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## CHAPTER THREE

## *Chican@ Indigeneity, the Nation-State, and Colonialist Identity Formations*

George Hartley

We do not want to be classified as "Hispanicized Indians."

To be Chicana/Chicano is to be indigenou.

—Vivian Lopez, Yaqui/Apache

Chican@ indigeneity? The very coupling of these terms has a contradictory ring to some American Indians. For many Chican@s, however, the coupling has the ring of redundancy, for the whole point of the Mexican-American turn to the term "Chican@" was to reclaim their indigenous roots. The discomfort behind this contradiction/redundancy stems from a long-standing but rarely confronted conflict in North America today—that between some American Indians and some Chican@s when it comes to Chican@ claims to indigeneity.<sup>1</sup> While some American Indian individuals and groups have openly recognized Chican@ indigeneity, some other American Indians see this Chican@ claim to indigeneity as woven into the traumatic legacy of the Spanish Conquest in today's US Southwest, where American Indians remain doubly colonized by both the Spanish and Anglo invasions. For Chican@s, the problem lies in the *denial* of their indigeneity by some American Indians, who thereby reinforce the constantly policed status of Chican@s as outsiders within their own country, another form of being "undocumented." The problem lies in implicitly accepting, even when apparently denying, the sanctioning of official identity by the nation-state by accepting the legitimacy of the nation-state borders.

This acceptance of the nation-state inheres in the naming process itself? The very terms *American Indian* and *Native American*, when used

to distinguish peoples indigenous to the "United States" from peoples indigenous to "Mexico," tend to reinforce the ongoing forces of US manifest destiny by accepting the notions that (a) *America* refers to the United States — one nation in the hemisphere named America — and (b) indigenous identities begin with their location within the various nation-states of North America. Hegemonic colonial-national concepts (Mexico, the United States, Canada) form the imaginary boundaries within which two colonized peoples define themselves both for themselves and against one another. During this process, they reenact their own particular colonized positions.<sup>3</sup> Statements such as "Yes, Chican@s are indigenous, but they are indigenous to Mexico, not to here" invoke this nationalist context when "here" stands in for the United States rather than for a specific tribal territory outside of the US Southwest. In this national context, Indians from Mexico and Canada are not considered "American Indians." By extension, neither are Chican@s "American Indians," given that their "original" indigenous roots are in "Mexico." The original Chican@ trauma, then, stems from their rejection as Americans by the dominant European invaders of the Anglo Conquest rather than from their earlier (but ongoing) colonization as indigenous peoples by the previously dominant Europeans of the Spanish Conquest.

What I want to argue here is that the notion of Chican@ indigeneity, precisely because of its provocativeness, provides us with a hinge concept for sorting out the various lines of colonial hegemony in North America and thus for conceptualizing indigeneity outside of such colonialist boundaries. As such, I hope to help transform the concept of Chican@ indigeneity into a tool for decolonial reconciliation for and solidarity among North American indigenous peoples. In the process, I will draw primarily on the work of three indigenous women of North America: Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna), Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (Zapotec), and Gloria Anzaldita (Chicana).

### Silko's Challenge to False Borders

I begin with Leslie Marmon Silko because she lays out a path for decolonizing national borders from the perspective of an American Indian (a concept already complicated by Silko's additional Mexican Indian ancestry). In her novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), the character Calabazas, a Yaqui smuggler who moves "illegal" goods across the Sonora and Arizona border, declares, "We don't believe in boundaries. Borders. Nothing like

that. We are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit claims. We know where we belong on this earth. We have always moved freely. North-south. East-west. We pay no attention to what isn't real. Imaginary lines. Imaginary minutes and hours. Written law. We recognize none of that" (216). The area of the Yaqui or Yoeme people, like that of the Tohono O'odham, was divided by the imposition of the US-Mexico border after the Anglo invasion and conquest of northern Mexico in 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. This division caused further mass detribalization of native peoples of Mexico on both sides of the new border, much like the detribalization of the Genízaro or Hispanized Indians in New Mexico.<sup>4</sup> As a result, as Chicana author Cherríe Moraga explains, the majority of Chican@s have

