

Ohpikihaawashow

RAISING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Stories from Métis Elders in British Columbia



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About the Title Ohpikihaawashow is a Michif word that reflects the practice of raising children and families.

Contributing Elders	Ellen Ahdemar	Larry Ahdemar
	Lea Becker	Marie Bercier
	Betty Gladue	Phil Gladue
	Barb Hulme	Stella Erasmus Johnson
	Verma Kerr	Denise McCuaig
	Joyce Munro	Fred Paquette
	Patrick Savard	Melba Sterling
	Lynda Tilley	Jo-Ina Young
	Marie Zwingli	
	As well as those who wish to be anonymous.	

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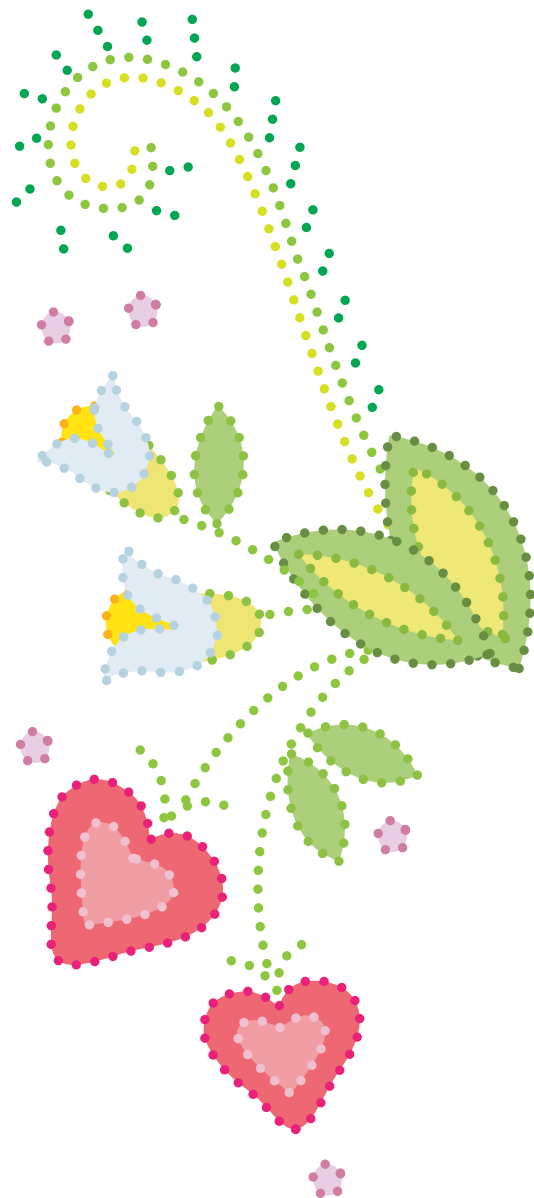
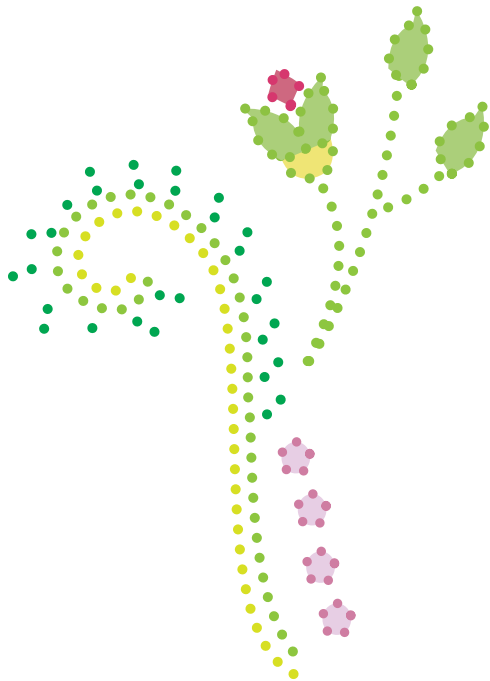


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CHAPTER 1

Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Métis people learn and grow from stories passed down by Elders and ancestors. Elders play a key role in teaching Métis people about traditional ways of raising children. Storytelling has always been a powerful and meaningful part of Métis culture. The knowledge that is held in stories has been used for many years to guide and teach Métis children and youth.

