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Funding and Ethics in Métis Community Based Research: The Complications of a Contemporary Context

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Abstract

Recent ethical guidelines developed by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research along with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* stress the importance of Aboriginal community engagement in research. Although these are positive changes meant to ensure respectful and responsive research relationships between communities and researchers, the understanding of 'community' employed by the new guidelines is problematic. In this sense, the guidelines rely on hegemonic understandings of what it is to be an Aboriginal person in Canada, as well as white spatial imaginaries of Aboriginal geographies. In this way, the guidelines codify Aboriginality and its spatiality as that of well-structured, landed, bounded and distinct rural communities. However, the contemporary Métis communities with whom the authors have worked rarely fit into hegemonic imaginaries of Aboriginality and its geographies in Canada. Rather, Métis communities are often institutionally weak, geographically dispersed and sociologically complex. Thus, we argue that the guidelines instantiate a territorialisation of society and space that risks re-marginalising Métis communities.

Introduction

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The recently implemented Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) 'Guidelines for Doing Research with Aboriginal Communities' and the recent revision of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research and Ethics (TCPS 2)[1] are intended to ensure the protection of Aboriginal communities involved in federally-funded research in Canada. The impact of these guidelines on the development of research in Canada will be profound because adherence to them is mandatory for all university-based research.

Their express objectives are to help ensure community engagement and collaboration at all stages of research in Aboriginal communities. In this article, we contend that the definition of 'community' employed by the guidelines limits the accessibility of Métis communities to this important bulwark of funding in two main ways.

First, it assumes a certain level of infrastructure which is simply not present in most Métis communities and, therefore, requires application and reporting criteria that are dependent upon infrastructure unlikely to exist in Métis communities in the ways it is understood to exist in other First Nations communities. Second, it draws on a hegemonic geographical imaginary that assumes a 'landedness' to 'Aboriginal community' (for example, specific First Nations or Métis settlements). Although conceptually convenient, this understanding fails to account for the formation and survival of communities not so neatly categorised according to bounded geographical spaces.[i] From this critical stance, we explore the relationship between the underlying spatialised assumptions of the guidelines and the paucity of Métis research in general. Likewise, we examine existing structural inequities that impede the implementation of the guidelines and, therefore, contribute to the lack of Métis research.

This article is organised into four sections. In parts one and two, respectively, we present a brief history of Indigenous ethics and review the paucity of health research for Métis populations. In parts three and four, we critique current understandings of community and discuss possible solutions. Our hope is that Métis realities will be negotiated and included in research guidelines put forth by Canadian funding agencies such as the CIHR and the TCPS.

History of ethics in Indigenous research

In the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in scholarship explicitly addressing Indigenous traditions of inquiry. Perhaps the earliest and most widely disseminated is the work of Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). Smith argues that academic and government-sponsored research, framed by a Western world view, has produced colonised research processes and findings. She believes that Indigenous groups seeking to decolonise must gain control of and indigenise research methodologies by approaching them from the perspectives of their own ethical and cultural values. Although Smith writes from the context of New Zealand, her arguments remain relevant in North America. In Canada, considerable work by Aboriginal scholars (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996; Mihesuah 1998; Battiste 2000; Battiste and Henderson 2000; Brant-Castellano 2004; First Nations Centre 2005; Bartlett 2007) has produced a research stance similar to Smith's (1999).

At the same time that Indigenous methodologies were emerging, the policy and practices of mainstream research institutions in Canada were transforming. The first ethical guidelines for Aboriginal research were developed in 2004 by the CIHR-sponsored Aboriginal Ethic Working Group (AEWG). In December 2008, the CIHR guidelines became policy for CIHR-funded researchers. Also in 2008, the TCPS released a discussion draft with a small section concerning Aboriginal research. This was followed in 2009 with a larger and more detailed set of guidelines for research in Aboriginal communities. At present, all federal research funding agencies in Canada require researchers to adhere to the TCPS. The extensive ethical issues addressed by TCPS policy include those of informed consent and confidentiality (Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics 2005). At first glance, these criteria appear emancipatory for Indigenous participants and communities involved in research. Indeed, they are more involved and offer greater power-balancing potential than the research relations 'of old'.