been denied direct information regarding our tribal affiliations. Since our origins are usually in the southwest and México, Chicanos' Indian roots encompass a range of nations including Apache, Yaqui, Papago, Navajo, and Tarahumara from the border regions, as well as dozens of Native tribes throughout México. Regardless of verifiable genealogy, many Chicanos have recently begun to experience a kind of collective longing to return to our culture's traditional indigenous beliefs and ways of constructing community in order to find concrete solutions for the myriad problems confronting us, from the toxic dump sites in our neighborhoods to rape. (1999: 166)

Calabazas attempts to decolonize the imaginary lines that let US imperialism define and empower itself while defining and subjugating others. In the same vein, in an interview Silko says, "Just because everyone wants to fall in and draw lines and exclude, well, that's the behavior of Europeans. A lot of that's been internalized. . . . The old time people were way less racist and talked way less about lines and excluding than now"; such internalized racism is "brought in by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and then the next thing you know, somebody thinks that's Indian tradition" (1998: 11).

This recognition of the emphasis on national borders as complicit in the perpetuation of racism and colonialism is exactly, I believe, what we need as a first step toward resolving the Indian-Chican@ conflict. For the boundaries between reservations and their enclosing nations are only one facet of the colonization of indigenous identity; the relationship between tribal nations and nation-states must also be taken into account. This becomes clear when we speak of the national identities of the Yoeme, the Dakota, or the Kanienkeha, all of whom are peoples whose tribal boundar-

ies cross national borders. Such cross-border identities reveal the dangers of uncritically accepting the nation-state as arbiter of indigenous status. This becomes even more complicated—in ways that can lead to decolonizing insights—when we speak of what is now the US Southwest. The indigenous peoples have been serially defined in relation to the Spanish Empire, the Mexican state, and then the United States. If we can say that Chican@s are indigenous to Mexico but not the United States, we immediately run into the problem of determining which historical boundaries of either state we are using to determine such national claims. Navajos were once Mexicans. Yet their status as American Indian remains unchallenged by this fact, while the status of Chican@s remains tied to their pre-Anglo colonial past.

### Altamirano-Jiménez's Continent of Diverse Islands

Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez develops a similar argumentative framework to the one I am offering here of the colonial nature of the indigenous internalization of national/linguistic borders. A Zapotec scholar teaching in Alberta, Canada, she is uniquely positioned to compare the diverse ways in which indigenities are constructed according to Mexican, US, and Canadian models. Altamirano-Jiménez (2008) argues that we must remember the precolonial conception of North America as Turtle Island, a geographical-cosmological vision of this vast territory as a continent of diverse islands. Shared by many indigenous cultures, the notion of Turtle Island allowed for a way of thinking unity-in-diversity. Whereas, then, the privileged territorial/cultural category was the nation as a people, this conception was flexible enough to allow for economic, cultural, and military exchange and innovation. The arrival of the Europeans and the establishment of competing empires, however, redrew boundaries along Euro-American lines between distinct nation-states that each enveloped and defined indigenous peoples (in ways unique to each empire). Over time these indigenous peoples ended up accepting those European-derived boundaries, along with their internal and external tribal-national definitions in relation to the state, and in the process “reproduced indigenous North/South relationships in North America” (176). The Spanish, French, and English colonial projects not only competed with one another but also pitted indigenous groups against one another. “In fact,” Altamirano-Jiménez argues, “one of the most divisive issues afflicting indigenous Peoples in this region involves who has a legitimate right to define his or her identity

and by what criteria and by whose definition this assertion may or may not be true” (178), exactly the problem faced by Chican@s today in terms of their indigeneity.

