"THERE'S PEOPLE WHO NEED TO HEAR MY WORDS" : HOW HIP-HOPPING, QUEER MÉTIS YOUTH SEE THEMSELVES

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ABSTRACT. This article focuses on the ways queer Métis youth who participate(d) in hip-hop cultures come to think about themselves and their identities. Using the voice-centered relational approach to data analysis, I analyze interviews with eight Métis youth conducted through online visiting. I explore the ways that the participants discussed themselves within the I poems created out of the transcripts of our interviews. I discuss the way the participants talked about themselves, whether with confidence or insecurity, and the ways they saw themselves as part of (or not part of) different communities—Métis communities, the Indigenous community more broadly, and hip-hop cultures. This work adds to the small but growing literature on 2SLGBTQ+ Métis youth and research on Métis hip-hop practices.

Keywords. Métis Youth Identity, Hip-hop Cultures, Métis Research Methodologies, Voice-centered Relational Approach, Indigenous Identity Formation

1. POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

When I enter new spaces, I usually introduce myself first in Michif and then in English. Lucy d'ishinikaashon, Winnipeg d'ooshchiin p daañ Winnipeg nii wikiin. En Michif niya. I am Lucy Delgado (née Fowler), I was born and raised in Winnipeg, and I am Métis with citizenship in the Manitoba Métis Federation. My Métis family kayaash were part of the story of this land, taking scrip in St. Andrews, Manitoba, and living for generations in other places in this province. I also have settler ancestry on my biological father's side, who came from Ireland, but I don't know much more than that. The man I call my dad adopted me into his Dakota family, and my mother and I were welcomed in from the time I was four years old. I was raised with ceremonial and cultural traditions of my dad's family and carry many of those teachings with me today. I am also a queer, cisgender woman; for many years, I exclusively used the term bisexual, but under guidance from Métis elders, I now also use the term Two-Spirit.

2. Introduction

The research discussed in this article comes from my doctoral research, during which I spent time visiting with Métis young people with connections to hip-hop cultures such as rapping, DJing, beatboxing, graffiti art, street style, spoken word, and breakdancing (Chang, 2005) and political orientations like hip-hop feminisms (Durham, 2014). Seven of the eight participants were also queer, though not all were comfortable openly claiming that identity. Through the design of this study, the interviews conducted, and the application of the voice-centered relational approach to analysis, a substantial dataset emerged. This article discusses Métis youth identity and the extent to which it is influenced by participation in hip-hop culture.

2.1. **Identity Formation.** The study of identity formation has been an important field of inquiry in psychology for decades. Much of the scholarship traces the field back to Erikson's (1950, 1968) seminal works on childhood development and identity development through the lifespan. Erikson identified three distinct levels of identity (ego, personal, and social) and discussed the levels as building blocks that are followed sequentially. Erikson also considered the ways that outside forces like racism and poverty affect identity development, including the impact that racist laws and policies and forced segregation of Indigenous people had on individual and collective identity development (Erikson, 1968).

Other foundational theories of note include Marcia's (1966) identity status theory, tracing the ego identity on a scale of development, along with identity development based on narrative (McAdams, 1985; Nelson, 1989) and Kohlberg and Kramer's (1969) theory of moral development. Trenchant criticism of these identity theories came from feminist researchers like Carol Gilligan, who had worked with Kohlberg as a research assistant, and was the first scholar to critique previous identity research basing itself in the ways that white, cisgender, heterosexual men navigate the world (Torres & Garcia, 2019). Gilligan's (1982) foundational work pushed back against the trend in psychology for theories to emerge out of work with men and assumed that men's experiences were the measuring stick against which the identity development of women and gender-diverse people should be evaluated.

In the realm of Indigenous psychology, many scholars have also critiqued these identity paradigms centred around white male experiences. Duran and Duran (1995) saw the field of psychology itself as "the enforcement branch of the secularized Judeo-Christian myth" (p. 7) and argued not for cross-cultural application of psychology to Indigenous communities but a psychological practice centered in Indigenous worldviews and histories. A. Wilson (1996) pointed out that although there were scholars addressing homophobia and racism in their discussions of identity development, they did not "describe the effects of the simultaneous experience of homophobia and racism" (p. 309, emphasis in original) that queer Indigenous peoples face. Indigenous psychology scholar Blume (2020) rejects the idea of the individual or self as being of central importance to identity development for Indigenous peoples, and instead advocates for an Indigenous

identity theory centred on the collective that acknowledges the relationships between different elements in the world, including those between humans and non-humans. In his discussion of Canadian Indigenous identity formation, Frideres (2008) identifies psychological models centered on attachments caused by colonization, primordialism (attachments based in real or perceived belonging in a community), and symbolic interaction focused on socialization as three relevant pillars of thought. Duran and Duran, Wilson, Plume, and Frideres each engage in different theoretical frameworks but all agree that Indigenous identity development cannot be subsumed under the umbrella of identity theory more broadly.

