



THOMPSON RIVERS  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURES, LANGUAGES, AND PERFORMING ARTS  
ENGLISH 4260-01 Studies in Canadian Literature—Métis Canadian Literature (3, 0, 0)  
RELATIONALITY ASSIGNMENT

“... every educational act is a political act – simply put it is either for the status quo or addresses change ...” (Celia Haig-Brown 7).

#### INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

Indigenous epistemologies tend toward a relationality. That is, the interconnection between people, events, time, land, and so on. Relationality is the concept that people are related to one another, to the environment, to the spiritual world, and these relationships create interdependencies. For most Indigenous peoples—from the First Nations to the Inuit to the Métis—the world exists in one reality composed of an inseparable texture of secular (nonspiritual or material) and sacred (spiritual, holy, or revered) dimensions. This is not to imply a specific “religious” approach or practice, but a spiritual development or component. Indigenous thought considers the emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and the physical.

Therefore, academic or cognitive knowledge is valued, but self-awareness, emotional growth, social growth, and spiritual development are equally of value. In Indigenous culture, personal experience is valuable; it is place-based—knowledge and experience are situated in relationship to location and people.

#### DIRECTIONS

- Create a piece of material that addresses relationality—meaning your (I, indeed, mean your) relationship to the course material, this location, this moment in time, and yourself. This piece of material that you create is ultimately up to you. For example,
  - It may consist of photographs, drawings, text, journal entries, and so on.
  - It might only contain written material.
  - It may contain a variety of material to address a variety of perspectives.
  - This is up to you.
- **Your work must include at least one verbatim (word-for-word) quotations from the material(s) that you are relating to** without exception; if it does not include a verbatim quotation, you will receive a grade of F for not having meant the standards of the assignment.
- It must include a Bibliography at the end of your assignment.
- It must include a land acknowledgement.
- It must clearly discuss, refer to, or analyse at least one piece of material that we covered in our course.
- If your project is a visual representation please include an artistic statement regarding the piece of material.

#### TOPICS OR A WAY OF GRAPPLING WITH THIS ASSIGNMENT

I have listed a few ideas that may assist you in your space, time, material, and self-analysis in a perspective that doesn't compartmentalize but rather includes various aspects of who you are, here

at this moment in time, in this place on this land, and the material you're engaging with. There are various methods of tackling and engaging with this assignment.

- As you work on this project, you might consider how the Red River Métis or the Michif Naiton engage with time, which is markedly different than dominant Canadian society as articulated in Amanda Strong's works.
- You might consider **image and identity**—meaning, explore the contemporary Métis issues covered in our course, consider their roots in the colonialist history of Canada. This may engage materials like “Call Me Brother,” “Leather and Naughahyde,” or the excerpt from James Tyman’s autobiography. If you are not Indigenous you may think this may not apply to you; however, you might examine your life and locate a moment where you were misunderstood or judged based upon your appearance (these are, I would assert, universal concerns that effect all people regardless of race or culture).
- You might consider an analysis upon the Cree and Michif word, **otipemisiwak**. Otipemisiwak is the word that the Red River Métis or Michif Nation uses to refer to itself. **It means, the people who own themselves.** You might consider “She is Spitting a Mouthful of Stars,” Bones of Crows (season 1, episode 1), Amanda Strong’s works, or how losing oneself and community—that lack of ownership within the dominant Canadian landscape—may address Richard Cardinal’s life.
- You might consider **code-switching**, which refers to switching from one language to another with ease and naturalness; however, for Indigenous people it also refers to switching from one perspective (settler) to another (Indigenous).
  - Culturally, most Indigenous communities sometimes refer to code-switching within cultures as **etuaptmumk** from the Mi'kmaq elder, Albert Marshall, meaning “the gift of multiple perspectives;” however, this has become quite simplified in translation as “two-eyed seeing.” However, they’re quite different and distinct—two-eyed seeing refers to “learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together Indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2, 331-340).
  - Code-switching is the act of changing our behaviours, including speech, dress, and mannerisms, to conform to a different cultural norm than what we might authentically do in our own homes; however, as you can imagine, for the Métis, code-switching is authentic in each culture and is not a purposeful modification of behaviour.
  - Clearly, you can see this concept is difficult to articulate outside the Métis community; however, you might consider that movement between First Nations and Métis cultures in Marilyn Dumont’s “Leather and Naughahyde” and Gregory Scofield’s “Call Me Brother.” You might consider the movement between cultures that James Tyman struggles with in his autobiography (we considered only an excerpt).