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# Aspirational Descent and the Creation of Family Lore: Race Shifting in the Northeast

*Darryl Leroux*

For the past five years, I have been studying race shifting among white French-descendants, those who count among their ancestors the first French settlers in the Americas (pre-1665). Most of this population currently resides in the easternmost provinces of Canada and in parts of New England in the United States. What I discovered is that since the early 2000s, tens of thousands of these French descendants have shifted into an “Indigenous” identity based solely on ancestry that is 325–400 years old. Throughout these regions, this social movement has led to the creation of nearly a hundred new “Indigenous” organizations that, on behalf of their white-settler membership, now lobby for a variety of Indigenous rights. Because these efforts have succeeded in altering the political landscape to varying degrees—notably through four “Abenaki tribes” in Vermont that received state recognition in 2011 and 2012—similar groups have emerged as “Abenaki” in New Hampshire and Quebec, “Algonquin” in Ontario and Quebec, and “Métis” in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Maine. The two largest organizations in Quebec were created by white men seeking to entrench their hunting rights while Indigenous territorial claims were being negotiated. These two organizations alone now have more than 25,000 paying members, combined.<sup>1</sup>

As previous scholarly work regarding the “self-indigenization” movement specifically in the provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia has demonstrated,

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the origins of many of these organizations lie in explicit anti-Indigenous politics.<sup>2</sup> In the case of at least eight “Abenaki tribes” in Vermont and New Hampshire, individuals seem motivated by an ambiguous urge to “honor” their Indigenous ancestors, an urge that is no less questionable given the long history of “playing Indian,” “race shifting,” “settler nativism,” or what Vine Deloria Jr. called the “Indian-grandmother complex.”<sup>3</sup> In each of these theorizations, as well as in others,<sup>4</sup> a range of scholars, particularly in Indigenous studies, have explained white settler efforts to subsume and/or adopt Indigenous identities as being the fulfillment of a centuries-old process aimed both at eliminating actual Indigenous peoples and transforming the descendants of European colonists into the *true* Indigenous peoples of the Americas.<sup>5</sup>

Irrespective of how motivations for self-indigenization movements are characterized, among actual Indigenous peoples in these territories—Mi’kmaq, Abenaki, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Algonquin, Atikamekw, Mohawk, and Innu—the clear political consensus has been to reject these emerging claims of indigeneity.<sup>6</sup> The Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia have been confronted with the largest offshoot of the “Eastern métis” movement, the so-called “Acadian-métis movement.”<sup>7</sup> Together, in the most high-profile opposition, Kwilmu’kw Maw-klusuaqn (Mi’kmaq Rights Initiative) and the Métis National Council pledged cooperation to oppose the “Acadian-métis” in Nova Scotia in a signed memorandum of understanding on October 1, 2018.<sup>8</sup> Rather than rehash the settler-colonial *political* basis for this movement, however, the aim of this paper is to detail precisely how genealogical mechanics are put to work in making such claims, as well as to explore how that method is used in the creation of “family lore.” Building on my previous work as well as other scholarship, I theorize descent as a genealogical *practice* that involves *doing* something with one’s ancestors.<sup>9</sup> The idea of descent as a practice might seem counterintuitive, since we may think of descent as representing a straightforwardly linear connection to a past ancestor, as depicted in the family tree that some of us dutifully brought to grade school.

Ultimately, this article’s initial analysis demonstrates that genealogical research is not simply a matter of discovering a long-ago ancestor, but that one might recreate the identity of particular ancestors to fit one’s current desires about identity. Similarly, attention to how white settler families create family lore allows us to expose how retellings of childhood stories about “hidden” indigeneity work in lockstep with settler-colonial logics. The next section introduces the practice of *aspirational descent*, in which women of the 1630s, actually born in western France, are turned by their present-day descendants into “Indigenous” women in order to claim a particular “Indigenous” identity. Tracing the practice of aspirational descent illustrates in clear terms the efforts that white settlers are willing to make in order to push the boundaries of whiteness and take possession of indigeneity.<sup>10</sup>

## PRACTICING GENEALOGY: INTRODUCING ASPIRATIONAL DESCENT

As a way to capture the complexity of twenty-first-century race shifting, I employ a range of research methods. The first part of the article involves an analysis of online genealogy forums through adopting sociologist Alondra Nelson’s notion of “virtual

ethnography.”<sup>11</sup> I have also sought to emulate anthropologist Kim TallBear’s use of virtual ethnography in her study of a high-profile genetic genealogy listserve.<sup>12</sup> As part of a broader three-year research project, I examined five major online genealogy forums geared towards French descendants. Three are conducted in French and two in English.

Individuals logged on to the forums were often able to confirm the presence of an Indigenous ancestor in their lineage—almost always from the seventeenth century. Such a discovery is not particularly notable, since five decades of historical demographic research predicts that today, a significant majority of white French descendants have a tiny percentage of Indigenous ancestry.<sup>13</sup> Although *lineal descent* is commonly used to indicate direct lineage in contemporary genealogical practice, it is rare for discovery of a particular lineal ancestor who lived several centuries ago to lead to a change of one’s current social identity. For French descendants already identified as white, for instance, discovering long-ago lineal descent from non-French European ancestry (e.g., English, Belgian, Portuguese, German, or Irish) appeared to *do* very little. Conversely, despite Indigenous activism and scholarship that have consistently opposed white-settler forms of self-identification based solely on “blood” or “genes,” forum participants were often empowered to claim an “Indigenous” identity when they searched for, and confirmed, Indigenous ancestry in their lineage, based on a single seventeenth-century ancestor.<sup>14</sup>

The forums repeatedly confirmed the power of lineal descent to radically alter one’s contemporary identity, always from a previous white identity to an “Indigenous” one. In some cases, individuals claiming different “Indigenous” identities used the same Indigenous woman ancestor born in the 1610s or 1620s. In one well-known case, a direct ancestral connection to one Nipissing woman born prior to 1610 empowers race shifters to claim an identity today that is variously “Algonquin” (in Ontario and Quebec), or “Métis” (in Quebec), or “Abenaki” (in Vermont and New Hampshire).<sup>15</sup> On the online forums, the actual, specific tribal identity of an Indigenous woman ancestor mattered little; what mattered most was discovering a sought-after Indigenous ancestor to transform one’s current identity, and then to build up a pan-Indian, imagined form of indigeneity that actual Indigenous peoples have long opposed. It was this latter observation of the power of lineal descent to redefine completely one’s identity by *doing* something with an ancestor, that led me to theorize descent as a practice.

Another, complementary way that descent is reconstructed to fit one’s contemporary identity aspirations emerged while analyzing the genealogy forums. Participants not only sought out a long-ago Indigenous woman ancestor and then transformed her tribal identity, but many also actively participated in transforming a number of French ancestors from the 1600s into “Indigenous” women. I have since discovered an entire infrastructure among today’s French descendants that supports the *creation* of “Indigenous” ancestors. The practice often involves a turn to genetic genealogy, which Nelson explains as “the use of DNA analysis for the purpose of inferring ethnic or racial background and aiding with family history research.”<sup>16</sup>

What I have called *aspirational* descent both builds on and differs from lineal descent in that the actual indigeneity of the “root” ancestor at the basis of one’s claim to

an Indigenous identity today is largely contested. The practice of aspirational descent that I document—focusing as it does on transforming the identity of French women ancestors born prior to 1650—is an example of what sociologist Ashley Barnwell describes as the “practice of self-authentication” that drives genealogical research.<sup>17</sup> More than other forms of descent that I identified on the forums, aspirational descent illuminates the creative thrust pushing race shifting forward.