On the one hand, European/indigenous miscegenation was encouraged in what was to become Mexico, resulting in the nationally idealized Mexican construct of *mestizaje* (the *mestizo* as the true Mexican citizen), whereas on the other hand, Anglo-European society, both in the United States and in Canada, marginalized people of mixed ancestry by emphasizing the strict ideological White/indigenous divide.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the “European colonial competition for the control of the continent of islands altered not only the interconnectedness of the original peoples in the Americas but also re-shaped their identification along racial inclusions/exclusions” (Altamirano-Jiménez 2008: 181). For Altamirano-Jiménez, then, the question is: “Can North American indigenous Peoples decolonize colonial representations and constructions in order to identify common issues, interests, allies and enemies across borders and difference?” (183). Such alliance building is only possible, Altamirano-Jiménez suggests, once Native North Americans recognize “the diversity of indigenous cultures and histories” and examine “nation-specific precolonial conceptualizations of citizenship”—how indigenous peoples determined citizenship and inter-tribal relations (2004: 183). “What unites Hawaiians with Zapotecs, what connects the Mohawks with Mayan activists or Inuit with Náhuatl and Mixtecs is neither colonial language nor their primordial attachments, but their long survival and resistance and their will to continue to be who they are.” Because of this shared history of survival, inter-tribal (rather than pan-tribal) solidarity can take the form of networking through “transformative actions in diversity across different indigenous nations” (184), just as the peoples of Turtle Island had done before colonization and conquest.

### Anzaldúa's Borderlands Indigenism

The destructive nature of the border still makes itself felt throughout the territory now defined as the borderlands, as Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa calls it. “A border is a dividing line,” she writes, “a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (1987: 25). And this is a painful and violent transition. The border tears apart not just peoples as groups but people as individuals, while redefining those identities on one side or the other. This splitting/

fusing nature is dramatically staged in Anzaldúa's elaboration on the open wound that is the border: "The US–Mexican border *es una herida abierta* [is an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (25).

According to Anzaldúa, the *mestiza* embodies this *herida abierta* and its bleeding-scabbing-merging continuum. Divided by the racist and colonialist imposition of the border, Anzaldúa's *mestiza* inhabits the imaginary gash of the modern nation-state—an imaginary line violently policed even in the supposed "postnational" nation-state of today's neoliberalism.

Anzaldúa writes: "I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that *tejas*-Mexican border, and others, all my life" (1987: 20). She is the alien of a variety of social domains—political, national, sexual, gendered, religious, academic, and artistic. And in all of these domains she can affirm with other Chicana@s and Native peoples, "We didn't cross the border; the border crossed us." This reality of the border itself as what has done the crossing ends up not simply dividing Mexicans into two different national groups on either side of the border but *at the same time* dividing Mexicans from Native peoples in the newly expanded United States. As a result, the Anglo invader-conqueror-occupier of Mexico benefits from this continental divide that now pits indigenous peoples—American Indian and Chicano—against one another to the degree that members of these two groups internalize and police each other in terms of the new international/economic/racial border.

More specifically, after the Anglo Conquest, "Mexican" and "Indian" identities are articulated in such a way as to exclude one another from identification or from occupying the same racialized relationship to imperialism and to the newly demarcated psychopolitical boundaries of the Mexican and US (and Canadian) nation-states. On the face of it, "Mexican-American" identity appears to be configured by the international border (as always on the wrong side of that border) while "Native American" identity appears to be configured by the internal borders between colonized nations and the enveloping nation-state. What too often gets left out of this picture is that "Native American" identity is equally determined by the international border to the degree that we accept the differences presumably separating the identities of Native Americans, Native Mexicans, and Native Canadians.

