English Studies in Canada

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Volume 47, Number 1, March 2021

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111349ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/esc.2021.a913991

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Publisher(s)

Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE)

ISSN

0317-0802 (print)
1913-4835 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Akerman, E. & Bidwell, K. (2021). (Re)mapping Métis Relationships in Cherie Dimaline's Empire of Wild. *English Studies in Canada*, *47*(1), 29–53. https://doi.org/10.1353/esc.2021.a913991

(Re)mapping Métis Relationships in Cherie Dimaline's *Empire of Wild*

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Cherie dimaline's 2019 novel, *Empire of Wild*, is a fictionalized depiction of her own Métis community and intervenes in debates about their relationship to the Métis Homeland. Since this community is often misunderstood within academic and political discourses, we begin with a brief summary of its history. *Empire of Wild*'s village of Arcand is based on Lafontaine, Ontario, the current geographic centre of a Métis community that was relocated several times to various locations on Lake Huron by the British and American administrations around the turn of the nineteenth century.[1] At the time of these relocations, the heritage of the community was largely Anishnaabe[2] and French (Travers 219), although their ancestors also included Indigenous people from Red River as well as other First Nations people and settlers of various nationalities and ethnicities who had, over time, cohered into a distinct community linked by a web of kinship connections and family solidarities as well as shared lands and

1 Dimaline identifies her community as centred in Lafontaine: "[W]e largely reside in the French/Métis town of LaFontaine [*sic*]" (Douglas and Anderson). Although Lafontaine may appear to be separate from Arcand because Joan's land is described as "out past Lafontaine" (71), this is part of the novel's intertwining of history and fiction.

2 We use this spelling because it is the one used in Dimaline's novel (221).

ESC 47.1 (March 2021): 29–53

historical experiences (see "The List of the Drummond Island *Voyageurs*" in Osborne). They spoke mainly Anishnaabemowin and French and often made a living in the fur trade and as guides and voyageurs on the Great Lakes (Travers 224, 230, 232).[3] The community was moved from Mackinaw Island (currently called Mackinac Island) in what is now Michigan to St Joseph Island, Upper Canada, in 1796 after the American Revolution and the signing of the 1794 Jay Treaty (Osborne 123). At the commencement of the War of 1812, the Métis helped to recapture Mackinaw Island, after which many of them returned to their former home ("Fort Mackinac"). They were again forced to cede the island to the United States in the wake of the 1814 Treaty of Ghent ("Fort Mackinac"). Since the fort on St Joseph Island had been destroyed during the war, the Métis were moved to Drummond Island in Upper Canada ("Fort Mackinac"). In the 1820s, the British and American governments redrew the border between Upper Canada and the United States so that Drummond Island then fell within American territory. Consequently, in 1828, the Drummond Island Métis were once again relocated, this time far across Lake Huron to Penetanguishene on Georgian Bay, "receiv[ing] lots [small parcels] of land as compensation for their losses" (Travers 226). Despite this coerced migration, the community demonstrated continuity and self-determination by reproducing their social relations in their new home. After they were allocated small parcels of land across Penetanguishene Bay, largely in what is now called Lafontaine (226), community members sought to re-root themselves by choosing lots near one another (A. F. Hunter cited in Travers 226), "marrying within their own community" (Travers 233), advocating for themselves as an Indigenous community to the colonial government (Marchand, *From* 61), and continuing to occupy "much the same location as the allocations of the first lots" when the 1901 census was conducted about seventy years later (Travers 226). This community is now called the Georgian Bay Métis Community and is represented by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and the Métis National Council (MNC).[4]

Erin Akerman is a member of the Georgian Bay Métis Community and an Assistant Professor in the English Department at Brock University. **Kristina Fagan Bidwell** is a member of NunatuKavut Community Council and a Professor and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Storytelling at the University of Saskatchewan. Our collaboration has been carried out over a pandemic, across time zones and technologies, and around major life moments. Throughout, we have drawn on Erin's knowledge of the stories and histories of the Georgian Bay Métis, while relating them to broader national and academic contexts.

3 Drummond Island Métis relocatee Michael Labatte explains that "[n]othing but French and Indian [Anishnaabemowin] was spoken at Drummond Island. I learned English at Penetanguishene, where I first heard it spoken" (138).

4 See Osborne and Travers for further Drummond Island Métis history and information about the development of the Métis community on Georgian Bay. See Osborne's interviews with Métis community members Rosette Boucher, Antoine and Michael Labatte, Angelique Longlade, Lewis Solomon, and Jean Baptiste Sylvestre for narratives of the relocation to Penetanguishene and the continuation of the community in their new home. More information on the heritage of the community is available in "The List of the Drummond Island

The Georgian Bay Métis Community's identification as "Métis," however, has recently become contentious. As part of a movement to define the Métis Homeland as centred on the historic Red River community, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) now claims that the Georgian Bay Métis Community and other MNO communities are not Métis, despite their citizens' inclusion within the MNC for decades. MMF President David Chartrand has starkly said about these communities, "[T]hey don't have no connection to us" (Monkman).[5] This exclusion of MNO communities has been opposed by the Métis Nations of Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, and, as a result, the MMF withdrew from the MNC in 2021. Dimaline seems to acknowledge these debates about Métis identity in *Empire of Wild* when her narrator initially describes the Indigenous community who relocated to Lafontaine/Arcand as made up of "halfbreeds […] and Métis people who had journeyed from Manitoba" (1–2); however, she thereafter uses the term "halfbreeds" to refer to everyone, signaling the diversity of their origins but also their internal cohesion. The novel's description of the redefined political borders that pushed the community off their traditional lands in 1828 (1–2) also resonates with current changes in and debates around the political borders of Métis identity. Although the Georgian Bay Métis have not been physically relocated by these shifts in the Métis political landscape, they nevertheless find themselves once again situated on new political territory and being pushed outside a moving border that until recently had encompassed them. At the core of these contentious issues are questions about Métis mobility.[6] How have Métis people moved and been moved over time and space? How have they maintained, lost, or created relationships through and across this mobility? And what does this mean for Métis territory and relationships today?

Our process of listening to one another's stories, finding connections across our different Indigenous communities, and seeking a shared understanding has itself been a process of coresistance.

In this essay, we argue that Dimaline's *Empire of Wild* (re)maps Métis mobility to envision what Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson calls Indigenous "coresistance" rather than division (*As We* 211–31). We draw the concept of "(re)mapping" from Seneca liter-

Voyageurs" appended to these interviews as well as in Travers and on the Métis Nation of Ontario website: www.metisnation.org.