Much of the recent literature specific to Métis identity focuses on one of the major threats to Métis nationhood: that is, the emergence of the "Eastern Métis" and a seemingly endless wave of people "discovering" an Indigenous ancestor and claiming access to Métis identity through that connection (Gaudry & Leroux, 2017; Leroux, 2019; O'Toole, 2020). Other Métis identity research touches on historical Métis identities (Duval, 2008; Ens, 2018; Ens & Sawchuk, 2016; Hogue, 2015; Macdougall, 2006; Macdougall et al., 2012; Midtrod, 2010; St-Onge, 2009), political or legal identities (Adese, 2011; Andersen, 2014; Chartrand & Boyer, 2021; Ens & Sawchuk, 2016; Green, 2011; Macdougall et al., 2012; Sawchuk, 2001), identities in fiction (Smulders, 2006), traditional or cultural identities (Campbell, 1973; Cyr, 2018; Farrell Racette, 2004; Fiola, 2015, 2021), and adult Métis identities and experiences (Adese et al., 2017; Forsythe, 2022; Laliberte, 2013; Legault, 2021; Richardson, 2006). The body of narrative and scholarly literature on Métis identity is growing to a meaningful degree, but only a few works focus specifically on Métis youth identity (Campbell, 1973; Fowler, 2017, 2019; Scofield, 1999).

3. Methodology

This exploration into queer Métis youth identity formation comes from a qualitative research study conducted in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Developed as part of my doctoral research, the methodology of this work was originally intended to be in person, with a focus around building community and kinship connections. I had imagined gatherings of young, 2SLGBTQ+ Métis folks in community spaces, feasting together and creating relationships. I envisioned a space like the ones Gaudet (2019) described when talking about an Indigenous research methodology based in visiting. In Métis culture (and in Indigenous cultures more broadly), visiting is an important way to rebuild and strengthen relationships, as well as an informal space in which a lot of work is done (Flaminio, Gaudet, & Dorion, 2020; Gaudet, 2019; LaVallee et al., 2016). Visiting includes sharing food together, telling stories, and passing time. I had developed a research proposal that include all of these elements, and a co-creation of a project through which queer Métis youth could share their identities and connections to hip-hop, but before I could begin data collection, Canada had shut down as a pre-cautionary measure against a global pandemic. Research plans were reconfigured, ethics were amended, and this research project finally came to

be. The project received ethics approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board, and support from the Two-Spirit Michif Local of the Manitoba Métis Federation.

This research is framed around a relational Indigenous paradigm (Fiola, 2021; Gaudet, 2019; Kovach, 2009; S. Wilson, 2008). Many scholars have written about kitchen table gatherings as a metaphor for research, including in Black feminist (Bennett, 2006; Davis, 1999; Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015; B. Smith, 1989), Latina/Mestiza queer feminist (Delgado Bernal, 2001), and Indigenous communities (Ferland, 2022; J. T. Johnson, 2008; Mattes, 2016, 2021). Key to kitchen table gatherings in research is a focus on relational, informal, and community space (J. T. Johnson, 2008).

As this research was reimagined in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, I considered ways in which relationship and community building could be carried out digitally (Brown & Crutchfield, 2017; Jackson et al., 2018; Libster et al., 2010; Pinkett, 2000; Thomsen et al., 2021) and how I could enact a protocol of visiting online. Without being able to connect in person, we visited online, and any trepidation I felt about the efficacy of online visiting quickly vanished. Each conversation felt so comfortable, as if it could have taken place at any Métis community gathering. I was purposeful in sharing of myself before asking the participants to share and tried to create a kitchen table atmosphere through our screens. These conversations were all recorded on Zoom and then transcribed through the assistance of Otter.ai.

