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ANTHROPOLOGY COLLOQUIUM

Reconciling the Past for the Future: Unsettling Métis as Mixed in the Archaeological Record

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Cornett Building: A229



There has been much discussion in the academic and archaeological community about the ways we can respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Transforming how we do archaeology is an important component of reconciliation, since much of the work of our academic forbearers was used to disenfranchise and erase living indigenous communities. Working with and for communities to explore their histories creates new opportunities for understanding the past and can help many communities reconnect with elements of their history that have been forgotten due to the colonial and assimilationist policies of the Canadian government. In this talk, I focus on the history and archaeology my own community; the Métis Nation of Canada. Typically, the Métis have been categorized as a mixed, hybrid ethnic group, based largely on racialized understandings of the early encounters between Indigenous women and European men. I discuss how settler colonial categories of hybridity and race have influenced past archaeological research on the Métis in Canada and present archaeological analysis of Métis sites based on a Métis ontology that centres kinship, mobility, landscape, and daily life. I present a Métis framework to conceptualize the rise of a new people through the archaeological record that does not rely on logics of mixedness, but rather considers the spatial and material patterns as representative of an emergent Métis worldview. Weaving together personal narrative, archaeological research, and storytelling, I talk about how working with materials from the past also can be a powerful way to resist the ongoing attempts of settler-colonial policies and practices to separate us from our communities and work toward reconciliation.

EVERYONE WELCOME.

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