

Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides (eds.), *Around the Kitchen Table: Métis Aunties' Scholarship*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press. 2024. 224 pages. ISBN 9781772840735. \$29.95 paperback.

The “Auntie essence” of the edited book *Around the Kitchen Table* is powerful enough to evoke a visceral feeling of enjoying cups of Red Rose tea at the kitchen table with academic Métis Aunties sharing their knowledge. The authors and editors of this book weave together many different subjects and themes that all work toward Métis sovereignty rooted in wahkotowin, keeoukaywin, and mino-pimatisiwin. The critical approaches of relationality, visiting, and living a good, balanced life are foundational in this body of work. Tethering together the past, current, and future of Métis epistemologies unpack Métis Aunties' reverence that transcends the supposed objectivity that is ever-present in colonial academia. The book is organized into three parts that often converge with one another: Identity, Métis Women in the Academy, and Research Methodology. Each one describes Métis women's tenacity and their various contributions to the community and academia. I will review a chapter from each part even though I admire all the wisdom and knowledge exhibited in each chapter.

The Identity Part hosts a treasure of knowledge transfigured through beautiful poetry (p.7, p.84); Métis community research passion projects and writings (p. 15, p.28, p.39, p.47, p.57); lived experiences of Two-Spirit self-determination through stages of childrearing (p.69); beadwork (p.89), and stunning art pieces (p.90-96). For this section, I focus on Lisa Shepard's work on Métis identity in Chapter 2 called “We Know Ourselves”.

Métis identities have depth and range differing from community to community. A commonality that Lisa Shepard identifies in Chapter 2 is the vitality of responsibility intertwined with Métis identity (p.12). This responsibility is the foundation of Métis people knowing who they are. She begins with the storytelling and family histories that tether Métis people to their relatives (including beyond human kin) and ancestors; visiting and sharing stories is based on Métis people knowing themselves, knowing their homelands, and recognizing kin. All aspects require deep responsibility as Shepard defines later in the chapter. Part of Métis people knowing who they are is knowing colonial entities' efforts to undermine self-determination. Western governments often dictate identity on behalf of Indigenous people in so-called Canada despite knowing very little about Indigenous identities. I appreciate Shepard highlighting the irony of Canada defining identities with little information, yet missing an identity itself (p.13). Further, there is an intense lack of initiative from hegemonic Canadians to learn more about Indigenous people and Métis people specifically, despite Métis literature becoming more accessible. Alongside her words, there is a critical call to action nestled within the chapter. In these resolute moments of the chapter, Shepard writes with authority and self-assurance of her identity and community.

In a transition of tone, Lisa Shepard turns to write to Métis people seeking out familial and community knowledge. This is an important aspect since it is common to find reconnecting Métis people in so-called Canada. Often, reconnecting Métis folks will reach out to Elders with the most visibility when their own families will hold a wealth of knowledge on who they are specific to their Métis community. Shepard rightfully and gently redirects Métis kin inward and toward willing family members for Métis cultural knowledge. Committing to sit and visit with Métis kin over time and always returning is key in this chapter. Access to Métis culture online is more reachable than ever. Shepard emphasizes the importance of returning home to family to acquire

Métis knowledge and to take responsibility for the knowledge gained. There is self-reflexivity, dedication, and internal work rooted in relationality that renders a Métis person ready to hear knowledge—naturally, this is all decided by the Métis person holding the particular thread of knowledge and embedded responsibility. Allowing time and space for teachings to reach those ready to truly hear them is essential (p.14). However, the unwavering access to unregulated information and misinformation creates difficulty in slowing down and managing the expectations of those reconnecting to their Métis culture (p.14). The authenticity of teachings for future generations depends on the deliberate slowness, reciprocity and responsibility of those who know themselves. I found myself drawn to this chapter for its brevity and direct calls to action reminding me of an Auntie who will set you right in your path.

Part Two speaks to Métis women’s influences and experiences in the academy. The kitchen table holds Métis scholars enriching their disciplines with heart-based wisdom and ancestral knowledge. The conversations held at this table include Métis women’s academic contributions (p.99), connecting to Métis ancestors through archeology (p.112), Métis women’s teaching in academia (p.122), and structural violence towards Métis women (p.136). Indigenous women continue to make groundbreaking contributions to academia and forge new paths in the colonial, concrete ivory tower of western knowledge. In this section, my attention centers on “Chapter 12: Métis Women’s Contributions to the Academy Despite Colonial Patriarchy” (p.99) by Laura Forsythe.

Laura Forsythe begins by introducing herself, her family names, and her community, which is an integral practice for Métis people to find kin amongst crowds (p.99). She moves through the chapter with a critical eye on systemic gendered colonial violence prevalent in academia. At the same time, Forsythe highlights the many Métis women scholars who traversed academic systems to deliver trailblazing literature and research to those same institutions (p.104-109). The colonial patriarchy is at odds with Métis understandings of gender in academic studies (p.101). However, Métis studies and communities alike still navigate internalized misogyny that may not be the common practices of their Indigenous ancestors.