5 Conversely, the MNO states that "[a] total of 23% of the MNO's citizenship […] ancestrally connect to Métis communities in western Canada" ("Registry Review Report").

6 We use the terms "mobility" and "rootedness" throughout, acknowledging the work of historians Brenda Macdougall, Carolyn Podruchny, and Nicole St-Onge, who argue that Métis people "lived and thrived at the intersection of" the two (9).

ary scholar Mishuana Goeman, who argues that "[w]e need to complicate our conceptual maps in Native nation-building" (29). In Goeman's sense, to (re)map is not to simply redraw the hard edges of the Métis Nation in a new location but, rather, to attend to what is erased in order to create such edges and to imagine alternative representations based in Indigenous ways of knowing (3). *Empire of Wild* imagines such an alternative through its depiction of the relationship between Joan Beausoleil, who identifies as a "halfbreed" from Arcand, and her husband Victor Boucher, described as Anishnaabe and French from Manitoba. Victor mysteriously forgets Joan and their history together, and she fights to get him to remember, a story that could be read as a parable of contemporary Métis politics. However, rather than having the couple reflect only this limited political reality, Dimaline places their struggles within a historicized and speculative world in which their actions have roots in the Georgian Bay Métis Community's history and point toward coresistant Métis futures. *Empire of Wild* thus (re)maps an interconnected Indigenous world that is unimagined within current and divisive debates about Métis identity and territory.

While Dimaline's identification with the Georgian Bay Métis Community may be acknowledged in the existing scholarship on her work, critics tend not to closely examine her rootedness in this community or the significance of this connection for her writing. Instead, they often offer insightful readings that celebrate her fiction as flexibly, imaginatively, and expansively addressing pan-Indigenous issues such as colonial violence, reconciliation, and the Idle No More movement (Cannella, De Vos, Zanella). Although Christina Turner and Chiara Xausa are more attentive to the specificity of Dimaline's community, Turner nevertheless focuses on Dimaline's connections to Red River (100–01), and Xausa mentions the Georgian Bay Métis' historical relocation from Drummond Island but situates it within a broader analysis of Indigenous "persistence and survival" (96). Previous criticism makes significant contributions to the scholarship on Dimaline's work by describing her imaginative mobility across time, space, and cultures, but it does not analyze her work's rootedness in her community and territory.

In response, we situate *Empire of Wild* within the histories, lands, current issues, and potential futures of the Georgian Bay Métis Community, focusing on the figure of the rogarou, which is found in both Plains Métis and Georgian Bay Métis traditions. Dimaline has said that this novel was inspired by the stories that her grandmother and great-aunts told her about rogarous or, as she describes them, "men turned into beasts for any number of reasons—each one unique to the storyteller" (*The Next Chap-*

ter 3:15–4:07; *Empire* 190).[7] Dimaline's rogarou seems drawn to conflict, entering Joan's and Victor's lives in response to their pivotal argument over whether to sell Joan's land. This beyond-human figure, who represents what Simpson describes as "an organization of time and space that's different than the colonial world's" (*As We* 201), allows Dimaline to layer the couple's story with multiple connections and dangers. For instance, Dimaline's rogarou is deeply rooted in her community's land, history, and stories, but he also moves across borders, ranging onto the Plains, including into Victor's community (233). At times, he enforces good relationships among community members, especially by maintaining strict ethics about the treatment of women and animals (3–4), and he preserves collective memory by remembering what "the people forgot," specifically "what they had asked for in the beginning" and, by extension, their community history, "original language[s]," and kinship networks (4). In other instances, however, he is harmful, causing forgetfulness, endangering community members—especially children, women, and elders—and aiding in the exploitation of Indigenous people and lands.

To begin to unpack these layers in the rogarou figure, and in Dimaline's depiction of Métis mobility and relationality, we have organized this essay in terms of past, present, and future. Beginning with the past, we read Joan's response to Victor's proposal to sell her land in relation to her community's history of displacement and their rootedness in their lands, ancestors, and stories. As an extended example, we contextualise the novel's conflicts within earlier rifts in the Lafontaine community that led to the appearance of the Lafontaine Wolf. The second section focuses on the contemporary consequences of not knowing such history and context. Drawing on theorists Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein's concept of "colonial unknowing," we analyze how Victor's unknowing leads to his forgetting his own identity and to his manipulation by settler colonial forces and how his story resonates with real misunderstandings of the Georgian Bay Métis. To conclude, we discuss how, in bringing Joan and Victor back together, *Empire of Wild* considers the potential for future coresistance between Indigenous peoples.

We use the word "Métis" when discussing the Georgian Bay Métis Community because, as part of the MNO, they remain within the MNC with the support of its remaining provincial organizations. To be clear, however, it is not our intention to debate the binary question of whether

7 For a discussion of the characteristics of the rogarou, see Métis scholar Warren Cariou's "Dances with Rigoureau."

or not the community is Métis. Rather, we seek to advance a different kind of conversation, one focused on exploring connections between this Indigenous community and others, rather than on establishing boundaries. The MNC is now turning toward a similar conversation: "Michelle Leclerc, vice-president of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, said she did not doubt that the people on the MNO registry were Section 35 rights holders," but asks, "'[A]re they us?'" (quoted in Narine). MNO President Margaret Froh indicated that the organization will now be taking up such questions in a nuanced way, considering the "connections […] we see to western Canada" within MNO communities and the "interconnections […] we see within and among our historic communities" (quoted in Narine). Using *Empire of Wild* as a focal point, we are similarly interested in what alternative pictures of the past and what possibilities for a shared future might emerge if we listen to the stories of the Georgian Bay Métis themselves.

Dimaline draws on intimate knowledge of her community's history to ground the characters within a relational context and thereby positions their argument as resonating far beyond themselves.

