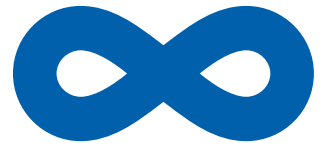




# US NOW



KIIYAANAAN  
AYKWAA

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Illustration by Dustin George

# Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now

*Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now*, previously known as *New Breed*, honours the strong leadership of our ancestors and celebrates our unique language, culture and heritage. Published over 50 years ago, *New Breed's* narratives, sharing of knowledge and inclusion of the Métis voice captured the formation of our political identity, while weaving our cultural identity into each publication.

*Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now* is about "Kayaash pi Anooosh," or "long ago and today." In each edition, our rich and beautiful Métis culture and Michif language will be celebrated through stories of long ago and how they connect to cultural identity today. Métis Nation–Saskatchewan believes in relationships being reciprocal and in the value of sharing knowledge passed down from our Elders' stories and the voices of our leaders, women and youth.

Our first publication honours Métis women and features profiles of women, diverse in age and background, who are effecting change and shedding light on matters specific to the interests of Métis women.

The claim "it's our turn" is a statement that, when historically asserted by our Nation, was roundly denied. For this magazine, "It's Our Turn" is a statement of fact. It's non-negotiable. Who better to tell our story than the women who have traditionally shaped and upheld our unique and irreplaceable way of being.

*Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa* celebrates the self-determination of Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk: We are those who own ourselves, and Otipemisiwak: the people who own themselves. *Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now* is naming ourselves in this place and time. *Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now – It's Our Turn*.



This publication was made possible by the outstanding efforts of our many contributors. Métis Nation–Saskatchewan would like to thank our community members and citizens for dedicating their time, energy and talents so that we may celebrate and share our culture, stories and perspectives. We offer our sincere gratitude for contributing to this issue to:

Angela Bishop, Rose Richardson, Elena Bentley, Jessica Fisher, Elder Blanche Pott, Louise Simard, Leah Dorion, Elder Norman Fleury, Sherry Farrell Racette, Melanie Monique Rose, Danielle Castle.

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On the cover: **Michif Women's Peace Prayer**  
by Leah Dorion  
leahdorion.ca

## CONTENTS

**MESSAGE FROM  
PRESIDENT MCCALLUM** 4  
Welcome to Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now.

**NI MIIYEUYHTAYN AEN  
PIIKISHKWAYAAN MA LAANG  
LI MICHIF. KA KII PAY ISHI  
NIHTAAWAKIYAAN** 5  
By Elder Norman Fleury  
"I am happy to speak my language, Michif. It is the way I was born," some words on connection to culture, land and language from Elder Norman Fleury.

**ELDER POTT:  
LIFE, LOVE, AND FAMILY** 6  
Throughout her life, Elder Blanche Pott has relied heavily on her traditional family values and close relationship with her parents and siblings.

**ROOTS OF THE RED WILLOW:  
HONOUR SONG FOR  
MÉTIS WOMEN** 9  
By Sherry Farrell Racette  
Based on extensive research, in this feature article, Sherry Racette examines Métis women's strength and spirit.

**ANGELA BISHOP:  
LEGACY OF GIVING** 15  
Carrying on the important work of her parents, Angela Bishop has cultivated a legacy of giving.

**LOUISE SIMARD:  
VISION FOR THE FUTURE** 18  
Prominent and beloved, from law to politics, Louise Simard commits to a vision for the future.

**LEAH MARIE DORION:  
VITAL ARTISTRY** 22  
Leah Dorion is a renowned Métis artist. From paintings to podcasts, Leah works to preserve her traditional upbringing through art.

**MELANIE ROSE:  
ROOTS AT HOME** 28  
A Métis visual artist from Saskatchewan, Melanie Rose discusses her latest collection.

**ELENA BENTLEY:  
A POETIC DISCOVERY** 32  
Elena Bentley premieres her latest piece, "Dreams of Futures Past," a journey into her Métis heritage.

**LES FILLES DE MADELEINE** 34  
Les Filles de Madeleine Secretariat provides a strong support network for Métis women in Saskatchewan.



Page 6



Page 18

**ACTION FOR MÉTIS WOMEN  
AND GENDER EQUALITY** 34  
While we work to see our dream of self-government fully realized, gender equality remains a priority.

**MN-S REGISTRY STAFF:  
WORKING REMOTELY  
TO BRING US TOGETHER** 36  
In the midst of a global pandemic, the MN-S registry department continues to assist the public.

**JESSICA FISHER:  
TWO-SPIRIT PRIDE** 38  
A path of self-discovery leads to community, identity and validation.

**HOUSING IS A HUMAN  
RIGHT FOR MÉTIS WOMEN** 43  
Access to safe housing is critical. If you feel you have been discriminated against you can file a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

**US THEN AND US NOW:  
MARCH 1975** 46  
A look at *New Breed* magazine from International Women's Year in March 1975.





MN-S President Glen McCallum and First Lady Verna McCallum.

## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MCCALLUM

Tansi!

The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan government is proud to bring you a new edition of our rebranded magazine – Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa, which in Michif means Us Now.

As a government, Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) works to engage with and hear from our citizens, delivering what they like to see. We reflect on where we are now and consider where we are going as a people and a nation. We are relaunching a rebranded MN–S magazine in response to our citizens and reflecting on our progress on our journey. This is Us Now.

In this first issue, we shine a spotlight on and pay homage to Métis women in our culture and our community. Métis women have always been dominant figures and the foundation of Métis society. This magazine provides context for historical roles in the community and highlights some current role models for their important contributions, wisdom and accomplishments.

Métis women are leaders, and that's evident within our MN–S government. I applaud the women on our Provincial Métis Council and our MN–S staff for their work engaging with citizens' needs. As our government has grown, our women have stepped up and shown us the path, now like always.

Métis women are a part of finding the answer to whatever questions and issues we have in the community.

We need to address the severe challenges for Women and Gender Equality and especially our shared concern for gender-based violence and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. People are grieving, wanting to find someplace to go for answers, for healing, and for real change. As Métis people, we all have to take it upon ourselves to ask what we can do and to act with courage, respect and a good heart.

During his life, Louis Riel made many profound statements that continue to guide me as your President. One I feel is relevant now is: "We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on."

MN–S first lady, Verna, and I are so pleased to introduce the new Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now magazine, and we hope you enjoy the refresh. But more importantly, this magazine provides one small but important way to live the critical lesson passed down to us from Louis Riel. The ways we tell our stories may change. Maybe you hold this printed in your hand, or on your phone or a computer screen. Regardless, I am proud to present another part of our nation's cherished story to pass on. This is Us Now.

Maarsii,

**Glen McCallum**

*MN–S President*

## *Ni miiyeuyhtayn aen piikishkwayaan ma laang li Michif. Ka kii pay ishi nihtaawakiyaan.\**

I'm so happy to be part of the movement of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan that we're in now because there's something solid about it.

Today our children can go to school and can find dollars to go to school. First-time homebuyers' programs, health programs, taking care of our own people in COVID. Now I can phone somebody and say, "Hey, I want to get into business. What can I do?" And you can find an answer to all these questions through our infrastructure.

There is now a strategy. There's a structure to what we're doing. We're developing, and we're teaching. We have a solid process. We can base it on something. We talk about our existence. Why? Well, to preserve our language and our culture and who we are as a distinct people. And we also base it on now.

Stories are good. When I was a child, there was a connection to our culture, our language, and we were connected to the land. We were connected to the four legged and the winged. We all lived together with nature, but we all knew each other, and we knew the differences. Even when walking through the trees or the meadow, you can hear the sound under your feet. You can hear the sounds of the birds, and you knew which birds they were. So, we had that relationship. We can learn from these stories.

Our grandmother, who was a Michif, always had a crucifix as a broach signifying her belief system, Catholicism. She always wore a shawl, an apron and long dresses. My grandma liked to dress a lot in black. That was the traditional dress of the old Michif, all in black, humble and modest.

My mom passed away at a hundred and eight and raised nine of us kids on her own on a small scale farm. My grandmother and women always had a say in what went on in the families. They had a say in the family and what they said carried a lot of weight. For example, if my grandfather was going to sell a horse. My grandmother would say, "No, you can't sell that horse. I can drive that horse to town with the kids in the buggy, and it won't run away. It's not scared of different sounds. It takes us there safe and takes us home safe. You can sell this other horse because it's not as trustworthy as that one."

*"I am happy to speak my language, Michif. It is the way I was born."*



Elder Fleury presenting at the MN–S Early Learning and Childcare conference in 2020. In the image behind Elder Fleury's is his Auntie Mary Fleury, Auntie Cecile Le Clerc, Sister Therese Fleury, Sister Clara Fleury, Sister Betty Fleury, Cousin Peter Fleury, Cousin Wally Fleury, and brother Rene Fleury.

All this was done in the oral Michif language. All the realities were in Michif, not in English. Because Michif is our first language, I will always express this as an Elder. Growing up with the Michif language, culture, and values that was my way of learning through our Elders' teachings in our Michif language. And it should still be done this way. When you speak a language and try to think in a different one to tell a story, it's not easy. Even that story should be told.

Maarsii aen ayamihtaayayk. Thank you for reading.

**Elder Norman Fleury**

*Michif Elder*



# ELDER BLANCHE POTT

## LIFE, LOVE, AND FAMILY

Born on a farm northwest of Shell Lake in 1924, Elder Blanche Evelyn Hotvedt was number four in the family's baker's dozen: seven boys and six girls. Her upbringing was tough, filled with the difficulties that came with the times, but full of love, kinship, family traditions and Métis culture.

According to Blanche, it didn't take long for her strong, Norwegian father, Helge, to put her and her siblings to work, one by one, on the family farm. In the 1920s, Saskatchewan was well on its way to becoming the 'breadbasket of Canada' and Blanche's family was a part of that movement.

If you've ever had the pleasure of meeting Blanche, you won't be surprised to learn that she was a vibrant young child. She did chores, fed the animals and was very active on the farm – almost nothing stood in her way. And her natural hardiness extended to more than just chores. Blanche laughs as she recalls the day her father stood in for the family dentist. She was seven years old, and it was a long way to the dentist's office. So, Blanche's father pulled out her sharp pointy little tooth with a pair of pliers. "It didn't hurt that much," she smiles.

While the 'Dirty Thirties' devastated much of the prairies, Blanche remembers her family faring well. "It kind of didn't affect us so much," she says. "We had cows to butcher and milk; we had butter, cream, bread from homemade flour and fresh vegetables." Not only did the family farm keep the Hotvedts busy, but it also saved them from suffering the economic ruin plaguing the rest of the province.

Blanche does remember the family not having much money to spend, and as a result, she and her siblings had very few school supplies. "We used birch bark to write on, and we had this brown paper that we used to make scribbles out of."



Elder Blanche Pott, in Shell Lake, Saskatchewan.

On their way to school, three miles each way, the Hotvedt kids would collect beer bottles to exchange for a bit of spending money. Treats at that time were satchel popcorn and Cracker Jack, 5-cents apiece, Blanche recalls.

For the longest time, the mode of transportation on the Hotvedt farm was horse and wagon. When the family got an automobile, it was a Chevrolet touring car.

Blanche says her mother Nora, born on Thunderchild First Nation when it was still the Northwest Territories, would "always be singing and whistling tunes" around the house. Try as she might to emulate her mother's talents, Blanche was never able to whistle. Instead, she remembers singing 'Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree', a classic Glenn Miller tune.

Blanche remembers a story her mother used to tell about when she was a little girl. She would go down by the river and pull grassy material down from the trees and make dresses out of them. Blanche inherited her mother's creativity with her sewing and crochet skills, and her love of the colour red.

Outside of the house, the Hotvedts didn't acknowledge their Métis heritage, an unfortunate symptom of the political climate in those days. "The kids at school used to call us damn black half-breeds," Blanche says. "I don't know why they would say that. They were the same colour as we were."

During Blanche's school years, she met a young man by the name of Arthur Pott. Arthur used to visit the Hotvedt farm to see Blanche's older brother and he caught her eye. "Oh, he was good looking," she says of Arthur, five years her senior. "So was I."

