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## Invitations from the land and waters: Lessons from the Peace of Fort Garry<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

This paper offers critical perspectives on engaging Indigenous Peoples land-based practices in the city. Using Winnipeg as its case study, this research identifies Winnipeg and the Red River area as a major pre-settler Indigenous population centre. Through an examination of the making of a peace treaty between the Great Sioux Nation, the Métis, and the Saulteaux at Fort Garry as a moment for exploring the land and waters as sentient entities inviting Indigenous Peoples to gather and engage in political activities. This work provides insights into the way the land and waters convey invitations to other beings, and explores what political values and activities those invitations have the power to encourage. What follows contributes to the ongoing scholarship of reclaiming urban geographies as Indigenous spaces, and challenging the reserve-rural-remote world as an Indigenous space, and the urban as a non-Indigenous space. By thinking about Indigenous politics in the city through the framework of what the land and waters invite, readers will be opened to the potential to transform contemporary inter-Indigenous political and cultural activity in places like Winnipeg.

*Keywords:* Indigenous urban geographies, inter-Indigenous politics, urban land based ways of being, Indigenous diplomacies

### *Résumé*

Cet article offre des perspectives critiques sur l'engagement des pratiques basés sur la terre et les eaux des peuples autochtones dans la ville. En utilisant Winnipeg comme étude de cas, cette recherche identifie celle-ci et la région de la rivière Rouge comme un important centre de population autochtone avant la colonisation. Cette recherche est basée sur l'étude du processus du traité de paix entre la Grande Nation Sioux, les Métis et les Saulteaux de Fort Garry comme un moment pour explorer la terre et les eaux en tant qu'entités sensibles invitant les peuples autochtones à se rassembler et à s'engager dans des activités politiques. Cette étude donne un aperçu sur la façon dont la terre et les eaux transmettent des invitations à d'autres êtres et explore quelles valeurs et activités politiques ces invitations ont le pouvoir d'encourager. Ce faisant, notre recherche contribue au domaine d'étude visant à reconquérir les 'géographies urbaines' en tant qu'espaces autochtones et de remettre en question le monde des réserves-rurales-éloignées en tant qu'espace autochtone et l'urbain en tant qu'espace non-autochtone. En repensant à la politique autochtone dans la ville à travers le cadre de ce que la terre et les eaux invitent, les lecteurs seront ouverts au potentiel de transformer l'activité politique et culturelle inter-autochtone contemporaine dans des villes comme Winnipeg.

*Mots-clés:* Géographies urbaines autochtones, politiques inter-autochtones, modes de vie urbains basés sur la terre et les eaux, diplomaties autochtones

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## Introduction

Cities within the settler colonial imaginary were, and frequently still are, conceived of as explicitly non-Indigenous places. Large population centres are framed using the language of commerce, intellectual pursuits, higher education, and are often the political seat of power for a region. They are seen as civilized spaces, contrasted by the world beyond cities which are perceived as uncivilized and wild. But this description does not accurately reflect the world before the onslaught of intense white settlement. The pre-settlement era featured major population centres that were—in culture, feel, and politics—very much *Indigenous* places. The Native character of these spaces can be seen in the news reports covered in the local paper, the concerns of the people who moved through these centres, and the economic orientation of the community. A focus on the civilized/savage analytical lens misses that contemporary settler cities that supplant Indigenous population centres also have Indigenous land-based stories underneath the concrete. Indeed, these land-based traditions help explain why a city exists in those places to begin with.

This paper examines the way land and waters create spaces that become Indigenous population centres before the settlement of Indigenous territories in what is now Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the significance of the Indigenous stories that emerge in those places. This will be done by re-examining inter-Indigenous political action during the making of the Peace of Fort Garry. In the making of this peace treaty, envoys from the Great Sioux Nation journeyed north to the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers to establish better relations with the Métis and Saulteaux nations. These three Indigenous powers on the prairies carefully negotiated with each other to build relationships of mutual respect, and put to rest past injustices. Through this narrative, I argue that this peacemaking is made possible by an invitation from the land and waters to gather at Red River—an enduring Indigenous population centre.