Remembering and (re)mapping community (hi)stories

While the stereotypical narrative of Indigenous mobility is that it leads to the diminishment of Indigenous relationships, cultures, and identities, *Empire of Wild* instead intertwines the fictional and historical in order to root Joan's and Victor's movements within a much more complex story of Indigenous people's mobile presence and resilience in the face of settler colonialism. To use Goeman's words, the novel (re)maps the couple's movements in ways that "question the very acceptance of colonial spatialities that […] look at distance and closeness in terms of dichotomous differences" (7). Joan and Victor spend much of the novel physically and emotionally distant from one another as a result of their fight over whether or not to sell Joan's land to developers who have offered them "life-changing money" (72). Yet, Dimaline draws on intimate knowledge of her community's history to ground the characters within a relational context and thereby positions their argument as resonating far beyond themselves. Joan's strong reaction to Victor's proposal that they move—"[s]he couldn't recall being more disappointed in him, ever" (73)—makes sense when considered in relation to her community's history. To Joan, her plot of land "reminded her who she was," rooting her in her Indigenous kin and their memories (72). Her late father, while "not a rich man," "had managed to purchase small parcels of land on his traditional territory" and to pass them on (71). Joan's determination to hold on to her family's land is shaped by the ways in which their community had repeatedly been dispossessed, first by colonial shifting of the international border and later by invasive settlers who erected "million-dollar cottages" along the bay (2).

Her response to Victor is part of her community's broader resistance to this swallowing up of their lands, expressed with their "jars of coins and a wistful plan to buy back the land" (3). The novel thus grounds Joan's response in her community's specific struggle and in what Simpson calls a "system[ ] of ethics that are continuously generated by a relationship with a particular place, with land, through […] Indigenous processes and knowledges" ("Indigenous" 22).

Dimaline's novel encodes such Métis knowledge of and presence on the land into its setting, (re)mapping Penetanguishene Bay in ways that resonate with the (hi)stories of Joan's ancestors, the relocated Drummond Island Métis. Goeman explains that (re)mapping revivifies "our relationships" because "[r]emembering important connections to land and community is instrumental in mapping a decolonized Native presence" (29). *Empire of Wild* provokes such remembering by interweaving Métis names, bodies, and lands. Dimaline's rogarou, in particular, is associated with this remembrance of deep and ongoing connection to the land. For instance, Joan first sees a rogarou while walking toward town around Penetanguishene Bay as a teenager. She has just passed Highland Point where "[t]he road curve[s] […] around the water's edge and past the small church" (76). As Drummond Island Métis relocatee Lewis Solomon explains in a 1901 interview with settler historian A. C. Osborne, this particular area of land was once named after its Drummond Island inhabitants. According to Solomon, "Highland Point […] was called Lavallee's Point; the next point east was called Trudeaux Point […]; the next point east […] was named Giroux Point, formerly called Beausoleil Point; next was Mischeau's Point; next, Corbiere's Point" (131). Some, if not all, of these points bore the names of Drummond Island Métis families.[8] The rogarou seems almost to have stepped out of the community's historic lands to teach Joan an important lesson that "lived on in the way she behaved. She never walked alone […]. She feared men in unknown cars" (80). While the rogarou scares Joan, this experience ultimately protects her, suggesting that her rootedness in her land and community continues to keep her safe outside its borders since she carries their stories and memories with her into the future.

Solomon's recounting of the place names around Penetanguishene Bay also suggests that the land is integral to the community's kinship connections, not merely supporting the community but also becoming related

8 The Métis Nation of Ontario includes the following families in their list of Métis root ancestors for the Georgian Bay Métis Community: Beausoleil-Giroux, Desjardins-Lavallee, Giroux-St Onge, and Trudeau-Papanaatyhianencoe ("Ontario Métis Root Ancestors").

to community members by bearing their names. *Empire of Wild* mirrors and expands on Solomon's account in that Dimaline's characters have some of the same names as the land that Solomon describes. For instance, Solomon lists Trudeaux Point on his remembered map and Joan's Mere is named Angelique Trudeau. Joan's last name is Beausoleil, which recalls the Drummond Island Métis who gave their name to Beausoleil Point. This name also connects Joan to nearby Beausoleil Island and Beausoleil First Nation. In recalling the geographic understandings of their ancestors and the earlier stories of their community, Joan's and Angelique's names demonstrate how acts of remembrance materialize and (re)map networks of local Indigenous relationships—between contemporaries, with ancestors, and with the land itself. It is much more than metaphor when Joan says that her land "reminded her who she was" (72).

While the family names that Dimaline uses for her characters in *Empire of Wild* are thus rooted in the Georgian Bay Métis Community and their lands, they also occasionally move, traveling out to the prairies and back again. For instance, although Victor comes from Manitoba, his surname, Boucher, is found among the real-life Drummond Island descendants in the Lafontaine area. Joan points to Victor's surname in her attempt to persuade Mere to accept him into the family, saying, "*Victor's father is a Boucher—didn't you know some Bouchers back in school?*" (10). The surname Boucher also connects Victor to Rosette Boucher, a Drummond Island Métis woman who, like Solomon, was interviewed by Osborne about her memories of the relocation. The surname Boucher is, then, one that travels—with Victor who came from the West, between the fictional story and real-life community, and into the past in its connection to Rosette Boucher's narrative. It is a surname that crosses physical and temporal borders and, as Joan's appeal to her Mere suggests, indicates not only relationships that need to be remembered but also a responsibility to care for those who are part of these extended kinship networks. While Joan's and Victor's communities are not irreducible, Dimaline represents them as connected through an ethic of solidarity. Seen in light of this community knowledge, Joan and Victor's fight over the land becomes profoundly embedded in the lives and struggles of their ancestors.

In addition to being grounded in the Georgian Bay Métis Community's lands and knowledge, Joan and Victor's conflict also gestures toward a specific event that occurred in the region. Their fight seems to invite the presence of the rogarou and to enable Victor's possession by the creature, thereby implicitly recalling the story of the supernatural wolf that was attracted to Lafontaine "[a]round the turn of the 20th century" by the ani-

mosity between regional factions consisting of the Métis as well as three groups "of settlers from four Quebec counties" (D. Marchildon). Local historian and storyteller Daniel Marchildon explains that the people of Lafontaine "distrusted one another to such an extent that the various members of each faction had very little contact with those outside their own group," and it was this "discord" that appealed to the wolf. The canonical account of the Lafontaine Wolf was written by Father Thomas Marchildon, who narrated its "règne de terreur" in his 1955 novella *Le Loup de Lafontaine* (16). His introduction to the story also stresses that the wolf was attracted to discord: "Trouvant ce milieu divisé, il s'y installa comme chez lui" ("Finding this place divided, he made himself at home," 4). Father Marchildon describes his approach to his retelling in his foreword: "Si les faits paraissent extraordinaires, cependant ils sont véridiques […]. Le décor, les principaux faits et les personnages de ce recit sont authentiques, mais certains circonstances et les dialogues en sont le fruit de l'imagination" ("If the facts appear extraordinary, they are however true […]. The setting, the main facts and the characters of this story are authentic, but certain circumstances and the dialogues are the fruit of the imagination," 3). This is a story that continues to be widely retold and celebrated in the region. In the autobiographical section of her website, Dimaline notes that "[o]ne of the pivotal stories of this place is how the Halfbreeds, First Nations, and French communities, separate but living in the same area," were brought together by their efforts to overcome "a giant wolf" that "came to be known as the Loup Lafontaine" ("Where").[9] Now, she writes, "every year there is a wolf festival, Festival du Loup."