Blanche claims she hardly knew Arthur, but when he and four of her brothers enlisted, she wrote to him all the time - and he wrote back. From that moment on, Blanche says she never dated anyone else.



Blanche and her sister Helga, at the Memorial Lake monument in Shell Lake.

Photo courtesy of Elder Blanche Pott

Despite her budding romance, Blanche's long distance love letters didn't stop her from dancing with other boys. When she turned 16, Blanche was finally allowed to go to dances with her sisters. They rode their bikes 10-miles to get there and "danced all night," arriving home just in time to see their father waking up for morning chores.

"We did everything," Blanche gushes, "especially when all of the boys went off to war- all the girls did it all - we used to drive the fence and stook the grain, which would look like a teepee while it dried."

The Hotvedt children attended school through it all, but Blanche would be the first to receive her grade 12 diploma. Having taught Sunday School for years growing up, she made the decision to continue

on that path and make teaching her career.

Arthur and her brothers returned home after the war, Arthur Pott and Blanche Hotvedt reconnected. And in 1947, Blanche Hotvedt became Mrs. Arthur Pott. The new couple moved a few times before settling onto the Pott family homestead in 1955. Together, they raised four children, two girls and two boys.

Blanche taught at Resolute School near Spiritwood. She remembers taking the kids with her during the week and travelling back to the farm to see Arthur on the weekends.

In 1986, just three years after she retired from teaching, Blanche lost her beloved Arthur. It was a "very sad day for me," she says.





From left to right: Photo of Blanche's parents', Nora and Helge, wedding – Blanche's brother, Ernest, who fought under the Blue Berets. Top right: Blanche and her brother Ronald - Blanche's daughter Christine with her daughter, Adel – all photos under Elder Pott's crocheted beret.

Photos courtesy of Elder Blanche Pott

WE DID EVERYTHING... ESPECIALLY WHEN ALL OF THE BOYS WENT OFF TO WAR- ALL THE GIRLS DID IT ALL - WE USED TO DRIVE THE FENCE AND STOOK THE GRAIN, WHICH WOULD LOOK LIKE A TEEPEE WHILE IT DRIED.

Easing Blanche's grief is the close relationship she shares with her surviving family members, her children and her grandchildren.

Throughout her life, Blanche has always been a pillar of her community. She has been a long-time participant and supporter of the Legion and is constantly finding ways to express and engage in her Métis heritage. In 2019, Blanche received the 'Pioneer Award' at the MN-S Western Region II Inspirational Gala and at 96 years old, she remains the President of Métis Nation-Saskatchewan's Local 81, a position she's held since 1984.

Blanche's Eldership is something she fulfils with a humble pride. Community members like Elder Pott are a vital and irreplaceable source of

knowledge and the value of her life's experience cannot be overstated.

Lucky for us, Blanche shows no signs of slowing down. She currently lives with 50 chickens and dogs that keep her busy. She also makes and sometimes sells beautiful berets, the Métis infinity symbol beaded with pride on the front.

Blanche has spent decades keeping track of her family's stories. Their recipes, memories, and photos all bound together in an impressive, forever growing album. Handwritten entries, memorabilia from years gone by, snippets of newspaper clippings and sketches of life on the farm, all carefully collected and memorialized– a testament to the Hotvedt family values and Métis pride. ✨

# ROOTS OF THE RED WILLOW

## Honour Song for Métis Women

By Sherry Farrell Racette



Arm River, a Cree Indian Camp  
Watercolour with touches of gouache and gum arabic on wove paper, 1887-1890.

Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, © ROM

A 19th century watercolour by James Settee Jr. is a rare visual record of a Métis woman's courage. The painting is a scene from a story, either witnessed by the artist as a boy, or a tale told by his father.<sup>1</sup> The woman, with a baby in a tikinagan on her back, stands poised at the entrance of a Cree camp. She is accompanied by her dog. The artist tells us she "made an escape from the

Blackfoot after wandering on the Great Plains came suddenly on the Cree camp". Stories of women's courage include negotiating the landscape of allies and enemies, risks of buffalo hunts, fighting alongside their husbands and sons, and facing the severe weather of the northern plains.



LARASINIWAN (THE ROOTS TOOK HOLD)

We trace our Métis origins to those first women who formed custom marriages with French or British fur traders, helped them survive, taught them necessary skills, and created families. Sometimes we remember her name: Titameg Favel (John Favel), Nahovay Sinclair (William Sinclair), Kahnawpawamakan (William Hemmings Cook). Early Catholic records generally followed French custom law, where a woman who was Catholic and legally married could inherit her husband's property. She required a surname to construct a legal identity, which explains the women in early Catholic registers: Josephte Saulteaux, Marie Crise or Domitilde Scieux. Their surnames came from their nations. It is also common to find women noted only as "a woman of the Indian country".

SHE BECAME OUR SPIRIT. SHE REMAINS IN THE PERSONHOOD OF HER DESCENDANTS. SHE WILL GO ON FOREVER.

Men who formed relationships, however necessary to survival, were breaking the rules. The Hudson's Bay Company threatened "forfeiture of wages in 1683. But as Andrew Graham observed in 1775, "the Company permits no European women to be brought within their territories, and forbid any natives to be harboured in the settlements. This latter has never been obeyed."2 The rival North West Company was less restrictive, but in 1806, they also



Métis camp - women baking, 1859

Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives

passed a resolution stating that no more women be "taken" from First Nations communities, although "daughters" might be considered suitable spouses.

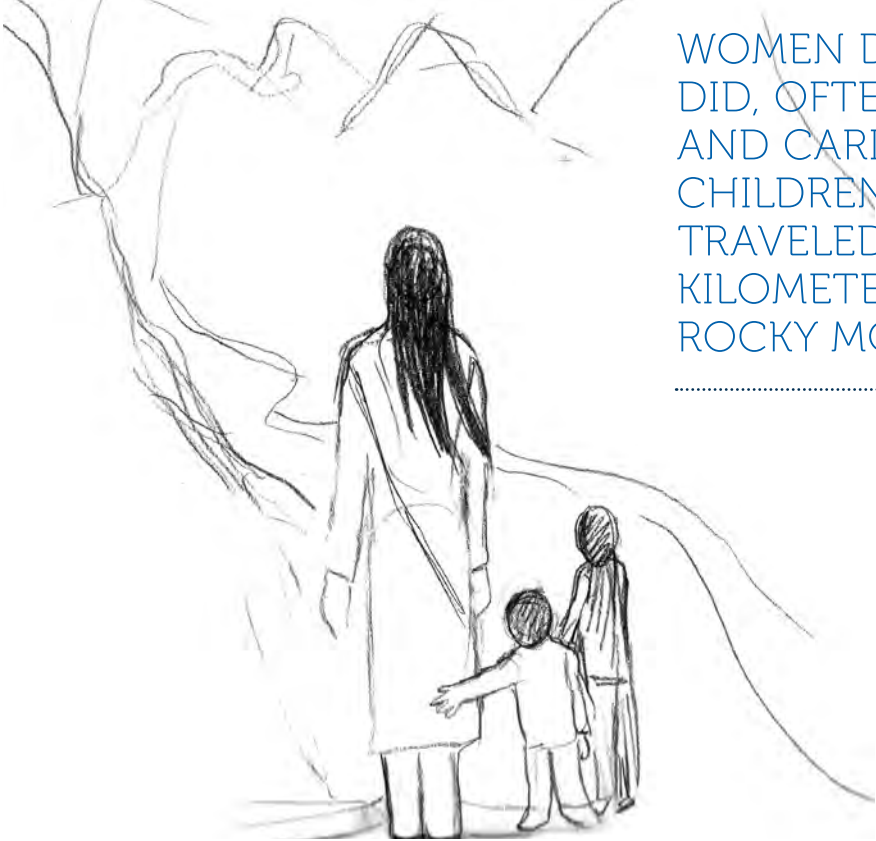
While some early relationships were exploitative and brief, many were enduring. In 1820, Mary, the "Southward" wife of blacksmith Thomas Halcrow, and her daughter Eurphronsine were among the first Protestant baptisms at the Red River Settlement. In early records from White Horse Plains, where services were held at Cuthbert Grant's house, "Suzanne de la tribu des Scieux" was the marraine (godmother) at the first baptism, the first marriages were Jean Baptiste Lepine and Charlotte Saulteaux and Alexis Vivier and Marie Anne Assiniboine. Nancy Black's mother was noted as "Margeurite Sauteuse". Angus McGillis, the old Scots Nor'wester, was living among his children and grandchildren.

By 1820, most of the women living at fur trade posts that dotted the landscape were the daughters and granddaughters of those first mothers. As John Franklin observed: "There is now a numerous race

of Half Breeds, offspring of the European and Canadian residents ... both Traders and Voyageurs take their female partners from this class".3 He noted the Hudson's Bay Company's practice of isolating women from the male domain, but described them keeping busy with sewing and childcare:

*The principal occupation of these women exclusive of attention to their children, of whom they are passionately fond, seems to be dressing skins, sewing and garnishing leather with porcupine quills ... they display great taste and ingenuity, and no small skill in extracting the proper colours from different materials to stain their quills.*4

As Franklin continued his journey he noted that women living at North West Company posts were more fully involved in daily life. When his party departed from Green Lake, he commented on the "novelty of the salute, the guns being principally fired by the women." At Ile-à-la-Crosse, Thomas McMurray (Jane Cardinal) organized a welcoming dance to please the women, which by then was an established tradition.



Lizette's Journey 1

Sherry Farrell Racette, 2012

In later years, families were more fully integrated into the activities of Hudson's Bay Company posts, although Fort Edmonton and Fort Vancouver maintained the practice of limiting women's "respectable" movement.

There is evidence of women's strength and spirit throughout the historical record. The most challenging aspect of marriage to a fur trader, was vulnerability to abandonment. Girls married very young, often to men decades older. They followed their husbands as they were transferred from one post to another, and could find themselves thousands of kilometers from family and friends. As Andrew Pambrun recalled: "In 1835 an old bloat of a chief trader had been retired from the company's service. On the beach stood his young half breed wife and babe in her arms both weeping. The brute was as

unconcerned at this parting or abandonment as if he was only taking a few hours excursion".5 The girl was Josephte Boucher, who found a kinder husband with whom she had another eight children. She lived to be an old woman.

Men traveled vast distances, but were always accompanied by women, even on Arctic expeditions. Clothing was essential to survival, and only women could repair essential items and maintain the supply of moccasins consumed. Women did everything men did, often while pregnant and caring for small children. Consider Lizette Dumont, born on the North Saskatchewan River. She arrived in Saint Louis, Missouri in 1826 with her husband and five children, including month-old twin daughters. They traveled more than 5000 kilometers, crossing the Rocky Mountains twice.

WOMEN DID EVERYTHING MEN DID, OFTEN WHILE PREGNANT AND CARING FOR SMALL CHILDREN. LIZETTE DUMONT TRAVELED MORE THAN 5000 KILOMETERS, CROSSING THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS TWICE.

Or Lizette Duval, who met Daniel Harmon near present-day Batoche in 1805, and at the age of fourteen embarked on a journey that took her across the Rocky Mountains to spend years near present-day Prince George, and then in 1819 back across the continent to Vermont, and later Montreal. She created the oldest documented piece of Métis art– a fine quillwork pihtasinân (shot pouch) made for her husband in 1810.

Women processed raw materials into the goods that formed the basis of the Métis economy: meat into pemmican, raw hides into soft leather, furs, and buffalo robes, hide into clothing and marketable goods. Red River cart trains trundling south during the free trade movement were loaded with the products of women's labour. In 1851, a young Swiss artist working at Fort Union described the arrival of "a dozen metisse de la Rivière Rouge".6 He described them as "dressed in bright colors [with] tobacco pouches, girdles, knife cases, saddles, shoes and whips elaborately decorated with glass beads, porcupine quills, feather quills, etc., in an artistic work done by their wives and sweethearts." He ended up purchasing a bridle, a knife with "embroidered sheath, a most beautifully ornamented pouch and whip."