The next section introduces two French-Acadian sisters born between 1624 and 1635, whose identities were debated extensively on three of the forums.<sup>18</sup> I explain the role that (genetic) genealogy plays in their reconstruction as “Indigenous” women, before turning to how several white settlers use one of the sisters as the basis for their newfound “indigenity” in courtroom proceedings.

### ACADIAN SISTERS IN THE SERVICE OF ASPIRATIONAL DESCENT: CATHERINE AND EDMÉE LEJEUNE

Together, the Lejeune sisters appeared about half-a-dozen times on three of the genealogy forums that I examined. Little is known about their early life or their travel across the Atlantic. As they were among the first French women to marry in Mi'kma'ki/Acadia and that they each had nine children, they figure inordinately in Acadian (and Cajun) and French-Québécois ancestral history today. The general lack of documented history about their lives led amateur genealogists and historians to transform both sisters into Mi'kmaw women in the second half of the nineteenth century. Stephen White, the lead genealogist at the top Acadian Studies institute in Canada, the Centre d'études acadiennes at the Université de Moncton, has raised significant questions about this theory, as has the Mothers of Acadia mtDNA Project, which has repeatedly verified that the Lejeune sisters' ancestral origins were from far outside the Americas.<sup>19</sup> Through that project, genetic testing of over two dozen of their living descendants associated both sisters' ancestral DNA with European origins.<sup>20</sup> According to the academic consensus in Acadian studies, the Lejeune sisters are not Indigenous to the Americas.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, the Lejeune sisters' identities prove a matter of significant debate online. It was while reading a thread on the Vos Origines (VO) forum titled “Indian/Métis roots coming from Acadia,” that I was first introduced to the conflict centered around the Lejeune sisters' ancestry. In the thread, Rods, a relatively new poster, sought to find out more about his Acadian origins: “Is there a list of Indian [*sic*] or Métis men and women recognized as such and coming from Acadia? My sister and I have done our genealogy and we found four Indian lines coming from Quebec. In my research, I discovered that many of our ancestors are Acadian. Some of them are considered Indian or Métis online, while others are not (according to DNA tests). Any help would be greatly appreciated.”<sup>22</sup> Rods received many responses, and the discussion on the thread lasted several months. Before long, Rods responded to a request for a list of the “Indigenous” ancestors that he had compiled with Catherine Lejeune's name, along with two others. Within a couple of days, a frequent poster sent Rods a link to an Acadian genealogy site that mimicked many of the genetic genealogy websites

shared by forum posters: contra the available molecular and documentary evidence, it favored a historical narrative that created Acadian-Mi'kmaq kinship relations where none had existed. On it, the Lejeune sisters were definitively identified as "Métis" (or mixed-race Mi'kmaq).

A long-time VO forum member, Lory, politely encouraged Rods to consider other sources. She wrote that, "the website that was placed in the thread is very interesting. But again, we should take some and leave some. It all depends on the site's author. As far as DNA goes, I'm very suspicious."<sup>23</sup> A few months later, in April 2014, frequent poster Yves made the final post in the thread: "Lots of Aboriginal lines have their own histories and Catherine Lejeune married to François Savoie around 1651 is not accepted . . . because there's no legal proof. . . if it's a pastime then fine, but if it's to get an Aboriginal card . . . the bureaucratic answer will be (lack of evidence). Sorry."<sup>24</sup> Yves's post most clearly pushed back at the use of Catherine Lejeune as an Indigenous root ancestor in this thread.

In a second thread titled, "Questionable Record Lejeune," this time posted to the Rootsweb forum in in 2015, CJ inquired about an online source: "Did somebody make this up? Edmée tested European, right?" and posted a link to a genealogical site that provided the genealogy of a woman named Marguerite M. Mikmaq.<sup>25</sup> Marguerite is said to have been born in 1585 in present-day New Brunswick, the daughter of Mi'kmaq Grand Chief Membertou (born 1560) and his wife Marie Abénaki (born 1582). According to this online source, Marguerite married Pierre Lejeune Briard II (born 1595) in Vienne in western France and had a child (Pierre Lejeune Briard) there in 1625. The file, updated in 2014, was hosted on a well-regarded online genealogy platform. It makes for an intriguing story, especially to race shifters involved in a process of strategic self-making—but, given that the database lists Marguerite's mother (the aforementioned Marie Abénaki) as only three years old at the time of her own daughter's birth, among other historical sleights of hand, it poses several incontrovertible problems.

The most active forum administrator, Paul, responded right away to CJ's post: "Edmée & Catherine have mtDNA of U6a ['European']. . . . The explanation [that their mother was Mi'kmaq]—a list of all founding mothers of Acadia that we could not trace back to Europe were assumed to be Aboriginal. . . . This is a false assumption."<sup>26</sup> Paul replied again later the same day, explaining that the genealogist who had entered the data on Rootsweb "is repeating the old guestimate that has been disproven by the mtDNA. [The Lejeune sisters'] parents are unknown, but we know the two girls were sisters."<sup>27</sup> In this case, the popular claim that the Lejeune sisters were Indigenous is *aspirational*, in that it rests wholly on the desires of individuals intent on race shifting.

A third thread on the Généalogie du Québec et de l'Amérique française (GQAF) forum titled "Micmac [*sic*] and/or Maliseet Ancestry" from 2017 repeated the same imaginative story about the Lejeune sisters' origins.<sup>28</sup> In February, Michel posted the following request: "I'm looking for my Indian ancestors. They say I'm Micmac. It seems [a genealogist] has published a family genealogy that says we're Maliseet. If a member could please clarify all of this, I'd be very happy."<sup>29</sup> Michel then posted his parents'

names, which led forum moderator Yves to provide him with the relevant links from the GQAF's genealogy database.