Empire of Wild and *Le Loup de Lafontaine* have several overlaps in narrative and setting, and the resonances between the stories make them at least implicitly conversant with one another. For example, much as *Empire of Wild* depicts the Arcand/Lafontaine community as divided over how to respond to the promises and threats of land development and resource extraction, *Le Loup de Lafontaine* begins with a description of the divisions between the peoples of the region a century earlier. Like Dimaline's rogarou, the Lafontaine Wolf is characterized as supernatural—as a possessed (16) werewolf-like creature or "loup-garou" (17). Marchildon writes that the

9 Dimaline may include the local First Nations community in her statement that the Lafontaine Wolf brought people together in the region because the Lafontaine community requested help hunting the wolf from Beausoleil First Nation. In *Le Loup de Lafontaine,* Marchildon explains that "on proposa d'inviter les chasseurs de l'Ile-aux-Chrétiens" ("it was proposed to invite the hunters from Christian Island," 16).

wolf's "présence devint un espèce de hantisse" ("presence became a kind of haunting," 26) in Lafontaine while Dimaline's rogarou "came home not just to haunt" but "also […] to hunt" in the region (4). Moreover, as dogs are initially blamed for the actions of the wolf in *Le Loup de Lafontaine*, so are "dogs, maybe wolves" blamed in *Empire of Wild* for Mere's murder (40). Yet, *Empire of Wild* and *Le Loup de Lafontaine* do not fit neatly together, but, rather, they layer and complicate Dimaline's novel in ways that inform her representation of the Drummond Island Métis descendants, their land, and their relationships to other Indigenous and settler communities.

A key difference between the two texts is that, even as it depicts the reconciliation of the region's French and Métis communities by emphasizing their common faith, *Le Loup de Lafontaine* is primarily centred on settler presence and perspectives and ultimately reproduces certain prejudices about Indigenous people. Yet, as Dimaline notes on her website, the story is significant for the contemporary community as a whole, including the Métis. Rather than "speaking back" to Marchildon's novella, then, *Empire of Wild* can be read as growing out of this intertext's earlier conflicts and conversations while recentring Indigenous characters and perspectives. Such attentiveness pushes further the concept of, and the work necessary to achieve, reconciliation. For instance, while *Le Loup de Lafontaine* critiques the discord in the region, it at the same time obscures the racism that was directed toward the descendants of the Drummond Island Métis and that underlies key moments of conflict and reconciliation in the novella, such as in the story's pivotal scene of distrust. In this scene, two settler men, Colbert and Philéas, shoot the dogs of Métis resident François Labatte. Marchildon introduces Labatte as the grandson of the "premier résident" who had "hérité un lot situé au fond sud-ouest de la Baie-du-Tonnerre" ("inherited a lot situated on the southwest end of Thunder Bay," 12). This makes François the relative of Michael and Antoine Labatte, two of the Drummond Island Métis relocatees interviewed by Osborne. Michael relates a similar history, telling Osborne that "[t]here was no house at Lafontaine when I first saw it. It was first called Ste. Croix. The nearest house was my father's, at Thunder Bay, about seven miles distant" (139). Before the presence of the Lafontaine Wolf is known, Colbert discovers that his sheep have been slaughtered during the night, and he and Philéas accuse Labatte's dogs: although they note "certaines différences" between the dogs' footprints and those left at Colbert's farm, they decide "que ces détails étaient sans importance" ("that these details were of no importance," 13) and execute the dogs. In ignoring François' protests, they call him a "[p]êcheur ou menteur, c'est tout un" ("fisher-

man or liar, it's all the same," 12). As Travers explains, according to the 1901 census, "the Métis dominate occupations that they had traditionally held in the region such as 'tour guide' and 'fisherman'" (230). *Le Loup de Lafontaine* simplifies the racism within the community by characterizing it as conflict between types of labourers. François seemingly participates in this conflict because of his "dédain" ("disdain," 12) for settler farmers. According to Travers, farming was an occupation "preferr[ed]" by French Canadians in the area (230).

Although Marchildon elsewhere acknowledges the socioeconomic injustices of the Métis community's relocation, *Le Loup de Lafontaine* appears to cast equal blame on the village's residents for the conflict in their community and veils the justifiably discontented feelings of the Métis, who, along with their Euro-Western voyageur counterparts from Drummond Island, had often been allocated only "twenty-acre and forty-acre lots" of land after the relocation, much of it "infertiles" (Osborne 124; Marchand, *Les voyageurs* 38).[10] While the relocatees "croient que ces terres leur ont été données gratuitement pour compenser leurs pertes dans l'île Drummond" ("believe that these lands were given to them freely to compensate for their losses on Drummond Island"), the colonial government ordered, among other stipulations, that they clear sixteen acres and pay "huit livres chacun avant" being granted "le titre de leurs lots" ("eight pounds each before" being granted "the title to their lots," Marchand, *Les voyageurs* 38). Community members protested these terms in 1830 and 1832 petitions in which they represented the clearing of the land as futile: according to local Métis historian Micheline Marchand, they argued that "puisque beaucoup de leurs terres sont infertiles, les déboiser ne servirait à rien" ("since much of their land is infertile, clearing it would serve no purpose," 38).[11] Marchand further explains that in another 1832 letter to Governor General John Colborne, some relocatees note that the small lots they had received effectively precluded their ability to farm as "vingt acres

Community members protested these terms in 1830 and 1832 petitions in which they represented the clearing of the land as futile.

10 In *Verner et Lafontaine*, Marchildon writes, "[C]eux qui on vu de leurs yeux ces 'généreuses concessions de terrains' savent qu'elles consistaient généreusement en sable, en cailloux" ("[T]hose who have seen with their own eyes these 'liberal allotments of land' know that they consist liberally of sand, of stones") (quoted in Marchand, *Les voyageurs* 37).