The argument will be advanced through three sections. The first section will examine how long-standing Indigenous population centres, that are frequently seen through a lens of urban/rural-remote-reserve, civilized/savage frameworks, can be reconceptualized in a way that brings to the foreground relationships that activate inter-Indigenous life in Winnipeg. The second section narrates the story and events of the Peace of Fort Garry with the aim of emphasizing the criticality of Indigenous presence and political power in a key population centre on the northwest plains. The final section argues that rather than thinking of land and waters as passive topography to be rationally traversed and settled, it makes more sense to ask what the land and waters invite Indigenous Peoples to do in Winnipeg. This is done by analyzing five key lessons from the Peace of Fort Garry that collectively set out a program of building good relations, thereby embracing the land's and waters' invitation to come together. This work is framed as disruptive to settler colonial narratives of the most iconic place in the city of Winnipeg. Across all three sections the civilized/savage, urban/rural-remote-reserve/, settler/Indigenous binaries are broken down to show that land-based learning that pre-dates settler cities can empower and inform Indigenous presence and politics within the contemporary limits of Winnipeg.

Winnipeg makes sense as a case study for a number of reasons. It is situated in a place that has included a robust Indigenous presence in both the pre- and post-settlement eras. This has included large numbers of Indigenous Peoples moving in, through, and out of it. To this point, Chris Andersen has talked about Winnipeg, and the Red River area more generally, as the “metropolis of Métis power” (2008, 354). Indeed, Andersen's work re-centres Winnipeg and Red River as Indigenous space generally, and Métis space in particular. From a contemporary perspective the city is home to over 84,000 people who self-identify on the census as Indigenous (City of Winnipeg, 2018).<sup>2</sup> This includes a wide range of Indigenous nations including Métis, Cree, Saulteaux, and Dakotas. Winnipeg is also a major health centre that makes the city important to Indigenous Peoples in northern Manitoba and north of 60. This reality means that Winnipeg plays a key role in providing health and human services to Indigenous Peoples from elsewhere. As such, focusing on land-based learning and politics in the city helps contextualize Winnipeg as an Indigenous place for those from there, living there but from somewhere else, and those who are there temporarily.

## Indigenous Peoples in the city

A number of Indigenous scholars have engaged the question of elimination of Indigenous presence in urban and urbanizing places. Glen Coulthard (2014) and others have pointed out that urban elimination possesses a Lockean logic in which urban inner-city neighbourhoods, into which Indigenous Peoples moved after the 1950s (see also Silver 2006), were later marked for gentrification such that those inner-city spaces could be improved. Coulthard argues that “[t]hrough gentrification, Native spaces in the city are now being treated as *urbs nullius*—urban space void of Indigenous sovereign presence” (2014, 176). For Coulthard's part, he uses Bonita Lawrence's interventions

on solidarities between reserve and urban Indigenous communities to encourage finding “ways of bringing together through relations of solidarity and mutual aid ‘the strengths that urban and reserve-based Native people have developed in their different circumstances, in the interests of our mutual empowerment’” (Coulthard 2014, 176). This orientation to the building of decolonial politics is linked to the importance of place-based decolonial thought and practice in Coulthard’s work. Coulthard defines this practice as grounded normativity which encompasses “the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements within the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time” (Coulthard 2014, 13).

However, Coulthard’s framing elides an interesting fact of Indigenous life in Winnipeg. Winnipeg, or more properly the Red River community, was an urban centre with a long-standing Indigenous presence and dominance that pre-dates large scale settlement in what is now western Canada. Further, not all Indigenous Peoples who call the Red River area home have, or had, an *Indian Act* imposed reserve-based life. Many Métis individuals were excluded from reserves, while some First Nations folks left reserves to join their Métis kin. As such, on one hand Coulthard and Lawrence both argue that there is a need to think through relationships of solidarity between urban and reserve Indigenous Peoples, however on the other hand, these relationships mean something different in the Red River area which has long had an urban Indigenous presence as part of the fabric of the Indigenous political, economic, and social worlds.<sup>3</sup>

Consider Peters and Andersen’s (2013) work examining what it means to be Indigenous in the city. They point out that “[d]espite the dominant scholarly emphasis on Indigenous cultures and communities in rural or remote areas, some research is beginning to position urban areas as spaces of Indigenous resilience and cultural innovation” (2). Further, they point out that contemporary urban and Indigenous focused literature and research fails

to recognize that most cities are located on sites traditionally used by Indigenous peoples, including settlements equivalent in size and complexity of organization to that of European cities at the time. The creation of Indigenous “homelands” outside of cities is in itself a colonial invention. Moreover, for many Indigenous peoples, ancestral homelands are not contained by the small parcels of land found in reserves, reservations, and rural Maori and rural Australian Aboriginal settlements; rather, they are the larger territories that include contemporary urban settlements (p 7–8).