WOMAN AS HEART AND HOME

The increasing emphasis on the Red River as a primary determinant of Métis identity undermines the longevity of Métis life on the prairies, parklands and bush country, and the importance of women in those regions. Several early communities (Lac la Biche, Cumberland House, Ile à la Crosse) fed the growing population at the Red River Settlement. For many, Red River was a destination - a place of trade, education, with churches for marriage and baptisms - but they lived elsewhere. Independent hunting and trading communities moved in vast, slow circles along networks of trails and waterways. Women were integral to those communities, and a growing body of Métis scholars are exploring the importance of family and women.

In her study of northwestern Saskatchewan, Brenda Macdougall brought forward wahkootowin as the overriding principle that enveloped family, land and identity.<sup>7</sup> Archeologist Krista Supernant has introduced the idea of kinscapes as she literally digs up evidence of extended and extensive land occupation by interrelated families.<sup>8</sup> Scrutiny of Red River census records and scrip applications reveals a significant number of women (and men) who gave their birthplace as the “North West Territory”, which at the time was the expansive former HBC territory of Rupert’s Land. Marguerite Primeau Fisher, applying from Fort Qu’Appelle stated she was born “in Saskatchewan” in 1845, referring to the region, not the province that would form decades later. Others simply noted they were born and married “on the plains” or

WOMEN PROCESSED RAW MATERIALS INTO THE GOODS THAT FORMED THE BASIS OF THE MÉTIS ECONOMY: MEAT INTO PEMMICAN, RAW HIDES INTO SOFT LEATHER, FURS, AND BUFFALO ROBES, HIDE INTO CLOTHING AND MARKETABLE GOODS.



Lizette’s Journey 2

Sherry Farrell Racette, 2012

“on the prairie”. Scrip applications were also made on behalf of women and children, like Madeline Wells (1859-1877), who were born and died “on the plains”.<sup>9</sup>



Magdeleine Beauchemin Klyne, her daughter Magdeleine Klyne Desjarlais and granddaughters Marie Justine and Rosine Desjarlais. Lebre ca. 1890.

Courtesy of Saskatchewan Archives Board

Madeleine Beauchemin, the widow of Michel Klyne, filed for scrip from Fort Qu’Appelle. Her affidavit is a narrative of a woman’s life. Her birth, marriage, and births of her twelve children chart a pattern across the prairies. She was born “on the plains” in 1820 and “church” married Michel Klyne in 1839 at the Red River Settlement, although their first child was born at Fort Ellice earlier that year. They followed his parents, Suzanne Lafrance and Michel Klyne Sr., who had been in charge of Jasper House in the Rocky Mountains. Michel Jr. and Madeleine settled at Point Douglas, but soon joined a large community of hunters, with a daughter born at Wood Mountain in 1841. Their son “Francis Cline” was the first baptism in 1848 at Father Belcourt’s new Catholic mission at Pembina. The 1850 US census

documented a community of over 100 hunters, with (often) very large families. By 1870 Madeleine and Michel had moved south to Devil’s Lake. The 1870 census and the Fort Totten US Army annual report described a small “half breed band” of twenty adult male hunters and their families. At first glance, they appear to be an alliance of four men: two pairs of brothers with their extended families: Antoine and Joseph Azure, Michel and François Klyne.

Historic records may follow patriarchal notions of family, but close scrutiny of women yields a deeper understanding of how families were linked together and functioned as a collective. Women often formed the connective tissue that bound people together. Close examination of kinship and marriage reveals that the 101 people who formed the Klyne/Azure band were brought together, or held together, by one woman - Madeleine Beauchemin Klyne. Her mother, Charlotte Pelletier, had been married to Antoine Azure.<sup>10</sup> The Azures were her father, uncle, siblings, cousins, nephews and nieces. The Klynes were her husband, brother-in-law, children and grandchildren. Madeleine was wife, mother, daughter, sister, cousin, auntie, and grandmother to almost everybody in the community. As one of the older women in a very young community, her knowledge and counsel would have been important. The small band began to move northwest, and separated with the Azures heading into Montana, while the Klynes moved across the border into Wood Mountain and north to the Qu’Appelle Valley.

Perhaps one can best see the strength of women from this time period in their portraits, particularly

elderly couples sitting side-by-side with their bodies aligned – women with hands scarred from decades of labour resting in their laps, shoulders squared or women standing tall with hands on their hips, looking straight at the camera. They were healers, midwives, artists, providers, and teachers. It could be said that women kept the spirit of resistance alive through the stories they recounted, the families they kept together and the inspiration their strength provided.

For French Métis in particular, Saulteaux knowledge and social structures were deeply integrated into beliefs. Elder Danny Musqua offered this description of the spheres of female influence, “Women are very strong in the Anishinaabe world; they are absolutely equal. We don’t govern our women. My father never did anything without the permission of our mother. When it came to the children, our grandmother’s authority and our mother’s authority was absolute; they make communal law, they make civil law.”<sup>11</sup> Female authority in a Métis context was experienced in 1859, when the women accompanying the Palliser expedition refused to move into Blackfoot territory. Palliser noted “very great unwillingness on the part of the French half-breeds to move”. Paul Cayen, the head guide, declared he was leaving the expedition due to “the commands of his mother-in-law”.<sup>12</sup>

The late Jimmy Laroque of Lebre told a similar story from the 1885 North West Resistance. Antoine Laroque, with his four adult sons, was preparing to join Chief Starblanket and a large party of warriors. His wife, Rosalie Laplante Laroque intervened, asking “What



will happen if we lose? There is nowhere left to run.” His story provides a compelling image of one woman standing before more than 100 men, reminding them that it would be the women who would bear the consequences of defeat. They listened to her and stayed home. One of my favorite stories is told of Madame Josephte Tourond. The first battle of 1885 was fought on her property, and her farm was destroyed. But when soldiers seized her wagon and horses, it was too much.

... she watched as troops burned her home, slaughtered her animals and pillaged her belongings...including her precious horse and wagon needed for the comfort and travel for her aged mother and her sick son. She was furious, and bravely walked across the enemy line to the troops’ encampment and demanded her horse and wagon. The troops were so dismayed at the courage of this widow that they promptly hitched up her horse and wagon, giving them back to her and watched as she rode back to her people.<sup>13</sup>

Never underestimate the power of an angry Métis woman. Madame Tourond endured, rebuilt, and was the embodiment of resilience.

WOMEN ARE VERY STRONG IN THE ANISHINAABE WORLD; THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY EQUAL. WE DON’T GOVERN OUR WOMEN. WHEN IT CAME TO THE CHILDREN, OUR GRANDMOTHER’S AUTHORITY AND OUR MOTHER’S AUTHORITY WAS ABSOLUTE; THEY MAKE COMMUNAL LAW, THEY MAKE CIVIL LAW.

It is important not to romanticize women’s roles or assume their central position meant privilege. It often means the opposite. Women worked very hard, and their autonomy was often viewed by the church and other colonial authorities as “unfeminine” or disturbing “the natural order” of male dominance. Indigenous practices of birth control

were strenuously discouraged by the Catholic church and women having twelve or fifteen children was not uncommon. Decades of persecution, poverty, internalized racism and colonial policies have undermined the position of women, once so fundamental to Métis survival. But the essential spirit remains.

The shift to towns and urban centers has eroded, but not erased the supportive web of family relations. Remarkably they are still there, sometimes faint, other times vibrant. Female-centered networks for community action still exist, and we can see their traces in the overgrown paths and clusters of surviving road allowance houses. Complex networks of interconnected women could – and can be – compared to red willows, with older women being the sturdiest of all, with the most expansive systems of branching roots just below the surface. A friend wrote these words about his late mother, but he could be speaking of all our maternal ancestors: “She became our Spirit. She remains in the personhood of her descendants. She will go on forever.”<sup>14</sup> ✨

<sup>1</sup>James Settee Jr. was the son of James Settee, Cree missionary, who established a short-lived Anglican mission in the Qu’Appelle valley in 1858. Settee Jr. was a teacher, interpreter and amateur artist. Arm River: a Cree Camp near Fort Benton, nd. Watercolour, 2017.67.1 Royal Ontario Museum.

<sup>2</sup>Calloway, Colin, *White People, Indians, and Highlanders: Tribal Peoples and Colonial Encounters in Scotland and America*. Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2008, 157.

<sup>3</sup>Franklin, Sir John, *Sir John Franklin’s journals and correspondence: the first Arctic land expedition, 1819-1822, Volume 1*. Toronto ON: Champlain Society, 1995, 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 37.

<sup>5</sup>Autobiographical Manuscript of A. D. Pambrun, ca. 1890, Andrew Dominique Pambrun Family Collection, WCMss025, Box 1, Whitman College and Northwest Archives, Walla Walla, Washington, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup>The Rivière Rouge in this instance was a large community of hunters from Pembina (now in North Dakota), and the priest was Father Lacombe.

Rudolph Kurz, trans. Myrtis Jarrell, *Journal of Rudolph Friedrich Kurz [1846-1852]* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1937), 87-88.

<sup>7</sup>See Brenda Macdougall, “Wahkootovín: Family and Cultural Identity in Northwestern Saskatchewan Métis,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2006): 431-462; One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan (UBC Press, 2010), Macdougall and Nicole St. Onge, “Rooted in Mobility: Métis Buffalo-hunting Brigades,” *Manitoba History* 71 (2013), 21.

<sup>8</sup>See Kisha Supemant, “Modeling Métis Mobility? Evaluating Least Cost Paths and Indigenous Landscapes in the Canadian West,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 84, no. 5 (2017): 63-73; “From Haunted to Haunting: Métis Ghosts in the Past and Present,” in Surface-Evans, Garrison, Supemant, eds. *Blurring Timescapes, Subverting Erasure* (Berghahn Books, 2020): 85-101.

<sup>9</sup>Data gathered from scrip affidavits and applications in Record Group 15, Department of the Interior, Library and Archives Canada using the search term “on the plains” and “on the prairie.”

<sup>10</sup>Heather Devine, “The Mother of Turtle Mountain: Charlotte Pelletier and Her Children,” unpublished paper, 2007.

<sup>11</sup>Danny Musqua in Janet Smylie and Nili Kaplan-Myrth, eds. *Sharing What We Know About Living a Good Life: Summit Report*, Indigenous Knowledge Translation Summit, Regina SK, March 2-5, 2006, pp. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup>John Palliser, *Journals, Detailed Reports, and Observations Relative to the Exploration by Captain Palliser* (London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1863), 137-138.

<sup>13</sup>The story was shared at the renaming of the Fish Creek Historic Site to the Battle of Tourond’s Coulee at the Métis Women’s History of Resistance and Survival: Stories of Tourond’s Coulee/Fish Creek and Batoche Storytelling Circle and Symposium, Batoche National Historic Site, 24 April 2008. See Henri Paulhus, trans. Jennifer Kastrukoff and Darren R. Préfontaine, “Josephte Tourond,” *New Breed Magazine* (Spring/Summer 2008): 18-25.

<sup>14</sup>Special thanks to Del Majore for sharing his beautiful words for his late mother Evelyn Majore, FB 09-09-17, used with permission.

# ANGELA BISHOP

## LEGACY OF GIVING



Angela Bishop

Photo courtesy of Angela Bishop

When you meet Angela, one of the first things you’ll notice is her commitment and passion to Métis communities. Angela Bishop grew up in Green Lake, Saskatchewan. From a young age, her life direction was heavily influenced by her parents, Rod Bishop and Rose Richardson.

“The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” Angela says.

“I was raised by and around a community of activists, people who wanted to make a difference. People like Maria Campbell, Harry Daniels, Jim Sinclair, Nora Ritchie, Aubichons, Favels, Durochers, to name a few.” With that kind of upbringing, it’s no surprise that Angela would go on to embody the passions of her family and turn the lessons she learned as a child into a career.



Today, Angela works as a federal lawyer and says her natural passion for Indigenous law comes from her father, Rod. Rod played a significant role in fighting for Indigenous people's rights in North West Saskatchewan, particularly Métis rights. In fact, he was part of an aboriginal delegation that travelled to London, England, in the early 1980s to advocate for the inclusion of Métis in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This notable change to the Constitution was a "game changer for all Métis people," says Angela. Without it, "it's doubtful Métis rights and corresponding obligations, including a duty to consult, would have been recognized by governments and industry today."