11 Marchand's *Settlement of Penetanguishene* identifies the authors of the 1830 petition as being "44 voyageurs and Métis" (20), although these may be interrelated, rather than distinct, groups. As Gwen Reimer and Jean-Philippe Chartrand note with regard to the 1832 petition to Colborne, the letter "includes names of individuals who are known to be Métis," "French-Canadians born in Lower Canada but married to Indian or Métis women," as well as "Scottish/British men also married to Indian or Métis women" (581).

ne suffisent pas à la subsistence de leurs grosses familles" ("twenty acres did not suffice for the subsistence of their large families," 39). The simple insult "fisherman or liar" does not convey the reality of these systemic spatial and economic injustices or the further exclusion of the Drummond Island Métis descendants from occupations that "were higher in both social status and yearly income" than their traditional trades "because of educational deficiencies or simple prejudice" (Travers 230).

Marchildon's novella moves from this effacement of the role of racism in community conflicts to culminate in a display of reconciliation that silences Métis voices. The Lafontaine Wolf is shot by Théophile Brunelle, who had prayed to the saints for assistance and offered to hold a mass for the community if he killed the wolf (34, 33). At this mass, the parish priest, Joseph Beaudoin, chastises the community, claiming that God allowed the wolf's "diabolique" destruction because of "nos propres péchés" ("our own sins," 38). He continues, "Le loup n'est donc pas l'auteur seulement de maux, mais d'un très grand bien: il vous a unis" ("The wolf is therefore the author not only of evil, but of a great good: he united you," 39). Daniel Marchildon characterizes the story as one of "reconciliation" between community members, a key scene of which occurs when "Théophile […] persuaded Colbert […] to buy François Labatte some new dogs." Although, in this scene, "Colbert en prenant François par le bras" ("Colbert took François by the arm," T. Marchildon 36), François does not respond, and his thoughts on this "reconciliation" are notably absent. Moreover, Daniel Marchildon explains that this story of reconciliation "has been both distorted and appropriated many times over the years," pointing to *Recollections: Township of Tiny*, a history of the region published by the township in which Lafontaine is situated. This collection claims that "[t]he one positive thing to come from this 'terror' was that it united the people, both English and French, against a common foe" (21). Yet, as Daniel Marchildon notes, "the conflicts reported in the tale only involved various groups of French Canadians and French-speaking Métis." In this official history circulated by the local government, the Métis are written out of the story, off the land, and outside of the region's "reconciliation." This questionable reconciliation is echoed in Dimaline's depiction of Thomas Heiser, the villain of *Empire of Wild*. She writes that "he'd been too busy dealing with relentless PR for the new pipeline consultations: too many posed handshakes with men in headdresses; too many dummy copies of agreements to pretend sign for the press as the real deals were being sweated out between lawyers in the backrooms" (45–46). The silent handshake between Colbert and François in *Le Loup de Lafontaine* is here magnified in the photographic capture

and stilling of "posed handshakes," with both constituting limited forms of reconciliation for Indigenous peoples. Heiser's actions in particular are public displays of a reconciliation that primarily serves settler interests.

Emerging from the Lafontaine region's past conflicts, conversations, and relationships to depict the contemporary Métis community, *Empire of Wild* is informed by this specific community context and implicitly outlines the limitations of *Le Loup de Lafontaine* by recentring Indigenous people in the present moment. At the same time, *Le Loup de Lafontaine*, if simplified in its narrative, is ultimately a true parable of efforts toward reconciliation and the coming together of divided communities. As a story foundational to the people and lands from and about which Dimaline writes, the lingering presence of the Lafontaine Wolf in *Empire of Wild* suggests a hopefulness about the coming together of the communities represented in Dimaline's novel despite how they have been separated by colonialism.

Colonial unknowing and Métis disconnections

While Joan's position in her fight with Victor is rooted in her community's history, Victor's position is shaped by the colonial unknowing of that history, which leaves him disconnected and uprooted from her. Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein describe colonial unknowing as "the predominant lack of acknowledgement or engagement with the histories and contemporary relations of colonialism—especially with regard to the specificities of Indigenous peoples," and, in line with this definition, Victor is never shown acknowledging the specificities of Joan's community or her relationship with her land. He later defends himself by claiming that his proposal to sell was based on an absence of knowledge or intention: "I didn't mean anything by it" (150).[12] However, Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein emphasize that colonial unknowing is not an innocent and passive absence but "an epistemological orientation that works to preempt relational modes of" knowing, such as Joan's. Victor's claim that his words do not "mean anything" denies the validity of Joan's reaction and obscures his distortion of her perspective. For example, echoing colonial beliefs about Indigenous "nomadism," he assumes that Joan's desire to travel means that she is not attached to her land: "I just, you know, was thinking that you keep saying you want to be able to get out of here. To hit the road in an old van, remember?" (Macdougall, Podruchny, and St-

12 Victor says this in the context of a dream or vision that Joan has. However, the novel suggests that this vision was real (152–53).

Onge 8; *Empire* 150). This colonial logic does not acknowledge the reality that many Indigenous people, as Simpson writes, "have lived or will live in a variety of places throughout our lives, and […] travel back and forth maintaining connection wherever possible and whenever we have the means" (*As We* 197). Simpson adds, "This in my mind does not necessarily dilute our Indigeneity, nor does it dilute our demands for a land base" (197). Rather than recognizing Joan's commitment to a land base for her family and community, Victor instead sees her plot as property, describing it in terms of its monetary value, its transferable ownership, and his right to it through marriage: "It's not your dad's land anymore; it's yours. And I thought it was ours" (73).[13] Representing this view is the "paperwork" that Victor pushes on Joan, reading the contract aloud to her "as if literacy were the problem," thus echoing the long use of written documentation to exclude Indigenous values (72). Goeman describes such a dynamic as pervasive in discussions of Indigenous land, where colonially-based legal and financial discourses are presented as the "real," leading to Indigenous women's "modes of mapping and geographic understandings" being "marginalized, dismissed, concealed, or erased" (2, 15).

Joan concisely articulates the harm caused by Victor's colonial unknowing: "It's like you don't know me at all. That makes me feel really lonely, Victor" (73). Her words resonate beyond their interaction, suggesting the ways in which the widespread lack of knowledge of the Georgian Bay Métis Community has caused harm to the community's relationships with other Métis peoples. While Victor never names his identity, he was raised in Winnipeg, has Anishnaabe and French ancestry, and grew up with rogarou stories told by his Moshom (221, 233), suggesting that he may be Plains Métis. Joan has similar ancestry and culture, with Anishnaabe, French, and Red River Métis roots and a Michif-speaking, rogarou-storytelling Mere (10). Through its depiction of Victor and Joan's troubled relationship, then, *Empire of Wild* invokes and critiques current fractures between Manitoba and Ontario Métis governments, fractures that exist despite the deep cultural and ancestral connections between the groups they represent.

