the one promoting a homogenous and primordialist neo-nationalism. As Wolfe (2013, 265) stated, "it would seem that the prefix 'neo-' furnishes [Sharma] with a way to avoid spelling out the inescapable absurdity entailed in her analysis which attributes racism to Native self-defence." Similarly, Malette's use of the prefix "neo-" furnishes him with a way to implicitly attribute "racism" to the Métis when their nationalism is in fact a form of self-defence. To make matters worse, Malette and Marcotte (2017, 62) conclude their article by repeating their accusations of Métis academics using "deplorable tactics," something that makes their "hope for a more constructive dialogue" and "mutual respect" appear somewhat insincere. In doing so, Malette and Marcotte not only portray themselves as a civilizing force in the debate but also implicitly cast Métis scholars as a bunch of barbaric, uncivilized demi-savages who are unable to respect the rules of proper civilized academic debate.

In the title of an earlier version of his article with Marcotte, Malette used the expression "aiābitāwisidjik wī mikākik". The expression comes from Jean André Cuoq's *Lexique de la langue algonquine* (1886, 8) and is translated as "*les Métis veulent se battre*." Malette took this as evidence that "the Algonquin themselves had a term for describing sustained and collective Métis presence in the East (n1). In the more contemporary Fiero (or double vowel) spelling, this would be written as *ayaabitaawizijik wii-miigaakig*. Cuoq also included the transitive verb with an animate subject in the first-person singular, *ābitāwisi* which he translated as "*être à demi, c'est-à-dire moitié blanc, moitié peau-rouge*" (1881, 8). In Anishinaabemowin, *aabita-* literally means "half" while *-izi* means "s/he is in a state or condition," so *aabitaawizi* literally translates as: "s/he is half." The singular nominalized verb form *ayaabitaawizid* means "the one who is half" while the plural form for "the ones

who are half” would be *ayaabitaawiziwaad*. In the case of *ayaabitaawizijik*, the *-jik* is the equivalent of “-ers” in English, so it literally translates as “the halfers”. A literal translation would therefore be: “The halfers want to fight.” It is not the first time in our history that outsiders have attempted to undermine our right to self-determination as a people. As Emma Larocque puts it, “the Métis are a resistance people.” If it’s a fight they want, then it will surely come as no surprise that *Wiisaakodewininiwag ga-nanaakonaawag*: “The Bois-Brûlé will fight back/defend themselves.”

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