The next day, a frequent poster, Alain, seemed to confirm Michel's Mi'kmaw ancestry: "You certainly do have long-ago Mi'kmaw origins from the beginning of the seventeenth century through your Acadian origins. It's Edmée Lejeune's mother, who's also among my ancestors."<sup>30</sup> Alain went on to provide additional information, including the claim that Frenchman Pierre Lejeune dit Briard married a Mi'kmaw woman in France before 1620 (Edmée's supposed parents). Alain then suggested in passing that these details still needed to be confirmed through the documentary record. A few days later, professional genealogist Dominique responded critically: "DNA tests have proven that Edmée Lejeune and her sister Catherine are both of European origins."<sup>31</sup> She then provided three Web links to the results of these tests and their respective analyses, including a report in *Acadie nouvelle*,<sup>32</sup> a French-language newspaper based in Moncton, New Brunswick, and the full results of the Mothers of Acadia mtDNA Project identifying DNA associated with just over half of the eighty or so known "Mothers" of Acadia from the seventeenth century.<sup>33</sup>

Alain was not deterred by Dominique's introduction of countervailing molecular evidence. On the contrary, he explained that "the confusion comes from the fact that there exists without a doubt two people called Pierre Lejeune dit Briard. Edmée and Catherine's father was born in 1595 and married a Mi'kmaw woman around 1620 in France . . . He must've brought his future wife with him to France."<sup>34</sup> To be clear, Alain is repeating the same story shared by CJ in the Rootsweb forum above: the Lejeune sisters were born in France to a Mi'kmaw mother. In response, Dominique pushed back further against Alain's claims: "This is pure speculation. There were two Lejeune families that immigrated to Acadia. . . . The second Lejeune family, who arrived around 1642, is the one to which Edmée and Catherine . . . belong. . . . Since the DNA tests prove that the two sisters (Catherine and Edmée) are of European origins, they cannot be of Indigenous ancestry."<sup>35</sup>

Alain further illustrated what Nelson calls the "strategic self-making" at the center of contemporary genealogy, in his later recourse to an excerpt from French historian François-Edme Rameau de Saint-Père's book *Une colonie féodale en Amérique, L'Acadie (1604–1881)*, first published in 1889. In the excerpt, Rameau argues that the Lejeune family was "métis" (mixed-race) and lists a marriage between a Pierre Lejeune and a Mi'kmaw woman as evidence. No dates are given in Rameau's account, nor is there any mention of Edmée and Catherine. In addition, there is no known kinship connection between the Lejeune sisters and anyone named Pierre. All the same, Alain resorts to the mobilization of an obscure nineteenth-century text to make his case against the prevalent molecular data. In this sense, his desire for indigeneity, rooted as it is in aspirational descent, leads him to confirm his beliefs about his own indigeneity, despite the available evidence to the contrary. The thread eventually ended, four days after it began, with the original poster, Michel, thanking Dominique for her contribution.

After conducting a similar form of virtual ethnography, Nelson's conclusion was that individuals who engaged in online genealogy forums integrated new knowledge about their ancestral past—including DNA-based evidence—in a manner that

*confirmed* their established beliefs about ancestry, race, and/or identity. In this case, the fact alone that the Lejeune sisters are imagined as the granddaughters of a well-known male Indigenous historical figure, Grand Chief Membertou, outweighs the strength normally reserved for molecular technologies.

Online genealogy forums introduced me to the Lejeune sisters: Acadian women born prior to 1635 who become “Indigenous” for the purpose of contemporary identity claims. Notably, their transformation has been solidified by a range of organizations active in the race-shifting movement in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, where they are regularly used as the basis for new claims to “Abenaki” and “Eastern Métis” identities.

## NO INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY: RACE SHIFTING IN “REAL LIFE”

The practice of aspirational descent is not limited to the transformation of the Lejeune sisters’ identities on genealogy forums. The fact that the Acadian sisters’ supposed indigeneity has been disproven has not stopped individuals and organizations from recognizing them as “Indigenous” root ancestors, particularly if we consider the actual frequency of their appearance in membership documents in the three largest self-identified “Indigenous” organizations in Quebec. For instance, in the more than 2,000-member genealogies from both the *Communauté métisse du Domaine-du-Roy et la Seigneurie de Mingan* (CMDRSM) and the *Communauté métisse autochtone de Maniwaki* (CMAM) that I have examined, one of either of the Lejeune sisters was listed as the sole “Indigenous” root ancestor for dozens of members. Both organizations have been involved in protracted legal proceedings, attempting to have their members recognized as Indigenous in order to access constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights. A third organization, the Métis Nation of the Rising Sun (MNRS), located in Gaspésie, is also on record as encouraging the use of both of the Lejeune sisters as “Indigenous” root ancestors for the purpose of membership.<sup>36</sup> Together, the three organizations claim to have about 32,000 members, at least a thousand of whom are likely using one of the Lejeune sisters as their sole “Indigenous” root ancestor for the purpose of membership.<sup>37</sup>

Besides these membership records, my analysis of ninety-two court cases involving claims to an “Eastern métis” identity in both Quebec and New Brunswick since 2001 has further confirmed that the Lejeune sisters (and one other well-known French-Acadian woman ancestor, Radegonde Lambert) are often used as the sole basis of one’s genealogy-based transformation into an “Indigenous” person. Incredibly, the Lejeune sisters are transformed into “Mi’kmaq” and then used to become “Métis” by about a fifth of the defendants whose “Indigenous” ancestry is named in these court cases.<sup>38</sup>

In order to understand further the specific ways that otherwise white French-descendants use the practice of aspirational descent to shift into an “Indigenous” identity, I turn to the family lore that defendants share in court, in order to deconstruct the specific “Indian-grandmother complex” at work in their testimony. As we know from previous research on race shifting in the United States and in Canada, a reliance on family lore often forms the basis for the public legitimacy of race shifter



claims to Indigenous identity, even in the face of contradictory documentary or genealogical evidence and the political opposition of actual Indigenous peoples.<sup>39</sup>

US Senator Elizabeth Warren's changing claims to Cherokee ancestry and identity provide a case in point. According to reports published in the latter part of 2018 at the height of the public controversy about her claims, Warren's own understanding of her "Cherokee" identity and/or ancestry appears to have been based in the type of family lore that is actually quite common among white settlers. Cherokee intellectuals<sup>40</sup> and political authorities<sup>41</sup> have been steadfast in their refusal to accept Warren's claims to Cherokee (or even Indigenous) ancestry or identity, as have other Indigenous intellectuals.<sup>42</sup> A common thread in these critiques has been an opposition on the reliance of the "Indian grandmother" and/or "Indian princess" tropes in US society. Another notable lesson has been about the importance of understanding the specific geographic and historical context in which these claims are based. Attending to the differences between Oklahoma, where Warren's ancestors dispossessed and displaced tribal nations, and Quebec, allows us to consider the logics of settler colonialism under a different light.

What follows are excerpts from the courtroom testimony of four individuals, who, according to their own court submissions, have no Indigenous ancestry, yet are claiming to be "Indigenous" due to their 400-year-old genealogical connection to Catherine Lejeune.<sup>43</sup> The testimony comes from the *Corneau* case, which originally involved twenty-seven registered members of the CMDRSM, an "Indigenous" organization created in January 2005 in northeastern Québec. I have outlined in some depth elsewhere how the CMDRSM had its origins in a white rights movement in Innu territory between 2000 and 2004.<sup>44</sup> The defendants were all defending themselves against the imminent destruction of their hunt camps, which were illegally built on public lands. The case was filed in Quebec Superior Court in 2007 and the defendants first testified at preliminary hearings in January and February 2009. A few years later, in November 2013, the defendants testified a second time during their trials. The defendants eventually lost the case in July 2018, when the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled that they had not proven that they were Indigenous under existing jurisprudence.