"My dad was a tireless advocate for Métis rights and Métis land claims," Angela says. One of his most significant contributions was a claim he launched for the return of land in Green Lake, Saskatchewan, set aside for the Métis back in the 1940s. "My father recognized the importance of land to the economic stability of northern communities at a time when unemployment was high, and poverty prevailed. So, my father was very influential in my career path."



Angela carrying a flag at Batoche, July 2019 Photo courtesy of Angela Bishop

For over 25 years, Angela has been working with the Department of Justice as in-house legal counsel to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs. Prior to accepting the position, she sought the advice of her father. "My girl, sometimes you can do a lot more to promote good relations from the inside than the outside," he told her.

If you ask her, Angela will minimize the critical role she played in advocating for federal approval of the historic Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreements. However, her colleague Tom Isaac says, "Angela brings a significant degree of knowledge and expertise not only on Métis rights and Canadian law, but Métis culture, traditions and what it means to be Métis. She was a critical component to us reaching agreement as quickly as we did."

Angela's similarity to her father, both in passion and dedication, is apparent in her work. Her admiration for him mirrors that which she feels for her mother as well. Rose Richardson is a mentor of traditional medicines and an advocate for ecotourism and sustainable development in the North, a project she pursued with her spouse's support (the recently deceased Ric Richardson). When Rose championed the use of traditional medicines as an alternative to mainstream cancer treatments, Angela recalls speaking to her mother and Ric about the importance of educating government institutions on their need to respect Article 24 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which outlines the right of Indigenous peoples to use traditional medicines. Ric Richardson ultimately lost his battle with cancer in 2020. Their advocacy for traditional treatments ultimately affected some change at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

At any given time, any day of the year – if she's not at home or in the office – you'll find her somewhere, outside, getting back to nature, walking or running the five-kilometers she's been determined to do every single day. "As Indigenous peoples, spending time on the land is not only spiritually and culturally enriching, but it is essential."

As a kid, Angela found solace in the Boreal Forest that surrounds Green Lake. She would go on forages with her mother and grandmother, Bella Fiddler, auntie Darlene Hill, her sibling and her cousins for plants and berries known for their medicinal uses. And although she hasn't followed in her mother's footsteps full-time, land-based discussions are a significant part of Angela's current legal work. As a traditional land user who exercises her traditional rights, Angela says, "I would posit that the continued recognition and protection of rights is dependent upon usage."

When she was Chair of the Camponi Housing Authority, Angela was part of a Métis culture camp, sponsored by SaskCulture, that had a focus on 'plants as medicines,

plants as food and plants in ceremony'. And, of course, she made sure to bring her mother along with her.

Even after all these years, Angela still spends a lot of time in the North and identifies Pinehouse as her 'home away from home', where she can be found walking, mushroom foraging, berry picking, fishing and on long walkabouts.

Like both of her parents, Angela has acquired several prestigious and impressive accolades throughout her career. The latest arriving just last year when her body of work garnered her the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Community Champion honour. A fitting recognition, you realize, when she says plainly, "I have very strong cultural values. I was always taught those who can, give – those who can't, should."

Raised in a Métis community by a Métis family, Angela demonstrated those traditional values last March with the formation of the 'Masked Makers' in the wake of COVID-19.

Together, with many seamstresses and the support of Métis Nation–Saskatchewan, Masked Makers outfitted 15,000 people with protective face masks. At the time, MN-S Health Minister Marg Friesen said, "Wearing face masks in public places is a part of the new normal and the work this group of selfless sewers is doing, helping protect our vulnerable citizens and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, is to be commended."

Now, in her 56th year, Angela celebrates life with her partner of seven years, Richard Muskaluk, her daughters, Crystal and Roberta, soon to be 40 and 39 respectively,



Angela Bishop Photo courtesy of Angela Bishop

and her five grandchildren, Shataya, Dakota, CJ, Kayden and Ryan.

While she has been busy, multi-faceted, and politically savvy from the start, Angela's constants have always been her family, her cultural beliefs and her daily five-kilometre run or walk. Regardless of what is happening at any given time, she says she finds time to take a moment for herself and get back to nature – to connect with the outside air just as she did as a child, growing up in her Métis community of Green Lake. 🌸



Back row from left: Gwen King, Rose Richardson, Sueki Bishop. Front row from left: Alexander Bishop, Angela, Manley Bishop. (In the background mirror) Angela's niece Kazlynn Bishop. Photo courtesy of Angela Bishop

I HAVE VERY STRONG CULTURAL VALUES. I WAS ALWAYS TAUGHT THOSE WHO CAN, GIVE – THOSE WHO CAN'T, SHOULD.



# LOUISE SIMARD VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Louise Simard

Photo by Jackie Hall

When you are a descendent of Pierre Poitras, a member of Louis Riel's provisional government, your future can feel predestined. At least, that would prove to be the case for a young Rose Marie Louise Simard.

Louise was born in Quebec in 1947 but grew up in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. Stories of her relatives bringing Manitoba into Confederation in 1870 instilled in Louise great pride for her Métis heritage. Beyond her grandparents' family name of Poitras, there were other household names in her family like Breland, Bannatyne, Grant, and McDermot.

Louise is particularly fond of a story about her Grandmother's Aunt, the feisty Annie McDermot Bannatyne of Fort Garry. The story goes that in February 1869, Annie (whose mother was Métis-Saulteaux) took a horse whip to Charles Mair over slurs and disparaging remarks he published about Métis women in Red River. Today, Louise still has photos of Annie and the Bannatyne family that her grandmother kept and passed down through the generations.

Louise remembers her grandparents fondly and looks back on the years she and her family lived with them with affection. "My grandfather would often speak Cree and Michif when I

was growing up," Louise says. "When I was very young, my family lived off the land, wood stove heating, no electricity, grew large gardens, hunted much of our meat and harvested berries; as did many other of the Métis families living in that part of Meadow Lake."



Annie Bannatyne

Photo courtesy of Louise Simard

Growing up, Louise's grandfather, Frank Poitras, would give her lessons in the Michif language, fiddling and jigging. Frank would frequently take Louise's brother, Ron, trapping and Louise, would beg to go trapping too. "Grandpa thought I was too young," she says, "nevertheless, I insisted. 'Bull-headed' Grandpa would say of me. So, we put on our moccasins - not the beautiful, beaded kind - the kind that smelled wonderfully of cured leather and which he put felt liners in and which had rawhide strings attached that wrapped around the ankle and part ways up the leg. Grandpa reluctantly took me out trapping, but I think he set up a small trap line behind our acreage in the bush and took me there just to keep me quiet. It was enough to satisfy me."

While her family was modest about their past affiliations, Louise recalls a snippet of a family story she heard when she was younger. "I remember in the early '70s getting ready to go to one of the first Back to Batoche celebrations. My Grandmother, Lily Poitras, was very interested in the celebrations, and she told me a story

about being a little girl and hiding under the kitchen table listening to the adults talking when Gabriel Dumont came to visit her parents. My grandmother was born in 1881, so I am guessing she was probably about four or five years old at the time. Louis Riel obviously knew her father, Taillefer, because he is referred to in the writings of Louis Riel according to Maggie Siggins in the book, *Louis Riel, A Life of Revolution*, and so it all makes sense, and the time frame fits."

MY GRANDMOTHER, LILY POITRAS, WAS VERY INTERESTED IN THE CELEBRATIONS AND SHE TOLD ME A STORY ABOUT BEING A LITTLE GIRL AND HIDING UNDER THE KITCHEN TABLE LISTENING TO THE ADULTS TALKING WHEN GABRIEL DUMONT CAME TO VISIT HER PARENTS.

Louise says her grandparents played a critical role in shaping who she became as a person. However, she acknowledges the strong influence of her parents as well, "My father [Robert Simard] demanded hard work, integrity and excellence in whatever it was we were doing. And my mother, Antoinette Simard [nee Poitras], demanded compassion, kindness, sociability and community-mindedness. And she put family and kinship above all else."

Her father started the first Alcoholics Anonymous chapter in Meadow Lake. In those early days, he would hold meetings in the family living room. "After my father died, the tributes came in," says Louise. "I had not realized the impact he had had on people's lives. All these get togethers, all this friendship, meant so much to others. He was doing something very important. After he died, I learned this about my father. The Alcohol and Drug Addiction Center in Meadow Lake was named after him."

Dinner-time chatter about law and politics eventually led Louise to her first love: law. At the age of 20, she enrolled in the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan,



and by 24, she had been admitted to the Saskatchewan Bar. Three years later, in 1974, Louise became the first female Legislative Council and Law Clerk for the province of Saskatchewan.

Louise continued to collect a long list of accomplishments: from being the Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights

Commission, to playing a key role in the development of The Saskatchewan Matrimonial Property Act, 1980 (which gave equal share rights to spouses in a marriage and set a precedent for other jurisdictions to follow), to being a publicly appointed member of the Medical Council of Canada and becoming the first non-physician to be named President of that Council.



**Christmas at Meadow Lake 1949** - Back row: mother Antoinette, Rita (George's wife), Grandmother Lily and Grandfather Frank Poitras, father Robert. Middle row: Louise, Uncle George Poitras, Aunt Jeanne Poitras. Front row: Cousin Barry Poitras, brother Ronald.

Photo courtesy of Louise Simard

In 1986 she was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and appointed Health Critic by then Opposition Leader Roy Romanow.

"In this role, I needed to inform myself so that I could ask questions in the legislature that made sense and that were important to the people," Louise explains. "I did a lot of research, which included travelling the province and meeting with people from all over, including health professionals. After that, it is all history. It led from one thing to another, and Health and Health Care have been a large part of my career over the years."

Eventually, Louise served as Minister of Health and Minister for the Status of Women under the Romanow NDP government starting in 1991.

During that time, she revamped the health care system in Saskatchewan, introduced a regional wellness model and received considerable recognition for her work. However, Louise says there was a lot of hardship created by the austerity of the early '90s, and she received a fair share of criticism. "But criticism is often a necessary by-product of change," she says. "One needs to stay focused on what one wants to accomplish. I have been asked to speak, internationally and nationally about what I've learned through the process of the reform of the '90s and the University of Saskatchewan, College of Arts and Science recognized me as an 'Alumni of Influence' because of my role in Health Reform." These health reform initiatives led the way for other provinces to follow suit.

Louise's responsibilities also extended to other important portfolios. She was a member of the Treasury

Board, SaskTel and SaskPower Boards, Minister Responsible for the Wascana Centre Authority, Health Services and Utilization Commission, Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation, Health Research Board, Women's Advisory Council, Centre of the Arts, Public Service Commission, and the Mental Health Advisory Council.

In 1995, Louise resigned from office to return to law and went on to be CEO of two large health care organizations. She moved to British Columbia, but she couldn't stay away from Saskatchewan for very long and returned in 2009. Soon after, she registered for her Saskatchewan Métis Citizenship.

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2017 would prove to be a difficult and pivotal year for Louise. She lost her mother (who was in her care) at 105 years old and then a few months later, tragically lost her older brother, Ron, in a plane crash in Panama. Louise was devastated by the loss of her brother, her 'biggest competitor' who provided friendly challenges to her throughout her life. However, her pain would turn into sheer determination as Louise moved on to the next phase of her career – assuming the Chief Operations Officer's role at Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S). Louise



Louise with her children Paul and Marin.

Photo courtesy of Louise Simard

brought a clear and resolute focus for Nation-building, administrative structures, and strengthening MN-S accountability and governance.

In the summer of 2020, Louise announced that she would transition out of her Chief Operating Officer post to devote time to her 6-year-old grandson (Jaxon), her son (Paul), her daughter (Marin) and herself. Understandable and well deserved, given her commendable and lengthy career and her playing an integral role in seeing MN–S sign a Self-Government agreement with Canada.

"I think that it is time now," Louise says, "for others to take over the reins and lead us into the next chapter. This was a difficult decision for me, but I can still help if I'm needed by giving governance workshops or in some other small way."