The following are examples of the most common elements in guidelines developed by funding agencies as well as by Aboriginal authors or organisations (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996; Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics 2005; Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2008a; Alberta ACADRE Network 2009): community control needs to be present at all stages (including process, findings, data); research should focus on positive traits (and not employ a deficit approach); community consent is required and is not superseded by individual consent; research participants should have an opportunity to comment on findings before publication; research must benefit the community; oral tradition should be understood as an

authentic source of knowledge; research results must be shared with the community (overt knowledge translation activities are sometimes expected); existing literature should be reassessed in the light of new guidelines; local research capacity should be enhanced; research agreements are required; consultation with elders is a key method; research should recognise diverse communities and diversity within communities; researchers should learn and implement local and traditional protocols; and research should include a participatory action approach. Interestingly, much of the discussion of research ethics guidelines take 'community' for granted, suggesting implicitly that community is readily apparent or easily defined. The taken-for-granted character of 'community' suggests that the guidelines draw on hegemonic discourses about what it is to be Aboriginal, and how and where that Aboriginality is enacted (Berg et al 2007). The CIHR website (2008b) outlines the intent and purview of their guidelines:

> The Guidelines are designed to be a collaborative tool for researchers, Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal individuals. The Guidelines provide the type of guidance that is needed for researchers who are eager to work with Aboriginal communities. The Guidelines are now policy for CIHR-funded researchers and will be evaluated at least once every four years.

We believe that ongoing evaluation of the guidelines is important; it invites dialogue and supports the vision that the guidelines become a collaborative and evolving document. Métis-oriented researchers, who deal with communities that are not so easily taken-for-granted, will need to take advantage of the review process to address the issues we discuss below.

Lack of Métis research

The lack of health research on and with Métis communities is as indisputable as it is troubling. Young (2003) searched the Medline database for the period of 1992–2001 for articles related to Aboriginal health in Canada. Only two of the 254 articles identified provide data about Métis people. A search of the social science databases for the period of 1995–2005 garnered similar results: 96 articles addressing Aboriginal health of which only thirteen concerned the Métis (Wilson and Young 2008). Since Métis people comprise over 30 per cent of the total Aboriginal population in Canada, it is clear that there is a significant underrepresentation of Métis-related research in the literature. According to the 2006 *National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health Report*, CIHR funding for Métis health research ranged between 2–8 per cent of total funding in all areas of research (including chronic diseases, social determinants of health, mental health, maternal health and addiction). Again, such funding levels do not come anywhere near to reflecting the proportion of Métis in the Aboriginal community. We argue that the paucity of Métis research will continue as long as research guidelines fail to account for the distinctiveness of Métis realities. There is a likelihood that Métis realities will be assumed to coincide with that of other Aboriginal communities which have been the focus of extensive research and thus have come to represent 'Aboriginality' in Canada.

It is critical, then, that research guidelines address the specific needs and circumstances of Métis peoples *in the same manner they already do for First Nations and Inuit communities*, and acknowledge the historical and present day contexts in which Métis communities and organisations enter into research partnerships. Although the CIHR and TCPS guidelines for research with Aboriginal peoples have led to significant reflection about researcher-community relationships—specifically on how to build equitable partnerships between researchers and Aboriginal communities and organisations—there has been little consideration of the distinctive challenges of Métis-based research. In what follows, therefore, we will attempt to identify the gaps and barriers that prohibit Métis peoples from participating fully in publically-funded research opportunities such as those emanating from CIHR.