Peters and Andersen perhaps more pointedly capture the contextual nuances of Indigenous presence in Winnipeg and other cities across the northwest plains than Coulthard. Further, from the perspective of Indigenous presence in Winnipeg, Coulthard and Lawrence’s interest in reserve-urban solidarity is undoubtedly helpful, but if done without sensitivity to the long-standing *urban* presence that marks the Red River area, their position also serves to make land-based learning activities in those urban spaces harder to engage as they miss the pre-settler land-based forms of relating in urban contexts.

Leanne Simpson got closer to this in her and Coulthard’s 2014 interview with Eric Ritskes for the journal *Decolonization*. Ritskes asked how land-based modes of being and living could be understood in urban contexts. Simpson responded that:

Well, all land in Canada is Indigenous land. It doesn’t matter if there is a national park or a city or a mine or a reserve on top of it, it’s Indigenous land because Indigenous peoples have relationships to it. In my own territory I think it is important to break down this dichotomy between city and rural, because within Nishnaabeg thought our nation is a network and we should be strengthen [sic] our relationship to all parts of our territory and our people regardless of where they live. The same processes of dispossession and erasure operate in all parts of our territory. Resurgence happens *within* Indigenous bodies and through the connections we make to each other and our land. That’s how we strengthen ourselves within Nishnaabeg intelligence. . . . Having said that, Peterborough is Nogojiwanong, the place at the end of the rapids. It is our land and there’s a lot of resistance and resurgence that goes on within the city. There are sacred sites in parking lots, we have ceremony in the city, we have festivals in the city—all involving a lot of red tape and a lot of fighting in order to [do] that. We have a system of maintaining a connection to the land despite settler colonialism, and settler

surveillance, and criminalization and all of those components of colonialism that serve to dispossess us of our land. So, I feel like framing cities as this cultural void, where we don't have a connection to the land, actually really makes me angry because I feel like we've worked really, really hard to be Mississauga Nishnaabeg in our territory despite the fact that we have the majority of Ontario's population screaming down our necks! (Simpson and Coulthard 2014)

What Simpson and Coulthard do here is realign the orientation of a traditional lifestyle away from its interpretation as a rural, reserve, or remote lifestyle to one that is connected to Indigenous relationships to land and territory, *regardless of that territory being urban or something else*.

The methodological risk of perpetuating the divide between urban life and reserve-rural-remote life is that it undermines Indigenous political mobilizing and resurgence in places like Winnipeg. Julie Tomiak (2016; also see Porter and Yiftachel 2019)—speaking directly to settler colonial studies literature—has pointed out that “methodological settler colonialism has meant that the settler-colonial framing of urban space has been invisibilized. Taking the settler city for granted without problematizing its historical and ongoing formation reinforces the erasure of Indigenous Peoples as peoples. Rather than treating the city as an innocent container of social relations, we need to examine its active construction, as an object of analysis and agent of settler colonialism in its own right” (10). Tomiak is not thinking primarily about Winnipeg in this context, but rather the way Ottawa has been transformed into a “settler city” as she puts it, and in the process undermined and attacked long standing Indigenous presence on that land. As such, this orientation away from thinking of the urban as settler, and everything else as wild, untamed, uncivilized, and, as a result, Indigenous, has both theoretical and practical methodological implications for Indigenous organizing in urban spaces.

This is not to say that one can simply just think differently and effect a different world in urban spaces. As Tuck and Yang (2012, 19) have pointed out, simply thinking differently about a problem does not automatically bring a different world into being. One of the particularly important dimensions of these settler colonial dichotomies is that there are now Indigenous Peoples who not only grew up and spent most of their lives in urban areas like Winnipeg, but so did their parents. The emergence of inter-generational urban Indigenous Peoples means that there is a need to do more than think differently about the urban/rural-remote-reserve divide in these spaces. For those people who may have grown up with the notion that a traditional lifestyle is one lived outside of the cities, there is a need to actively engage the question of what anchors their relationship to their territories in the urban place they have lived most—if not all—of their lives. Putting a sharper point on it, Peters and Andersen argue that:

Privileging a connection to ancestral homelands as a marker of Indigenous identity reinforces dominant visions of Indigenous peoples as authentic only if they live in remote areas and engage in “traditional” lifestyles or, conversely, only if we assume that these homelands are located exclusively in such areas. When the source of Indigenous identities and the focus of lifeways is located outside the urban milieu, innovations that emerge from interactions with non-Indigenous society are positioned as less central or even less “authentic” than transplanted tribal traditions. Different Indigenous relationships to ancestral lands are homogenized, and people who may not possess these connections are excluded. In particular, an emphasis on a connection to land and ancestral territories (as dominantly conflated with rural or remote areas) generates questions about the identities of urban Indigenous dwellers whose connection to tribal homelands may be sporadic, may not continue to exist, *or may never have existed*. It poses particular barriers for individuals with Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry who may not have had a strong connection to tradition, rural Indigenous communities, and for many third- and fourth-generation urban [Indigenous] residents (2013, 8, emphasis added, please also see Andersen 2008).

While Peters and Andersen frame their analysis as urban Indigenous identity innovation, I would posit that for Indigenous Peoples and our communities in Winnipeg, there is also room for a robust engagement with land-based learning and tradition that is rooted to the long-standing urban Indigenous character of Winnipeg.

While scholars have noted that transforming the intersecting power dynamics of settler colonial, racist, misogynist, homophobic power is a challenge at a community level (see Grandinetti 2017; Silver 2006; 2010), there is also significant cultural creativity that can practically change how Indigenous Peoples live our lives, and even have land-based orientations to the world shape the homes in our urban communities (Deane and Smoke 2010; Wilson and Peters 2005). Indeed, the additional challenge is that even when Indigenous Peoples engage in land-based and

cultural activities in the cities, they confront a persistent attack on their presence, and the activities in those urban spaces (Peters and Lafond 2013). However, in the face of all of these challenges and violent anti-resurgence policies and practices, there is still an insurgent urban Indigenous presence under the pavement at Portage and Main in Winnipeg that has the potential to teach Indigenous Peoples from Winnipeg, in Winnipeg, and visiting Winnipeg, how to ethically engage each other in their urban Indigenous surroundings in a way that is informed by what the land and waters invite. In the next section I narrate the story of the Peace of Fort Garry to demonstrate the way Indigenous Peoples of many nationalities used what became Winnipeg as a centre for their inter-Indigenous politics.

### The Peace of Fort Garry

Historians and geographers have pointed out that a major population centre at what is now called the Forks (referring to the meeting place of the Red and Assiniboine rivers) makes sense. Fur traders and Indigenous Peoples have long gathered there because it is the nexus of several major transportation networks. Humans decided to establish centres at the Forks because it made the best economic sense. One could easily argue that any rational self-maximizing human would decide that the Forks is the perfect place for a major population centre. This formulation can be used to describe why Fort Garry ended up at the Forks, and why it grew into an important and large (by the standards of the time) population centre. However, this reading of rational action in human history and decision-making erases the land as a sentient and active actor in human affairs. If we shift our view away from a myopic focus on humans and their self-maximizing decision-making activities, and instead try and appreciate the active sentience of the land and waters, what becomes clearer is that relationships with land inform a complex web of relations between Indigenous Peoples, outsiders, and political decision-making.

The *Nor'Wester* newspaper, a prominent newspaper published in the Red River area between 1859-1869, reported on inter-Indigenous political activities on the plains.<sup>4</sup> By way of background, the relationships between the Great Sioux Nation and the Métis of Red River as well as the Cree, Assiniboine and Saulteaux Nations were frequently fraught with tension, acrimony, peace treaties and violent conflict. However, in March of 1860 the *Nor'Wester* reported on the coming of a group of eighty Sioux who had journeyed north towards Fort Garry. Their journey was a peace mission, seeking to ease hostilities between their people and the peoples further north. They were met along the way at Pembina by Governor of Assiniboia William Mactavish. There, Mactavish informed the Sioux that he could not guarantee their safety if they continued any further and encouraged them to turn back. Of the eighty Sioux warriors that originally set out, twenty decided to continue on to Fort Garry.

As this smaller party ventured north along the Red River, they approached a house belonging to a Métis family. The word having gotten out that the Sioux were coming, many Métis and key Métis leaders had gathered at the house to meet them. It is reported that the Sioux stayed the night at this house, during which time they “negotiated a treaty with the plains hunters and pledged their faith in a cloud of smoke, undercover of which they danced all night” (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 1). The next morning, the Sioux continued north to Fort Garry. However, they did not travel alone. They were escorted by several prominent Métis leaders and plains diplomats including William Hallett, James McKay, Mr. Rowand and others “who from their frequent visits to the plains [and Sioux territory] were well known to [the Sioux]” (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 1). As the party neared the fort, the Saulteaux rode out to meet them and accepted the overture to treat for peace. Together, the Métis, Saulteaux and Sioux rode into Fort Garry.

