

Editorial

We Own Ourselves: Métis-specific Education

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Since the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's summary report and 94 calls to action, educational bodies across Canada have taken seriously the call to advance reconciliation. Provincial curricula have been re-written to attempt to better include the stories of Indigenous peoples' experiences with treaty, residential schools, and settler colonial systems and abuses more broadly. Teacher education programs have included or increased their focus on Indigenous content requirements for all teachers. Some post-secondary institutions have moved to require Indigenous content courses for all students. Within this broad move towards Indigenization, however, the experiences of Métis people are often lost.

There have also been many Métis scholars working over the years on issues of Métis peoplehood, nationhood, and histories, and others still working on a variety of topics that impact Métis peoples, including health, education, law, and natural resources. Within the last five years, a movement towards uniting Métis scholarship and creating a concentrated community of Métis thinkers has taken off, galvanized by biennial scholarly meetings of the Mawachihitotaak research symposium. This movement has included the establishment of *Pawaatamihk: Journal of Métis Thinkers*, an open-access journal in which all first authors, editors, copyeditors, and designers are Métis with demonstrated ties to the historic Métis homeland.

Fig. 1 Map of the Métis Nation homeland (Delgado & Forsythe, 2025)



There have been several Métis-led, Métis-authored edited collections in this time: Andersen and Adese (2021) and Boyer and Chartrand (2022) brought together mostly Métis scholars to discuss, among other things, Métis peoplehood and kinship with other Indigenous nations; Forsythe and Markides (2024, 2025) published volumes of exclusively Métis contributors on a vast array of topics, including identity, research methodologies, and historical and contemporary belonging; and Troupe and MacKinnon's (2024) collection provided biographical profiles of Métis matriarchs, presented through case studies, that offer insights into the strength and resiliency of Métis women.

This blossoming movement is being taken up at universities across Canada and across disciplines, from history to law to health sciences and, thrillingly, to education. This special issue focuses exclusively on issues of Métis education, with pieces from seasoned educators and experienced researchers who have focused on Métis inclusion in education throughout their careers (some for decades!), alongside articles from two emerging Métis graduate students who bring their experiences into conversation with their explorations of Métis and non-Métis theory.

The first article in this special issue pushes back against those who might overlook Métis perspectives. Yvonne Poitras Pratt and Billy-Jo Grant centre their work within their own vast experiences as Métis educators in Alberta, working towards the advancement

of Métis inclusion in provincial curricula and other educational contexts. Poitras Pratt and Grant ask us to consider what we can learn from the experiences of the Métis people, navigating systems that were not made for them and often do not include them. The authors tell the story of how the Métis “have fought to be recognized as Indigenous people,” and the historical and contemporary contexts of these fights, including work happening at provincial and federal levels to ensure the Métis receive adequate representation and resources as an Indigenous people. The authors conclude with a call to other educators to look to Métis-specific educational inclusion while centring the values of relationality, reciprocity, and respect.

Dana Chaulk, another Métis educator and a graduate student in Alberta, asks “How can Métis ways of knowing and being be used to create an education leadership framework that leads to sustainable, equitable, and effective change in education systems?” Through an exploration of decolonizing educational leadership frameworks, Chaulk gestures the reader to tenets which center Métis and First Nations interrelated ways of knowing, while also supporting all students in their educational journeys. The author considers how to situate these leadership frameworks within the principle of *wâhkôhtowin* (or *wahkotowin/wahkootowin*, a *Nēhiyawēwin* and Michif term referring to kinship, or the relations and interrelations between all living and non-living things) and imagines what a framework informed by this principle could look like.