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* brings this doubly articulated division of identities

into view when she begins talking about the "heavy Indian influence" on her Chicana identity. In *Borderlands* Anzaldúa writes, "My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance" (1987: 43). As a *mestiza*, then, Anzaldúa is by definition a descendent of Indian ancestors in addition to Spanish and African ancestors. She highlights this indigenous connection as she frequently uses expressions such as "the Indian woman in me" (44), "our Indian ancestry" (49), my "dark Indian self" (65), and "my people, the Indians" (83). The defining gesture of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s was precisely its embrace of indigenous roots as an anticolonial act of self-definition against both US and Mexican forms of colonialism. Ana Castillo makes this identification even stronger when she writes, "In this text I have chosen the ethnic and racial definition of Mexic Amerindian to assert both our indigenous blood and the source, as least in part, of our spirituality" (1995: 10). And it is this spiritual connection as part of a decolonizing project that lies behind Anzaldúa's elaboration of Chicana indigeneity.

### American Indian Responses to Chicana@ Indigeneity

This self-definition of Chicana indigeneity has not always sat well, nevertheless, with some Native North American critics or with other Chicana@ critics of such representations of Indianness and indigeneity. Reasons given for resisting the identification of Chicana@ as indigenous generally hold in common the insistence that there are major, perhaps irresolvable distinctions between the two groups that need to be maintained. I would argue that these distinctions fall under three main concerns: (1) the living legacy of the Spanish Conquest, (2) the differing ways in which the US government relates to and defines the two groups, and (3) the claim that Chicana@ appropriations of markers of indigeneity differ little if at all from the exploitative appropriations of all things Indian by the dominant Anglo culture.

One topic that draws the attention of natives in North America and other critics such as María Josefa Saldaña-Portillo is the notion of Aztlán as the Chicano homeland. As part of the decolonizing challenge by the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, self-defined Chicanos proposed the "myth" of Aztlán in order to assert that Chicanos are *not* foreigners or aliens because they have territorial priority over the Anglo invaders in what is now the US Southwest. This is so not just because the region had been northern Mexico before the 1848 Anglo conquest, but also because the Southwest was the presumed site of the ancestral homeland of

the Aztecs before they migrated south to the Valley of Mexico. People of Mexican ancestry in the US Southwest, then, had simply returned home in a circular migratory pattern spanning more than half a millennium. This claim continues to play an important role in the anticolonial politics of Chicanismo in the fight against the Anglo-imperial ideology of manifest destiny.

Perhaps the first person to have raised this idea of Aztlán as the Chicano homeland was Powhatan-Renápe/Delaware-Lenápe scholar Jack Forbes (1962: 17).<sup>6</sup> Even so, this territorial claim appears to some critics as an erasure and dispossession of Native peoples living in the region before and since the “return” of the Aztecas del Norte, as Forbes (1973) refers to Chicanos. Mexicans, after all, are descendants of the Conquistadors, so such territorial claims in places such as what is now New Mexico are especially troubling to, for example, the Pueblo peoples. Add to this the racist penchant of some “Hispanos” or “New Mexicans” to claim pure Spanish blood (as opposed to the *mestizaje* of Mexicans) as well as to continue to celebrate the “cultural legacy” of conquistadors such as the Spanish conquistador Juan de Oñate, and it can be easy to see why the emphasis on Chican@ indigeneity upsets some Native American critics and their allies.

The suggestion of spiritual appropriation is another major issue of contention. Anzaldúa recognizes that some Native women see Chicanas as appropriators.<sup>7</sup> She sees this rift—interestingly described as “an open . . . herida”—as aggravating the Chicana and Native peoples’ “wounds of genocidal colonization and marginalization that have never formed scabs because they’ve continued to bleed for centuries” (2004: 10). In their attempt to reoot themselves in indigenous spiritual practices, some Chican@s, Anzaldúa admits, misuse what they borrow by decontextualizing it. “Chicanas/os are not critical enough,” Anzaldúa asserts, “about how we borrow from lo indio.” The key question, she suggests, is “who does the appropriating and for what purpose” (14–15). Depending on the nature of the appropriations, the relationship between spiritual appropriation and sexual violence that Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith points out is possible (2005), where the “right” to “knowledge” of the other and the spiritual practices of the other is implicated in the colonial-masculinist “right” to bodily conquest. In her own poetic-spiritual-activist practice, Anzaldúa engages in Aztec and other Mesoamerican practices and their survival in so-called folk culture. These practices, far from being romanticized appropriations, are still-existing and recuperated detribalized indigenous elements that for many Mexicans have been forgotten or suppressed, especially in the north in places such as Texas.<sup>8</sup>