Given her extraordinary catalogue of accomplishments, when asked what accolade meant the most to her, Louise modestly answered "In my workplaces, when I left or retired, my co-workers have all expressed

feelings of sadness that I was leaving, and they all gave me warm wishes. That means the most to me."

At the age of 73, Louise plans to embark on some adventures in her retirement. Her feisty character, passed down through her family, means she's not likely to sit quietly on the sidelines. Although she hopes to stay involved in MN–S and see Louis Riel's vision of Métis Self-Government - and that of her forefathers' - realized, Louise says she is now happiest spending time with her grandson, or walking her dog, Buddy.

When Louise decided to officially step away from MN-S at the end of 2020, she left behind a considerable legacy. With sincere appreciation, everyone at MN-S thanks her for her invaluable contribution to laying the groundwork for the foundation of the Métis Government of Saskatchewan. To show MN-S' indebtedness, Louise was recently presented with a token of our respect – a Melanie Rose original entitled 'Solstice Bird' to wear with all of her Métis pride, passion and vision. (See page 31) ✨



LEAH MARIE DORION

# Vital Artistry



Education is Our Buffalo  
leahdorion.ca

Photo courtesy of Leah Dorion

Creativity is in her blood. She shares it with everyone she meets. And despite the limitations and obstacles brought to us by a global pandemic, Métis artist and mentor Leah Dorion hasn't skipped a beat.

Through the Inter-generational Métis Artist Mentorship Project, facilitated by the Mann Art Gallery in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and sponsored by SaskCulture, artist-in-residence, Leah Dorion was paired with a young Prince Albert artist and educator, Danielle Castle.

Over the summer months, the two installed five different temporary outdoor art exhibits in various locations around Prince Albert. The purpose of the project – to transfer Dorion's Métis cultural and artistic knowledge to her mentee and their community.

Following the project's completion, Danielle Castle was quoted saying, "I knew it would be very vital in my own self-growth to really connect with my [Métis] roots. And it all just worked out by getting this apprenticeship. Leah is full of knowledge. And I've learned so much already."

Leah didn't come by that knowledge by chance. She learned by soaking up her surroundings and, most importantly, watching and listening to her family.

Raised in a large fur trading Métis family in Prince Albert, Leah absorbed her aunties' lessons. Throughout her childhood, she witnessed them create all kinds of things – from clothing to moccasins.

I KNEW IT WOULD BE VERY VITAL IN MY OWN SELF-GROWTH TO REALLY CONNECT WITH MY (MÉTIS) ROOTS. AND IT ALL JUST WORKED OUT BY GETTING THIS APPRENTICESHIP. LEAH IS FULL OF KNOWLEDGE. AND I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH ALREADY.

— DANIELLE CASTLE —



Living Giving Tree  
Mixed media on bristol board, cloth, ribbon, feathers, live tree,  
Kinsmen Park, Prince Albert, 2020

Photo by All My Relations Photography,  
courtesy of Danielle Castle

At five years old, Leah took her traditional Métis cultural upbringing to the great outdoors. There, she was further inspired, and nature became her canvas. Leah made the usual childish mud pies and sandcastles, but she soon moved on to dandelion necklaces and crowns. She discovered the flower's petals provided the perfect shade of yellow to colour a piece of paper or a person's body. "We learned through playing," Leah says. "We would just find things and make things."

The women in Leah's life have been instrumental in shaping her both as an individual and as an artist. The female image became a prominent theme in her art as she believes women are a force and the next generation's teachers. Leah herself holds Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees.

With a penchant for passing her knowledge on to others, Leah incorporates much of her Métis learnings into her work; for example, beadwork is often represented in a contemporary form.

After the arrival of Louis (her firstborn, who Leah says carries the name of her late father very well,) Leah took to writing her first children's book.

'The Giving Tree', translated into Michif by Elder Norman Fleury, includes teachings on Métis values and was published by Gabriel Dumont Institute in 2009. According to Leah, that's when she earned her official 'professional credibility.' Her book's successful completion demonstrated her work ethic. Soon after, Leah began passing on her knowledge through mentorship programs.





Moving the Load  
leahdoron.ca

Photo courtesy of Leah Dorion





**Singing to the Aspen**  
leahdorion.ca

Photo courtesy of Leah Dorion

When asked how she finds her mentees and co-collaborators, Leah says she's simply relied on the law of attraction. "I believe the Creator hooks me up with the perfect match, guiding me to the right people. I follow the heart."

And as if creating masterful works of art and mentoring new artists wasn't enough, Leah also fills her time working as a keynote speaker and conducting community workshops. She says kids, in particular, energize her. "They are so experimental, learning to make dye with berries and using the land as their canvas," just as she did in her youth. Leah makes sure to pass

I LOVE ASKING  
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TO SHARE.

on her traditions to her family, as her young nieces aspire to be artists and her now 17-year-old son Louis helps collect willows for her artwork.

Recently, Leah has preserved Métis culture even further by teaming up with Métis Nation—Saskatchewan and Canadian Geographic to host the podcast series, Paykiiwikay'. The collaborative podcast series focuses on the preservation of the Métis culture and the Michif language. "I love asking questions to spark the knowledge keepers, giving them a platform to share," Leah says. ✨

**You can view Leah Dorion's work at:**

[leahdorion.ca](http://leahdorion.ca)

**The Mann Art Gallery in Prince Albert.**

**Her art cards and prints are available at the Saskatchewan Craft Council Boutique in Saskatoon.**  
[saskcraftcouncil.store/collections/fine-art-prints](http://saskcraftcouncil.store/collections/fine-art-prints)

**Her wearable art, such as scarves, are at Oscardo gifts in Toronto.**  
[oscardo.com/collections/leah-dorion/artist\\_leah-dorion](http://oscardo.com/collections/leah-dorion/artist_leah-dorion)

**You can find the Paykiiwikay' podcast streaming now as part of a much larger Métis Nation — Saskatchewan and Canadian Geographic Michif language partnership.**  
[canadiangeographic.ca/article/paykiiwikay](http://canadiangeographic.ca/article/paykiiwikay)



**Michif Horsewomen**  
leahdorion.ca

Photo courtesy of Leah Dorion



MELANIE ROSE

# ROOTS BACK HOME



**Summer Sleeping**  
Model: Melanie Rose  
Materials: Hudson Bay blanket, needle felted wool, antler and fox fur, 2020.

*Photo by Blair Hornung, courtesy of Melanie Rose*

*Inset: Melanie and daughter Meadow.*



*Photo courtesy of Melanie Rose*

In late December, fibre and visual artist Melanie Monique Rose received an early and most welcomed birthday gift: a spot in CBC's Future 40.

The annual awards support Saskatchewan's leaders, thinkers, builders and change-makers under 40 - those who are making a difference in our province.

CBC's acknowledgement of Melanie's exceptional work comes at just the right time – the visual artist turns 40-years old in 2021. "It's such an honour. What a good way to close out 2020," said Rose of the recognition. She was also the recipient of the 2020 Indigenous People's Art & Artists (IPAA) grant.

Except for a short stint in British Columbia, Melanie's 40-years have been spent nearly entirely in Saskatchewan. Born in Red Deer, Alberta, Melanie's family moved back to Saskatchewan before her first birthday. "My family on both sides is from Saskatchewan," she says. "My father grew up in Sturgis - from my understanding in a CPR ditch house. His father's family was from the Cochin/Meadow Lake area. My mother grew up on a farm outside of Ituna."

Never settling in one place for very long because of her father's work, when Rose graduated from high school and decided to relocate to British Columbia for art school, it was an easy move. There, she met visual artist Wayne H. E. King who become her mentor. She says it was a time of affirmation that allowed her to truly call herself an artist.

She recalls, "Wayne was truly one of a kind. He lived a life as an artist and hermit to the end. I met him over coffee while going to school at The Kootenay School of the Arts & Design in Nelson, BC. Wayne would journey down the mountain from his mysterious house in the woods and share conversation and coffee with me after school often. We developed a wonderful friendship and mutual admiration. Wayne was a fellow flower person - one of his favourite subjects to paint. He taught me about 'beauty for the sake of beauty' to create for that alone as a worthy pursuit. His outlook and pursuit of well-being and joy has stuck with me both in my art practice and as a way to live life."

When she finished school, Melanie felt a strong draw to return to Saskatchewan. "A calling brought me back here, to my roots, my home," she says.

That return home led Melanie to assume the position of Facilitator at Regina's MacKenzie Art Gallery, handling everything from community-based art education to workshops and outreach.

During that time, Melanie had the opportunity to meet another of her favourite artists, Adrian Stimson. His interdisciplinary flair for telling stories through his "provocative art" transformed her approach to her own work, and she found herself incorporating themes of social change.

With a Métis father and a Ukrainian mother, Melanie's heritage has played a major role in her creations.



PAGE

29



Using felting techniques on collected blankets to create a canvas, Melanie explores her Ukrainian and Métis heritage through textiles. Vibrant reds, lush greens, soft purples and sunny yellows come together to form stunning flower imagery.

Her collection, 'The Flower People' reflects the history of the Métis flower beadwork people and her own love of music and dance. "If you take a birds-eye view down at the flowers [in my work] they look like dancing people. One person even thought one of my pieces looked like musical notations," she says, "these things come through you in art."

## HE TAUGHT ME ABOUT 'BEAUTY FOR THE SAKE OF BEAUTY' TO CREATE FOR THAT ALONE AS A WORTHY PURSUIT.

— MELANIE ROSE TALKING ABOUT HER MENTOR, VISUAL ARTIST, WAYNE H. E. KING —

Melanie's love for traditional Métis music and dance comes through in more than just her art. Her affinity for jigging actually induced the labour of her three-year-old daughter, Meadow. "We were informed that there were three things that could help [induce labour]," says Melanie. "Spicy food, dancing and sex. I was too tired after jigging and we never made it to number three."

According to Melanie, Meadow was born with an obsession for traditional Métis fiddle music. "I have to go to the library to make sure I have enough fiddle music in the car," she laughs.

A proud Métis woman, when Melanie learned her grandmother and grandfather's generation was known as 'hidden' and her father's as 'lost', she transferred those feelings into her art. 'Summer Sleeping' is a metaphor for hope and reclamation. She adorned a Métis capote, traditionally used as camouflage for hunting, with bright, colourful flowers. Her way of showing that Métis people don't need to hide anymore.

'Summer Sleeping' is a very personal piece and was recently acquired by the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (Indigenous art acquisition program) in Gatineau, Quebec. Another honour that



**Morning Sun**  
Materials: wool blanket, felted wool, 2019.

Photo courtesy Melanie Rose



Melanie Rose foraging for wild colour in the ditches.

Photo by Brandy Webb, courtesy of Melanie Rose

recognizes Melanie's pride in her heritage and allows others to experience her story through her work.

Melanie has always been a prolific artist. Although The COVID-19 pandemic might have slowed most people down, Melanie is not among them. She says she was extremely focused during 'lockdown' and with the momentum of the last few successful months she intends to keep up the pace.

Currently part of the 'Arts on the Move' program at the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC), which is now online, Melanie has already been awarded a grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board enabling her to continue to create new work.

'Colour in the Ditches' is one such project. Melanie's objective is to use the story of 'The Road Allowance People' to forage through the typically "leftover places" throughout Saskatchewan. She plans to gather wild plants and flowers to use as organic dyes and create "a thing of beauty and magic." 🌸

**Melanie Monique Rose's work can be seen:**

**Darrell Bell Gallery**  
[darrellbellgallery.com/melanie-monique-rose](https://darrellbellgallery.com/melanie-monique-rose)

**Saskatchewan Craft Council**  
[saskcraftcouncil.org/project/melanie-monique-rose](https://saskcraftcouncil.org/project/melanie-monique-rose)

**Instagram: Melanie Monique Rose Art**

**OSAC Arts on the Move**  
[artsonthemoveonline.com/arts-on-the-moveonline/melaniemoniquerose](https://artsonthemoveonline.com/arts-on-the-moveonline/melaniemoniquerose)



**Cape for Louise Simard (Title, Solstice Star Bird)**  
Model: Brandy Webb  
Materials: wool, satin, felted wool, antler, 2020.