Through storytelling, Métis families have been able to stay strong and succeed for generations. Stories can also help Métis people to rebuild what has been lost, and guide people home.¹

Rooted in the knowledge from 20 Métis Elders living in British Columbia (BC), this book shares many stories. These stories focus on Métis culture and identity, raising children, and Métis values. Métis teachings, culture, and history are held in the Elders' stories. Through their generosity in sharing, the Elders hope that other Métis people will strengthen their understanding of who they are as Métis people today, and pass that on to future generations.

This book includes a collection of prayers, which have been written by Elders supporting Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services (LMO). These prayers have been carefully gathered over the years, and are included in the first Appendix of this book.

This book also includes artwork from children and youth, who submitted their pieces to LMO to be included alongside the Elders' stories.



ABOUT LII MICHIF OTIPEMISIWAK FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

LMO is a Métis child and family service agency located in Kamloops, British Columbia (BC) in Secwépemcul'ecw. LMO has a vision that Métis children, youth, and families “live with love, honour, dignity, and respect knowing they belong to a strong, proud People with a unique heritage and cultural identity.”² LMO works with families in their healing, supporting the wellness and safety for Métis children, youth, and families.

LMO believes that Métis people have the right and responsibility to care for their own children, youth, and families. LMO's work is also rooted in compassion, love, and respect. They offer services that weave in Métis culture, values, and traditions, with a goal of nurturing each child's sense of belonging with culture, family, and community.

ABOUT THE ELDERS

While "Elders" is a term that is generally accepted in Indigenous communities, some people prefer alternative terms. Names used in this book also include "Kohkom" and "Auntie."

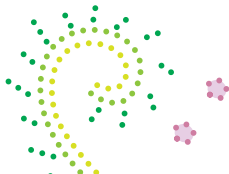
This book includes the names of many Métis Elders who played important roles in this project. Each name included in this book has been done so with the Elder's permission. Some Elders preferred to be anonymous and use a different name (marked with an asterisk *). You can read the biographies for the Elders at the end of this book.

Elder's Council

Métis Elders are the teachers and the guides of Métis child welfare at LMO. The Elder's Council (also called the Voices of the Michif Elders) is a team of Métis Elders in Kamloops and the surrounding areas, who support LMO's services reflect Métis culture, values, and ways of being. The Elders are cultural advisors and share knowledge and teachings throughout the services and programs at LMO.

¹ Maria Campbell. “Forward,” *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine*, ed. Kim Anderson (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), i-xix.

² “Our Vision,” Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services, 2025, <https://lmofcs.ca>



Members of the Elder's Council who helped create this book include:

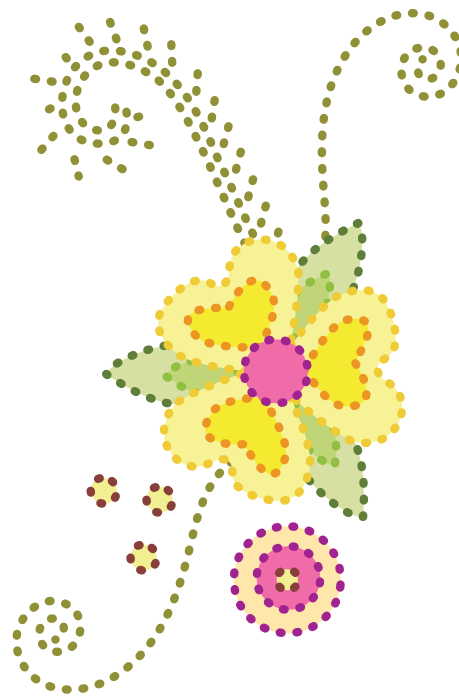
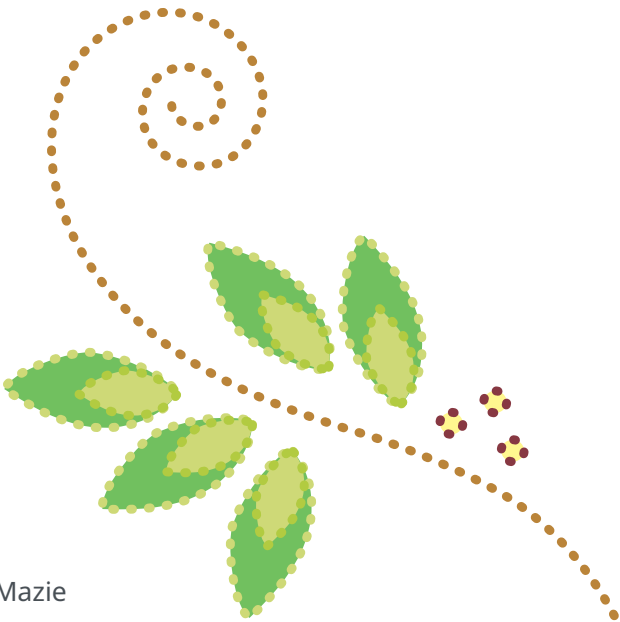
- *Ellen Ahdemar*
- *Larry Ahdemar*
- *Lea Becker*
- *Jane Jones**
- *Verma Kerr*
- *Denise McCuaig*
- *Joyce Munro*
- *Fred Paquette*
- *Patrick Savard*
- *Melba Sterling*
- *Lynda Tilley*
- *Marie Zwingli*