To explore the resonances between Dimaline's novel and the contemporary Métis political landscape, we compare Victor's arguments with those in a recent report that was commissioned by the MMF before they left the MNC and authored by settler sociologist Darryl Leroux and Métis

13 Victor's claims about his marital rights to Joan's land recall the ways in which, under the Indian Act, "[g]ender, citizenship, and marriage were triangulated to unravel complex Native communities, and in doing so, deplete their land bases" (Goeman 49).

legal scholar Darren O'Toole. While this report was released after *Empire of Wild*, we use it as an example of the current discourse about Métis relationships circulating within and about Métis organizations. The report asserts that members of the Georgian Bay Métis Community whose roots are in the Great Lakes region are not Métis and, further, regarding those community members with roots in western Canada, it implies that the movement of Métis families from Alberta and Red River to what is now Ontario depleted their descendants' Métis connections (30). It argues, therefore, that the Georgian Bay Métis Community has "little to no evidence provided of […] connection to the Métis Nation Homeland" (20). While the report states that it reserves judgement "on whether this community has standing as a non-status or half-breed community" (20) and that some members may now be eligible for "status under the *Indian Act*" (7), it nevertheless goes on to suggest that Georgian Bay Métis community members are "settlers" (29) despite their long-standing identification, recognition, alliance-building, and advocacy as an Indigenous community. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to engage in a full discussion of the report's claims and conclusions, our intention here is, by looking at similarities between Victor's words and logic and those from this report, to reveal how both participate in patterns of colonial unknowing by not attending to the local contexts and relationships of the Georgian Bay Métis. For example, as explained above, Victor assumes that Joan's desire "[t]o hit the road" means that she will happily give up her land, and he adds that he himself is "happy to be with [her], no matter where" (150). He assumes that he and Joan must choose between, on the one hand, their mobile connection to one another, and, on the other, a rootedness in a specific land and place. The MMF report uses strikingly similar logic and wording to deny both the Georgian Bay Métis' painful history of colonial displacement and their Indigeneity. To support this denial, the report states that in 1832 the Governor General of Canada, John Colborne, wrote that the Drummond Island Métis "have always been happy to move in order to conserve their beautiful title of British subject" (28). Seemingly building upon this quotation, the report then asserts that the community self-identified primarily "as loyal British subjects" (29). The assumption seems to be that mobility and allyship with the Crown are incompatible with an Indigenous sense of community and place. However, just as Victor makes assumptions about Joan without seeking to understand the context of her attachment to her land, the report similarly does not attend to the context of this quotation, erroneously attributing it to Colborne. The quotation is from a petition likely written by Drummond Island mission-

ary Dédin Révol, signed by community members, and sent to Colborne (Marchand, *From* 50–51). The petition explains the community's history of dispossession—"Tous ces divers déplacements n'ont pu avoir lieu sans obérer leurs faibles moyens" ("All these various displacements could not take place without burdening their meagre resources")—and pleads for more land around Penetanguishene Bay for the community members to support their children, making this plea partially on the basis of their history of alliance with the British (quoted in Marchand, *From* 51). In this context, especially in the wake of the War of 1812 when a number of Indigenous peoples along the border allied with either the U.S. or Britain, the petition's reference to the "beautiful title of British subject" is clearly part of its rhetorical strategy and does not indicate a giving up of Indigenous identity and relationships. In misattributing the words from the petition, the MMF report erases Drummond Islanders' voices and historical context to imply that they were "happy" about a situation that left them displaced, dispossessed, and impoverished.

Underlying its interpretation of its sources is the assumption that Indigenous rootedness and mobility are incompatible.

Additionally, outside of a limited amount of scholarly research, the MMF report makes no use of local, community voices—their stories, interviews, and oral narratives—to support its claims about the Georgian Bay Métis. Although it purports to reference Lewis Solomon, the words it quotes are in fact those of his settler interviewer, Osborne.[14] Underlying its interpretation of its sources is the assumption that Indigenous rootedness and mobility are incompatible. For example, like Victor quantifying the value of Joan's land while ignoring the ways that she values it, the report calculates the percentage of Plains Métis bloodlines among the Drummond Island Métis without ever considering the ongoing meaning of these connections to the community (30). Similarly, the report draws on historical records to assert that the Dusome family—Dimaline's ancestors ("Where")—left Red River "by 1833" and that "[n]one of their immediate descendants are known to have moved back west" (30), implying that the family's Métis roots were severed by their move. Yet it never looks to community sources to investigate whether these roots may have been remembered in ways that have not been institutionally documented, as Dimaline's novel sug-

14 According to the report, Solomon "stated that 'in his person no less than five nationalities are represented,'" which it interprets to mean that he perceived his identity as mixed instead of rooted in "a singular nationality—Métis" (25). However, these quoted words were actually Osborne's, who was intrigued by his subject's "very mixed nationality" and disappointed that "he fails to tell us how" he was mixed (126). Solomon's own words, never quoted in the report, show careful attention to his roots in his specific ancestors, their homes, and their movements.

gests they have. Drawing on the same logic, the report suggests that the community's relocation to Georgian Bay means that they are not rooted there either. It asserts that the Drummond Island Métis' petitioning of the government for "presents" rather than land in 1840 "could be read as giving some indication that they were aware of their tenuous relationship to the land—that it was not *really* their homeland and that they themselves were settlers encroaching on the territories of local First Nations," despite the fact that this petition uses the self-ascription "half breeds" to refer to the community and connects them to other such communities around the Great Lakes (29).[15] The report here seems to assume that the displacement across Lake Huron transformed the Drummond Island Métis into settlers, a view that is particularly damaging when describing a period of large-scale Indigenous removals and relocations. The report's argument about the Georgian Bay Métis Community, like Victor's about Joan, is rooted in colonial unknowing, and the MMF's decision to walk away from their relationship with the MNO, partially on the basis of this report, also resonates with Victor's storming out on his disagreement with Joan.