I employed the voice-centered relational method in sorting and thinking through the data. This method (also referred to as the Listening Guide method) was developed by Carol Gilligan and a number of graduate students from different backgrounds. This method is "designed to facilitate psychological discovery" (Gilligan, 2015, p. 69), both in the analysis of the data and within the researcher, and to prioritize marginalized voices that were generally excluded from research, as outlined above. The voice-centered relational method pulls researchers into relationship with both data and participants, requiring constant self-reflection and self-situating. This method aligns with an Indigenous research methodology through its focus on relationship and relationality (Kovach, 2009; S. Wilson, 2008). It is especially appropriate in working with queer Indigenous youth, as it was designed to be used with communities who "have traditionally been silenced" (Woodcock, 2016, p. 4) and necessitates an abundance of care in reading and re-telling the stories of the participants. Part of this care included a process of member checking, in which I brought the analysis that I performed back to the participants to allow them to review and critique my thoughts or request changes in what was to be published.

Through the voice-centered relational method, the researcher conducts multiple "listenings" of the data where one reads with a mind to hear the speaker instead of hearing to quantify pieces of data. The first listening is to understand what exactly is being told and to notice how the researcher responds to what is being told. The second listening is the creation of an "I poem" by pulling out

all "I" statements and creating a document with each such statement listed in sequential order. This listening is meant to reveal the underlying thoughts and patterns of the speaker, of which even they may not be aware. The final listening is really a series of listenings, each meant to pull out a "contrapuntal voice," or a voice that tells a particular kind of story. There may be opposing voices or several voices that harmonize at different points throughout the data or some combination of the two. Throughout this process, researchers also make notes and memos of their own thoughts, observations, and personal connections that have arisen. With such a robust process for analysis, the voice-centered relational approach helps enrich data throughout the analysis process itself. This article calls on data from all stages of the approach.

The participants in this data are all young Métis people from a variety of backgrounds. The research was intended to be conducted with only 2SLGBTQ+ [1] Métis youth, but one of the eight participants is heterosexual. The other participants use a variety of terms to name their sexuality and gender identity, including pansexual, bisexual, Two-Spirit, gay, omnisexual, and ecosexual. The variety of ancestral backgrounds of the participants reflects the vast Métis diaspora in the land that is currently called Canada, with participants naming ancestral communities across the traditional Métis homelands. Some participants have Métis ancestry on both sides of their families, while others have European, First Nations, or Caribbean heritage. The final unifying theme across participants was an interest in either the production or consumption of hip-hop cultures. This specific subset of Métis youth has not been centred in any previous research, and this work adds to the small but growing body of research on 2SLGBTQ+ Métis youth and the literature on Métis hip-hop cultures.

4. DISCUSSION

The depth of data uncovered through the voice-centered relational approach lends itself to the investigation of a variety of themes. This article focuses solely on the ways in which these eight young Métis people, who all chose to use pseudonyms, form their understandings of who they are and who they want to be. As I went through the rigorous process of analyzing data using the voice-centered relational method, there was a commonality in the different spheres of being in which the participants spoke about themselves. This analysis led to an understanding of identity creation for queer Métis youth as made up of several pieces: how the participants understand themselves as individuals, how they see themselves as part of a community, and how they see themselves and their chosen communities in relation to other communities. With the intention of focusing on both the conscious and subconscious voices of the participants, this analysis is centered on the I poems that were created out of each transcript.

4.1. **How They See Themselves.**

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[1]In this article, the term queer is used to encompass those within the umbrella of 2SLGBTQ+; the terms queer and 2SLGBTQ+ are therefore used interchangeably.

4.1.1. *As Smart, Capable, and Driven.* While reading back the participants' I poems to understand how they saw themselves, I heard several distinct voices. One voice told the participants that they were smart, capable, driven and that they would accomplish great things in their lives. Eve spoke several times about her desire to be a famous artist and what it would take to get there. Even though the prospect of fame can be daunting to some, Eve's I poem is quite confident:

> I want to be
> I just
> I really want that exact thing
> I could be anyone

While she does worry about how she will find her own voice as an artist, Eve also described herself as unique. When I think back to myself at age 18, I was not as confident, but Eve has

> already grown up knowing
> I just kind of am myself
> I guess people figure it out.