The first excerpt involves a defendant ("John") whose lawyer confirmed with him at the beginning of his preliminary testimony on January 21, 2009, that his only "Indigenous" root ancestor is Catherine Lejeune, described as "Micmac métis" [*sic*] in the courtroom transcript. The notion that Lejeune is herself mixed-race builds on the story that she is Chief Membertou's long-lost granddaughter whose Mi'kmaw mother was sent to France in the last two decades of the sixteenth century. As I explain above, this mythical story circulates rather freely on a range of online platforms today, despite ample evidence that Lejeune was a French woman. Regardless, John's nonexistent Indigenous ancestry did not stop him from sharing a poignant family story about having "Indian blood" with his counsel:

Q. What motivated you to join the [CMDRSM]?

John: . . . Since I was young, I've loved the woods. I'm always out there. And, my mother always told me that we had some Indian blood, and I don't want to—

Q: Your mother spoke with you about it?

John: Yes, before she died my mother always told me, and I don't want to . . . I don't want to turn my back on her, I'm one, and I'm proud to be one. . .

Q: Did she say anything else [about it], or did she say: "So, you have Indian blood?", and then went onto other things. How did it work?

John: No, she just said that we were Indians [*sauvages*].<sup>45</sup>

The theme of a grandparent or parent being at the origins of an individual's knowledge about their supposed Indigenous ancestry was quite common among all defendants, including among those who had no actual Indigenous ancestry such as John. In fact, this type of family lore was the most common form of evidence that defendants offered in defense of their claim to a new "Indigenous" identity (along with their genealogies). Clearly, presenting one's oral history, passed down through one's immediate ancestors, was seen as a way to insulate oneself against concerns that their recent claims to Indigenous identity were opportunistic or worse still.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that all oral history is flawed, nor am I suggesting that these individuals are inventing their family stories whole cloth; on the contrary, as Cherokee and other Native American intellectuals have illustrated in Warren's case, it is entirely possible that individuals in her family told her that she had some Cherokee ancestry, just as it is possible that John's mother told him that he had "Indian blood" in his childhood. Given the political and social interests that white society has had in eliminating Indigenous peoples, we must interrogate the basis for this type of family lore, even when told it has been shared by one's mother or grandmother. In Warren's case, the senator's ancestors were active participants in the dispossession and displacement of the Cherokee people in the nineteenth century, eventually settling on Indigenous lands stolen away in Oklahoma. Cherokee writer Rebecca Nagle has convincingly demonstrated how Warren (Crawford) family lore turned *living among* Native Americans to *being* Native Americans in a way that helped insulate them from accountability for their active participation in colonial violence in the US southeast and eventually in Oklahoma.<sup>46</sup> Since the genealogical evidence that John submitted in court disproves his own claims to Indigenous ancestry (and identity), just as the work of Cherokee genealogists has done for Warren,<sup>47</sup> we must also consider the possibility that John is misrepresenting or misinterpreting the truth in a manner that supports his legal strategy.

While there are clear parallels between the use of family lore to justify race shifting in the United States and in Canada, I would like to turn to the specific context of Quebec to understand the precise ways that family history is mobilized in the courtroom. Social theorists Bruno Cornellier and Julie Burelle have both written about the complex figure of the "Indian" in Quebec culture through illustrating the long history of using indigeneity as a foil for Québécois identity. In her study of Quebec theater and cinema, Burelle explains how Quebec culture "fetishizes 'Indian blood' and 'Indian ancestry' and mobilizes the notion of a set of inherently Indigenous traits being

passed on, resulting in the French Québécois' . . . unique cultural character."<sup>48</sup> Part of that cultural "character," according to Cornellier's work on Quebec cinema, involves a search for a way to associate white French-descendants to "the Indian, the original inhabitant,"<sup>49</sup> in order to construct a sense of belonging to the land. These efforts usually involve the creation of fictive kinship relations with Indigenous peoples as a way to analogize the oppression faced by the Franco-Québécois as the only French-speaking community in North America.<sup>50</sup>

Burelle builds on Cornellier's argument, suggesting that through the creation of these fictive kinship ties, "The Québécois are suddenly the Indigenous people who have successfully survived colonialism, carried their métis [mixed-race] values into modernity, and formed a thriving cultural and political project. This narrative positions the French Québécois . . . as the better, more resilient version of their supposed Indigenous ancestors."<sup>51</sup> The idea that the so-called "Quebec métis" are more authentic, and thus, more "Indigenous" than actual Indigenous peoples in Quebec has become commonplace, so much so that it was one of the principal ideas driving the CMDRSM's successful recruitment efforts in its first few years of existence.<sup>52</sup>

The CMDRSM's attempt to transform white French-descendants into "Indigenous" people was also aided by the widespread circulation of the trope of *ensauvagement* (literally, "enwilding," i.e., "becoming Indian"), one that posits the eventual indigenization of white settlers.<sup>53</sup> The ideas at the heart of the trope of *ensauvagement*—that French-settler men are prone to fall prey to the seductive force of the wilds, in the form of Indigenous women's sexual prowess and the freedom associated with the woods—continue to hold a great deal of explanatory power in Quebec society. Feminist theorist Corrie Scott has explored how this broad discourse is intimately linked to the development of white Quebec masculinity.<sup>54</sup> In her analysis of Quebec literature, Scott has explained how *métissage*, in the sense of race-mixing, is used as a literary device that affirms white masculinity, whereby "descriptions of nature and contact with Indigenous people show a Quebec hero who 'enwilds himself' . . . this transgression of cultural boundaries is above all an opportunity to prove his virility."<sup>55</sup> While French-settler men and their (male) descendants gain a sense of virile masculinity through their mastery of the wilds and subordination of Indigenous women, Scott explains how the discourse of *métissage* serves to emasculate Indigenous men in the face of French men's superiority over their domain.<sup>56</sup> Reading John's testimony (and that of his peers) through the lens of the trope of "enwilding" allows us to understand the drive to possess indigeneity and even to become "Indigenous" through displays of mastery over the land.

To return to the exact wording of his statement, John claims that his mother called him and his siblings *sauvages*, which was the French-language equivalent of "Indian" in Quebec and other parts of what we generally call Canada for generations.<sup>57</sup> While certainly offensive today, it continues to be used widely in French, despite its problematic double meaning (Indigenous= savage/ry). Perhaps because of the double meaning evoked by the term, it has been used in another, related register as well. For generations, *sauvages* was used to refer to an individual or a group of people as "wild" or "out

of control,” sometimes in a cutting manner (e.g., “stop acting wild/stop misbehaving”), sometimes in a stubborn display of pride (e.g., “we’re so out of control/free”).

As an example of the latter, growing up in a French-Canadian cultural milieu, it was not uncommon for my male peers to refer to themselves as *sauvages* and/or refer to their fictive “Indian blood” as a way to affirm a sort of uber-masculinity associated with heavy drinking, physical violence, and/or outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, and camping. I can distinctly remember one of my friends—a neighbor with whom I went to public school for eleven years—repeatedly blaming his frequent violent outbursts to the wildness coursing through his body in the form of “Indian blood.” These references were not literal claims to an Indigenous identity or even to Indigenous ancestry; instead, they were part of a broader cultural repertoire that fetishizes “Indian blood,” in Burrelle’s terms, rationalizing the performance of a particular set of dominant masculine traits that trade on and solidify white settler fantasies of Indigenous incivility. The connection between “Indian blood” and a dominant form of white masculinity, focused especially on hunting, was a salient motivator for French-descendant men to shift into an “Indigenous” identity in the regions covered by the CMDRSM in the years leading up to John’s preliminary testimony.