Once there and settled, the peace negotiations began. At least two Sioux chiefs made speeches espousing the importance of peace on the plains. Man of the Leaves is reported to have shook the hand of all the Saulteaux and then said “that it made his heart glad to see them. His warriors bore no ill-feeling towards them, and when they had smoked again and eaten again they would be the best of friends. ‘You have given us *your* hands,’ he added, ‘and we have given you *our* hands—let us now give to each other our hearts” (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 2, emphasis original). A Saulteaux leader replied,

Friends, you have left your hunting grounds to come here. I have done the same. We are strangers here, but we have met often at the Mountain, and my heart was always glad. My friends, listen to me, for I am wise. We have made peace: let us keep it. When the white man goes through your country, I hope you will not harm him nor the d--l get hold of him (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 2).

To which another Saulteaux added “When you meet the half-breeds alone you kill them; but we are friendly with them. We would not touch them—no, not even with our fists, because they give us our knives, blankets, and powder”

(*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 2). In response the Sioux man sitting beside Man of the Leaves said “Nine of my warriors are here. We are pleased to hear what you said of the half-breeds. They are our friends—we like them much. My warriors shook hands with them last winter. We now shake hands with them again” (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 2).

Following these and additional speeches the Sioux spent the night in the Fort with the Métis. A nightcap of grog was passed around which kicked off singing and dancing and storytelling in which they “talked of ‘auld lang syne,’ when Red River and Dacotah [sic] hunters met together on the plains and the Sioux ran off with the half-breeds’ horses” (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 2). This evening of stories and fellowship concluded and a second day of peacemaking started with the return of the sun.

Both the Sioux and the Saulteaux presented the other with their peace pipes. Both were charged and lit, and passed around. The Sioux at this point presented gifts of eagle plumes to the Métis. Man of the Leaves made a final speech thanking Governor Mactavish for being party to the peace agreement, and commented on the Sioux relationship with the Métis:

The half-breeds are brave men; they smoked with us the pipe of peace. The Great Spirit above (pointing upwards) was the witness; and I hope they will keep their promise, as we will keep ours. If they do so we shall be able to return to our lodges and shew that we have not lived in vain. We have walked many miles through the snow to make peace, and I hope that war is over. Let the past be forgotten—we have laid aside the scalping knife (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 3).

After this point there was drumming and dancing, additional presents were distributed. These gifts were said to have been paid for using public funds. The Sioux were then escorted out of Fort Garry. The report concludes with the remark that “[w]e only hope that to the oppressed nationalities of civilized Europe the Congress of Paris may prove as satisfactory as the savage tribes of North America was the Peace of Fort Garry” (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 3).

### **Taking up invitations in Winnipeg through the Peace of Fort Garry**

At first glance, this appears to be just a news story from a bygone era. However, I argue that it contains important lessons for thinking about urban Indigeneity that are informed by what the land and waters are inviting Indigenous Peoples to do. As noted above, many have thought about why Winnipeg matters, and rational self-maximizing humans will stay in places where geography and topography benefit them. However, what if Winnipeg is important not because of the choices made by rational humans, but rather because humans, and other non-human beings, accept the invitation to take up lessons offered by the land and waters? This re-framing makes urban life just as implicated in land-based modes of relating and ethics as non-urban spaces. It also takes up Dian Million’s view that “[t]he premise of a different knowledge organizing human life undergirds Indigenous relations in place,” (26) a point that transcends urban/rural/remote places (2018, 26).

Rather than geography and topography being dispassionate, blank canvases on which humans paint the picture of their civilizations, one can re-examine human activity from the perspective of what geography and topography invite humans to do. In order to do this, one must eschew the desire to engage in what Bang et al. have argued are the deficit narratives applied to urban Indigenous communities. To their point, they argue:

deficit narratives of urban Indigenous communities often claim there are limitations to the living of Indigenous lives in urban places because they are supposedly disconnected to Indigenous homelands and sacred places is intimately intertwined with issues of residing and dwelling. . . . Marking urban land as invisible, or not authentic lands, and non-Indigenous, reinscribes the settler-indigenous dialectic that services the logic of elimination for territorial acquisition (Wolfe 2006). This dialectic is complicit in the domestication of decolonization and the denial of repatriation of Indigenous lands (Tuck and Yang 2012), urban and rural; further, it limits imaginative creations of indigenous futurity that are not bound by colonial conceptions of land. (Bang et al. 2014, 43).

