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Self-in-Relation: Seeking Understanding and Transformation through Indigenous Métissage

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Abstract

In this article, I consider the narrative practice of Indigenous Métissage as a creative, subversive praxis to help understand my identity as a settler in Canada and how settler colonialism has shaped my relationship to Indigenous peoples, history, and Land in Canada. Given the hermeneutic roots of Indigenous Métissage, I suggest it is a research approach that can handle the complexities inherent in these relationships while also providing imagination and hope for transformation. I discuss how personal, and family stories can be textually braided with larger national narratives to draw attention to similarities and differences with the hopes of provoking understanding and new ways of seeing Indigenous and settler relations.

Keywords

white settler identity; nursing education; unlearning colonialism; Indigenous Métissage

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In Fall 2024, the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary introduced an Indigenous Framework to guide the preparation of faculty and students to provide culturally safe care for Indigenous peoples (Scott Paul et al., 2025). The Framework connects the four elements of air, fire, earth, and water to key themes: air (self-in-relation); fire (practice principles of service and reciprocity for the benefit of Indigenous peoples, communities, and land); earth (unlearn colonial constructs and renew and repair relationships to land); and water (recognize the ways that anti-Indigenous racism shows up in health care and develop skills to disrupt racism and create cultural safety through cultural humility). In this article, I introduce Indigenous Métissage as a research approach to critically reflect on myself in relation to settler colonialism and systems of power and privilege (the element of air). Such introspection on my identity can feel uncomfortable, however critical self-reflection is a necessary step towards cultural humility. Papaschase Cree Scholar Dwayne Donald (2021) described the impacts of colonization as multiple sites of relationship denial. He invites Canadians to unlearn colonialism by seeking to repair and renew their relationship to land, to Indigenous peoples, to themselves, and the more-than-human world. I consider the narrative practice of Indigenous Métissage as a creative, subversive praxis to help understand my identity as a settler in Canada and how settler colonialism has shaped these important relationships. Settler colonialism is a system predicated on the replacement of Indigenous peoples by settlers who structure society according to their own logics, laws, and mores (Scott Paul et al., 2025; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). Rather than being an event of the past, it is a structure that upholds settler dominance in ways that continue to impact the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Despite the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that raised public consciousness about the Indian Residential School System, educational researchers Mattila et al. (2024) suggested Canada's mainstream society maintains a superficial understanding of their history, their identity as a settler colonial nation, and the implications for Indigenous peoples. They call for the development of tools to disrupt settler ignorance in ways that will dismantle oppressive colonial processes that continue at the expense of Indigenous peoples' wellbeing. As a leader in nursing education and a white settler Canadian, the need for truth-telling — for a renewed understanding of Canadian history and a reimagined, ethical relationship with Indigenous peoples — resonates with me. I recognize the need to interrogate my own understanding of Canada's colonial history, my white settler identity, and my complicity in colonialism. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (1960/1989) stated that understanding begins when something addresses us, when it chooses *you*, calls *you* into its world of past and present. I sensed an inner longing, a call, to *pause* (Patel, 2016) and turn the ethnographic lens inwards to *understand* the ways my white settler colonial upbringing has formed my identity and shaped how I view Indigenous peoples, land, and my position in Canada. I was drawn to Indigenous Métissage as a narrative practice to guide this work.

Indigenous Métissage, as imagined by Papaschase Cree Scholar Dwayne Donald (2012), is a research sensibility grounded in hermeneutics. It welcomes the

> messiness and difficulties of a given situation or context that creates opportunities for new knowledge and understanding to arise…Rather than working to remove ambiguity, hermeneutics works to interpret and give voice to the difficulty and ambiguousness of life itself. (pp. 545-546)

Given the complexities, histories, and contexts that inform the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Canada, hermeneutic imagination helps make sense of the ambiguity without attempting to find easy answers.

My purpose in this self-study was to explore the stories that formed my identity as a settler in Canada with the hopes of finding ways to transform my relationship to self, land, history, and Indigenous peoples. Given the concerns that brought me to this research project and my desire to trouble my understanding of myself within the narrative of Canada, I found myself drawn to Indigenous methodologies that provoke, unsettle, and hold the potential to decolonize the spaces where I live and work. I wanted to trouble the story I believed about Indigenous peoples and heighten my critical consciousness of a particular negativity surrounding Indigenous and settler relations (Donald, 2012). As an educator who works in Indigenous nursing education, I sensed the need to pause my work and enact a creative, subversive praxis to help shift and transform my settler colonial-shaped relationship to peoples, history, and land (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009; MacDonald & Markides, 2018; Tuck, 2016). This was a hermeneutic endeavour.