As a case in point, the census agglomeration (Saguenay) in which John and the large majority of the defendants in the *Corneau* case lived and hunted had a disproportionate number of men self-identifying as “Métis” in the first census after the CMDRSM’s creation in 2006: over 30% more men identified as “Métis” than women.<sup>58</sup> For men who grew up hunting and working in the woods in a region of Quebec already imagined as its rough-and-tumble heartland, suddenly claiming an “Indigenous” identity in their fifties and sixties became normalized. In their testimony, all of these men spoke about their own *ensauvagement*: no longer a metaphor to denote virile masculinity, they now sought to be recognized as Indigenous. Above all, what made them “Indigenous” was their decades-long passion for moose hunting, even when they had no known Indigenous ancestry.

Consequently, it does not take too much imagination to reinterpret John’s mother’s use of the term *sauvage*. Given that John premises his statement by explaining his love of the outdoors, it is plausible, following Cornellier’s later theorization, that his mother was expressing “a certain archetype of wild Québécois masculinity . . . almost co-dependent with the natural world associated with Indianness.”<sup>59</sup> Of course, we will never know what John’s mother meant, nor what precisely she said. Given that John’s genealogy includes no known Indigenous ancestors and that none of his ancestors are identified as adopted (nor does John suggest otherwise), it seems likely that his mother was using the term *sauvages* not as a literal descriptor (you’re “Indigenous”), but in another register altogether, one that linked John’s love for the outdoors with a stereotypical understanding of “Indianness.” She may also have been simply telling him to behave (“stop being wild [like those ‘Indians’]” or “stop misbehaving”). We must consider the possibility that John is remembering events that took place nearly five decades ago through the prism of “wild Québécois masculinity” theorized by Cornellier, one that relies heavily on myths associated with long-ago Indigenous ancestry and activities like hunting, fishing, and working in the woods.

During his preliminary testimony on January 22, 2009, a second defendant, “Rick,” who claimed Catherine Lejeune as his only “Indigenous” root ancestor, mentioned how his grandmother introduced him to the idea that they had Indigenous ancestry:

Rick: On my mother’s side, my [maternal] grandmother’s side, she would often talk about having Indian ancestry.

Q: So, you’re talking about [your grandmother]?

Rick: That’s right, Catherine Lejeune’s descendant.

Q: Was she able to name Catherine Lejeune, or is that you —

Rick: No, they —

Q: . . . who explained —?

Rick: . . . listen, they said that we had Indian blood [*sang de sauvage*], you know, and these weren’t things that . . . in that time, it was like . . . you know, it wasn’t . . . you don’t glorify it, because you’d attract unwanted attention, eh, so at that time, we’d talk about it within the family, but no more. Get it?

Q: Yes.

Rick: That’s how it worked.<sup>60</sup>

In this statement, Rick suggests that his maternal grandmother would “often talk about” the fact that they had “Indian blood” through an ancestral connection to Catherine Lejeune (born circa 1630s). When pressed about his grandmother’s claim, he links his general lack of knowledge about his Indigenous ancestry to an ambient anti-Indigenous social environment at the time of his childhood (“you don’t glorify it, you’d attract unwanted attention”). At his later testimony during the courtroom trial on November 13, 2013, Rick wove a significantly different story about his grandmother’s words while being questioned by his own counsel:

Q: Can you tell us why you claim to be Métis?

Rick: Well, why—it’s to try to keep my hunt camp, to practice activities in the woods . . .

Q: Do you know your [Indigenous] ancestry?

Rick: . . . It’s Catherine Lejeune, it’s an eleventh generation Micmac [*sic*], yes.

Q: Catherine Lejeune, you say?

Rick: Yes. . . .

Q. OK. So, when you saw [your completed genealogy in 2008] what reaction did you have?

Rick: Well, the reaction, I knew, at least partly from my maternal grandmother, she talked about it. Sometimes she talked about us having Indian blood.

Q. Can you remember when she told you about that? When did you hear that you had Indian blood?

Rick: Well, it was during family get-togethers.

Q. And how old were you at that time?

Rick: Ah! I was young, maybe four, five years old.

Q. When she spoke with you about [having Indian blood]?

Rick: Yes.

Q. Did it happen again?

Rick: Not really, because it wasn't something that we really . . . I mean, at that time we didn't brag about it, there wasn't anything to gain by bragging about it.

Q. It's just your grandmother who talked about it?

Rick: Yes, yes, yes. . . .

Q. Can you tell us when you started identifying as Métis?

Rick: Well, it started in 2008 after I had my family tree made. Since that time, I've known about it officially.<sup>61</sup>

In this case, the same defendant who suggested that his maternal grandmother had often talked about their Indigenous ancestry now explains that it likely only happened on one occasion when he was four or five years old (in 1968 or 1969). More to the point, he admits in open court that he only started identifying as "Indigenous" as part of a broader political and legal strategy to avoid the destruction of his hunt camp, which was built illegally on public lands. Rick then explains that he officially found out about having "Indian blood" when he had his family tree done by the CMDRSM's in-house genealogist in 2008. It was only after receiving these results that he decided to identify as "Métis" and claim to have Aboriginal rights under the Constitution.

Later in the same testimony, Rick directs us to some of the other ways that "Indian blood" may manifest itself among white French descendants, this time under cross-examination by the prosecution:

Q: When did you find out that you have Indian blood?

Rick: My grandmother had already referred to us having Indian blood. But, officially, it's since 2008 when I had my family tree made. It's officially since 2008.

Q: And when your grandmother was talking about it, what did she say?

Rick: She told us that we had Indian blood because of our customs. . . we weren't afraid of the cold, we wouldn't dress for the weather, that's what she told us. It was related to that.

Q: Under what circumstances did she tell you that? When she saw you outside without a sweater?

Rick: No, no, no. More like family get-togethers, things like that, yes.<sup>62</sup>

Here, Rick builds on his two previous accounts, claiming that his grandmother told him that he had "Indian" blood because of a mix of cultural characteristics ("customs" and lack of fear of cold). Remember that according to the complete genealogy that he submitted to the court, Rick has no Indigenous ancestry. Besides his reliance on a grossly stereotypical characteristic—comfort in cold weather—the only other "customs" that Rick connects to his "indigeneity" in his testimony are his love for hunting and fishing, which he discussed in considerable detail. Clearly, Rick fetishizes "Indian blood" in the manner theorized by Burelle, mobilizing "the notion of a set of inherently Indigenous traits being passed on, resulting in the French Québécois's . . . unique cultural character."<sup>63</sup> Through combining the biological substance ("Indian blood") with a set of cultural characteristics (love for hunting, tendency to underdress in winter), Rick "enwilds" himself, a process that Scott argues is central to the construction of white Québécois masculinity.

Another key aspect of the process of *ensauvagement* evidenced by John and Rick is that both enlist a woman in their immediate family (mother, grandmother) to transform their identities, as was the case for all other defendants who shared family lore in the courtroom. Combined with the fact that Catherine Lejeune, a French-Acadian woman, held the key to their transformation, it appears that white French-descendant women play an inordinate role in mediating the creation of a wild Québécois masculinity premised on indigeneity.