Esselen scholar Deborah Miranda, in a complex but relatively sympathetic take on the “heresy” of recognizing Chican@ indigeneity, explains another source of the tension behind the question of such recognition: the fear of losing their own federally recognized status as American Indians by granting legitimacy to the claims to indigeneity of a people defined (by the Mexican state) as *mestizo*. “Thus, as I see our situation now,” Miranda explains, “US Indians can accept the indigenous lineage and hearts of Chicanos, but still resist embracing our own *mestiza* identity until we are more assured that our indigenous survival is provided for. When we omit Chicanos from the ‘Indian Rolls,’ then, what we are also doing is resisting our own coming out as *Mestizas*” (2002: 206). We should note two things here: (1) the explicit dependence on recognition by nation-states (whether US or Mexican) and (2) the fact that some American Indian critics and their allies see themselves as in the position (functionally as extensions of the colonial state) to grant or reject such recognition to Chican@s. Not many Chicanas, on the other hand, seem to be waiting for such recognition and legitimization by their American Indian sisters and brothers. I would suggest that this whole dynamic of recognition all too closely mirrors the problematic politics of recognition that Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, following Franz Fanon, rightly criticizes in his examination of mainstream liberal formulations of indigenous relations to the nation-state, wherein one’s tribal legitimacy and rights are sought from the state that, whether it chooses to “grant” or “withhold” such recognition, still positions indigenous nations as subordinate to the interests and powers of the nation-state (see Coulthard 2007). This dynamic, in other words, in its own way plays out the policing of borders of empire, following all too closely the age-old story of two differently subjugated peoples who, to their own detriment, inadvertently carry out in their fight with one another the work of the colonizers.

Not all American Indians, of course, take such a negative stand concerning Chican@ indigeneism. Nimpin-Chicana scholar Inés Hernández-Avila, for example, has written:

My own vision, as well as the vision of the Native American Studies department in which I teach [at the University of California at Davis, which Jack Forbes helped develop], is inclusive of *mestizas/mestizos*, Chicanas/Chicanos in definitions of “Indianness,” which in itself disrupts the definition of “Indian” that is commonly associated with the study of Native American literature, as well as with most Native American Studies programs in general. This particular position is apparently as unpalatable to many Indian scholars as it is to many Chicana and

Chicano scholars, due to the internalized racism and historically regulated animosities that have obstructed the si(gh)ting of both communities with respect to each other. (1995: 493)

In order to clarify the ways in which the elaboration of Chicano@Indigenism might provide a way not just out of this Chicano@/American split but also out of the politics of recognition and dependence that Coulthard examines, I will analyze the terms and implications of one specific indigenist challenge to Chicano@indigenism (or, more specifically, to Gloria Anzaldúa's Chicana indigenism).

### Anzaldúa's Backpack

One influential challenge to Anzaldúa's framing of Chicano@indigenism in terms of the New Mestiza is that of Chicana scholar María Josefa Saldaña-Portillo. One point in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* that Saldaña-Portillo singles out for criticism is a passage in which the former introduces a crucial transition point in the work of the New Mestiza. The Anzaldúa passage reads as follows:

She goes through her backpack, keeps her journal and address book, throws away the muni-bart metromaps. The coins are heavy and they go next, then the greenbacks flutter through the air. She keeps her knife, can opener and eyebrow pencil. She puts bones, pieces of bark, *hierbas*, eagle feather, snakeskin, tape recorder, the rattle and drum in her pack and she sets out to become the complete *tolteca*. (1987: 82)

According to Saldaña-Portillo, this passage “reproduces liberal models of choice that privilege her position as a US Chicana: she goes through her backpack and decides what to keep and what to throw out, and she chooses to keep signs of indigenous identity as ornamentation and spiritual revival” (2001: 420). Implicit in such a gesture, Saldaña-Portillo contends, is the erasure of “the living Indian who refuses *mestizaje* as an avenue to political and literary representation” and demands instead “new representational models that include her among the living.” Saldaña-Portillo positions this passage as perhaps the greatest sign of Anzaldúa's apparent complicity in the Mexican nationalist uses of *mestizaje* as well as her complicity in the developmentalist construction of the revolutionary subject.