Photo courtesy of Melanie Rose



ELENA BENTLEY

# A Poetic Discovery



Five-year old Elena Bentley.



Inset: Elena Bentley with her grandmother six months before she passed.

Photos courtesy of Elena Bentley

Métis poet Elena Bentley has been writing for as long as she can remember. Influenced by her late grandmother, Elena has pursued her passion for writing both creatively and professionally, but until last year, had never been published. Then, in January 2020, up-and-coming literary journal untethered featured not one - but two of Elena's poems. The newly published poet even flew to Toronto to be part of the celebration and give a public reading of her work.

Since then, Elena's writing has been published in two other journals. She happily devotes her time to writing, editing and proofing her work and the work of others.

Although it's what first got her published, 33-year-old Elena doesn't limit herself to writing just poetry; however, she values it as a cathartic exercise.

"For me, poetry is a place where I can work out emotions and find [some] clarity. For example, it saddens me that I didn't grow up hearing and speaking Michif, so it's natural that those musings and feelings should come out in my writing," Elena says.

"Poetry also gives me a space to imagine, and to explore an issue as 'the speaker' rather than as 'Elena.'"

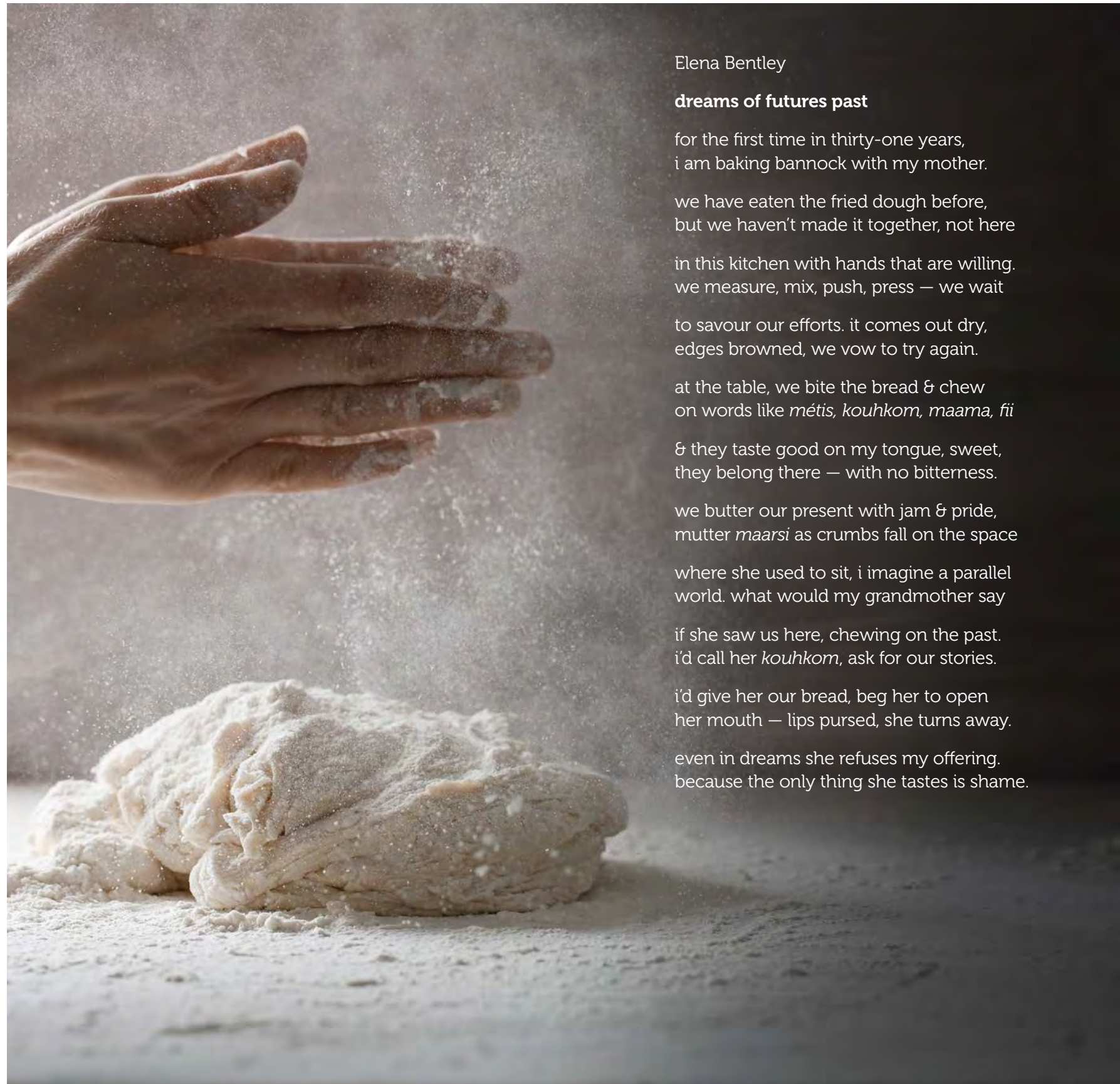
Elena, a former employee of the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan (MN–S) Registry office, says her career at MN–S afforded her an amazing opportunity to discover more about her Métis roots, something she was unable to do while her grandmother was alive.

"Unfortunately, knowing what it means to be Métis was inaccessible to me for most of my life," explains Elena. "I always knew that I was Métis, but my grandmother would not talk about the Métis part of herself and growing up that left me with a lot of questions about where I come from and who I am. She passed away seven years ago, and it took me a while to allow myself permission to ask questions about our family because I felt that doing so somehow disrespected my grandmother whom I loved and respected very much."

After her grandmother passed, Elena convinced her mother to join her on a journey of self-discovery to explore and embrace their Métis heritage. Their first step made easier by Elena's time with the Registry. "I learned a lot about Métis history and genealogy [while working at the registry]," she said. Today, Elena, her mother, her two sisters and her niece have all received their Métis Citizenship cards.

One of Elena's latest poetic efforts, 'dreams of futures past', reflects her newfound focus and understanding of her Métis background. MN–S is proud to be premiering this poem in this edition of Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now.

"We really did make bannock for the first time in [my mom's] kitchen," says Elena, which she describes in her poem. "I wouldn't have even suggested it before. I feel proud of us and the path of discovery. I can only hope that my grandmother is proud of me and my writing, too." 🌸



Elena Bentley

## dreams of futures past

for the first time in thirty-one years,  
i am baking bannock with my mother.

we have eaten the fried dough before,  
but we haven't made it together, not here

in this kitchen with hands that are willing.  
we measure, mix, push, press — we wait

to savour our efforts. it comes out dry,  
edges browned, we vow to try again.

at the table, we bite the bread & chew  
on words like *métis*, *kouhkom*, *maama*, *fii*

& they taste good on my tongue, sweet,  
they belong there — with no bitterness.

we butter our present with jam & pride,  
mutter *maarsi* as crumbs fall on the space

where she used to sit, i imagine a parallel  
world. what would my grandmother say

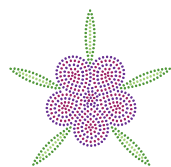
if she saw us here, chewing on the past.  
i'd call her *kouhkom*, ask for our stories.

i'd give her our bread, beg her to open  
her mouth — lips pursed, she turns away.

even in dreams she refuses my offering.  
because the only thing she tastes is shame.



# LES FILLES DE MADELEINE



As part of the structure of Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S), Les Filles de Madeleine Secretariat Inc. (Les Filles) provides a voice for Métis women. A provincial organization, Les Filles holds a dedicated seat within the structure of the Provincial Métis Council and is dedicated to synthesizing and amplifying Métis women's voices throughout Saskatchewan and beyond.

Established in 2008 and incorporated in 2018, Les Filles has been developing programs and services to improve current conditions unique to women and children.

Two years ago, Les Filles hosted a 'Coming Home' event to encourage sharing and healing among our people, survivors and family members. While intended to be an annual gathering, the COVID-19 pandemic has halted those plans. The President of Les Filles, who also holds the position of Minister of Women and Gender Equality at MN–S, intends to pivot accordingly and reconvene the event as soon as it is safe to do so. The event will honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Children's legacies in our communities across Canada. ✨

**Providing a strong support network is a mandate of Les Filles de Madeleine, more information is available here:**

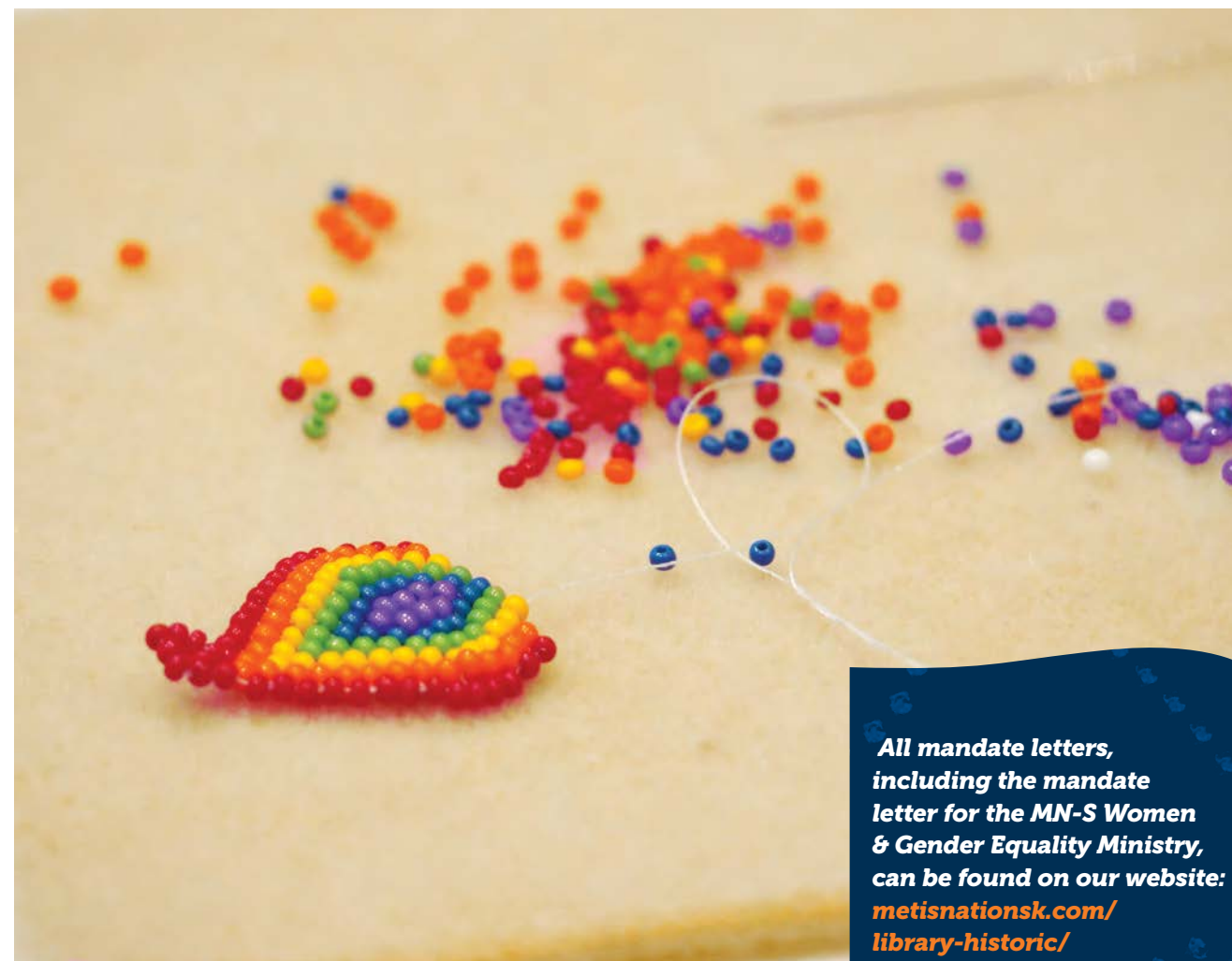
**[en2.metiswomen.org/metis-women/metis-women-sk/](https://en2.metiswomen.org/metis-women/metis-women-sk/)**

## ACTION FOR MÉTIS WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

In Métis society, women traditionally played essential roles in governance, voyaging expeditions, subsistence trapping and fishing, buffalo hunting brigades, and passing down cultural, spiritual and social knowledge following generations. Communities were organized along matrilineal lines. Colonialism and accompanying discriminatory gender norms splintered our societies and eroded women's traditional roles. Land dispossession, displacement, residential and day schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the ongoing apprehension of our children have left women marginalized and vulnerable.