It is in pointing out the truncation of creative Indigenous futures rooted in our own conceptions of land where Bang et al. connect most directly with the Peace of Fort Garry. The meeting of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, and all the

feeder rivers and creeks, come to possess sentients that starts a conversation between humans and non-human entities that offers a different future for Indigenous presence in cities. As such, instead of being self-maximizing actors, the Indigenous Peoples who gathered at the Forks and the surrounding area accepted an invitation to do so from the land and waters. These long standing and periodic gatherings have had intersecting motivations and rationales—political, economic, cultural—but the space created by the meeting of land and water is also inviting people to gather there for various periods of time, and for a wide array of activities. Seeing land and waters as active beings is not how the settler state conceives of its urban presence. Instead, by viewing the Peace of Fort Garry through a land/water-centric orientation we are able to take up the creative potential that Bang et al. are referring to. This potential is actualized through five lessons from the Peace of Fort Garry about the ways the land and water invite Indigenous Peoples to meet, and the interactions undertaken at that place.<sup>5</sup>

First, we learn that the Peace of Fort Garry is more than just day-to-day plains diplomacy and machinations of treaty making (Dempsey 2015, please also see Gaudry 2014). This is a moment in which adversaries (or in Gaudry's terms, "strangers") are turned into friends, if not family. We learn through this story about the process of being good to people with whom you had bad relations. Recall that the story is told in a way that makes clear that it is the desire of the Sioux to end hostilities with the Métis and Saukteaux, not the other way around. It teaches us about wanting to end conflict and live peacefully with other people. To be clear, this is not a lesson of living *in* peace. Rather, this is a lesson of *making* peace. The Peace of Fort Garry is not about life after a conflict has ended, it is instead about the importance—and methods—of ending of hostilities. As such this story productively troubles the pervasive peaceful, docile, nature loving character of Indigenous Peoples that is often imposed on the Indigenous past. As Val Napoleon has pointed out, Indigenous worlds have always been rife with conflict and disagreement (2013), what we learn by studying the invitation to gather and make peace at Fort Garry through a lands/waters-centric lens is how we rise above ourselves and our national boundaries to live peacefully with those we have struggled against in the near past.

On the one hand, the Sioux are travelling to Fort Garry because that is a node of Métis and Saukteaux power. However, on the other hand, the land and waters create a space at the Forks that has always invited meeting and exchange. That is why that location is a node of Métis and Saukteaux power. The Métis and Saukteaux—and the Crees before them—accepted the invitation to gather there, and the diplomats from the Great Sioux nation like Man of the Leaves, and the son of La Terre qui Brule, were just the most recent Indigenous Peoples to take up that invitation. This is particularly important as urban spaces continue to be places of meeting and exchange. Consider the effort to bring together Indigenous and newcomer communities in Winnipeg. In the spring of 2017, a number of Indigenous and newcomer activists decided to come together and break down the walls and stereotypes between them. The point of this more recent gathering was to build a movement of common cause and improve the social and political relationships between Indigenous Peoples and peoples originally from other places (Grabish, 2017). When combined with the lessons of the Peace of Fort Garry, this orientation seems to fit what Daigle and Ramirez (2019) have argued is the need for "embodied knowledge of Indigenous Peoples coming into dialogue and relationship with those of Black and other dispossessed peoples" (79). Indeed, Daigle and Ramirez make explicit that this includes urban space because "these sites are part of Indigenous geographies despite relentless reframings by white proprietary logics and practices" (79). Thus while the Peace of Fort Garry is about taking up the land's and waters' invitation within 19<sup>th</sup> century inter-Indigenous politics, approaching the land and waters as sentient has intellectual and political power well beyond the context in which the story happened.

Second, in taking up this invitation, there is a teaching about the importance of making peace respectfully by relating to peoples different from your own. The Peace of Fort Garry is a multi-national peace activity. The HBC, Métis, Saukteaux, Sioux are all parties to this peace. Recall that on the second day of the meetings, both Saukteaux and Sioux peace pipes were shared. Both traditions embodied by the respective pipes were charged, lit and smoked by all the participants. Similarly, it was reported that during the concluding dances that the Métis also joined in:

They sang a kind of chant which, commencing in a low and melancholy strain, rose higher and wilder as it proceeded. At first it produced no effect; but after awhile it brought to their feet not only the Indians of both nations, but some of the half-breeds also, who joined hands in the mazy dance and bobbed about much to their own satisfaction and greatly to the amusement of the spectators (*Nor'Wester* March 14 1860, 3 col. 3).