The next article in this special issue brings the concept of *wahkotowin* into conversation with anti-racist education and moves towards racial justice. In their study, authors Carmen Gillies, Nicole Mercereau, and Sheila Pocha partnered with Gabriel Dumont Institute’s Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) and the University of Saskatchewan’s College of Education to deliver five anti-racist workshops with Métis educators. From these conversations, the authors develop a Métis-centred anti-racist education framework, visualized with flower beadwork imagery inspired by traditional Métis material culture. The authors share back the findings from these workshops within this imagery, with the roots representing Métis anti-racist epistemologies, and the leaves representing the ways race and racism appear in these Métis teachers’ experiences: through cultural essentialism, colourism, monoracism, and exploitative exclusion. The metaphor concludes with a description of the eight petals as strategies that the Métis teachers used to confront and disrupt racism in their own practice, presented as combined first-person narratives. Through these strategies, the authors provide concrete

demonstrations of the inextricable link between Métis anti-racism work and survival as a Métis teacher within the K-12 school system.

Laura Forsythe and Arielle Garand's contributions both bring Métis-centred education into focus by exploring the intersection of theory and praxis. Laura Forsythe's article urges educators to move beyond only Métis inclusion in elementary and secondary classrooms that is limited to discussions of Louis Riel, and instead ushers educators towards a more fulsome inclusion of Métis peoples, histories, and perspectives. Forsythe advises educators that it is a "*responsibility* to bring Métis ways of knowing and being into the classroom" (emphasis added) and that inclusion of Métis requires planning, self-learning, and collaboration with Métis peoples. Forsythe guides the reader through what it means to unlearn and build deeper understandings of Métis histories and peoples and drives home the importance of differentiating between Métis experiences across the historic Métis homeland. Through discussion of collaboration with Métis educators, Forsythe profiles those who have been doing this work across Canada and concludes with tangible resources that educators can access and utilise in their own classrooms. Finally, through discussion of authentic Métis inclusion, Forsythe guides educators through tensions and questions that commonly arise when non-Métis educators attempt to include more Métis voices. By providing clear direction to educators who want to know where to begin with the work of centring Métis experiences, Forsythe interrupts the narrative of not knowing where to start.

The next article brings together story and experience to provide an example of what Red River Métis pedagogies can look like. Arielle Garand's article, written from her perspective as a K-12 educator and graduate student, bridges history and contemporary experiences in her own Métis family. The author also makes clear the importance of authenticity in the inclusion of Métis peoples by gesturing to the discourse around so-called "new" Métis and people claiming Métis identity without genuine connection to the Red River or historic Métis nation. As Adese et al (2017) reminded us, it is "indeed the responsibility of settler Canadians to better understand the implications of these settler moves to indigenize, especially as they do so at the expense of the Métis peoples" (p. 2). From this theoretical grounding, Garand explores a variety of Métis inclusion initiatives which she pursued in her various roles in K-12 settings alongside storied retellings of her own Métis family, sharing with us the ways that her Memayre and Pepayre shaped the Métis educator that she has become.

The final article in this special issue reiterates the importance of the preceding pieces exploring Métis education. In our article, Laura Forsythe, Jennifer Markides, and I urge educational researchers to move away from Indigenous umbrella scholarship, or scholarship that does not name the specific Indigenous nations or communities which it relies on, and towards discussing Indigenous scholars and their work as inextricable from their Nations. The authors examine the evolution of Indigenous umbrella scholarship, and the political circumstances which necessitated its existence, tying the evolution of collective organizing for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit to parallel organizing and solidarity movements with the academy. Where these spaces were once essential to have any modicum of Indigenous inclusion, this article argues that we have moved beyond a need for inclusion alone and we need to shift to recognizing the unique knowledges, histories, and cultures of individual First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. The authors provide critiques of their own work, previously having engaged in umbrella scholarship themselves, and provide a way forward for all of those writing with, about, for, and through Indigenous knowledge systems. The authors “envision an academic world where Métis scholars can draw on Métis-specific teaching, knowledges, and scholarship that frame their work from Métis ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies, inclusive of Métis ethics and outputs,” a world which has been reflected in this Métis-centred special issue.

The articles in this special issue challenge us to confront what we thought we knew about Métis education. Within that challenge lies opportunity – a shift towards a different way of approaching Indigenization and reconciliation within education. Where heretofore Métis educational research has remained largely the interest of Métis peoples, organizations, and scholars, I hope that this special issue can act as a catalyst and a jumping off point for deeper and more expansive engagement with Métis educational research.

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