Locating Myself

I locate myself as a settler coming to this work in a specific time, place, and space. It is from this standpoint and my desire to honour local Blackfoot sensibilities, that I articulate my epistemological, ontological, and axiological orientation. As I commenced this research project, I felt cautious, yet welcomed by Indigenous scholars who invite non-Indigenous scholars to work with Indigenous methodologies in a respectful manner (Donald, 2012; Kovach, 2009). I was reminded of the physical, epistemic, and ontological violences committed against Indigenous peoples and their ways (Donald, 2012). Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) suggested the term *Indigenist* for non-Indigenous scholars whose work aligns with Indigenous peoples' goals for sovereignty, self-determination, and treaty rights. While Cree scholar Sean Wilson (2013), noted Indigenist research works from a worldview that reflects an Indigenous view of reality.

It is important for me to articulate how my beliefs about the world shape my research approach and make visible the assumptions and beliefs that underpin it. I highlight four beliefs. First, I believe that *relationships* are important in how I approach meaning making. The idea of "relational worldview" is often used by Indigenous scholars as a means to understand how relationships extend beyond humans, to include the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996; Donald, 2016; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). Ethical relationships or right relatedness encompass how I position myself in this work, how I enact principles of reciprocity, accountability, and whether I conduct myself in *a good way* (Kovach, 2009; University of Calgary, 2017). This, too, holds true for hermeneutic research which considers context and relationality, and perceives hermeneutics as a response to an ethical call and a responsibility to understand (George, 2020). Transforming my relationships is a central concern that brings me to this work, particularly as it concerns my relationship to myself as a white settler, to Indigenous people, and to land.

I am encouraged to think about relationships differently by Donald's (2016) suggestion that "we need stories and mythologies that teach us how to be good relatives with all our relations- human and more-than-human" (p. 11). I am also drawn to Cherokee scholar Daniel Justice's (2018)

writings about *kinship*. He suggested there is no singular, prescriptive model of kinship for each practice is based on the diversity of Indigenous traditions and is tied to the particularity of place. However, Justice warned that the "dominant colonial stories about kinship are designed to destroy Indigenous peoples' ties to our homelands, to one another, and to our other-than-human relatives, and ultimately serve to transform those lands into exploitable resources and diverse peoples into memories" (p. 84). Drawing on Justice's work, I find myself looking for generative and transformative ways of being in relationship.

Second, I believe in being open to transformation and growth. Just as I believe the universe is governed by natural laws that include dynamic cycles of transformation and renewal, I believe there is opportunity for transformation and renewal within myself and within relationships. Donald (2009) suggested epistemological assumptions or colonial logics divide the world according to racial and cultural categories (Willinsky, 1998). I look for life-giving ways to counter these logics. I am drawn to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, connecting, and doing as a place of renewal and rejuvenation (University of Calgary, 2017). I believe in the mystery of prayer and ceremony to transform; "through prayer and ceremony, we participate in the natural patterns and renew intimate relationships with those entities that give us life" (Donald, 2009, p. 14). I remain hopeful and open to the ways transformation may be realized and lived out through this project. In many regards, this is akin to the hermeneutic notion of *aletheia* which means to open, unconceal and reveal, enliven, and remember (Moules, 2015; Moules et al., 2015).

Thirdly, I consider my beliefs about truth and reality. Though I believe in a Creator who is all-knowing, I believe that truth and reality are far too complex to be captured in a single truth. I come to understand knowledge as deeply interconnected, and interdisciplinary. What can be known is based on our interpretation of the world. Ontologically, I believe that knowledge is inherently subjective. As I seek to understand the complexity of human beings, I am drawn to methodologies that allow for, even celebrate, complexity.