In acknowledging the place of Métis women in our nation, we need to address the historical and ongoing violence faced by women, girls and also by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit (2S), androgynous and asexual (LGBTQQIP2SAA) persons. Countless have gone missing, been murdered and survived violence. This has created trauma, loss and suffering in our communities and families. Despite the courage of survivors and families to share their stories, Métis voices and experiences were largely excluded from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered

Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Recognizing this gap, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LMFO) released a Métis-specific Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG. Representatives from the LMFO, Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S), Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation of Ontario, and the Manitoba Métis Federation are working together on the Métis chapter of the national response to the Inquiry's 231 Calls to Justice. Keeping our families and survivors at the forefront of this work and advocating for a Métis-specific approach is critical to addressing the gaps in support and services that our communities need.



**All mandate letters, including the mandate letter for the MN–S Women & Gender Equality Ministry, can be found on our website: [metisnationssk.com/library-historic/](https://metisnationssk.com/library-historic/)**

**The Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls toll-free support call line is available for anyone who requires assistance. This line is available free of charge, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at [1-844-413-6649](tel:18444136649).**

**Métis Nation–Saskatchewan provides citizens help with navigating mental wellness and addiction support toll free at [1-855-671-5638](tel:18556715638) from 8am to 4pm central time Monday to Friday, and for crisis situations a 24 hr Crisis Line is available everyday at [1-877-767-7572](tel:18777677572).**

At the provincial level, in September 2020, MN–S President McCallum instructed all Ministers through their respective mandate letters to work with the MN–S Minister of Justice and Minister of Women and Gender Equality to develop a plan to address the situation of violence facing our women, girls, female Elders and LGBTQQIP2SAA persons in Saskatchewan. To begin this work, the MN–S is actively engaging the Government of Saskatchewan to procure funding for the strategy and create a Métis-specific Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU). The FILU will support our families and provide information about their missing and murdered loved ones. This strategy must be informed by the lived experiences of families, survivors and communities in Saskatchewan and address their real needs.

Métis are resilient people. Through the trauma of colonial legacies and policies, we are building our nation to realize the vision of those great leaders who came before us. Our women, girls and LGBTQQIP2SAA citizens are strong and continue to be an example for our children of what it means to be a proud Métis person. ✨





MN-S Registry staff meeting via zoom.

## MN-S REGISTRY STAFF WORKING REMOTELY TO BRING US TOGETHER

Due to the pandemic, many workplaces have changed how they operate to protect staff and the public. In a similar effort, the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) registry department has been working remotely to assist with citizenship applications safely. Before COVID-19, applications were submitted by mail, fax or delivered in person. MN-S has since streamlined the process and shifted to an online system. Staff are available to answer questions and provide help by phone, email, or video conference.

"We receive 600-800 applications each month by mail and email," says MN-S Registrar Tammy Vallee. "As well, front line staff handle thousands of questions from clients and people looking for information on the process. The number of registered Métis citizens has increased by 39% in the last year and has more than tripled in the last four years."

Partnerships with eHealth Saskatchewan and Alberta Health allow MN-S staff to access, with the applicant's consent, birth and event records at no cost to applicants. Since last fall, 1459 Saskatchewan vital statistics event requests have been processed, saving applicants more than \$58,000.

The registry department staff protect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information and all of the information is stored safely and securely. Staff will not release any information without written consent from the individual, or in the case of children, their guardian.

Since the registry department streamlined the application process a few years ago, more than 19,000 registry files have been digitized. Electronic files are stored in a datacenter, accessed only by registry staff who are issued a secure login. These programs use

strong data encryption technology and also have secure access. All MN-S computers have antivirus software, and the office networks have strong firewall barriers.

The MN-S strives to maintain an objectively verifiable registry by following the Canadian Standards Association and national registry standards. Each application is carefully researched and vetted by staff, including intake officers, administrative support, researchers and the office's resident genealogists. This multi-step verification process ensures every application meets the criteria of what constitutes a Métis person, as described in the MN-S constitutional definition of Métis.

"Métis means a person, who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation."

The benefits of becoming a registered citizen of MN-S are extensive. Métis citizens become part of an organization working hard to ensure the rights and interests of Métis individuals and communities in

Saskatchewan are respected and considered. Becoming a citizen also provides a sense of belonging and can help families learn more about their culture and lineage. Citizens can also help further the MN-S self-governance mission by running for office and voting. Programs and funding are also available to help citizens and communities in areas such as health and wellness, COVID-19 emergency support, housing, education, business, employment, harvesting, and sports. ✨

**For more information about the MN-S registry office and the benefits of becoming a citizen visit:**

**[metisnationsk.com/citizenship/](https://metisnationsk.com/citizenship/)**

**Call 1-833-343-8391  
or email [info@mnsregistry.ca](mailto:info@mnsregistry.ca)**

**"Being a Métis citizen empowers me to connect with my community, share my culture, and access education programs."**

**Emily** / Citizen & USask Agriculture Student

**Now is the Time.**

The **Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) Government** works to preserve Métis culture and ensure Métis rights and interests are respected. We are furthering Métis language, culture, health, housing, education, business, and employment.

**[metisnationsk.com/citizenship](https://metisnationsk.com/citizenship)**

**Métis Nation Saskatchewan**

"Métis means a person, who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation." Métis Nation-Saskatchewan Constitutional definition of Métis.





Jessica Fisher

Photo courtesy of Jessica Fisher

At thirty-two years old, Jessica Fisher has grown into a comfortable, proud Two-Spirit Métis woman. She remembers as a child feeling that “the few people who were visibly Indigenous were singled out by other classmates”. Not wanting that for herself, she made the difficult decision to hide behind her ‘lighter complexion’ and distance herself from her Métis identity. She even joined in with bullying remarks despite knowing they were harmful.

Although she hid her heritage in an attempt to avoid being ostracized, Jessica still experienced bullying, this time for not looking feminine enough. Jessica recalls countless times being referred to as a ‘hairy man’ or a ‘flat boy’ by her peers. “I wore my hair in braids to school and was told I looked like a Native boy, so I didn’t wear my hair like that for a long time.”

As she suffered internally from having to hide who she was on a cultural level, Jessica eventually found herself, as all teenagers do, on the road to self-discovery. It was during that time that she realized she didn’t only find boys attractive. “But no one was talking about sexuality or identity, so I mostly kept it to myself.”

“I was so scared to come out to my parents even though I knew that they would love me,” Jessica says. “I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church – so I didn’t really come out to them until I was in my mid-20s; it was actually right after the Pulse Nightclub shooting where I think some 50 queer folks were murdered just for existing. So, I thought, my gosh, I need to be more vocal about who I am. I need to take up space so that people can see it is okay to be queer and that we are everywhere.”

Jessica’s Métis grandmother’s response was a welcomed surprise. “She asked what queer and pansexual meant after reading a Facebook post I made, and I told her it means I’m attracted to the person, not the parts.” Her grandma replied, quite simply, “Oh, okay.” Then ended their call like they always did, “Love you, grandma.”

“Love you, my girl.”

In 2019, Jessica attended a Two-Spirit powwow at the Beardy’s Okemasis

Cree Nation. There, she met a Two-Spirit Métis Elder who performed a ‘coming in’ ceremony for all Two-Spirit people in attendance. Jessica says it was this Elder who taught her to make sure everyone had a place in the circle.

Today, Jessica is the Gender-Based Violence Education Coordinator for OUTSaskatoon. Her work focuses on supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit (2S), androgynous and asexual



Jessica at Duck Lake with her family.

Inset: Jessica with braids, grade 5 or 6

Photos courtesy of Jessica Fisher



THE IMPACT OF  
COLONIZATION  
ON MY FAMILY AND  
ON ME FOR SO  
LONG, WAS FINALLY  
LIGHTER. I HAD  
ROOM TO BREATHE.



Jessica laying with sage.

Photo courtesy of Jessica Fisher



Top: Jessica with Chelsea Fulton and Jack Saddleback, National Indigenous Peoples Day, 2019.  
Bottom: Jessica Fisher

(LGBTQQIP2SAA) people who have experienced gender-based violence and educating service providers on how to provide affirming care. Jessica and her team hope to bring awareness to the need for systemic, organizational and individual change in the Saskatoon community and beyond.

Jessica's road to self-discovery recently came full circle when her Métis identity was, at last, officially recognized. She received her Métis citizenship card in the mail in 2020. "The impact of colonization on my family and on me for so long was finally lighter," she says. "I had room to breathe. I started crying when the card arrived in the mail. That little piece of plastic finally gave me validation." ✨



Photos courtesy of Jessica Fisher





# HEALTH OF THE NATION MIIYOOMAASHCHHOWIN DAAN NUTR NAASYOON

The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) Government Ministry of Health oversees health programs and services for Métis citizens and communities.

## OUR PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- COVID-19 response
- Travel assistance for medical appointments
- Métis-specific health and wellness strategy
- Support for mental wellness and addictions

## DETAILS ON OUR HEALTH PROGRAMS:

[www.metisnationsk.com/Health](http://www.metisnationsk.com/Health)

## COVID SUPPORTS AND APPLICATIONS:

[www.metisnationsk.com/COVID](http://www.metisnationsk.com/COVID)

1-833-343-8285 OR  
[covid19@mns.work](mailto:covid19@mns.work)

## MENTAL WELLNESS AND ADDICTIONS SUPPORT:

1-855-671-5638 8AM-4PM / MON TO FRI

1-877-767-7572 24 HOUR CRISIS LINE

[metisnationsk.com](http://metisnationsk.com)



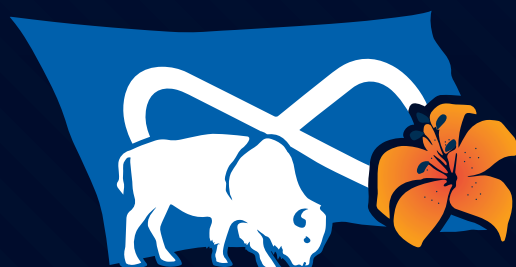
@MNSASK



@METISNATIONSASK



#METISNATIONSASK



*Métis Nation*  
Saskatchewan



# Housing is a Human Right for Métis Women

On March 11, 2020, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (COVID-19) was declared by the World Health Organization to be a pandemic, triggering responses and restrictions by Indigenous, provincial and federal governments.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the primary tool used to fight the spread of COVID-19 has been social distancing and the directive for Canadians to stay home. However,

these actions incorrectly presume that everyone has access to a safe place to live.

On May 12, 2020, after conducting a series of nation-wide consultations, the Native Women's Association of Canada reported a sharp rise in violence against Indigenous women.<sup>2</sup> Initial findings showed that Indigenous women were

experiencing more violence since the pandemic began - often from their intimate partner.<sup>3</sup>

Just a few months later in August of 2020, StatCan reported that Indigenous women were facing multiple barriers during the pandemic, including mental health impacts, intimate partner violence and lower perceptions of safety



PAGE

43



at home and in public.<sup>4</sup> In the wake of COVID-19, stay at home directives, higher rates of overcrowding in Indigenous homes, along with the mental health impacts of a global pandemic amplify vulnerability to victimization.<sup>5</sup> More than 40% of Indigenous participants reported being “very” or “extremely” concerned about the impact of confinement on family stress, with 47% Indigenous women more likely to report this concern than Indigenous men (33%).<sup>6</sup>

This reality has prompted advocates to emphasize the need for a rights-based approach to safe and adequate housing.<sup>7</sup> The National Housing Strategy Act,<sup>8</sup> enacted in 2019, recognizes the right to adequate housing as a fundamental human right, essential to a person’s inherent dignity and well-being, and to building sustainable and inclusive communities.<sup>9</sup>

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) also recognizes the right to housing as a fundamental right.<sup>10</sup> UNDRIP says that Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to improve their social and economic conditions, including the right to housing.<sup>11</sup> UNDRIP also mandates specific attention be given to the needs of Elders, women, youth and persons with disabilities.<sup>12</sup>

Access to safe housing is a critical factor to escaping intimate partner violence.<sup>13</sup> Indigenous women already face barriers and inequities that prevent access to adequate housing and COVID-19 is magnifying them. Indigenous women are more likely to be paid less for the jobs they do, are most often the head of single parent households, and are more likely to assume responsibility for caregiving and childcare.<sup>14</sup> This means that women are more likely to be laid off, to be evicted or face other housing barriers, or to experience food insecurity.<sup>15</sup> As a result, many women are often compelled to remain in an unsafe or volatile situation.