There are four related pragmatic barriers to health research for Métis communities: first, a lack of health care infrastructure (i.e. Métis-specific health care centers); secondly, limited human resources (i.e. community health directors similar to those found in First Nations reserve communities); thirdly, reliance upon volunteers; and fourthly, political instability. These barriers may prevent many university-based researchers from studying Métis communities because of the difficulties in securing the kinds of information and evidence government-based funding grants require to demonstrate evidence of effective or sincere university–community partnerships.

In comparison to status First Nations and the Inuit, the Métis receive significantly fewer local, provincial and national resources for health care. In general, Métis people receive health care supports and services from non-Aboriginal health care providers. Unlike Inuit and First Nations communities, Métis communities rarely have their own health centres. Instead, they are often forced to fit their health needs and circumstances into those of adjacent non-Métis communities. Even then, geographical and jurisdictional barriers often limit access to health care for Métis people. For example, even though a range of health care services might be offered in a nearby reserve community, service delivery on-reserve is often restricted to people with legal status under the Indian Act, and thus jurisdictional limitations frequently prevent Métis from accessing those services, forcing them to travel long distances to an urban centre to obtain services that are offered only a few kilometres away. That is, funding arrangements are rarely created to include health care for non-community residents (whether Metis, Inuit or white).

Furthermore, unlike First Nations reserve communities, most Métis communities lack the resources to employ a health director. Community health directors are often key in the formation of research partnerships between First Nation reserve communities and university researchers; their role as a designated person in a paid position who oversees research improves communication and coordination of the project. Unfortunately, the Métis are rarely in a position where they have someone who can fill this role, specifically at the community level. Provincial and national Métis organisations, generally, have somewhat more capacity to participate in research partnerships and large and small-scale urban Métis organisations also have some human resource capacity. However, at all levels of organisation, the Métis are under-resourced and in any case, lag far behind the resources of similarly positioned First Nations organisations.

As a result, research in Métis communities and organisations relies largely on the volunteer work of individuals from the community. These individuals typically have fulltime employment and undertake this work on an 'after-hours' basis. Commonly, community members lack the background in health care required by the research initiative, and likewise, are unlikely to receive the kinds of training required to gain such a background. Additionally, Métis communities often lack the meeting and office space necessary for research meetings, the employment of community researchers and the storage of data (all identified as central components to successful research projects).

Political instability at local, provincial and national levels is another potential deterrent for researchers wanting to partner with Métis communities. With a few exceptions, the political structures of the Métis community have little or no statutory or legislated supports, and rely on short term and constantly renegotiated bilateral relationships with the Canadian government. Most recently, a dispute over the election of the provincial body representing Métis in Saskatchewan left its Métis communities severely hampered in terms of their ability to enact community level policy or programs.

From a research point of view, a relatively stable partner, community or organisation with whom to develop and undertake a project is essential. The perceived threat of disruption to data collection or other unexpected results of instability within the community or organisation, can often dissuade researchers from approaching Métis communities for research partnerships. While all four barriers present very real challenges for research in Métis communities, we make the case that the most significant barrier to equitable Métis research lies in the assumptions undergirding the guidelines, as we will discuss in the following section.

Another look at community

Community, in an Aboriginal policy context, is normally understood by identifying 'reserve bands', loosely translated as 'First Nations communities'. For instance, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' (RCAP) discussion of community remains heavily indebted to a land- and settlement-based understanding that treats urban communities, by contrast, as incomplete, or partial vestiges of these more legitimate communities (1996, Vol. 4, Chapter 5; Andersen and Denis 2003). The problem with this view is that it conflates community (formed by the collectively-shared cultural symbols produced within certain sociological, though not necessarily geographical, boundaries) with place (the land itself). Not only is conflating community with place analytically naïve in a Métis context, it does little justice to the complexity of First Nations and Inuit senses of community (where 'reserve communities' often contain enduring links to extended kin and family members beyond the geographical space of the reserve location).