Beautiful contributions from Elders Dave Barron, DeeDee Hurd, and Mazie Beeds are included in this book. Each of these Elders were treasured by the helpers, children, youth, and families at LMO. They passed on before this project began and their presence is deeply missed.

Several Métis Elders from areas outside of Kamloops and Merritt also provided knowledge for this book; these Elders included:

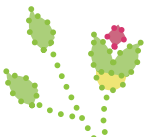
- *Marie Bercier*
- *Betty Gladue*
- *Phil Gladue*
- *Barb Hulme*
- *Stella Erasmus Johnson*
- *Isabella Matheson**
- *Francois Morrisette**
- *Jo-Ina Young*

We are deeply grateful to each of the Elders for taking the time to share their stories and teachings. We hope that these stories will contribute to many future generations of happy, healthy, and connected Métis people.



CHAPTER 2

Métis Culture, Language, and Identity



MÉTIS CULTURE, LANGUAGE, AND IDENTITY

This chapter includes stories from the Elders, with a focus on Métis identity, connection to land, ways of knowing, and languages.

Journeys of Understanding Métis Identity

People have taken many different journeys to understand what it means to be Métis, and some of these journeys are reflected in the Elder's stories. Some Elders grew up with a strong understanding of who they are as Métis people. In fact, some said that they have always known that they are Métis, and are grateful for this:

It was just a whole different way of life, but I was really thankful for that way of life... being raised Métis because it's all that I knew, and living the way that we did and being connected to the land, a lot of Métis don't have that.

– Francois Morrisette*

Other Elders explained that they were not raised with a strong understanding of who they are as Métis people. Elder Patrick Savard explained that he was raised with the understanding that he was French, and he did not have a strong connection to the Métis community growing up. Elder Lea Becker shared that her family was disconnected, and she was not raised with her Métis culture. Her reconnection to culture as an adult shows the importance of helping other Métis families reconnect with their culture and identity:

We weren't brought up in the Métis culture because my father left, I think in search for work at one point in time. A lot of the family units broke down and so they were isolated, and a lot of the traditions broke down. But, what I have seen between language and storytelling, and surrounding everybody with Métis teachings through the stories and through the culture, through the honourings. It's like a beautiful gift that the Métis give to each other in such a beautiful way.

– Lea Becker

DO ALL ELDERS USE THE TERM MÉTIS?

There are many different ways of referring to Métis people. While many Elders use the term Métis today, there are different terms too, including Âpihtawikosisân (half-breed) and Otipemisiwak (the People who own themselves). Some Elders have always called themselves Métis, while others prefer different names.

Elder Jo-Ina Young did not find out she was Métis until adulthood, and she has worked very hard to learn who she is and what it means to be Métis. Even though she was not raised in Métis culture, she reflected on how Métis values were a part of her family. She shared, "I grew up not knowing I was Métis, but I was still getting Métis values, and I think that's the difference, right? Métis values are there, but you're not knowing that's what they are." Today, she sees how those values are uniquely Métis.

The Elders all want to share knowledge with others—including Métis children, youth, and adults who are learning and reconnecting, as well as other people who may not understand who the Métis are. Elder Larry Ahdemar spoke about the importance of sharing teachings with other Métis people: "They've got to know where they came from, because there is a lot of Métis out there who don't know where they came from."

