

**Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality.** By Chantal Fiola. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015. 256 pages. \$32.95 paper; \$70.00 electronic.

Fascination with Métis identity is ongoing, especially as it pertains to spirituality. As a result, Métis identity is rarely written about without definitional complexities or controversies. In a story of journeys, Chantal Fiola makes a striking contribution towards unraveling the threads of Métis identity and spirituality. *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality* follows personal, historic, cultural, and spiritual journeys of Métis individuals and Métis communities. Building narratives by following the life stories of each participant in the study, it is also clearly a journey for Chantal Fiola, who describes the book as a “form of contemporary agency” as well as the “unfolding of an ancient prophecy” (2). As an author and Métis Anishinaabe advocate for her community, Fiola is able to provide this agency partly by opening the door to further inquiries about Métis ties to spirituality. Threads are often used as metaphors for Métis identity and history. Pulling at one of these threads, Fiola focuses on an often-overlooked segment of Métis life. She examines Anishinaabe spirituality on an individual scale through the use of personal interviews with Métis people who have close relationships to Anishinaabe ceremony and spirituality. In addition, she examines the broader picture of how these threads weave through the Métis places in Canada and their lives alongside other indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. In all the ways that Métis spirituality launches some potential tension or confusion, throughout the book Fiola encourages us to see a kinder approach as she creates new avenues.

For near-centuries Métis have faced imposed definitions and colonially constructed identities in Canada. Fiola provides a curious history of American-Canadian relations and a history of Métis resistance in Canada. There is an added emphasis on Métis relationships to First Nations treaties somewhat unlike other histories of Métis identity formation in Canada. Fiola builds a historic narrative that helps us situate the Métis within the tangled threads of colonialism, Christianity, empire, gendered roles, kinship ties, resistance, racism, and internalized violence. In addition, she scrutinizes the important connections between the Métis and the Catholic Church in Canada, including the Métis experiences at Canadian residential schools. (Here, I must note that Fiola incorrectly credits the work of my fellow authors Larry Chartrand and Judy Daniels in our 2006 book *Métis Experiences and History and Residential Schools in Canada* as being the work of “Paul Chartrand, Tricia Logan, and Harry Daniels,” at 238 and 243.)

Métis have a history with the church that is quite unlike those in First Nations communities, Inuit communities, or non-indigenous Canada. The focus on a move away from Christianity and towards Anishinaabe spirituality is a much-needed commentary on the changing status of how Métis identify themselves today. It should be remembered that the Métis are traditionally the Free People, *Otipemsiwak*, people who define themselves, and this work helps to unfurl a very Métis narrative about accessing spirituality and religion. Following Métis histories of resistance and how the Métis held to their spirituality through periods of dispossession, Fiola presents

her study involving Métis individuals who shared their personal stories of spirituality. The interviews that she conducted were rich, insightful, and provided agency to Métis experiences. We are able to follow the journeys of participants through their relationships with their communities, their families, ceremonies, and the land. As peoples often cast as dispossessed, it is easy to misplace the Métis connections to the land. Studies of Métis nationalism sometimes underemphasize or miss the spiritual and historic connection Métis have to the land, beyond their dispossession from their land base. Part of the “rekindling” that Fiola enacts is drawing the threads together between spiritual or familial connections to the land and Métis identity.

Well beyond the shaky logic of using blood quantum in focused discussions of Métis identity, there are unavoidable forces of colonialism, racism, lateral violence, and Christianization that organize the deliberations in *Rekindling*. Scholarship on Métis identity also bears on debates about Métis nationalism or politics. In recent work on Métis identity and nationalism, such as Chris Andersen’s *Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, Métis scholars have been facing a recent waves of changes in how Métis identify and how various provincial registry systems and Métis organizations in Canada have asked them to identify. Métis history reminds us how the “intergenerational movement away from Christianity and toward Anishinaabe spirituality” (208) has an influence on how we identify ourselves and how others attempt to post labels on us. Ideally, this shift will represent a larger movement towards self-determination and how we find spaces to express our spiritual lives.

Several doors are left open for future study and inquiry into Métis spirituality. It is important to note the focus of the study is based on participants with a level of higher education. Almost all participants had connections to a university or college. Lines of inquiry involving individuals with fewer connections to higher education would be compelling for future study, as well. Additionally, a reflection on the movement away from Christianity and churchgoing in general may reveal something about Anishinaabe spirituality, how we reclaim indigenous spaces, and about decolonization in communities across Canada.

*Rekindling* shows ingenuity and it provides good examples for fellow indigenous scholars on how to find their own path between Western academic traditions and research with Métis communities. There are important conversations inside this work that reveal who we are as Métis. For anyone with questions about Métis identity and the paths we take to discover or rediscover our spirituality, this is a valuable read. My parents, Thomas and Christine Logan, who raised me as Métis in Anishinaabe territory, read this book along with me. This review was a joint effort and I appreciate this rare opportunity to share my work with them.

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