These injustices raise clear human rights law issues. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (the Code),<sup>16</sup> prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, creed, marital status, family status, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, colour, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, race or perceived race, receipt of public assistance, and gender identity.<sup>17</sup> These characteristics are referred to as “prohibited grounds” of discrimination. The Code says that it is against the law for someone to discriminate against a person based on a prohibited ground in the sale or rental of property, in accessing services available to the public (stores, hotels, etc.) and in hiring and employment.<sup>18</sup>

Individuals who feel they have been discriminated against can file a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The complaint process can be time-consuming and typically won’t provide the type of immediate relief an urgent situation requires. However, an individual can bring a discrimination complaint to the Commission up to 12 months after the incident of discrimination, so timeliness does not have to be an immediate concern.

If you find yourself in a situation like this, it’s important to know that it is not necessary to have legal counsel in order to file a complaint with the Commission. The Commission is quite accessible for self-represented claimants. The Commission’s authority is limited to the Code. Sometimes complaints raise additional legal issues that are outside of the Commission’s jurisdiction and in that case, would need to be brought to a different forum (such as family law matters).

Where a complaint raises a human rights issue, the Commission has the authority to investigate the matter. It is critical for the complainant to record every detail about the incident of discrimination, including time, place and all possible witnesses and gather all evidence that establishes their case. For example, for complaints in discrimination for refused tenancy based upon Indigenous and/or family status, some key documents may include:

- Evidence establishing Indigenous status and/or family status (for example, Métis citizenship card);
- The application for tenancy – particularly where the application form itself may be discriminatory;
- A copy of the advertisement for tenancy;
- List of names of witnesses and a summary of the evidence that they will have relating to the complaint;
- Landlord address and corporate information;
- All communications between the applicant and the landlord;
- Evidence about the rental property – address, photographs, etc.;
- All landlord policies that may be relevant to the claim (for example, a policy against renting to young families or prohibiting renting to families with small children);

- Documentation of any and all discriminatory statements made by the landlord, which may include the reasons for refusing the tenancy;
- Any evidence of a pattern of refusing tenancy on the basis of family or Indigenous status.<sup>19</sup>

If the investigation supports it, the Chief Commissioner can apply to the Court for a hearing. Complaints are most often resolved through negotiated settlement well before a matter proceeds to a hearing. However, the remedies outlined in the Code will often inform the settlement, i.e. reinstatement for a dismissed employee. If the Court finds that there was discrimination, the Court has broad authority in determining appropriate remedies.<sup>20</sup> For example, a respondent could be ordered to provide the opportunity that the claimant was denied due to the discrimination. The Court can also award special compensation.<sup>21</sup> Special compensation may be awarded where: 1) the contravention of the Code was willful and reckless, or 2) the person discriminated against suffered injuries to dignity, feelings, or self-respect.<sup>22</sup>

There are no guarantees when filing a complaint with the Commission. In some instances, the Code might contain an exception to a situation that might otherwise constitute discrimination.<sup>23</sup> There are also specific elements that are necessary to ground a viable claim and intake officers should provide some guidance on

those points. However, the greatest limitation in bringing a human rights complaint is how long the process takes. For an individual facing eviction because her landlord discovered she has small children, retribution months after the fact is not adequate.

At the same time, individual remedies cannot address systemic injustice. Canada already recognizes housing as a fundamental human right. Canada also recently presented Indigenous governments with draft framework legislation to implement UNDRIP. Canada, the provinces and Indigenous governments have all expressed their commitment to women. Yet women are consistently relegated to the back seat at each level. Without their meaningful and influential guidance, any government action will simply be another paternalistic and colonial exercise. ✨

**Individuals who feel they have been discriminated against can file a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, call toll free at:**  
**1-800-667-9249**

<sup>4</sup>WHO Director General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19, online: World Health Organization <<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>> (11 March 2020).

<sup>5</sup>Teresa Wright, *Violence against Indigenous women during COVID-19 sparks calls for MMIWG plan*, (The Canadian Press), online: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/violence-against-indigenous-women-action-plan-covid-19-mmiwg-1.556352> (10 May 2020).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Paula Arriagada et al, *“Perceptions of safety of Indigenous people during the COVID-19 pandemic,”* online: (2020) Statistics Canada <<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00071-eng.htm>>.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>See generally, Leilani Farha & Kaitline Schwan, *The Front Line Defence: Housing and Human Rights in the Time of COVID-19*, In Colleen M Flood et al, *“Vulnerable: The Law, Policy and Ethics of COVID-19,”* University of Ottawa Press, 2020 CanLIIDocs 1866, <<https://canlii.ca/t/5vqr>>, at 355.

<sup>11</sup>National Housing Strategy Act, SC 2019, c 29, s 313.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid at ss. 4(a) and 4(b).

<sup>13</sup>See Articles 21.1, 21.2, and 23 of the UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: resolution/adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295*, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html>.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid at s. 21.1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid at s. 21.2.

<sup>16</sup>Supra, note 7 at 362.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018, SS 2018, c S-24.2 (the Code).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid at s. 2.

<sup>21</sup>This list is not exhaustive. The prohibitions against discrimination are set out at Part 3 of the Code.

<sup>22</sup>This list is not exhaustive and will depend on the specific facts of the case.

<sup>23</sup>See section 39 of the Code. The Court’s authority is subject to certain limitations, such as where it would mean firing an employee from a position if that person accepted the job in good faith, or if it would mean evicting someone from their home where the occupant obtained the housing accommodation in good faith.

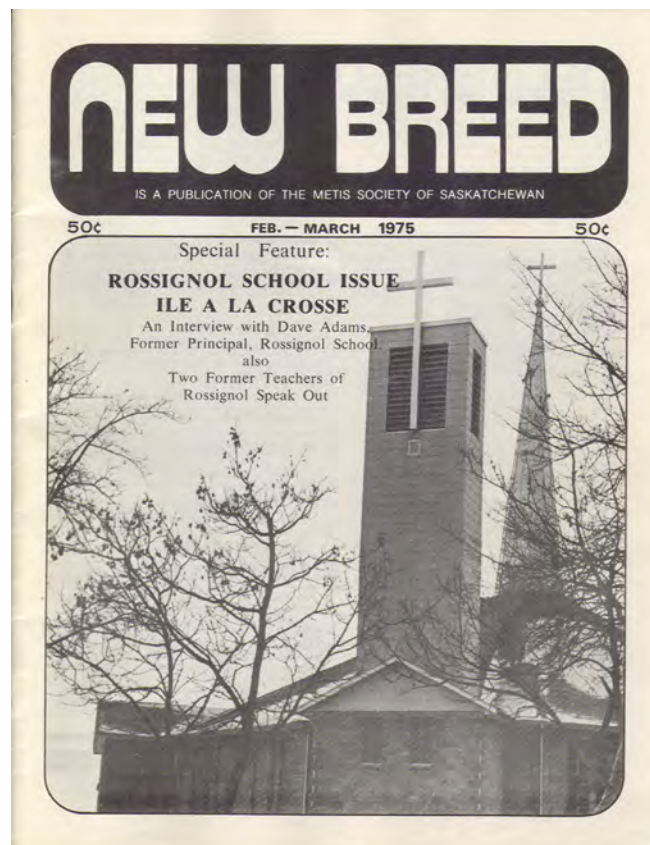
<sup>24</sup>See section 40 of the Code, which limits special compensation to \$20,000.00.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>See for example, section 11(4) of the Code which excludes renting housing accommodation for occupancy exclusively by persons who are 55 years of age or more.



# Us Then & ∞ Us Now



The United Nations declared 1975 as International Woman's Year. In March of that year, Métis–Nation Saskatchewan's original publication, New Breed, featured an article on Saskatchewan Native Women's Movements (SNWM). The article encouraged Indigenous women and children's social, political and economic development at the community level.

This month, Kiiyaanaan Aykwaa: Us Now celebrates Métis women and girls with our first issue: honouring women and gender equality. In the 46 years since International Women's Year, women's rights and gender equality have made significant strides; however, there is still much work to be done and the fight to amplify the voices of our Métis women and girls on a social, political and economic level lives on.

Left: A 1975 cover of New Breed shows an image of Rossignol School. Today, the elementary school still stands in Île-à-la-Crosse and is among the first schools to pilot the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Michif immersion language program.

To view more issues of New Breed, visit the virtual museum at [metismuseum.ca](https://metismuseum.ca)

## SUPPORT RESOURCES

There are supports available if you, or someone you know, need to reach out. Here are some resources:

### MÉTIS NATION – SASKATCHEWAN:

#### Mental Health & Addiction Support:

1-855-671-5638

#### Crisis Line:

1-877-767-7572

### SASKATOON RESOURCES:

#### Crisis Nursery:

306-242-2433

#### Mobile Crisis:

306-933-6200

#### Women's Abuse Crisis Line:

1-888-338-0880

#### Family Service Saskatoon:

306-244-0127

#### Sexual Assault Crisis Line:

306-244-2224

**OUTSaskatoon:** for a complete list of supports available to 2SLGBTQ survivors of Gender-Based Violence  
[gbvproject.ca](https://gbvproject.ca)

### NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN RESOURCES:

#### Prince Albert Children's Haven:

306-922-4454

#### Prince Albert Mobile Crisis:

306-764-1039

#### Prince Albert Sexual Assault Line:

306-764-1039

#### Piwapan Women's Centre:

306-425-4090

#### Pregnancy Crisis Line:

306-446-4440

#### Northeast Crisis Line:

1-800-611-6349

### REGINA RESOURCES:

#### Domestic Violence/Abuse Crisis Line:

306-569-2292

#### Mobile Crisis:

306-757-0127

#### Sexual Assault Line:

1-844-952-0434

#### Family Service Regina:

306-244-01237

### SASKATCHEWAN RESOURCES:

#### Central Saskatchewan Sexual/Domestic Violence Assistance & Support Team:

306-463-1860

**Lloydminster Domestic Violence/Abuse Crisis Line:**  
780-875-0966

**Yorkton Domestic Violence Crisis Line:**  
1-888-783-3111

**Moose Jaw Domestic Violence Crisis Line:**  
306-693-6511

**Southwest Saskatchewan Crisis Services:**  
306-778-3386

**Professional Health Advice and Mental Health Support:**  
811

**Problem Gambling Help Line:**  
1-800-306-6789

**Human Rights Commission:**  
1-800-667-9249

**Office of Residential Tenancies:**  
1-888-215-2222

### CANADIAN RESOURCES:

**Indian Residential School Crisis Line:**  
1-866-925-4419

**Boarding School Survivors (INAC):**  
1-866-925-4419

**Métis, First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:**  
1-855-242-3310

**Kids Help Phone:**  
1-800-668-6868

**Domestic Violence & Abuse Hotline:**  
1-888-338-0880

**Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline:**  
1-833-900-1010

**Suicide Prevention & Support:**  
1-833-456-4566

**Mental Health & Substance Use Support:**  
Text WELLNESS to 741741

**Support for Frontline Workers:**  
Text FRONTLINE to 741741

**Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Support Line:**  
1-844-413-6649

**Veterans Crisis Hotline:**  
1-800-268-7708

**Trans Lifeline:**  
1-877-330-6366

**Crisis Text Line:**  
Text HOME to 686868