Finally, I consider the influence of my beliefs about time. Though my colonial upbringing has deeply embedded an understanding of time as linear, through teachings of Indigenous Elders and community members, I have come to understand time as cyclical as well as linear. If time is also viewed as a spiral, events from long ago may be much nearer than they seem from a linear perspective. This understanding of time resonates with my lived experience, ergo, I embraced both a linear and cyclical perspective of time as I entered a research project where I considered the past, present, and future possibilities and complexities of settler-Indigenous relations.

The topic of my study and the questions that concerned me brought me to Indigenous approaches to research. Employing Indigenous methodologies in addressing my research topic provided me with the tools and considerations I need to examine my topic fully and responsibly, respecting Indigenous ways of knowing, being, connecting, and doing (Donald, 2012, Kovach, 2009; University of Calgary, 2018). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) noted that following local cultural protocols, values, and behaviours are an integral part to Indigenous methodologies. I situated my work in this territory by respecting the protocols and teachings about Territorial Acknowledgements, smudging, offering tobacco, and praying I received from Blackfoot Traditional Knowledge Keeper Adrian Wolfleg of Siksika Nation and Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe of Piikani Nation.

Indigenous Métissage

As I consider Métissage as a hopeful practice to help guide my transformation as a settler, I draw on Hasebe-Ludt et al.'s (2009) description of Métissage as:

> a counternarrative to the grand narratives of our times, a site of writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages, particularly in colonial contexts; a way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy, and pedagogical practice. (p. 9)

The term, Métissage, suggests some degree of mixing or heterogeneity (Donald, 2012; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). More specifically, I am drawn to Indigenous Métissage as understood by Donald. Rather than a picture of post-colonial hybridity or universalized homogenization that erases Indigenous identity in Canada, Indigenous Métissage circumvents colonization's assimilatory forces by paying "closer attention to the particular character of colonial discourses in specific Canadian contexts" (Donald, 2012, p. 541). In Donald's imagination of Indigenous Métissage, particularities of Indigenous places, knowledges, and identities are made visible as they are juxtaposed with the realities of coloniality. Personal and family stories are textually braided with larger national narratives to draw attention to similarities and differences with the hopes of provoking understanding and new ways of seeing Indigenous and settler relations. Though Indigenous Métissage is to be informed by Indigenous values, ethics, and ways of knowing, this does not limit the practice to Indigenous peoples. However, this type of inquiry is about particular relationships and particular places and must be interpreted in a Canadian context.

Metaphor

Donald (2012) suggested there are many metaphors that inform the research sensibility of Indigenous Métissage. Metaphors can be juxtaposed and then connected through interpretation in a process that attends to the complexities of colonial engagements, prompts shifts in historical consciousness, and enacts ethical relationality. Donald suggests research attend to the particularities of place by choosing metaphors that align with the research context. As a scholar working in Blackfoot Territory, the metaphor that I drew from was the braid of sweetgrass.

Métissage as Braiding

Indigenous Métissage is both a process and a product, a research sensibility and a methodology (Donald, 2012). The metaphor of braiding is commonly used to help explain what processes are involved in Métissage work and what the product might look like (Donald, 2012; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). The tangible image of a braid helped me to make sense of this emergent, complex, and adaptive approach to research. Bringing disparate elements of text together in ethically relational ways to draw attention to differences and similarities while imagining a better way forward is made more tangible when expressed as a concrete image.

Artifacts

To provide an opening into understanding the unique character and complexity of the particular place of concern in the inquiry, Donald (2012) suggested researchers use artifacts that are *indigenous* to the place and hold symbolic yet different meaning to both Indigenous peoples and settlers. Donald considers artifacts to be products of culture that holds socio-cultural and historical meaning or significance. Doing Indigenous Métissage "involves interpretation of the significance of an artifact to a place by showing how Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives of the artifact and place are both rooted in perspectives of colonial constructs and histories" (p. 543). An artifact might be a natural object such as a rock, or an object crafted by humans such as a painting or photograph. By attending to the difficulties and complexities of the Indigenous and Canadian relationship and acknowledging and comprehending difference, ethical relationality is fostered.

Place

In addition to artifacts, Donald (2012) stressed the importance of locating inquiry such as Indigenous Métissage in a particular place and context. Indigenous peoples in Canada were displaced from their land through colonization and Indigenous Métissage works to decolonize educative spaces by reclaiming and highlighting the importance of Indigenous relationship to places and spaces. A central goal of Indigenous Métissage is to draw attention to specific place-stories in a way that prompts settlers to rethink and reframe their understanding of history, place, and Indigenous/settler relations (Donald, 2012).

