

Pawaatamihk Answering the Call for Métis-Specific Scholarship

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Over the past two decades, Métis scholars have called for a more Métis-centred scholarship. In 2024, we are positioned at Pawaatamihk: Journal for Métis to encourage and lift up Métis-centre scholarship. Due to the increase of Métis thinkers in the academy and in the community, we see an increase in Métis-specific knowledge production. However, it is essential to remember our not-too-distant past within the publishing world to ensure forward movement toward the vision many have expressed in their scholarship in recent years.

How Did We Get Here?

Isaac (2016) called for a “greater understanding of Métis distinct issues” (p. 26) in his report on Métis reconciliation. Métis rights extend beyond land claims to inclusive scholarship. Historically, Canada has “downplayed Métis indigeneity or only recognized Métis rights and title to extinguish them” (Gaudry, 2018, p. 1). Madden (2015) asserts that Métis have been excluded from Crown consultations on their rights and denied access to programming despite including Métis in section 35 of the constitution, which recognizes Métis as Aboriginal people. Métis exclusion is a form of discrimination, and the lack of our inclusion in research and publications was historically due to the assumption that we fit nicely under the Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) umbrella (Forsythe, 2022).

What Have We Been Saying?

A review of the literature reveals decades of a lack of Métis-specific research. Kumar et al. (2012) list several literature reviews highlighting the underrepresentation of Métis in research regarding Indigenous peoples, stressing that the Métis-related items that had appeared over the previous three decades were pan-Indigenous and did not provide Métis-specific findings. This type of scholarship clouds the findings and often hides the lived realities of Métis communities. Poitras Pratt et al. (2014) put it bluntly: “Métis-specific issues simply aren’t talked about, nor does publicly available disaggregated data exist to facilitate such a discussion” (p. 12). Further to that notion Scott (2021) expressed there was the lack of Métis-specific representation in “formal literature that defines Métis knowledge as a worldview” (p. 5) conflating Indigenous worldviews and hiding our ways of knowing. Chartrand et al. (2006) assert that “Métis are underrepresented in the literature and in some cases, references are almost non-existent” (p. 61). Continuing in that vein, Logan (2008) insists that “Métis specific information or academic study is in high demand; it is rare and often hard to find, even today” (p. 93). Beaudin Reimer’s (2020) literature review reveals a “lack of research recognizing the significance and perspectives of Métis populations” (p. 246). All of these thinkers expressing frustration when

attempting to build Métis-specific research projects based on Métis ways of knowing and being.

What about Specific Disciplines?

In terms of specific disciplines, such as health, LaVallee et al. (2016) find that Métis have largely been ignored as a distinct population in health research, stressing the “little information on Métis-specific research paradigms and methods” (p. 170). Evans et al. (2012) report that the lack of Métis-specific research in health was as indisputable as it was troubling, asserting that research guidelines must address the needs and circumstances of the Métis while acknowledging that there are differences in both historical and contemporary Métis communities and the broader Indigenous population (p. 57). They further call for Métis-specific research and funding. In Women and Gender Studies, Porter (2013), meanwhile, asserts that “there is very little Métis-specific research” (p. 19) in discussing lateral violence affecting Métis women. Flaminio et al. (2020) seek to highlight Métis-specific methodologies, epistemologies, and pedagogies, noting “the limited research by Métis women and with Métis women” (p. 55). Their research context is not academic realities but community research with women. They also highlight a “lack of research on Métis women’s wellness especially led by women themselves” (Flaminio et al., 2020, p. 55). In education, Poitras Pratt (2019) acknowledges being “initially perplexed by the lack of previous scholarly work in this area to help guide my study with the exception of a scant few studies” (p. 47) in seeking to decolonize through digital storywork. These are just a few of the disciplines with Métis thinkers raising the alarm that Métis historically have not been represented within the scholarship. Forsythe (2022) speaks to the words of the Grandmothers and Aunties who spoke to the struggle to publish in many fields Métis-centred scholarship due to lack of funding and publishing opportunities.

Where we are Now?

As we slowly increase the number of Métis thinkers in the academy who dedicate their scholarship to Métis-specific research and knowledge production, we see an increase in Métis-specific publications. Journals and academic publishers are beginning to see the value of nation-specific scholarship and the danger of pan-indigenous work that homogenizes realities. As the Circle of Editors, we are elated to lift up Métis thinkers in the second issue of Paawatmihk: Journal of Métis Thinkers. We hope that those who walked before think we have answered the call. We hope that in the decades to come, we become a home for many future thinkers' work, and we live in a world where the words shared by Métis thinkers of the past stating the lack of our existence in scholarship is rightfully in the past.

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