A third defendant, "Jim," who lists Catherine Lejeune as his only "Indigenous" root ancestor in his court submission also turns to a story about his mother when explaining his recent claim to an Indigenous identity. The effort to "enwild" his family is apparent in the list of cultural traits that he links to his "Indigenous" identity. Here is an excerpt of the back and forth between Jim and his own counsel during his preliminary testimony on February 17, 2009:

Q: At the time, was [having Indian blood] something that people talked about . . . ?

Jim: Well, it was a subject that was taboo, you know. I mean, people didn't share that they were Métis. Within families, there was some talk, my mother would often say, "We definitely have some Indian in us, we have huge meals, we hunt, we fish, we prepare our own fish and meat, and all of that, we smoke fish," you know, and we'd say, "We definitely . . . we definitely have Indian roots."<sup>64</sup>

Again, through fetishizing "Indian blood" Jim connects a range of cultural practices, linked mostly to food preparation, to his family's supposed indigeneity.

Later in his testimony, Jim explains that he received his genealogy through the CMDRSM's own genealogist in order to find a way to defend himself against the destruction of his hunt camp. Picking up the story after he received the results and started to identify as "Métis," he explains what happened next:

Jim: So, at one point I told [my uncles who hunt with me] that we were Métis and all of that and they said, "Holy! That explains why we love the woods so much, why we're always in the woods."

Q: So, you taught them about their [Métis identities]?

Jim: Not so much taught but confirmed . . . confirmed that we really had these origins. But whether you like it or not, when I tell you that it has been 50 years since their father brought them here [to Saguenay], then, well, they surely must've asked themselves "Well, we must have [Indian blood], we have this and that." Clearly. You know, I mean, I wasn't there then, but it's clear that somewhere, listen, they lived in the woods. My grandfather lived in the woods, my grandmother as well. . .

Jim: That's why we love [hunting] and are always in the woods, and . . . you know, [being Métis] probably answered questions that [my uncles] had asked themselves their entire lives, but that they didn't shout from the rooftops.<sup>65</sup>

For Jim, discovering that he was related to Catherine Lejeune, a French woman born in the 1630s who has been accepted as an "Indigenous" woman by the CMDRSM's genealogist and its membership committee, affirmed his "Indigenous" identity. Following the cultural repertoire provided by the concept of "wild Québécois masculinity," Jim enwinds himself and his uncles, retroactively reading indigeneity into their past cultural practices. "Indian blood" alone has the power to explain a range of cultural practices linked to rural, Québécois forms of masculinity, including "living in the woods" and "loving to hunt." In other words, the discovery of a tiny bit of Indigenous biological substance—even when said substance turns out to be invented, as is the case with Catherine Lejeune's descendants—allows one to reinterpret decades of one's conduct to fit a desired identity claim.<sup>66</sup>

The only woman among the eventual seventeen defendants in the case, "Debra," also reflected on childhood memories during cross-examination by the prosecutor at her preliminary testimony on February 16, 2009. Notably, she interpreted stories about "Indian blood" in her childhood quite differently than her fellow defendants:

Q: And, when you were young, did people talk about [having Indian blood]? Did people say, "Oh, well, we have Indian blood? We're different?" Can you remember?

Debra: I know that . . . some of my school friends would say to me: "We have Indian blood." But, well, "we have Indian blood," is that because my mother didn't want us to play with our friends or was it . . .? I don't know what they meant by it.

Q: OK



Debra: So . . .

Q: But did you feel excluded at school or in the community, did people say, “Oh, well, she’s not like us, she has Indian blood or we don’t hang out with her, we don’t hang out with [your family]?”

Debra: Yes . . . no . . . yes, but not in the way that you mean.

Q: OK. OK.

Debra: No, I . . . I was . . . we were quite marginalized, but because of our poverty.<sup>67</sup>

Debra also expanded on her understanding of the use of the word *sauvage* during her childhood in her trial testimony more than four-and-a-half years later on November 18, 2013. Under questioning by the prosecutor, it became clear that in her youth her friends would call her and her siblings “little Indians” (*petits sauvages*) as a way to further marginalize them, likely based on their evident poverty, and not as a way to identify them literally as Indigenous. Again, Debra confirms that nobody in her family ever talked about having Indigenous ancestry. The only mention of “Indian blood” came from her friends:

Q: When you were young, did your mother ever say that you had Indian blood?

Debra: No, I never heard her say that.

Q: Your brothers and sisters neither?

Debra: No.

Q: Your grandparents?

Debra: No.

Q: Did the people from the village ever say you were *sauvages*?

Debra: Sure, some friends would tell me, “Oh, you’re such little Indians [*petits sauvages*].” But probably, it’s because my mother didn’t want us to play with them.

Q: In other words, they weren’t saying that you had Indian blood—

Debra: No, no.<sup>68</sup>

Throughout her testimony, Debra confirms that the metaphor of “Indian blood” and the word *sauvage* were used repeatedly in relation to her during her childhood by other children in her entourage. However, unlike her male peers testifying in the *Corneau* case, she does not interpret the use of either as meaning that her or her friends were Indigenous. In fact, Debra connects being told that she had “Indian blood” to efforts to marginalize her, though how precisely that marginalization operated remains unclear from her testimony. What is clear from Debra’s testimony is that in the middle of the

twentieth century, even children knew to use the metaphor of “Indian blood” or the word *sauvage* to inflict some form of harm on other white-French-descendant children. Perversely, the widespread circulation of “Indian blood” as a pejorative marker of exclusion in Quebec society is now actually being mobilized as a building block of regional family lore by a range of individuals and organizations that are creating new “Indigenous” identities that harm actual Indigenous peoples in the region.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of aspirational descent is a way to explain the race-shifting movement in New England and in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Tracing how white French-descendants create “Indigenous” ancestors in order to shift into an “Indigenous” identity today, I have focused specifically on Edmée and Catherine Lejeune, two French-Acadian sisters born prior to 1635, who are remade into “Mi’kmaw” women through an imaginative story of a Mi’kmaw woman marrying a French man in western France at the end of the sixteenth century. Repeated mtDNA ancestry testing of the Lejeune sisters’ descendants has disproven the story, yet those intent on race shifting reject countervailing evidence, so that the Lejeune sisters continue to be used as key “Indigenous” root ancestors by a range of actors in the race-shifting movement.

The strength of family lore lies in how it mediates regionally based narratives of Indigenous-settler relations. In a contrasting type of claim made by defendants involved in a protracted court case in Quebec, three individuals with no known Indigenous ancestors constructed family lore about their “Indigenous” identity. This I link to a widespread discursive form of “wild Québécois masculinity” that relies on a process of “enwilding,” i.e., “becoming Indian,” that posits the eventual indigenization of white French settlers. Genealogical research is not simply an innocent matter of discovering long-ago ancestry; in some settler-colonial contexts, it presents an opportunity to push the boundaries of whiteness and possess indigeneity.