Out of context, the list of items Anzaldúa chooses to keep in her New

Mestiza backpack (bark, bone, feathers, drum) could appear to reproduce the popular nostalgic notions of the paraphernalia that would make one “Indian” and perhaps (but not necessarily) might contribute to the construction of Indianism as a parallel version of Edward Said's Orientalism. In her response to Saldaña-Portillo's essay, Anzaldúa acknowledges the danger here:

I think it's important to consider the uses that appropriations serve. The process of marginalizing others has roots in colonialism. I hate that a lot of us Chicanas/os have Eurocentric assumptions about indigenous traditions. We do to Indian cultures what museums do — impose western attitudes, categories, and terms by decontextualizing objects, symbols and isolating them, disconnecting them from their cultural meaning or intentions, and then reclassifying them within western terms and contexts. (2004: 14)

Even so, as the reader returns to Anzaldúa's backpack list, the function of this list becomes radically transformed in the subsequent paragraph: “Her first step is to take inventory. *Despojando, desgranando, quitando paja*. [Stripping, shelling, removing straw — “separating the wheat from the chaff”] Just what did she inherit from her ancestors? This weight on her back — which is the baggage from the Indian mother, which the baggage from the Spanish father, which the baggage from the Anglo?” (1987: 82).

We should note that in his analysis of Orientalism, Said insists on the need to take inventory in order to come to just such an awareness of the historical roots that make up a person's identity. Such an inventory allows us to recognize the “infinity of traces” deposited by history in the process of social identity construction. The purpose of Anzaldúa's backpack, then, is not to serve as the grounding gesture of bourgeois subjectivity — choice — but rather as the decolonizing site at which she can take inventory of the traces of the historical impressions on her very being *as a being of the borderlands*. This becomes even clearer when we go on to read the passage that follows this one:

*Pero es difícil* [but it is difficult] differentiating between *lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto* [the inherited, the acquired, the imposed]. She puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been a part of. [. . .] This step is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions. She communicates that rupture, documents the struggle. (1987: 82)

In producing the inventory of her own historical positioning, Anzaldúa documents the struggle and, through such documentation, communicates the rupture that marks the New Mestiza's rejection of all inherited, acquired, and imposed oppressive systems. Rather than "returning" to her indigenous roots as some "nostalgic" or "romantic" escape to the past, as Saldaña-Portillo charges, Anzaldúa uses the knowledge she gains from her itinerary as she "reinterprets history and, using new symbols, she shapes new myths" (1987: 82). This is the subaltern process of hegemony, the transformative appropriation of the New Mestiza's *nahual* (shape-shifting) nature in the molding of a new mode of being ("*Se hace moldadora de su alma*") in which she "strengthens her tolerance (and intolerance) for ambiguity" (1987: 82–83).

I propose Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* as a framework for overcoming this current stalemate in order to better create the "network of tribal coalitions" she suggests is needed to march against the borders of US empire, a people's army drawn from throughout the Americas and "dedicated to the retaking of ancestral lands by indigenous people" (1991: 737). By inventorying, challenging, and rewriting the colonialist scripts that mutually, simultaneously, and contradictorily define, recognize, and reject the subjective borderlands of indigeneity, Chicana@s and other North American indigenous peoples can join together in anticolonial gestures of self-recognition. Such acts of self-recognition and reclamation of Chicana@ indigeneity illustrate and embody the concrete possibilities of acting outside of the subordinating, recolonizing politics of recognition by the nation-state. As such, Anzaldúa provides one concrete way to imagine a way of bridging pan-indigenous refusals to recognize the legitimacy of the nation-state itself, such as those toward which Silko and Altamirano-Jiménez point.