Her surety in her identity, at least when talking about her musical career and her sexuality, stands out. Eve is not the only one who expresses this self-confidence around her creative work—Kendel describes how he sees his emerging musical career transpiring:

> I want it to be my work
> I don't want it to be someone else's
> I want to change sound
> I want to not fall into the crowd
> I want when it's my time to shine, it really is mine
> I'm the main show/I'm not the opening act.

Kendel knows that he will be able to create a sound that is entirely his and is sure that it will be something that dazzles crowds. Amber, on the other hand, is most confident talking about her intelligence and drive. She dropped out of high school but resented being treated as if she were stupid when she went to the adult education program to obtain her high school diploma. She remembers feeling like she

> had to make a point ... I'm not stupid
> I'm here
> I just refused to do that ... I'm like, well, this shit is dumb.

Amber knew she was intelligent and did not feel that being in a remedial program was a good use of her time. This is made even more clear when she speaks later about entering university:

> just kind of took all that
> I put it towards university
> I was like

> I'm just gonna focus ... I felt like
> I felt challenged enough ... I started my career
> I started my master's
> I'm focusing.

Amber attributes her success in both her career and in academia to being able to focus her energy on something that challenged and interested her. For Amber, it was (and is) inevitable that she would succeed.

4.1.2. *As Unsure or Insecure.* Another voice that came out in the participants' I poems was unsure, providing nagging doubts and insecurity. For some of the older participants, Isla and Wesley in particular, this voice only came out when reflecting on the past. Isla struggled with being a late reader and writer and having teachers openly question her capabilities. She was also challenged with body image issues at this time in her life, saying

> my body never fit in
> I was always surrounded by tiny white girls.

With brown skin and a larger body, Isla had not found a place for her body to fit. Some participants had only recently begun to recognize themselves and their sexual preference as queer, and the insecure voice emerged most when speaking on that theme. Marcus speaks about his friends growing up and his current experiences:

> I always had gay best friends
> I was most comfortable
> I didn't know he was gay
> I did not identify
> I had another gay best friend after
> I was still reserved
> I guess
> I ... met someone at ceremonies
> I was more open-minded
> I guess
> I ... more fully embrace
> I guess
> I like to do more of that.

Even growing up with close gay friends, Marcus did not see himself as anything but straight for a long time. Marcus repeats "I guess" after statements he makes about his own behaviour and actions just a few years before but does not use such qualifiers when talking about things that he did or thought as a child or teenager. It reminded me of when I was first coming to terms with my own sexual identity and did not feel comfortable owning or embracing my queer identity in all spaces. On the other hand, Kenna's trepidations around associating outwardly with the queer community were articulated clearly; she shares that she had not told all her acquaintances as she knew some would be uncomfortable with queerness and might no longer feel like being around her: "I know that if I come out, they're

not going to dump me as friends but . . . that's gonna, you know, it'll be a bone of contention that I'm not sure I'm ready to deal with. I think they would be scared of me. And I'm not ready for that."

4.1.3. *In Search of Something.* The third voice was a searching voice, although what participants were seeking in themselves varied. Kendel is searching for his place in the world, as the very first lines of his I poem show:

> who I am right now?
> I've just been kind of feeling lost in the world
> I don't know what I want to do or what I should do.

Wesley, looking for a new path after leaving his previous career, also wonders what is next for him. Kenna, on the other hand, speaks about a search for a place to express herself and be accepted for who she is. Kenna feels more herself when she does hip-hop dance—she is able to embrace all parts of who she is and does not have to hide, shrink, or pretend to be more feminine or heterosexual. She connects this feeling of freedom of self to the search she has undertaken for these spaces throughout her life:

> I don't know, as a Métis person and a gay person
> like you don't
> I know
> you don't feel that kind of like feeling of just, like, pure acceptance
>   very much

Thus, feeling that acceptance in hip-hop spaces is freeing for Kenna. Isla also turned to hip-hop spaces to find community; as an Afro-Indigenous woman raised by her (Métis and First Nations) single mother, Isla said that "hip-hop gave me an entry into blackness" and it "broadened the community that I . . . that I didn't have." While she is reflecting on her youth in these sentences, Isla still turns to hip-hop to feel that closeness to community and explains that hip-hop "hits a different spot in my body" than other kinds of music.

4.2. **How They See Themselves in Relation to Community.** The second category of seeing the self was how the participants viewed themselves as part (or not part) of community.