Ethical Relationality

Donald (2012) stressed the importance of ethical relationality when enacting Indigenous Métissage. Ethical relationality is an "ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (p. 535). Cree scholar, Willie Ermine (2007), conceptualized this ethical way of relating across difference as ethical space.

> It is argued that the ethical space, at the field of convergence for disparate systems, can become a refuge of possibility in cross-cultural relations and the legal order of society, for the effect of shifting the status quo of an asymmetrical social order to a partnership model between world communities. The new partnership model of ethical space, in cooperative spirit between Indigenous peoples and Western institutions, will create new currents of thought that flow in different directions and overrun the old ways of thinking. (p. 203)

The work of Indigenous Métissage, the reflecting on and reframing of complex historical and current relations between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians in a way that is more truthful, helps to foster the creation of an ethical space where Indigenous peoples and settlers can be fully present. As Donald (2009) noted, "if colonialism is indeed a shared condition, then decolonization needs to be a shared endeavour" (p. 5).

Hermeneutic Imagination

Donald (2012) acknowledged the role of hermeneutics in his conceptualization of Indigenous Métissage. He draws on four requirements developed by David Geoffrey Smith that must be attended to by researchers engaging in interpretive work: a deep, critical attentiveness to how language is used; a willingness to deconstruct interpretations of the world while proposing creative alternatives for ways of thinking and acting; a historical consciousness and openness to consider how they, as a researcher, are implicated in the research; and a willingness to discover meaning through interpretation rather than simply reporting their findings. Hermeneutic imagination is a creative inquiry that makes meaning tangible in new ways while remaining cognizant of the past, the present context, and the multiplicities of perspectives. This level of attentiveness to the ambiguity and difficulty of life fits well with Indigenous Métissage as it "restores life to its original difficulty. Hermeneutics is an attempt to stick with the original difficulty of life and not to betray it" (Caputo, 1987, p. 1). The past and present relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadians are restored to their original *difficulty*.

> The central difficulty of these relationships stems from the displacement of Indigenous peoples in their own lands and systemic attacks on Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life justified under the guise of progress, development, and the spread of universalized liberal democratic values. (Donald, 2012, pp. 546-547)

Indigenous Métissage is an *imaginative, interpretive sensibility* fueled by the desire to understand and imagine a different way forward; a different way of being in relationship that restores "artifact and place with renewed vitality and significance for both parties" (p. 547). The intention of Indigenous Métissage texts is to inspire readers to examine how they are implicated in their own stories; to seek to understand and make critical connections to the narrative of Canada and transform how they are in relationship.

Positioning (Self)

As a faculty member who helps implement the TRC Calls to Action (2015) related to nursing education and the Faculty of Nursing's Four Elements Indigenous Framework (Scott Paul et al., 2025), I have a keen interest in transforming my understanding of Canada's history and my responsibilities as a settler educator using my family's story as an entry point. My family's story is a quintessential Canadian settler story with connections to homesteading, Indian Residential School, and the Sixties Scoop. However, the reality of this history and the impacts on Indigenous peoples were hidden by settler colonial logics that erases the Indigenous perspectives, obscures atrocities, and normalizes settler dominance. I viewed my own white settler identity and my potential for transformation as justification for taking the time to pause and turn the ethnographic lens towards myself (Patel, 2016).

Research Positionality

I was born in Calgary and am a third generation Canadian to a middle-class family. My father was born on his family's homestead in Northern Alberta just days before moving to Vancouver Island, and my mother was born in a rural town in Northern British Columbia. They later moved