## Notes

*Author's Note:* The chapter epigraph is from "Indigenous Peoples of Mexico." Glenn Walker, compiler. *Indigenous Peoples Literature*, February 26, 2008. www.indigenouspeople.net/mexmain1.htm.

1. Though I direct the reader to the Fall 2003–Winter 2004 special issue of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (SAIL) titled "Indigenous Intersections in Literature: American Indians and Chicanos/Chicanas" as a print index of some of these voices, much of this battle goes on behind the scenes. My own understanding of these issues comes primarily by word of mouth from a host of anonymous people.

2. Michael Yellow Bird, in an important move away from this practice, writes, "Venida Chenualt and I interchangeably use 'First Nations Peoples' and 'Indigenous Peoples,' stating that we avoid using 'Indian,' 'American Indian,' and 'Native American'

because they are 'colonized identities' imposed by Europeans and European Americans. We assert that refusing to use these labels represents an important paradigm shift of the identity of Indigenous Peoples in the United States" (1999: 6).

3. In the words of Taiiaki Alfred and Jeff Cortassel, "There are many 'aboriginals' (in Canada) or 'Native Americans' (in the United States) who identify themselves solely by their political-legal relationship to the state rather than by any cultural or social ties to their Indigenous community or culture or homeland" (2005: 599).

4. See Dunbar-Ortiz 2007, Menchaca 2001, and Gómez 2007 for analyses of the complex racial-political histories of New Mexico.

5. See Bonfi Batalla 1996 for an analysis of indigenous Mexico.  
6. The works of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales (2001) and Alurista (1989) were what brought the notions of Aztlán and Chicano indigenism into common circulation as key rallying points for Chicano nationalism. See also Rudolfo Anaya 1988 and Anaya and Lomelí 1989.

7. This charge of romantic appropriation has also been leveled against Anzaldúa by Chicana@ scholars; see Sáenz 1997, Saldaña-Portillo 2001, and Contreras 2008. Anzaldúa speaks directly of her involvement with contemporary indigenous political issues in her interviews with Hernández-Ávila (Hernández-Ávila and Anzaldúa 2000) and in SAIL (Anzaldúa 2004).

8. This is one of the primary functions of groups such as Alma de Mujer in Austin, where *Mexica conchero* practices, among others, are practiced by a wide range of indigenous people with suppressed tribal roots.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

*Métis Voices and Sovereignty*Reflections on Métis Resistance  
to Imperial Layers of Colonialism  
in Canada

David T. McNab

Canada,<sup>1</sup> as a nation-state, has survived into the early twenty-first century, and it owes much of its survival to Indigenous ideas such as its acceptance of treaties as a basis of agreements among its diverse peoples. Métis identities and family histories are part of Canada's history as a place.<sup>2</sup> Métis people are recognized today in Canada as a separate First Nation along with "Indians" and the Inuit in Canada's written constitution, which was proclaimed in 1982, including section 35. Métis resilience, memory, and, above all else, historical resistance to the multifarious French, British, Canadian, and American imperialisms remain. This chapter explores the impact of Métis voices on the official history of the Métis, indigenous sovereignty, and the formation of the Canadian nation-state, specifically with reference to Ontario.<sup>3</sup>

Métis sovereignty has been all but ignored by the official histories of Canada and the United States. Sometimes their voices have also been forgotten. It is the premise of this chapter that, in order for Métis voices to continue to survive and flourish, the Métis must continue to reassert Métis sovereignty as an international people and to reclaim the spirits of their family voices. What does Métis mean? The Métis were, and still are, a truly culturally mixed people (indigenous and European) residing in both Canada and the northern United States. Métis people are not just French speaking (Métif). This is a colonial myth generated by empires



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