4.2.1. *Indigenous Community.* Although some participants have significant knowledge of their Métis ancestry and feel secure in that knowledge and/or very connected to Métis community, some participants struggled with seeing themselves as part of that community. When the topic switched to speaking about her Métis community, Eve's I poem read:

> I don't know
> I know my mom is
> I'm like, really not that much
> I
> I always get mad about how white I look like
> I don't fit in anyway.

Eve expresses a feeling of being less than other Métis people who are more pheno-typically Indigenous and feeling as though she is only a fraction of her mother's identity. Métis scholars write at length about Métis identity not being tied to blood quantum or mixedness but rather to community and cultural bonds (Adese et al., 2017; Gaudry, 2018), but Métis youth in community do not appear to have these same understandings. Kenna grew up on a river lot in a Métis community, and she expressed similar feelings of not being accepted as Indigenous because of being coded as white. Kenna's I poem read as follows:

> when I see somebody
> I want to be like, "Where are you from"
> when I say that, they're like, "okay, white person"
> I don't often make those connections.

Despite her family being part of Métis politics and active in Métis culture and community throughout her life, Kenna shares this unease with her physical appearance and desire to be accepted as Indigenous at first glance. Kendel had a different experience from someone who is immediately coded as an Indigenous person. Despite now loving and appreciating his skin, Kendel's I poem recounts a time when he felt differently.

> I wanted to be like the kids that had pale skin
> I thought that was more attractive
> I remember hearing comments
> I'd be very dark
> hearing a lot of comments like looking dirty
> it really upset me having this dark skin.

It upset Kendel so much that he decided to not spend time outside in the sun for many years, until his skin was light. Many years later, Kendel now feels very differently:

> I am now happy to be brown
> I show my skin to the sun.

4.2.2. *Queer Community.* Some of the participants in this work also shared mixed feelings about fitting (or not fitting) in to the queer community as 2SLGBTQ+ Métis people. Amber's I poem shows her uncertainty in a queer identity as she intersperses the words "I guess" nine times in just one stanza:

> I mean
> I know that
> I'm, like, not fully straight
> I've also just never made it part of my identity
> I don't like
> I guess
> I don't know.
> I guess
> I've just never made that my identity

> I don't even
> I guess
> I don't even really know what it means within myself.
> I guess
> I would lean more towards being bisexual.
> I guess
> I guess
> I still think
> I guess
> I think
> I don't really actually fully understand
> I guess
> I don't know
> I guess

Amber expresses her uncertainty in several ways, including what identity she should claim and the implications that might carry for her. She indicates she is still thinking; she just does not understand and is perhaps guessing to fill in these blanks for herself. Possibly because of these uncertainties, Amber does not think of being queer as a part of her identity that she claims and portrays openly. The two youngest participants, Kenna and Eve, shared almost identical responses when the topic changed to "coming out" or sharing one's sexual identity with those closest. Eve's I poem reads as follows:

> I haven't really come out
> I like
> I don't really like
> I think like, you wouldn't say
> "I have something to tell you/I'm straight."

Similarly, Kenna had not told many people:

> I noticed that I like very few of my friends have I told that
> I'm, like, pansexual
> I'm not just like, "Hey, how's it going?
> I'm bi."

To both of these queer young Métis women, sexuality is part of who they are but is not something that they felt the need to lead with in conversation. Kenna speaks about not telling certain people for fear of their reactions, but Eve's reasoning is a confrontation of heteronormativity. In another moment, Eve recounted a conversation with her father when she used the phrase "gay" to describe something, and he told her that she cannot use the word "gay" in that way since she was not part of that community, to which Eve responded bluntly with "I'm not?" These anecdotes may not represent the entirety of young queer experiences, but I remain hopeful that 18-year-old Eve is emblematic of changing attitudes about queerness and heteronormativity in Generation Z.

Marcus and Jessica both expressed a different uncertainty about their place in the queer community, but for them, it was centered on the Indigenous-specific term "Two-Spirit." Two-Spirit, a term that is often attributed to Myra Laramee of Fisher River Cree Nation (McLeod, 2003), is used in different ways, including being "deployed as an umbrella term, a placeholder for specific community roles in various nations, a singular and specific ceremonial role, and as a term that gestures at the ineffability of Indigenous gender and sexuality" (Laing, 2018, p. 24). As a queer Métis person, I did not feel comfortable for many years with using the term, after I was told by a prominent Two-Spirit scholar that Métis people didn't count as part of the Two-Spirit community. I only found myself in the term later, after a number of conversations with Métis knowledge holders like Elders Barbara Bruce and Charlotte Nolin and listening to and reading other Two-Spirit speakers and scholars like Albert McLeod, Alex Wilson, and Chantal Fiola. One stanza of Marcus's I poem (which was unedited, as each statement he made in this section of the interview was stilted and uncertain) reflects a similar hesitancy:

> I would
> I would say
> I could say okay, Two Spirit
> I understand that
> I identify with that
> I can get with it
> I don't know if
> I'm, if
> I have the right to say that.