to Calgary for work and started a family. I can trace both family lines to their ancestral roots in Europe, to Scotland, England, and Germany. In 2014, as a graduate student in nursing, I began to learn a more truthful narrative of Canada's historical legacy; one that included stories about Indian Residential Schools. These stories provoked me to replay the stories I had been told about where my grandparents worked. Suddenly, I realized the "boarding schools" were in fact Indian Residential Schools. This realization started me on a journey of deconstruction regarding my white settler identity and the stories that formed me. Though it was painful to admit, I was becoming increasingly aware that the education I had received (from my family, schooling, and society) was neither truthful nor sufficient. My education was underpinned by the assumptions of Terra Nullius, settler nativism, and Indigenous erasure (Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a nurse educator at the University of Calgary with responsibilities to teach about the legacy of colonization and its impact on Indigenous peoples, I recognized my need for re-education and transformation. I saw benefit in an intentional *pause* to critically reflect on my story, *who* I am, and *how* I come to the work of reconciliation and decolonizing educative spaces (Patel, 2016). As Mi'kmaw scholar Michelle Scott Paul and colleagues (2025) suggest, "who we are matters. Where we come from matters. The stories that form us matter…The goal is to become fully human, which means we need to know where we come from to know our responsibilities and the way forward" (p. 4).

Doing Métissage

Donald (2012) noted that "Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility that is against prescribed method but instead requires *aokakio'ssin* or careful attention to the details of the research context with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told" (p. 544). Donald pushes against the idea that Indigenous Métissage is a methodology that can be used. Instead, he encourages scholars to enact or "do" Indigenous Métissage. For me, Indigenous Métissage called for a flexibility that aligned with my beliefs in plurality, transformation, and the importance of ethical relationality.

Data Generation

In many ways, data generation in Indigenous Métissage is an organic process that is interconnected with and inseparable from interpretation (Donald, 2016). To prepare myself for writing, I took purposeful steps such as: offering tobacco and prayer in accordance to the teaching I received; choosing sites that were significant to my settler story; researching about the site to learn its history from both a colonial and Indigenous perspective; spending time at a site, reflecting on the significance of the place to my settler story and to Indigenous history; choosing an artifact of significance to the settler story; and writing in a reflective journal about my thoughts, reactions, assumptions, beliefs, and responses. I intentionally prepared myself for the writing process and took time to note my reactions, particularly areas of openness and resistance.

Indigenous Métissage does not have a set formula or approach, nor a delineated stage of data collection and interpretation (Donald, 2012). My goal in data generation was to produce individual texts such as life writing, stories, essay, poetry, and photography with text that articulated the context, history, lived experience, and transformation of my white settler identity. I collected a variety of documents: photographs, newspaper articles, and historical documents from multiple

colonial and Indigenous sources. I maintained a daily journaling practice throughout my research process to record self-observations and self-reflective data. I used the self-reflective data as a means to locate myself within the story of my family, society, and history (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). I also used the self-reflective data as a means of recording my reactions and transformations as I was interested to see the ways embodied narrative practices acted as facilitators to my self-discovery and transformation and the ways my white settler identity acted as a barrier to transformation. These documents did not directly transfer word-for-word into my writing; however, they informed my textual narratives.

Document Analysis

Data analysis and interpretation are difficult to separate from data generation in Indigenous Métissage because interpretation begins at the point the researcher decides what to write and how. Despite this, I engaged in document analysis to analyze photographs, relevant newspaper articles, and historical documents that informed my textual narratives using Maccarella's (2019) three step process: summarize, analyze, and criticize. I considered why the document mattered and critically analyzed the source and its relationship to the context from which it came. I was particularly interested in the ways white settler identity, Indigenous identity, and the land were present, absent, and shaped through discourses. Thus, I attended to both what was said and not said in the documents, as it related to Indigenous and settler understanding of historical events, relationships, and place.

I also considered Moules et al.'s (2015) suggestion that "good interpretive work should disclose something about the meaningful existence of the interpreter and the world" (p. 119) with the goals of deepening understanding and changing practice. Interpretive analysis is a deliberate attempt to listen for particulars of experience and thoughts, involving rich descriptions, exemplars, and counter-stories. It is both deconstructive and reconstructive, highlighting questions about how and why things have come to be what they are while also opening up new possibilities for a better way forward. Maintaining an openness to possibilities provided the basis of interpretive analysis as I leaned into the idea that, "we never come to thoughts. They come to us," (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 6).

Story Writing

The narratives created for use in an Indigenous Métissage are part data generation, data analysis, and they inform the final product. The two processes of data generation and analysis were inseparable as I made decisions and judgements about my story as I wrote it. To produce these narrative texts, I spent time reflecting, imagining, and writing through the stories that arose within me. I drew on Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) practice of story writing as "honoring the location of the self" through creative, critically reflexive narratives that "can evoke deeper parts of the self, heal wounds, enhance sense of self—or even alter one's sense of identity" (pp. 1419-1420). I considered the ways I came to make sense of my story, the voices I used (and the absences), the ways I addressed credibility, and how I engaged myself and the reader in the important topic of white settler identity.