This conflation is not specific to Aboriginal policy contexts but in fact reflects a broader lack of rigour in twentieth century understandings of place and belonging. Lee and Newby (1983) describe how networks, though more sophisticated in their ability to distinguish one community from another, are often perceived solely in terms of their geographical proximity. Thus, place becomes the fixed evidence of community. Alternatively, they propose that the relationship between community and place is best conceived as 'a set of points joined by lines, the lines indicating which individuals, groups or institutions interact with one another. It is a matter for investigation whether or not this network is confined to a particular locality or not' (1983, 61).

Moreover, this also relies on an understanding of place as merely a fixed, static and empty container, through which people and objects move and in which social relations occur. There is a long history of scholarship that is highly critical of these kinds of 'essentialist' notions of space (e.g., see Frankenberg and Mani 1993; Gregory and Urry 1985; LeFebvre 1991; Massey 1985; 1993; 2005). These writers point out that place is not merely an empty container, but, instead, that 'geography matters' (Massey 1984) and that a recursive relationship exists between the social and the spatial. In this way, space and place are understood to be constitutive of social relations, but also constituted by the social. Moreover, places are not bounded spaces with clear insides and outsides, nor are they singular and monolithic. Rather they should be seen as processes constituted as bundles of social relations that are multifaceted as well as singular, fluid as well as static, and unbounded as well as bounded.

However, because places can be linked to specific material objects (land, water, roads, buildings, etc.), they tend to be understood in ways that naturalise and 'fix' objects as having specific (singular), bounded (marked out) and knowable (identifiable) features. This allows 'place' to act as a kind of conceptual placeholder for itself; positioned and misrecognised as a 'thing', it becomes a fetish that hides the complex social relations that produce particular places and in turn are (re)produced by those places. Such is the case with 'Indian reserves', which help to naturalise the social relations of ongoing colonialism in highly problematic ways that can significantly affect processes of 'decolonisation' (for example, in the trope that 'Indian reserves' represent tribal lands in ways that urban locales do not).

In Canada, one reason 'Indian bands' and their affiliated tribal structures are so readily understood as the 'real McCoy' of Aboriginal community is the visibility/stability of the colonial institutions created administratively by Canadian polity (specifically according to Indian Act regulations) and the way that these institutions demarcate and are demarcated in relation to their discursive attachment to reserve spaces.

Nevertheless, Peters (2007; 2005) stresses that specific First Nations administrative/geographical boundaries and 'community' are not always synonymous and, therefore, should be employed interchangeably only with extreme caution (a point we made earlier). The conflation of reserve with community is particularly problematic in light of the increasing movement of reserve community members on and off reserve, back and forth between urban, rural and reserve locales. Furthermore, Anthony Cohen, in his classic discussion (1985), locates community in the boundaries produced between insider and outsider, and self and other. Accordingly, reserve boundaries should not be taken as robust indicators of a First Nations community but rather, of a larger and more geographically dispersed community of which they are merely one part. This point has been addressed in Aboriginal jurisprudence over the past decade or so, which has understood 'community' in terms that reach beyond the Indian Act designated boundaries of the reserve itself (see, e.g., *R. v. Corbiere* 1999).

Also at issue is that definitions of community are contextually dependent on the social location of the person doing the defining. In her discussion on doing 'community research' in Vancouver's downtown east side, for example, Waldern (2006) demonstrates that different members of the community, located in different social positions, hold widely divergent views about the community's boundaries and its 'essence'. Social service deliverers hold one meaning; institutions (such as the university) and official bureaucracies hold another; and its most disadvantaged members hold yet another. If this were merely about semantic differences (i.e. that one person's conception of community differs from others), we might agree to disagree and leave it at that. However, in a very real way, the meanings and power of funding agencies like CIHR are never exhausted by the specific application of their monies to particular projects. Instead, decisions about what (and whom) to fund and whom (and what) not to, contributes to the symbolic weight of legitimising certain conceptions of community at the expense of others. While such discrimination need not be (and often is not) intentional, the conceptual boundaries of community written into funding guidelines nonetheless effect just such discrimination. Over a generation, it calcifies in powerful ways what counts as a 'fund-worthy' community and, through the influx of millions of dollars of funding, produces the infrastructure required to seek out subsequent funding. In so doing, it tilts the playing field towards particular constructions of community.