## NOTES

1. Laurence Niosi, “Revers pour un groupe métis du Québec en Cour suprême,” *Radio Canada Espaces Autochtones*, May 2, 2019, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1167480/corneau-metis-revers-cour-supreme-canada-autochtones>; Joane Bérubé, “Un nouvel échec pour les Métis de la Gaspésie,” *Radio Canada*, November 29, 2017, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1070312/un-nouvel-echec-pour-les-metis-de-la-gaspesie>.

2. Adam Gaudry, “Communing with the Dead: The ‘New Métis,’ Métis Identity Appropriation and the Displacement of Living Métis Culture,” *American Indian Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2018): 162–90, <https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.42.2.0162>; Adam Gaudry and Darryl Leroux, “White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: The Contemporary Evocation of Métis-sage in Québec and Nova Scotia,” *Journal of Critical Ethnic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 116–42, <https://>

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3. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2011); Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40; Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

4. Brian D. Haley and Larry R. Wilcoxon, "How Spaniards Became Chumash and Other Tales of Ethnogenesis," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 432–45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3567028>; Stephen Pearson, "'The Last Bastion of Colonialism': Appalachian Settler Colonialism and Self-Indigenization," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 165–84, <https://doi.org/10.17953/aicr.37.2.g4522v766231r3xg>.

5. See Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

6. For example, the Abenaki passed a resolution on April 1, 2019, opposing the presence of "Abenaki tribes" and "Métis" organizations in Abenaki territory in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Quebec (Band Council Resolution ROB-001-19-20); the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council unanimously adopted a resolution against the presence of a distinct Métis people in its territory at its general meeting in Val d'Or, Québec in December 2018; Mohawk opposition to several nascent "Indigenous" organizations in its territory near Montréal has been well documented in the media. See, for example, Tom Fennario, "Kahnawake Peacekeepers Say a Mikinak Member Tried to Commit Fraud on Mohawk Territory," APTN National News, November 1, 2016; three Innu First Nations intervened against the CMDRSM in the *Corneau* case; the Métis National Council has consistently taken a public position against the "Eastern métis" movement, for example, Métis National Council and Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, "Memorandum of Understanding," October 1, 2018; and both the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy opposed the state recognition of the Wesget Sipu (Fish River Tribe), a decision that was eventually overturned by the State of Maine in 2011.

7. According to the Canadian Census, 225 individuals in 1991 and 830 individuals in 1996 self-identified as "Métis" in Nova Scotia. That figure rose to 23,315 in 2016, which was equivalent to about 2.5 percent of the provincial population.

8. Prior to that agreement, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia had released a number of public statements asserting the Mi'kmaq as the only Indigenous people in present-day Nova Scotia, including "Understanding Métis Rights Within Mi'kma'ki," October 1, 2013; "Mi'kmaq Chiefs Respond to the Daniels Decision," April 21, 2016; and "The Challenge with Self-Identification and Recent Court Decisions," August 24, 2016.

9. Darryl Leroux, *Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous Identity* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019). See Ashley Barnwell, "The Genealogy Craze: Authoring an Authentic Identity through Family History Research," *Life Writing* 10, no. 3 (2013): 261–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2013.802198>; Anne-Marie Kramer, "The Genomic Imaginary: Genealogical Heritage and the Shaping of Bioconvergent Identities," *Media Tropes* 5, no. 1 (2015): 80–104; Alondra Nelson, "Bio Science: Genetic Genealogy Testing and the Pursuit of African Ancestry," *Social Studies of Science* 38, no. 5 (2008): 759–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312708091929>; Catherine Nash, *Genetic Geographies: The Trouble with Ancestry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015);

Catherine Nash, "Genealogical Relatedness: Geographies of Shared Descent and Difference," *Genealogy* 1, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy1020007>.

10. Aileen Moreton-Robinson. *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

11. Nelson, "Bio Science."

12. TallBear, *Native American DNA*.

13. Yves Beaugregard, "Mythe ou réalité. Les origines amérindiennes des Québécois: Entrevue avec Hubert Charbonneau," *Cap-aux-Diamants: La revue d'histoire du Québec*, no. 34 (Summer 1993): 38–42, <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/8408ac>; Bertrand Desjardins, "Homogénéité ethnique de la population québécoise sous le Régime français," *Cahiers québécois de démographie* 19, no. 1 (1990): 63–76, <https://doi.org/10.7202/010034ar>.

14. Jennifer Adese, Zoe Todd, and Shaun Stevenson, "Mediating Métis Identity: An Interview with Jennifer Adese and Zoe Todd," *Media Tropes* 7, no. 1 (2017): 1–25; Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Jill Doerfler. *Those Who Belong: Identity, Family, Blood, and Citizenship among the White Earth Anishinaabeg* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015); Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003); Robert A. Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013); J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Damien Lee and Kahente Horn-Miller, "Wild Card: Making Sense of Adoption and Indigenous Citizenship Orders in Settler Colonial Contexts," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14, no. 4 (2018): 293–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118818186>; Pamela Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011); Krystl Raven, "Ka oopikihtamashook': Becoming Family," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14, no. 4 (2018): 319–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118818186>.

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16. Nelson, "Bio Science," 761.

17. Barnwell, "The Genealogy Craze," 263.

18. I have included every mention of the Lejeune sisters from my overall examination of five online genealogy forums. They were discussed on three forums.

19. Stephen White, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles acadiennes* (Moncton, NB: Centre d'études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, 1999).

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21. See also André-Carl Vachon, *L'histoire de la famille acadienne des Lejeune dit Briard: Les sept premières générations et plus* (Sainte-Adèle, QC: KLEMT, 2014).