Strands: Four Narrative Approaches

I employed different narrative genres such as life writing, stories, essay, poetry, and photography with text. Like individual strands of hair that form a braid, the four different approaches to revisiting the settler stories that formed me were as follows: autobiographical life writing (Chambers et al., 2009; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009); cultural and historical perspectives (Donald, 2012); relational renewal with place or *aoksisowaato'p* (Blood et al., 2012); and re-storying (Absolon & Willet, 2005; Justice, 2018).

Strand One: Life Writing

Inspired by the work of Ted T. Aoki and the concept of lived/living curriculum, life writing is a textual practice that uses creative, contemplative approaches to autobiographical writing (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). Life writing includes a mix of genres such as memoir, poetry, poetic prose, story, journaling, essay, and letters. I was drawn to this style of writing inquiry because it promotes a generative space where I could locate myself within the worlds I inhabit—to better understand who I am and how I am in relation to others in the world (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). Using reflective writing, I paid careful attention to my life and chronicled it in different ways with the purpose of understanding myself as a part of a network of ethical relations (Donald, 2021).

I imagined the process of life writing to be much like the slow, careful, purposeful act of brushing out a long section of hair. As a brush traces and retraces the lines of the hair, not pulling too hard or forcing the brush through messy knots, I used text to trace and retrace the settler stories that formed me "to better understand who and how [I am] in relation to others in the world" (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 3). I located myself within the settler story of Canada, drawing attention to the colonial logics that have shaped me and influenced my relationship with Indigenous peoples and their history (Donald, 2012).

Strand Two: Cultural and Historical Perspectives.

In one of his first published articles about Indigenous Métissage, Donald (2009) warned of the consequences of settler's living from a reductive national narrative of Canada that positions Indigenous peoples as outsiders. This idealized conceptualization of Canadian history weighs heavily on Indigenous peoples by maintaining colonial logics and perpetuating the myth of Terra Nullius. In this strand, I attended to cultural and historical stories that reframed my historical understanding of Canada's history and fostered a renewed openness to seeing Indigenous peoples. I considered and contrasted settler and Indigenous understanding and relationship to land. Returning to the image of brushing out long hair before braiding, I slowly and purposefully retraced the history of my settler story, including historical and cultural context. I purposefully juxtaposed mythic historical perspectives from a settler perspective with Indigenous historical perspectives.

Strand Three: Aoksisowaato'p

The late Narcisse Blood, a scholar and ceremonialist from Piikani Nation, and his colleagues (2012) referred to the Blackfoot concept *aoksisowaato'p* as a guiding principle for personally and intimately connecting with the land and stories linked to specific places. *Aoksisowaato'p* refers to the "ethical importance of visiting a place as an act of relational renewal that is life-giving and life-sustaining, both to the place and to ourselves" (p. 48). As I considered the ways by which to transform my white settler identity and way of relating to land, I was drawn to this concept. I wanted to learn the stories of each place and come to know the place. Colonialism severs the connections between people and place and frames land as property to be exploited, so I wanted to counter this troubling legacy by rebuilding my relationship with land. I offered tobacco when I visited the land, spent time with the land, and wrote through my experiences. I was hopeful that the experiences of being on the land and learning its stories would be transformative for me and that my narrative account would prompt transformation in myself and its readers. I came expectantly.

Strand Four: Re-storying.

To counter the dominant stories that construct a particular sense of place which displaces and ignores colonial history and the experience of Indigenous peoples, I re-storyed my family's narrative with a renewed understanding of Canada as an Indigenous nation. This was something my ancestors would not have understood. I considered land as a present character in ways that pushed against my settler conceptualization of land as property (Cass Yorku, 2019). I struggled, in ways, to find the right words to animate the land since, in the English language, this denotes human qualities (Kimmerer, 2013). Instead of living as if Indigenous peoples and land were not present and affected by my ancestor's presence, I countered the null curriculum in my family's settler-colonial story (Flinders et al., 1986). Through the act of re-storying, I attempted to reverse my ancestor's enactment of Terra Nullius by having them engage Indigenous peoples and land as though they were visitors on the land under local Indigenous sovereign authority. I imaginatively engaged in relational responsibility to the First Nations peoples and the land through a growing understanding of kinship (Justice, 2018).