Finally, it is important to recognise the way that what Young (1990) terms 'community discourse' requires a constitutive *outside* for the very existence of the 'community' in question. In other words, community always and necessarily produces insiders and outsiders. We argue here that such boundaries between who is included and who is excluded are produced through the spatiality of the reserve system that gets naturalised as a spatial representation of Indigenous 'community' that is both constitutive of and constituted by, funders like CIHR.

It needs to be emphasised that the visible infrastructures of First Nations communities (reserve lands, Indian 'bands' etc.) are not natural. Instead, they have been produced through multiple generations of Canadian attempts to intervene on and govern the complexity of pre-existing forms of Indigenous collectivity. However, because these infrastructures are so easily linked to specific places, and because of the power of place to fetishise social relations, they have come to represent 'Aboriginal communities' and in turn, have come to be understood by non-Aboriginal Canadians as natural and commonsensical representations.

Notwithstanding these processes, there are other ways to approach community for policy purposes. For instance, family and kinship remain powerful orienting forces for many Métis and other Aboriginal communities. We contend that existing ethics guidelines unconsciously privilege some communities at the expense of others. More specifically, they privilege certain *visions* of community at the expense of others—that is, those that are place-based with obvious administrative infrastructures. This privileging is evident in the examples provided in the guidelines; they have been written and explained with examples of research in First Nations and Inuit communities; no examples of Métis-based research are used. It is simply assumed that Métis research would fit the examples given for First Nations and Inuit research (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2008a). Such assumptions are dangerous, we argue, because they limit the ability of Métis communities that fail to correspond to these stereotypical conceptions to apply for funding. Moreover—and perhaps more importantly—they limit their likelihood to do so, since Métis fail to recognise their collective selves in the existing funding guidelines.

Towards a fuller inclusion of Métis in research initiatives

All of this is to say that Métis communities are structurally disadvantaged on two accounts: by infrastructure requirements and by a conflation of community with geographical 'boundedness'. First, with several distinctive exceptions (including Alberta's Métis settlements), Métis communities have not enjoyed the on-going funding required to produce the infrastructures present in many reserve bands (or larger associated regional organisations). Certainly, Métis local, provincial and national organisations do exist. However the stability of such organisations tends to decrease in proportion to scale and administrative coverage of individual Métis communities can often be absent; even when there is an administrative presence, these communities do not receive funding comparable to that under which First Nation organisations (either regional or community-specific) operate. Communities with no formal infrastructure are simply more difficult to locate administratively and likewise, are less able (and hence less likely) to even apply for the kinds of funding available.

Secondly, place-based notions of community tend to define community as singular, as based in one place (for example, one reserve and not another). However, Métis people often live in large urban centres and simultaneously belong to multiple communities (as do First Nations individuals). The following example illustrates the complexity involved identifying Métis communities in the absence of comparative 'settlements' like the Métis settlements in Alberta or First Nations reserves more generally:

> Métis community X shares geographic boundaries with a First Nations reserve/territory and also with a non-Aboriginal municipality. Boundaries are defined socially and are well known by local residents. This same Métis community comes under administrative authority of both municipal and provincial governments but, its health centre is funded federally. In contrast to its First Nations neighbour, the community struggles to access consistent funding. Such inconsistencies create very real social tensions. In addition, the community is further divided socially/politically: some support the provincial Métis organisation, some have allegiances to the regional Métis organisation and others to the Métis local. Furthermore, Métis community X is comprised of various family, cultural, social and language groupings. Participants in a research study might come from one, several or none of the above. Further, in any one household Métis, non-Aboriginal, and First Nations people may well be present.