The term itself makes sense to Marcus, but he simply is not sure whether he, as a Métis cisgender man, can use it. Jessica also expresses hesitancy with the term in her poem:

> I still kind of struggle with that
> I kind of just like created my own
> I guess
> I guess
> I'm not taking up too much space
> I identify
> when I was younger, I . . . I certainly had
> hints that I was not straight
> I don't know.

Jessica is very cognizant of being a white-presenting Métis person and had discussed her efforts to not take space that should be held for Indigenous peoples with experiences of direct racism based on their appearance; she was also intentional about not "taking up too much space" in the Two-Spirit community by using that term. She has come up with her own term in Michif that she uses to describe her sexual identity as a cisgender queer Métis woman because of frequent conversations in community about whether Two-Spirit literally implies two spirits

in the same body or is only applicable to trans Indigenous people or is for any Indigenous person who is not heterosexual.

4.3. **How They See Themselves in Relation to Other Nations.** The third category of seeing themselves that came out through the I poems was how each participant saw themselves and their Métis community in relation to other nations. Several participants talked about what having a "Métis card" meant (or did not mean) to them. Isla has Métis heritage but does not often identify as being Métis because she was raised in a First Nations-centred environment and maintains those cultural connections. Despite that and because of the Canadian government's disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples, Isla holds a citizenship in her provincial Métis government. Her I poem reads:

> that's the only way that I can demonstrate Indigenous citizenship
> I have
> I claimed community
> I don't have strong investments within the Métis community
> we're asked to, like, prove our identity
> that was the only one like only way that I could prove.

Amber and Marcus, on the other hand, have never gotten a Métis card and see no need to do so. Marcus looked into filing for citizenship:

> I, I found records
> I was gonna go through with it
> I thought
> I have to pay
> I just got busy
> I didn't really care
> I thought
> I'd rather keep it that way.

For Marcus, getting a card was simply not a priority and would not impact the way he lived his day-to-day life. Amber, though, has made the decision not to get a card because she anticipates that it would be detrimental to her work:

> I know if I like say I'm Métis
> I'll be like, taken less seriously
> I just think
> I just don't have either
> I don't
> I probably
> I might get a Métis card.
> I just kind of just exist.
> I don't really quite know
> I need to pick a side
> I don't really feel like that's necessary

Amber feels pressured to not openly identify as Métis out of a belief that people at her work and in community will take her "less seriously" if she is seen as a Métis person. These stark differences between the reasons why Isla and Amber did or did not get a Métis citizenship card gave me pause. Amber has a mixed background (Métis, First Nation, and Southeast Asian) and appears at first glance to be Indigenous. Isla also has a mixed background (Métis, First Nation, and Caribbean) and is immediately coded as Black. I believe these differences in wanting "proof" of Indigenous identity are tied to the ways in which both women are seen and treated in the world. Black Indigenous peoples often are not recognized as part of the Indigenous community, and there is in fact scholarship arguing that Black people claiming Indigeneity in the United States are trying to absolve themselves of complicity in the theft of lands, despite evidence of cooperation between Black and Indigenous liberation movements (Mays, 2021). For Isla, a card is necessary to avoid having to defend her Indigeneity and to access programs and services available for Indigenous women. Amber, who is perceived as First Nations by most who meet her, sees no need to get a card that she believes would actually take her a step down in perception from other Indigenous groups by first claiming Métis-ness instead of First Nations identity. This complex relationship between outward appearance, the requirement of paperwork to access services, and inter-community tensions makes the choice to obtain a Métis citizenship card a complicated one.