The dances and songs deployed at the conclusion of the meetings were not Métis dances or songs. But the expectation was that one engage the traditions of other peoples towards building new and respectful relationships. In the same way, one might imagine that the dancing and singing that the Sioux took part in the night before their arrival at Fort Garry may not have been Sioux dances and songs. It is possible those were the dances of the Métis nation. As such, this invitation made by the land is being taken up in a way that encourages learning from and engaging others with the aim of respecting different traditions and ways of doing things. This includes being present and uncomfortable in a context that is not your own. To be clear, this exchange and engagement is true of the hosts, and the visitors, and as such forms a deeply reciprocal expectation of behaviour. One of the key benefits of this is that the land's and waters' invitation to meet forces us to see, and relate to, other Indigenous Peoples.

Third, the land's and waters' invitation to meet also provides an opportunity to laugh about our past conflicts. Staying up late and telling stories about the time that the Métis went onto the plains and the Sioux ran away with the Métis' horses served as a chance to make light of what was a serious affront. The point is that even serious affronts to another people can be overcome, and that there is a lesson to be learned in laughing about it in an effort to forge a better relationship. It is important to note that not everybody laughs, or needs to laugh. However, this moment is conveying that there is transformative potential, under the right circumstances, in humour and the art of laughing with the folks with whom you have conflict.

Fourth, the Peace of Fort Garry is as much about water as it is about land. When scholars talk about land-based and land-informed knowledge and learning, they have also thought about the close relationship between land and water (Daigle 2016). The invitation made by the land is also an invitation made by the rivers that cut through what is now Winnipeg. Recall that the Sioux travelled up along the river towards Fort Garry. This should also be seen through an active sentience of the rivers. The land and rivers both contribute to a space ideal for gathering. In addition, navigating the rivers helps the peoples of the plains find that gathering place. The rivers also guide journeyers to other houses along the way, as was the case in the Peace of Fort Garry. A land/water-centric framework demands we appreciate the rivers and water bodies that also inform and contribute to the invitation to come together. This re-oriented thinking about the land and waters cradling urban spaces creates a body of reciprocal responsibilities between lands/waters and Indigenous Peoples. If the land and confluence of rivers invites Fort Garry to be a centre of gathering and peace-making, then the rivers also ought to be seen to play an active role in helping people find where and how to make that peace.

To this end, Corntassle and Bryce have argued that “[w]hether living in rural or urban areas, indigenous peoples are finding new pathways to resurgence and cultural continuity in order to strengthen their nations amidst ongoing colonialism and legacies of cultural harm” (2019, 157). They lay out well the moments of creativity in and outside urban centres in which Indigenous Peoples are connecting with the land and giving back more than they take. One of the challenges that the rise of urbanization has produced is to make urban landscapes appear to be normal, or natural. Rather, what a return to the Peace of Fort Garry does is help inform what Corntassle and Bryce call the redefinition of subsistence and sustainability. The invitation, and the ensuing making of peace, becomes about reciprocal relationships to each other and the natural world in an urban place. The story thus empowers one to challenge settler colonialism and its normalcy in urban spaces while informing the redefinition of key concepts.

Finally, thinking about what the land and waters invite teaches us about non-domination. The Indigenous Peoples who met at Fort Garry are described in the report as “[t]hose hereditary and implacable foes.” And in the face of that description, there was a way to have people with seemingly intractable and long-standing grievances come together in an act of peace building. One party did not impose on the other a mode or pathway to peace. No persons in attendance insisted that the peace be done at gunpoint or with reference to pre-determined conditions. The effort, as described, was start to finish about repairing relationships and making space for better future interactions. Peace-making was the goal in itself. This frames what the land and waters invite as non-domination, no party to the Peace of Fort Garry used that moment to dominate or impose their worldview on the other.

The Peace of Fort Garry can be viewed as being informed by the types of reciprocal ethical relationships that Coulthard, Simpson and others noted above are talking about. The peace happened at Fort Garry not because humans deemed it a rational place to build a large population centre, it happened at Fort Garry because the land and waters have invited humans to make that an enduring gathering place for activities like peace making. The Sioux came north in part because that is the population centre of their adversaries. But they also were guided to this meeting place by the lands and rivers, and accepted the invitation to gather at the Forks to fulfill the goal of building peaceful relations.