The problematic of identifying Métis community(ies) is an unavoidable issue in Métis research. Although the challenges involved are considerable, thoughtful definitions that pay close attention to these distinctive complexities are key. They are necessary for fiscal recognition

(funding can only be accorded to entities with clear boundaries). Even more, they directly impact the way research is conducted (data collection, for example) and, therefore, influence research outcomes as well as the interpretation and dissemination of results. There are many Métis (local, provincial, national), non-Aboriginal (municipal, provincial, federal), and First Nations or Inuit levels of formal community. Numerous cultural and individual 'informal' distinctions weave between these categories. Like those working with First Nations communities, a researcher working with a Métis community (or communities) will have to make a well-informed, but ultimately personal, decision about how to identify the appropriate infrastructure within which to work. The difficulty in a Métis situation is that, unlike First Nations, this might not be as conceptually obvious as, for example, a band office or regional health board. The guidelines could be revised to read 'jurisdiction(s)', in recognition of the multiple jurisdictions and multiple definitions that are applied to Métis communities, and as a way to avoid the naturalising power of place-based notions of 'community'.

Another significant issue concerns the relationships between multiple Aboriginal and Métis communities and the ways such communities overlap in particular locales. Research conducted in urban settings is particularly challenging. For example, in many Prairie cities, traditional First Nations, longstanding Métis, and newer urban Aboriginal networks have overlapping geographical and community boundaries and these create competition for resources (Berg et. al. 2007). The problem comes immediately to the fore as a result of the new CIHR guidelines that require a community partner to sign a community research agreement at the time a project is proposed rather than funded. Tensions are now felt prior to the research, and influence the definition of community employed by researchers. Indeed, when tensions exist between traditional territory holding First Nations and the Métis and/or urban Aboriginal communities, defining community can be extremely fraught. Researchers frequently take the path of least resistance by choosing the most visible community in terms of governmental infrastructure (i.e. the local band of the traditional territory holding group). Again, we see the privileging of certain visions of community (those with obvious and capable infrastructural forms) as well as certain forms of Indigeneity (often defined and enacted through the Indian Act and the INAC system, since it represents the effects of more than a century of official government recognition and therefore infrastructural funding).

As a telling example, we offer the following scenario drawn from the second draft of the Tri-Council Policy Statement, Article 9.2 (2008, 95–6):

Application: First Nation, Inuit, Métis, urban and rural communities differ significantly from one another, and they are characterized by increasing internal diversity. Engagement with the relevant community throughout the research process is the preferred means of ensuring that the ethical protections incorporated in a project respect the identities, interests, and circumstances of participants. In the following examples, List A illustrates degrees of Aboriginal involvement in a variety of research projects and List B gives examples of community engagement proportionate to the level of Aboriginal involvement in each type of project cited.

List A: Examples of Aboriginal involvement

… Research involving Aboriginal people who comprise a sizable proportion of the study or community and where Aboriginal-specific conclusions are intended. Example: a comparative study of access to public housing in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.
List B: Examples of proportionate community engagement
… The tribal council representing local First Nation communities may partner with the Prince Albert city council to sponsor, implement, and use the results of the housing study.

The issue here is as marked as it is unremarked. It is not at all obvious to Métis-oriented researchers that the local tribal council is the appropriate partner; it is certainly not an appropriate sole partner for such research. Prince Albert has a significant proportion of Métis in the city, which serves a number of longstanding rural and peri-urban Métis communities. The 2006 Canada Census (Statistics Canada 2008) data indicates that just under half of all Aboriginal people in the city (5835 of 12140 persons) and census agglomeration (6680 of 13570 persons) identified themselves as Métis (as a single response). A December 2009 revision changed List B examples to read 'First Nations in the district, represented by their tribal council, the local Métis association, urban Aboriginal and women's organizations may partner with the Prince Albert city council to sponsor, implement and use the results of the housing study' (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics 2009b, 97). Although this revision addresses the issue of the inclusion of the Métis, it fails to deal with the more structural issue of an intergenerational lack of investment in Métis communities, coupled with funding guidelines that presuppose particular conceptions of 'community'.