There were also many varied views among participants regarding their place in hip-hop cultures. Each participant was or is an active member in some part of hip-hop cultures, though none of them felt comfortable identifying solely as a hip-hop artist. Jessica, who spent some time working as a stripper, spoke at length about her incorporation of hip-hop into stripping: "I think it is just like inherently from Black women really breaking the mold and then like setting it for people like me (and not getting any credit for it). I think another . . . another part is like being surrounded by this culture, still being hyper aware it's being profited off of, but it's not being respected." Jessica recognizes that Black women are gawked at, discussed, commodified, and copied while simultaneously rendered invisible in public discourse by not having the words or perspectives they share valuing or crediting Black women's work (Brown, 2009).

Isla looks to powerful women in hip-hop to provide an alternative to the thin white Eurocentric standards of beauty that surrounded her in her youth:

> black and brown women do not fit within Eurocentric beauty stan-
>   dards
> why are we always trying to emulate it?
> it's harmful on our, like our minds and our spirits
> physically harmful on our bodies
> trying to always reduce ourselves
> I think that hip-hop has done a lot of that work
> that's not to say that it's always positive

Isla finds representation in the imagery of hip-hop and also recognizes that hip-hop has created damage in communities. Amber thought back to her formative teenage years when she was immersed in street style and the consumption of hip-hop (particularly in the form of music videos). She both loved and felt confident in hip-hop fashion, but she also learned to objectify herself and was long only able to see her worth in relation to the male gaze. This speaks to a common criticism of hip-hop cultures as a tool of misogyny; hip-hop feminists do not deny this but instead "contend that hip-hop is also a site where young black women begin to build or further develop their own gender critique and feminist identity, which they can then turn toward the misogyny of rap music" (Peoples, 2008, p. 21). There is space to be both empowered by participation in hip-hop cultures and to engage critically with them.

5. Conclusion

For these eight participants, the construction of a self-identity and a Métis identity are both involve "a process of social interaction and dialogic relationships between the inner world and the external world" (Richardson, 2006, p. 57). Through the I poems that emerged out of this research, we can clearly see some of the discrepancies between scholarship on Métis nationhood and the experiences of Métis youth. Gaudry (2018), for instance, writes about connections to long-standing Métis communities as being the key factor for belonging in a Métis nation, but five of the participants of this research did grow up in or were connected to long-standing Métis communities and yet still felt insecurity (presently or when they were younger) about belonging as Métis people. I wonder if this also affects the ways that these youth reach out (or do not reach out) to the queer Indigenous community and whether part of the hesitation to claim queerness that some participants recounted came from not feeling comfortable in either the white or Indigenous queer communities, impacting their ability to "come in" (A. Wilson, 2007) to themselves as queer Métis people. This disconnection from queer Indigenous spaces is also reflected in the hesitation that several participants felt about using the term "Two-Spirit." This raises difficult questions for Métis governments and scholars: if we are arguing that it is community connections that matter more than other indicators of belonging in Métis communities, then how are we creating spaces that are welcoming, safe, and appealing to queer Métis youth? How are (or aren't) we making queer Métis youth genuinely feel part of their own nation?

Through use of the voice-centered relational method of data analysis in this research, I found myself in close relationship with the participants' words and stories. In these tellings and retellings, I began to notice that participants described moving through phases in their thinking as they grew—whether that was growing older or growing more connected to Métis communities. The younger group of participants were often unsure of what (or who) they should claim. Did living in an urban setting mean they were less connected to indigeneity? Did they belong in Indigenous spaces? The older participants, though, had moved out of this phase and were much surer of their ancestry, their communities, and

their identities. This had not happened spontaneously—each of the participants in this second group had done work to build connections with Métis community members and other Indigenous peoples and had deeper understandings of their ancestral connections and contemporary responsibilities as Métis people. This strengthening of self also happened through engagement with and participation in hip-hop, with participants finding space in that culture to express multifaceted beings and find solidarity with other Indigenous people. Sometimes, in that strengthening of self, participants demonstrated a type of code-switching by deciding when and in what ways they would engage in hip-hop out of an (actual or perceived) understanding of hip-hop as not fitting into all spaces.

When considering the voice-centered relational method in future work with queer, Métis peoples, I am reminded of the importance of hearing and sitting with these narratives but also the obligation I have to the texts with which I am in relation. Doucet and Mauthner (2008) remind us that this method "offers a way of operationalizing epistemological concepts of relational narrated subjects" (p. 407), but it is the researcher who becomes accountable to the texts through this process. These narratives have shared with me the stories that participants told about themselves and about how they fit into their communities, and these stories will guide this important nation-building work in the months and years to come.

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