Another major focus for Forsythe is citational ethics. There is often a colonial fallacy that depicts academia as a place with only white narratives. As Forsythe denotes, this fallacy is perpetuated by white scholars who often cite their white peers and write bibliographies overwhelmingly represented by them (p.102-103). This echo chamber phenomenon permeates Indigenous and Métis Studies as well: despite Métis academics contributing to Indigenous studies and many other disciplines since 1953, white scholars will cite their white peers in Indigenous studies over Indigenous scholars (p.101). Forsythe holds up a mirror to unethical and relational citational practices that continue the cycle of elitism and white supremacy.

While white scholars often receive more recognition and praise, Métis women have always and continue to make grand contributions to the systems that were not built with them in mind. Forsythe’s writing evokes her commitment to other Métis academic Aunties in sharing a collective truth and lived experiences navigating colonial institutions, Western positivism, and patriarchy. Métis women’s inherent power and autonomy in Métis communities and beyond is the focal point of this chapter. She mentions “[...] Victoria Calihoo, Dorothy Chartrand, Anne Anderson-Irvine, Maria Campbell, Emma LaRoque, and Audreen Hourie [...]” as founding Métis (academic) grandmothers who changed the course of Métis Studies for those yet to enter the academy (p.104-109). As Forsythe shares, many other grandmothers have done exemplary work for their academic communities as their birthright. Lastly, she explains that Métis women and grandmothers’ resilience and tenacity build the roots of Métis Studies for generations to come.

The third and last Part of the edited book centers Métis academic Aunties sharing their expertise on research relationality (p.151); Métis women's sovereignty through Lii Taab (p.169); wahkotowin and education (p.183), queer Métis research paradigms (p.196); Métis feminisms (p.200); and Métis matriarchs' wellness knowledge (p.212). Lastly, the Chapter written by Rita Bouvier incorporates poetry infused with Cree-Michif creating the feeling of being amidst an Auntie's story flow (p.231).

Bouvier begins "Chapter 22: if the land could speak" with a flow of words that feel like the beginning of Métis stories that continuously drift into one another like lapping waves always promising another in their wake. Immediately, readers are immersed in her world, envisioning her life as a young Métis girl being guided through the world by her moshôm (p.233). There is not always a clear linear beginning or end with Métis storytelling, just cycles of related stories laden with lessons. This chapter drew me in like how my kokom draws me into one of her stories that seemingly begins out of nowhere. From poems and stories about her youth, she shifts to her more recent experiences. Her work is a reminder that emotions are cyclical and transcend conventional understandings of time. Objectivity, neutrality, and linearity are the antithesis of this work. For some, this writing may even feel foreign due to the constraints of the English language.

Bouvier states that her paper is a medium for her to explore and imagine her Cree-Métis existence through her first language (p.234). She includes Cree-Michif words that may not always be directly translated because of differing worldviews; worldviews that pulled her in two, longing for the "[...] mnemonic-sonic sounds [...]" of her mother tongue while being institutionally educated in English (p.238). This longing is consistent and streams around the words throughout this chapter. I could feel the heartache of remembering and the overwhelm of a full human experience tethered to all of creation and kinship. This is certainly not a critique, emotions are gifts. Bouvier recounts her heavy emotions when coming across fraudulent, inauthentic Indigenous goods for sale. Welcoming emotion in all her forms is a powerful lesson from this chapter. Bouvier's writing approach is a breath of fresh pine air that is welcomed in comparison to the stale, stagnant air that is bricked in by academic walls. Maarsii for ending this book with a hopeful beginning built on continuous Indigenous resistance to coloniality. Just as we all need a stern Auntie, we need a gentle Auntie; both guiding young Métis people back to themselves, the land, and their communities.

*Around The Kitchen Table* is another staple in my collection of Auntie teachings on my bookcase that I will revisit time and again. This book holds "smarten up!" Aunties, "listen to your heart, my girl" Aunties, and all the academic Aunties in between. While I've learnt many teachings in the edited book, I remain pondering a few aspects: (1) Perhaps there is a future land-based conference or gathering of Métis women that could continue the responsibility and reciprocal practices that come with knowledge. How might this book transcend the rigid academic walls and be used by Métis communities doing their own grassroots work?; (2) Books are an important documentation medium, especially for academic publications, but I wonder what other modes of knowledge mobilization could be used to embody the vital content; and (3) how will the academic Métis Aunties foster their kinship to one another beyond this collection of work? Whichever kitchen table brings them together once again will become sentient upon their visiting.

My most treasured lecture hall is an Auntie's kitchen table where I can learn any subject that "formal" western education can offer me and more. I dream of one day achieving a PhD in kitchen table talk studies. However, this dream is only possible in community. Bouvier's last chapter of the book made me miss my Métis homelands. A mentor, who is featured in this book,