## Conclusion

Underneath the concrete at Portage and Main, and underneath the shops at the Forks, there is an Indigenous world that included an Indigenous population centre before settlers built office towers, railways, or shopping malls. Thinking about urban spaces as non-traditional elides the land-based knowledge and logics that inform why there is a city built around the Forks in the first place. Indeed, for Indigenous Peoples living in Winnipeg, there is value to reconnecting with those stories to help engage with a prairie inter-Indigenous political ethic that is informed by what the land and waters teach us about gathering at the Forks, and how we might relate to, and with, each other once we are there. All of this serves to teach Indigenous Peoples how we relate with persons different from us.

As such, while there is important knowledge and learning to be done in spaces that are not urbanized, there is also important work and learning to be done in spaces that are. Thinking and working through what the land invites also might provide the impetus to engage in activities that are commonly thought to happen in non-urban spaces. For example, during the winter Indigenous Peoples danced for the #IdleNoMore movement, a group of people stopped traffic at the intersection of Portage and Main to hold a round dance. In this moment Indigenous Peoples from multiple nations gathered near the Forks to engage in something that is forbidden by settler law, and in doing so, took up an invitation to gather to assert their presence on that land. If the land is inviting peoples to gather at Fort Garry to engage in peacemaking in a framework of non-domination, holding a multi-nation round dance in a busy intersection realizes the potential of that invitation. The same could be said for an inter-Indigenous political or protest movement to treat the Red, Assiniboine and feeder rivers better. The land and waters are not inviting us to dump sewage into the river, so living up to reciprocal relationships with the land and waters in urban centres can be an activity informed by what are often thought of as non-urban traditional land practices.

And finally, with all the discussion of how hard it is to practice urban Indigenous governance without a land base, what this examination of the Peace of Fort Garry tells us is that in cities like Winnipeg that have long been major Indigenous population centres—legal land base arrangements and urban reserves are not necessary for Indigenous Peoples to reach across tribal and cultural differences to build peaceful relationships and govern ourselves. The Sioux came to a space important to a number of Indigenous nations. They came to a place that the land and waters created for the meeting of different peoples. They didn't come to a reserve, reservation or scrip allotment or road allowance. In the Peace of Fort Garry Indigenous Peoples gathered and governed themselves fairly and justly in a population centre without any western legal frameworks to sanction it. And that may be the key lesson in thinking about accepting the invitation from the land and waters.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Voth was born and raised in the inner city of Winnipeg, with family throughout the Interlake region of Manitoba. He is Métis, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary, and an Instructor in the International Indigenous Studies Program. The stories told in this paper include reflections on members of his family, and are part of a larger project of thinking through inter-Indigenous political engagement in Winnipeg.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that self-identification has thoughtfully been examined by Andersen in his foundational text. The point here is not to take up this debate, but rather point out that there are a significant number of people who live in Winnipeg and assert an Indigenous identity. Please see Andersen, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> This point may also be important for Indigenous Peoples in other urban contexts. The shaping of urban space in Winnipeg has been part of a larger settler urbanizing phenomenon touching many other city spaces, and will have similarities and differences that are also important to study. It is not within the scope of this work to take on this more comparative work.

<sup>4</sup> From a methodological perspective, the use of the *Nor'Wester* newspaper has both advantages, and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that it was read by a primarily Indigenous audience. There was an occasion on which it published a report in Anishinaabemowin due to the interest among its readers. It was also keen to keep up on Indigenous political affairs, particularly concerning the Sioux. However, like all newspapers, it has its own agenda which includes telling stories people are willing to purchase to read. I use it here because it covers key details about this treaty, and the process that unfolded in making it a reality. It is a key source of information during this time, and provides an accounting of events that was available to the public and subject to public debate. In addition, the engagement with this source by Indigenous scholars allows for a broader range of theoretically informed

interpretations to be applied to its content. In this research, I am engaging this news report with an appreciation of Indigenous lived self-determination in fact—and in theory—during the context in which the paper was published.<sup>5</sup> This would also take up Bang et al.'s point that when one moves through a place as a matter of routine, land “recedes from consciousness.” However, as they point out, “recession of place from consciousness depends on the ways in which we understand and routinize our relationships to other beings” (2014, 44). As such, reinterpreting the Peace of Fort Garry through what the land and waters invite helps centre “other beings” and thereby pushes back against land receding from consciousness.

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