Seen in relation to colonial unknowing and to the MMF report, the nature of Victor's mistake and subsequent punishment becomes clearer: it is not just that he misunderstands Joan but, rather, that he participates in forms of unknowing that continue to erase and deny the relationships between her people, their ancestors, their land, and their history. In this sense, his punishment by the rogarou—the erasure of his own history with Joan and his presence on the land but inability to find community—is one that fits his crime with excruciating precision. At the same time, however, *Empire of Wild* treats Victor with compassion, showing his love for Joan and the ultimate strength of their connection. We are told that, as a child, he was moved away from his community and mother (84–85), echoing the displacement of Joan's community and perhaps, if we consider him as Métis, the repeated displacement of his own people. Mere reflects that

15 In 1840, a number of Métis community members—including Dimaline's ancestor, Alexis Beausoleil—identifying as the "half breeds residing in the Town of Penetanguishene" petitioned the Governor General "to have the same advantages […] from the issue of Indian presents" received by First Nations people and "a number of the half breeds, from the Sault St. Marie (*sic*) and other places on the shores of Lake Huron" (Petition quoted in Marchand, *From* 61; Dimaline, "Where"). As Theodore Binnema and Kevin Hutchings note, "[s]hortly after the conquest of New France, the British" began to engage in "an annual distribution of gifts" to their Indigenous allies, a practice that "would persist until the 1850s" (135 n5). The MMF report explains that this was "a common practice that the French and British engaged in as a matter of honouring First Nations diplomatic protocols of *gifting* and *exchange*" (29).

Victor's own history may be why he puts financial security before his relationship with Joan and her community: "For him, he sees a different way of being secure, I suppose […]. It's not bad, just not right" (85). She refuses to villainize Victor, expressing empathy for him and encouraging Joan to look for him (85–86). The elder's advice suggests that an ethical response to disconnections among Métis peoples is not blaming and distancing but, rather, seeking to reconnect.

Instead of blaming Victor, *Empire of Wild* directs our attention to the true villain, Thomas Heiser, who—as a church leader, federal treaty negotiator, and mining and gas company employee—represents colonial and capitalist interests. Heiser both feeds on and propagates the unknowing of the Indigenous characters. The novel thereby suggests that such unknowing is not caused by the characters' personal dysfunctions or "passive" "forgetting" but "is aggressively made and reproduced, affectively invested and effectively distributed in ways that conform the social relations and economies of the here and now" (Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein). Because of Victor's unknowing, Heiser is able to take control of him and to "invest" and "distribute" that unknowing for his own gain. The rogarou, while under Heiser's control, admits that he "can't really remember" how he ended up inside Victor (233). Victor's possession by the rogarou in turn causes Victor to forget his own personal history and relationships. Then, as the Reverend Wolff, he calls on the ministry's Indigenous followers to forget their relationships to their ancestors and turn away from "the decisions that [their] forefathers made" (120–21). Victor's disappearance even affects Joan's memory: "There were days she couldn't remember how she got to her patch of land or out to the dump. She just ended up there" (12). Her sense that she "just ended up" on her land suggests that the community history that brought her there is being erased by this spread of colonial unknowing.

Heiser hides his erasure of Indigenous memory through his appropriation of the rogarou. Bringing the creatures back and forth between the Plains and Great Lakes areas (172, 177–79), he distorts and exploits the history of Indigenous mobility and relationality between the regions. He uses Victor, as Reverend Wolff, as an Indigenous frontman whom he hopes will persuade Indigenous peoples in both regions to agree to resource extraction on their lands. Because of this subterfuge, for most of the novel, Joan does not recognize Heiser's control of Victor, first blaming Victor for his own disappearance, then blaming the rogarou. Her efforts to save her husband are thus hindered by misdirection, confusion, and anger: "her anger was making it difficult to comprehend" (273). When she does finally

confront Heiser, his strategy is to divert her anger by revealing that Victor, as a rogarou, killed her Mere (271), although the reader has reason to suspect that Heiser was truly responsible (46). Joan's resulting uncertainty is emphasized by her repeated and inarticulate question, "What the fuck?" (277, 278, 285). As she attacks Victor, Heiser laughs at the way that he has managed to "kill[ ] two birds with one stone" (274). Joan's inability to recognize her true enemy even as she fights to get Victor to recognize her exemplifies the ways in which we are caught in "the messy entanglements between knowing and unknowing" (Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein).[16]

By depicting Heiser and his scheme to exploit Indigenous lands as the source of Victor's forgetting, Dimaline raises a crucial question about current fractures between Métis governments and peoples: how might the forgetting of historical Métis relationships serve colonial interests by dividing Métis people and hampering their collective resistance against the threats of settler colonialism? In asking this question, however, Dimaline also refuses to blame or villainize Indigenous people for the ways in which they are impacted by and implicated in colonial unknowing. Similarly, in a recent commentary that addresses the divisions within and between Métis organizations, Mi'kmaw scholar Pamela Palmater writes that "while these organizations are not to blame for systemic racism, oppression and violence from governments, industry and some segments of society," "[u]ltimately, it is the grassroots people who suffer the consequences of their infighting." Through its depiction of the far-reaching loss, pain, and violence that proliferate from Joan and Victor's fight, *Empire of Wild* reflects on such consequences. But it also points toward future alternatives.

(Re)mapping coresistance and Métis futures

While the narrative of *Empire of Wild* grows out of the stories of the Georgian Bay Métis Community as well as out of the damage caused by the colonial unknowing of those stories, the novel is skeptical about the potential for reversing this damage by merely making Indigenous knowledge more available. When Joan tells Reverend Wolff who he really is, he still cannot recognize her, and she realizes that "[s]he couldn't get him to unforget if he refused to listen" (95). Joan learns that challenging colonial unknowing is not simply a matter of providing information but must be a process of listening and learning in relationship (Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein). To free themselves from Heiser, Joan and Victor must reconnect with one another and with their peoples to create the possibility for

16 Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein here build on Saidiya Hartman's "Venus in Two Acts."

what Goeman calls "vibrant Native futures" despite colonial spaces and systems (3). *Empire of Wild* (re)maps such connections between Indigenous people through its movements across time and space. For Victor, this means striving to return to Joan and her community as he reflects on his family in Manitoba. In his isolation, while possessed by the rogarou, he contemplates memories of the mother who taught "him how to skin a rabbit" (42), the uncle "he trailed along behind" as a child (102), and the Moshom who told him rogarou stories and taught him life lessons (233–34). Such reflection allows Victor to (re)map himself, a necessary task in escaping from the rogarou since Reverend Wolff "was not so much a man as the outline of one" whose "edges" "had to be redrawn [by Heiser] on a regular basis" (164). Dimaline writes that "[m]emories live not just in the brain but also in the muscle and tissue where they are created," and the rogarou tells Victor, "[Y]ou know who I am […]. You know it in your bones" (164, 233). Although Victor forgets Joan, accessing embodied memories of his relationships helps him to redraw his own edges outside of Heiser's control, (re)map his relationships, and return to his wife and her community.