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26. Paul L LeBlanc, untitled reply to "Questionable record Lejeune," MetisGen Mailing List, Rootsweb, March 7, 2015, 5:39 a.m., <https://lists.rootsweb.com/hyperkitty/list/metisgen@rootsweb.com/thread/227853/>.
27. Paul L LeBlanc, untitled reply to "Questionable record Lejeune," MetisGen Mailing List, Rootsweb, March 7, 2015, 5:39 a.m., <https://lists.rootsweb.com/hyperkitty/list/metisgen@rootsweb.com/thread/227853/>.
28. I have translated all French-language genealogy forum posts, court testimony excerpts, and academic article excerpts into English.
29. Michel, "Ascendance Micmac et/ou Malécite," GQAF forum, February 22, 2017, 2:51 p.m., [https://www.nosorigines.qc.ca/genealogie\\_forum\\_famille.aspx?question=5572](https://www.nosorigines.qc.ca/genealogie_forum_famille.aspx?question=5572).
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32. Denis Savard, "Racines acadiennes—la famille Lejeune," *Acadie nouvelle*, March 3, 2016, <https://www.acadienouvelle.com/chroniques/2016/03/20/la-famille-lejeune/>.
33. Mothers of Acadia. "Mothers of Acadia mtDNA Project—mtDNA Test Results for Members," <https://www.familytreedna.com/public/mothersofacadia?iframe=mtresults>.
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35. Dominique, "RE: Ascendance Micmac," GQAF forum, February 26, 2017, 4:06 p.m., [http://www.nosorigines.qc.ca/genealogie\\_forum\\_famille.aspx?question=5572](http://www.nosorigines.qc.ca/genealogie_forum_famille.aspx?question=5572).
36. Leroux, *Distorted Descent*, 195-96.
37. Of the nearly 3,000 individual membership records that I examined from the CMAM, CMDRSM, and of an "Abenaki tribe" in New Hampshire, about 30% of members relied on either of the Lejeune sisters, four other French women transformed into "Indigenous" women, or a man who never existed. In other words, an average of 30% of members had no Indigenous ancestry at all. See *ibid.*, 73-102.
38. I have surveyed ninety-four separate "Eastern métis" court cases involving 124 individuals and twenty-six organizations in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia between 2001 and 2019. All have failed at securing Aboriginal rights under the Constitution.
39. See Sturm, *Becoming Indian*, and Leroux, "Self-made metis."
40. Rebecca Nagle, "I am a Cherokee Woman. Elizabeth Warren is Not," *ThinkProgress*, November 30, 2017, <https://thinkprogress.org/elizabeth-warren-is-not-chokeee-1ec6c91b696/>; Rebecca Nagle, "Elizabeth Warren's 'Part' Cherokee Claim is a Joke, and a Racist Insult to Natives Like Me," *USA Today*, October 18, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2018/10/18/native-american-elizabeth-warren-chokeee-ancestry-column/1668763002/>; Brandon Scott, "Cherokee Nation Citizens Like Me Are Used to People Claiming Our Heritage. It's Exhausting," *Vox*, October 17, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2018/10/17/17985886/elizabeth-warren-claims-native-american-descent>.
41. Cherokee Nation, "Cherokee Nation Responds to Senator Warren's DNA Test," October 15, 2018, [http://webtest2.cherokee.org/News/Stories/Archive\\_2018/20181015\\_Cherokee-Nation-responds-to-Senator-Warrens-DNA-test](http://webtest2.cherokee.org/News/Stories/Archive_2018/20181015_Cherokee-Nation-responds-to-Senator-Warrens-DNA-test).

42. Nick Estes, "Native American Sovereignty Is Under Attack. Here's How Elizabeth Warren's DNA Test Hurt Our Struggle," *The Intercept*, October 19, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/10/19/elizabeth-warren-dna-native-americans>; Julian Brave NoiseCat, "Elizabeth Warren Is Not Native American," *Huffington Post*, October 16, 2018, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-elizabeth-warren-native-ancestry\\_us\\_5bc5f8d9e4b055bc947a6e13](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-elizabeth-warren-native-ancestry_us_5bc5f8d9e4b055bc947a6e13); Krystal Tsosie, "Elizabeth Warren's DNA Is Not Her Identity," *The Atlantic*, October 17, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/what-make-elizabeth-warrens-dna-test/573205/>; Krystal Tsosie and Matthew Anderson, "Two Native Americans Geneticists Interpret Elizabeth Warren's DNA Test," *The Conversation*, October 22, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/two-native-american-geneticists-interpret-elizabeth-warrens-dna-test-105274>.

43. Since hundreds of Acadians fled west into present-day Québec during the Deportation years (loosely 1755-1764), it is quite common for French-Québécois individuals to have Acadian ancestors.

44. Leroux, *Distorted Descent*, 135-76.

45. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, pre-trial testimony (transcript), January 21, 2009, 56-57.

46. Rebecca Nagle, "Elizabeth Warren Has Spent Her Adult Life Repeating a Lie: I Want Her to Tell the Truth," August 30, 2019, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/elizabeth-warren-cherokee-apology\\_n\\_5d5ed7e6e4b0dfcbd48a1b01](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/elizabeth-warren-cherokee-apology_n_5d5ed7e6e4b0dfcbd48a1b01).

47. Twila Barnes, "Elizabeth Warren Information," Thoughts from Polly's Granddaughter, <http://www.pollysgranddaughter.com/p/elizabeth-warren-information.html>.

48. Julie Burelle, *Encounters on Contested Lands: Indigenous Performances of Sovereignty and Nationhood in Quebec* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 77.

49. Bruno Cornellier, "L'Indien, mon frère: Identité, nationalité et indianité dans Le Confessionnal," *London Journal of Canadian Studies* 21 (2005): 49-70, 58.

50. See also Jean Morency, "Images de l'Amérindien dans le roman québécois depuis 1945," *Tangence*, no. 85 (2007): 83-98, <https://doi.org/10.7202/018610ar>.

51. Burelle, *Encounters of Contested Lands*, 73-74.

52. See Paul Charest, "Qui a peur des Innus? Reflexions sur les débats au sujet du projet d'entente de principe entre les Innus de Mashteuiatsh, Essipit, Betsiamites et Nutashkuan et les gouvernements du Québec et du Canada," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 27, no. 2 (2003): 185-207, <https://doi.org/10.7202/007453ar>; Mathieu Cook, "Les droits ancestraux des Innus: Reconnaissance et analyse des discours sur l'altérité déployés lors d'une controverse à propos de négociations territoriales," PhD diss., Université Laval, 2016; Leroux, "Self-made metis."

53. Emannelle Tremblay, "Une identité frontalière: Altérité et désir métis chez Robert Lalonde et Louis Hamelin," *Études françaises* 41, no. 1 (2005): 107-24, <https://doi.org/10.7202/010849ar>; Gilles Havard, "Virilité et 'ensauvagement': Le corps du coureur de bois (xviiie et xviiiie siècle)," *Clio: Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, no. 27 (2008): 57-74, <https://doi.org/10.4000/clio.7392>.

54. Corrie Scott, "Cowboys et Indiens. Masculinités, métissages et queeritude chez Tomson Highway et Louis Hamelin," *Temps zéro*, no. 7 (2013), <http://tempszero.contemporain.info/document 1108>.

55. Scott, "Cowboys et Indiens," para. 18.

56. Scott, "Cowboys et Indiens," para. 16.

57. For instance, upon its adoption in 1876, in French the Indian Act was called "Acte des sauvages." Also, the Department of Indian Affairs was once known as the Département des Affaires des Sauvages.

58. Statistics Canada, "Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census: Census Divisions (CDs) Grouped by Provinces and Territories," <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/select-Geo-Choix.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=CD&TOPIC=10> .
59. Bruno Cornellier, "Je me souviens (maintenant): Altérité, indianité et mémoire collective," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 19, no. 2 (2010): 117, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjfs.19.2.99>.
60. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, pre-trial testimony (transcript), January 22, 2009, 18.
61. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, trial testimony (transcript), January 22, 2009, 83-85.
62. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, trial testimony (transcript), January 22, 2009, 160.
63. Burelle, *Encounters of Contested Lands*, 77.
64. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, pre-trial testimony (transcript), February 17, 2009, 9.
65. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, pre-trial testimony (transcript), February 17, 2009, 52-53, 55.
66. Lest we think that such fanciful reconstructions emerge only from working-class men living in rural regions, Burelle reminds us that the urban intelligentsia has embraced the trope of *ensauvagement* quite uncritically, capitalizing on its circulation to produce a range of highly successful and widely praised films in the past decade.
67. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, pre-trial testimony (transcript), February 16, 2009, 22-23.
68. Quebec Superior Court, *Corneau* case, trial testimony (transcript), November 18, 2013, 319-20.