Conclusion

In this article, we demonstrate that what counts as 'community' is fraught with multiple and, in most cases, conflicting understandings of the pertinent intersections of people, place and territory. In particular, certain common sense conceptions of 'community' that arise from the naturalising power of place tend to dominate the funding and ethics protocol guidelines of the Tri-Council. Notions that communities are attached to visible administrative infrastructure with manifest settlements shape in powerful, but largely unacknowledged, ways who (and, institutionally speaking, what) is funded and who and what, as a result, gets marginalised. These conceptions are not natural but rather, are rooted in particular historical and geographical conditions relating to Indian Act administrative requirements. Métis research projects and associated communities that exist at the margins of, or more problematically, in ways that defy such rationalities and requirements, tend to bear the brunt of these interpretations and their associated lack of funding and research. In contrast, First Nations (whether specific reserves or more territorially broad administrative entities) tend to come out ahead. It needs to be underlined that funding and the knowledge it produces holds the power to (re)produce the legitimacy of these collective entities, potentially at the expense of apparently less visible entities like many Métis communities, who are seeing their collective knowledge and legitimacy pale in comparison. While this might take place in the context of committee decision biases, it certain does not need to, nor are we making such a claim here. Instead, we suggest that the selection effect takes place at a much deeper structural level.

Although this process has some startling resonances with the erasure of Métis communities in the past, we are more concerned here with its future impacts. A stubborn insistence that Métis communities must look and behave as those imagined and maintained by the Indian Act has the potential to re-marginalise these communities in the eyes of government, academic funders like CIHR or SSHRC, and the Canadian public more generally. At the same time, this re-marginalisation could create conditions where these communities would indeed dissipate and the lack of funding, staff turnover, and inconsistent political influence negatively impact on the creation, collection and dissemination of Métis research. Examples of these barriers and the inclusion of some 'Métis-specific examples' certainly make the guidelines more applicable to Métis research and researchers, but the spatiality of Métis communities demands a more nuanced approach to the notion of community itself (the same can also be said for First Nations communities). The guidelines should be viewed as a beginning and must contribute to a growing dialogue on Métis-specific definitions of ethical research practices.
The most recent set of TCPS guidelines appear to acknowledge a more sophisticated understanding of community. Given the long-standing understanding of community

characterising the last couple of decades of Aboriginal-specific funding, it remains to be seen whether (or more generously, how) this will play out in policy and funding practice.

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[i] The Tri-Council Policy Statement is a policy document that was intended to harmonise and make standard the ethical process of research in Canada. The Tri-Council is made up of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

(SSHRC), and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). The first version of this policy statement contains a short section on the ethics of doing research with Aboriginal participants. The second version contains a considerably larger and more comprehensive section detailing guidelines for doing research with Aboriginal individuals and communities (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2010).

[2] There are a number of locales across the parklands and prairies of Western Canada that are identifiably Métis. Most evident in institutional terms are the Métis settlements of Alberta, but there are also numerous towns, villages and townships in the rest of the country which have varying levels of institutional development and recognition that are identifiably 'Métis' communities. Whereas such communities are more-or-less bounded and more-or-less amenable to research contained by images of landed communities, there are any number of communities which are less recognisable in these terms. Though the updated TCPS guidelines would seem to obviate these critiques, it remains to be seen whether, in practice, the configurations of Métis communities typified by networks of relationship and not isolated points can be successfully incorporated into emerging research. It is instructive to note that in the area of jurisprudence, case law has been pushing conceptualisation of Métis community in exactly such directions (Teillet 2009,18).