In ways, the act of "re-story-ation" was an attempt to heal my relationship with the land through story (Nabhan, as cited in Kimmerer, 2013). Regan (2010) called Indigenous allies to "restory" the dominant colonial-settler version of history and make space for Indigenous counter-narratives and peacemaking practices. Drawing on Daniel Justice's (2018) understanding of story as a healing practice, I wove together fiction and nonfiction to help make visible the people and land who were invisible in my family's colonial narrative with the hopes of imagining a healthier way of relating. "To remember is a way to re-know and re-claim a part of our life" through storied connection to my ancestors and the land (Cajete, 2017, p. 114).

Preparing to Braid

Denzin (2014) suggested that writing is simultaneously an act of interpretation and method. Sense making or interpretation begins at the point when the qualitative researcher makes the difficult decision on what and how to write through their thoughts and impressions, their field

notes, documents, and experiences. With Indigenous Métissage, writings are revisited, and texts are selected and braided in such a way as to "highlight both points of affinity and dissonance. The braiding becomes an interpretation of the narratives as well as a form of representation and reporting of the research" (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 9). Hasebe-Ludt et al. noted that themes arise organically throughout the writing process and during the thoughtful process of juxtaposing various writing techniques and strategies, affinities and differences, particularly when remaining mindful of "differences in context, history, and memory" (p. 9).

For the first stage of my braid, I revisited the writings I created; I reread them, pondered them, looking for themes, attending to resonances and differences. As I reread the pieces of writing, I considered what ideas echoed, challenged, resonated, stayed with me, or fell away. I listened to my embodied reaction – to emotions, tensions, revelations, and movements, and I took note of particular points of affinity or dissonance within and between different written pieces (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). It was at this point that I engaged *hermeneutic imagination* to help me imagine creative ways of juxtaposing and mixing the texts with the goal to understand more deeply Indigenous and settler relations (Donald, 2012). I traced the *hermeneutic circle* many times as I deconstructed and reconstructed an interpretive account (Donald, 2012; Moules et al., 2015).

Braiding the Texts

In Métissage, the author skillfully and mindfully juxtaposes and mixes narratives and texts to create a novel text that is stronger and more complex than the individual stories and narratives (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009); "such stories demonstrate that relationality and difference can be productively held in tension" (Donald, 2012; p. 548). In the second stage of my analysis, I created four main pieces of writing out of the different storied accounts and pieces of writing. I experimented with sections of narrative texts, interweaving between stories like a braid. I used different fonts to indicate which story was being told. I purposefully interwove sections of text from the four stranded writing pieces (life writing, historical, relational renewal of place, and re-storying) in a way to highlight points of affinity and dissonance. The braiding became "an interpretation of the narratives as well as a form of representation and reporting of the research" (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 9). After I completed the braiding process, I reflected on the teachings it provided me. I considered the themes that came to me by reading the braided text and wrote a reflective piece to capture my thoughts and learnings from each section.

Criteria for Evaluation

Since I engaged in Indigenous Métissage as my research approach, it was important that I also aligned my evaluation criteria with Indigenous methodologies. In her discussion about research validity and credibility, Kovach (2009) drew on the question posed by Indigenous Elders who informed and guided her work: *Are you doing this in a good way? Are you speaking the truth?* To do this, Kovach suggested, is "to tend to the process in a good way, so that no matter the outcome you can sleep at night because you did right by the process" (p. 52). Kovach encouraged researchers to use accessible language and to represent findings of research in story. This aligned well with my choice to use story and locally acceptable and recognizable metaphors. I also ensured that I located myself in relation to others throughout my work.