For Joan, reconnecting with Victor requires delving into her own community's history. Dimaline writes that, upon being relocated from Drummond Island, community members "laid down coarse salt" "from the actual bones of one particular Red River family" "as protection against" further displacement (2). Over the years, the bone salt is "ground to dust" (4). However, Joan re-enacts this heritage by using bone salt from her Mere to once again (re)map the community's protective borders, this time trapping the rogarou. Since Mere is a Métis woman of Red River and Drummond Island ancestry, Joan (re)maps the Georgian Bay Métis' kinship to the Plains Métis, depicting these communities as powerful and resilient beyond the grasp of colonial intervention when brought together. Also, Joan lays Mere's bone salt near Leamington, Ontario, far from the Georgian Bay Métis Community but "right near the perforated line of the US border" (241). Although Leamington is not close to Drummond Island, because both sites are near the border between Canada and America, Joan's presence there refracts her community's history of displacement and (re)maps their dislocation from their traditional lands. While Dimaline begins her story by contextualizing the Georgian Bay Métis' relationship to their ancestors and land by narrating their relocations as a history of disenfranchisement, Joan learns from and mobilizes this history, especially through her elder Ajean's teachings about bone salt, to return to the border and save Victor and their communities from Heiser and the colonial and capitalist forces he represents—the same forces that once coerced

her community's relocations. The bone salt, then, no longer signifies the community's desperation and disempowerment but denotes what Simpson calls their "resurgence" or rejection of the settler state's "dispossessive forces of capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy" alongside the "embod[iment] [of] an Indigenous alternative" rooted in Indigenous knowledges (*As We* 34–35, 35).

Through Joan and Victor's individual reconnection, *Empire of Wild* (re)maps possibilities for reconceptualizing the real-life divisions between contemporary Métis communities in Canada, situating these communities within what Simpson, building on the work of Jarrett Martineau, calls "constellations of coresistance" wherein Indigenous people form "networks" that "disrupt […] settler colonialism" (*As We* 211, 217, 216). Constellations of coresistance also serve as a warning about the danger of forgetting and colonial unknowing since, as Simpson notes, "[c]onstellations exist only in the context of relationships" (215). Dimaline's constellations of co-resistance resonate with the MNC and MNO's contemporary move toward conversations that consider Métis relationships in terms of the "connections" and "interconnections" between Ontario and western Métis communities (Margaret Froh quoted in Narine). As we noted in the introduction, these conversations move beyond the binary question of whether MNO citizens should be called "Métis" and instead consider these communities' relatedness as Indigenous people. Although the MMF report demonstrates an opposing approach in terms of its colonial unknowing or reluctance to recognize the Georgian Bay Métis' Indigeneity or relatedness, one of its authors, Darren O'Toole, elsewhere offers an example of how the kind of constellations of coresistance that Dimaline represents in *Empire of Wild* could translate into a real-life (re)mapping of Métis relationships. Specifically, O'Toole (re)maps possible kinship connections between the Plains and Great Lakes Métis in his article "From Entity to Identity to Nation: The Ethnogenesis of the *Wiisakodewininiwag* (Bois-Brûlé) Reconsidered." O'Toole points out that the word "bois-brulé" appears to have been used as a term of self-identification by people of French and Anishnaabe ancestry in the Lake Huron region in the nineteenth century and that this term was also "used as a self-ascription" by the Red River Métis in the same period (179). He traces the origin of this shared term to a "French translation of the Anishinaabemowin word *Wiisakodewininiwag*" (179), which *The Ojibwe People's Dictionary* translates as referring to "Metis" or "mixed ancestry" people ("Wiisaakodewinini"). Explaining that there also "seem to be links between Sault Ste. Marie and Red River during the three major political moments of the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, the Sayer trial in 1849 and the

Resistance in 1869–70," O'Toole situates these communities as "*inawendiwag*—related to each other—through a common cultural, linguistic and religious heritage on *both sides* [French and Anishnaabe] of their mixed ancestry" (177, 178–79). While genealogical ties are often traced through settler identities and written historical records (177), O'Toole proposes exploring "the extent to which the specific institutions and culture of the Anishinaabeg played a role in the development of a common national identity in both the Red River Métis and Great Lakes Region" (179). He thereby "raises the question of a vast *Wiisakodewininiwag* nation that emerged out of an *Anishinaabeg-Canadien métissage* and the institutional framework of a fur trade system that stretched from the Ottawa River to southern Saskatchewan" (179). O'Toole thus (re)maps a large expanse of Canada through historical connections based in Indigenous relationships, ways of knowing, and language. He raises an interesting possibility. Reflecting on terms of identification grounded in Indigenous histories and languages, such as *Wiisakodewininiwag*, might offer a narrower sense of who is Métis in terms of the cultural and historical specificity of that word and its rootedness in Western Canada. But such terms might also reveal a wider understanding of real-life connections and relationships within and between the various Indigenous communities that have been called Métis because of legitimate claims to constitutional rights as Indigenous people and thereby create opportunities for the expression and celebration of their specific cultures and (hi)stories.

Such (re)mappings of communities and geographies hold the potential for Indigenous resurgence. As Simpson explains, "[w]hen […] constellations work in international relationship to other constellations, the fabric of the night sky changes" (*As We* 218). It is this possibility for change through remembrance of relationships that Dimaline proposes in *Empire of Wild*. By (re)mapping the fractured relationships between provincial Métis organizations through a rogarou story reflective of both the Red River and Georgian Bay Métis, Dimaline offers an expansive understanding of Indigenous relationality rooted in Indigenous family and community histories, stories, memories, languages, and geographic understandings. *Empire of Wild* is a story that warns us about the dangers of Indigenous people forgetting our relationships to one another—and it is a story that (re)maps routes back to these relationships for community members through the pieces of (hi)story to which they have access. This process is embodied by Victor as he slowly returns to himself, a journey initiated by Joan's efforts to make him remember. In the chapter "Victor, in a Twenty-Six-Acre Cell," Dimaline writes, "A face came to him, soft with laugh lines

and with a ridge of small, brown beauty marks along her jaw like a constellation […]. Her name … it was almost there" (43). The "astronomy on her skin" is a constellation symbolizing how Joan guides him back to her name, to their relationship, and so to himself (44). Through coresistance, Joan and Victor achieve what they cannot do alone: they free themselves, (re)map the colonial forces constraining them, and move on to the next fight together.

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