Given that Indigenous Métissage is a creative, narrative, textual practice with its roots in hermeneutics, I drew on the criteria of rigour in research described by Moules et al. (2015). Using a hermeneutical approach, Moules et al. considers the criteria of validation, veracity, and transferability when appraising hermeneutic research. Ethical validation is an "appraisal of whether the research findings inform and transform practice and assist us in doing things differently" (p. 173). Veracity of hermeneutic work refers to the credibility of the accounts. Given that I drew from my own memory, family stories, and archival records, I aimed to create accurate versions of the stories, ensuring that the storylines, characters, and language used were as credible as possible. Though generalizability is often a criterion for evaluation of research, Moules et al. suggested transferability is more appropriate for hermeneutic-based studies. Transferability considers how the findings of the research can apply to contexts outside the study situation. By using evocative, compelling language to describe my settler narratives – the settings, relationships, and stories – I invited the reader "to enter into, engage with, experience or connect with" my story and find resonances with their own story (Le Roux, 2017, p. 2014). This "ringing of truth" may lead the reader to recognize a sense of kinship or affinity with the interpretations whereby the interpretations speak to them in a way that feels valid and recognizable (Moules et al., 2015). Moules et al. suggested rigid and inflexible adherence to method is replaced by "careful attention to the treatment of topics such that the work engenders trustworthiness and believability" (p. 172). By choosing documents from both colonial and Indigenous perspectives, I drew on Indigenous sources to illuminate and counter the logics that informed colonial perspectives and thus enhanced the study's credibility.

Ethical Considerations

It is often thought that since autobiographical, life writing is essentially a self-study, it does not impose harm or cross established ethical boundaries (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). However, since stories are constructed using social interactions with others, ethical considerations must be acknowledged. I considered the ethical perspectives of the people who were factored into the creation of my stories, ensuring that no harm towards myself or others arose from the data (Ellis, 2007). I followed the principle of relational ethics that requires researchers to "act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and consequences" (Ellis, 2007, p. 3).

Limitations and Delimitations

Given the hermeneutical roots of Indigenous Métissage, the limitations of this study align with those commonly found in hermeneutics. Hermeneutic research is an interpretive approach that seeks to understand rather than explain (Laing et al., 2020). Moules et al. (2015) suggested this approach is often constrained by its openness to possibilities and resistance to solid conclusions. A limitation of this study lay in the fact that, as one person's journey, my story may not resonate – or be transferable – with those who read it. Though generalizability is not a goal of this study, I hope that readers will feel they are invited to think *with* my story, whether or not their own story and experiences resonate with my story. I hope it might be an aperture or starting point for their own reflection on their identity and place in Canada, particularly if they are settlers.

Conclusion

As I reflect on the challenge of engaging in a relational, interpretive, research praxis that caused me to rethink my identity and my way of being in the nation of Canada, I am encouraged by the words of Donald (2012):

> Doing Indigenous Métissage requires work with artifact, place, and context in the hope that a story will emerge that will need to be told. To weave this story requires a provocative juxtaposition of Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints to bring about a shift in the critical consciousness of writer and reader, storyteller and listener. Such relationality needs to happen in theory because it has not been perceived and appreciated in the daily interactions and practices of living together in this place we call Canada. It has been concealed by colonial frontier logics. We must first reread and reframe colonial constructs in order to see more clearly the language and logics that have clouded our thinking. Such theorizing will help deconstruct the colonial frontier logics of inside/outsider and facilitate meaningful reconstruction through sustained engagement that traverse perceived civilizational divides. Only then will the stories linking Aboriginal peoples and Canadians revitalize relationships with a common sense of place. (pp. 549-550)

The goal of Indigenous Métissage is to tell a more truthful account of Canadian history and of the current state, particularly in light of the ways these stories impact Indigenous peoples. In many ways, these stories form us and shape how we relate to the world around us (Donald, 2012). As a third-generation Canadian and a descendant of pioneers who homesteaded in the prairies, my family's story exemplifies Canada's settler-colonial nationhood. By examining my family's stories, I uncovered the hidden curriculums and colonial structures that maintain settler dominance over Indigenous peoples and lands in Canada. I re-storyed my family's narratives to imagine a better way forward for settler/Indigenous relations. Indigenous Métissage is a research approach that speaks specifically to the Canadian context; about local places and artifacts; about the relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada; and the relationship between humans and the more-than-human (Donald, 2012). It is a research approach that can handle the complexities inherent in these relationships while also providing imagination and hope for transformation. As a nurse educator, I take seriously my responsibility to understand who I am in relation to settler colonialism and systems of power and privilege. As Lakota/Dakota Elder Evelyn Good Striker teaches, the healing begins with me (Scott Paul et al., 2025).

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