Helping Others Learn About What it Means to be Métis

People may have different journeys with understanding Métis identity, and many Elders spoke about the importance of embracing and supporting adults who are learning about who they are. Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson spoke about the importance of helping Métis children and adults to learn about and connect with their culture and community:

We can teach our young children... but also our older ones that are 40 and 50 and are just finding out that they're Métis. Invite them. If you find something, that there's going to be a cultural event happening, invite them, let them know, or sign up for something and usually there's a little bit of culture taught at the same time of whatever, making a ribbon shirt... making earrings, there's so much. The Métis communities are really working hard to share that knowledge, and they have Elders come in, you get to meet them and talk with them, set up a time and maybe go have tea with them later and learn a little bit more.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

Kohkom Stella acknowledged that because of racism, many Métis families hid their identity. Today, there is an opportunity to proudly be Métis. Through being inclusive and inviting young and older Métis people to connect with community and culture, the Métis culture will continue to grow.



Elder Larry Ahdemar shared how important it is to sit with and learn from the older people who can share “the way the true Métis were brought up.” He said that an important part of understanding what it means to be Métis is by learning about traditional ways of life from those who lived it. As Elder Larry explained, “you got to know where you come from and that and you got to make sure the people who are telling the story lived that life.”

Other Elders noted that workshops for Métis community members are helpful in bringing people together and strengthening identity. For example, Elder Phil Gladue spoke about the importance of bringing together community members for workshops that address topics in Métis history and identity; these gatherings create opportunities for learning and connecting with community.

Being Proud to be Métis

The Elders emphasized that Métis people should be proud to be Métis. One way of showing this pride is by wearing Métis sashes:

We’re living in a great opportunity now to be able to talk about who we are and where we come from, and people will understand.... Wear your sash, even the little lapels... There’s so much culture. We all have so many Nations in our blood running through our veins. It’s just like our sash how it’s woven in. Be proud of who you are. Our ancestors hid it because they were trying to keep us safe and now we have the opportunity to spread the word. What is it, like the churches or whatever, spread the word. Spread the Métis word now. It is time we have that opportunity. Some of our ancestors were able to hold that culture and teach their children.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

In addition to showing pride as Métis people, the Elders explained that wearing sashes is a great way of identifying other Métis people, creating connections, and expanding our social circles.

Blood Memory

The Elders shared that blood memory is a way of knowing, as well as a strength and a gift for Métis people. They spoke about awakening blood memory, as Auntie Marie Bercier recalled, “blood memory goes right back to our ancient mothers.” Elder Jo-Ina Young spoke about the importance of supporting Métis children to connect to their own blood memory; she said, “Just by learning about more Métis culture, there’s more acceptance... there’s blood memory in people and little Métis kids have blood memory, those things are going to come back to them.” Similarly, Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson spoke about guiding Métis adults to connect with their culture and identity, sharing a personal experience with her granddaughter who felt connected to her ancestors when she heard drumming at a Métis gathering.

WHAT IS BLOOD MEMORY?

Blood memory is a term that was used by some of Elders when referring to the ways that knowledge is passed on from generation to generation in unspoken ways.

CONNECTION TO LAND

For many people, connection to land is an important part of being Métis. The Elders spoke about their relationships to the land, animals, people, and spirit as key aspects of who they are. The Michif word, Niikinaahk, reflects the Métis connection to land. It includes the place where you live as well as the people that take care of you.

WHAT DOES NIIKINAAHK MEAN?

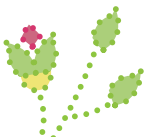
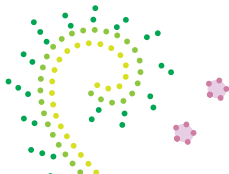
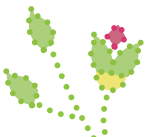
Niikinaahk is the place where you live and the people taking care of you. ³

Many Elders also spoke about the importance of knowing who your family is. Elder Melba Sterling shared her experience of growing up in a Métis Settlement community:

It’s really important that we connect back to our childhood and where we’re from, learning and understanding our ancestry and our connections... I was born on a Métis Settlement in Alberta, which is unique because it’s the only place in Canada that has settlements.

– Melba Sterling

³ Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services. “Belonging and connection assessment” (2024).



WHAT ARE MÉTIS SETTLEMENTS?

Métis settlements are land bases that are collectively held by Métis people. There are eight of them and they are all located in Alberta. ⁴

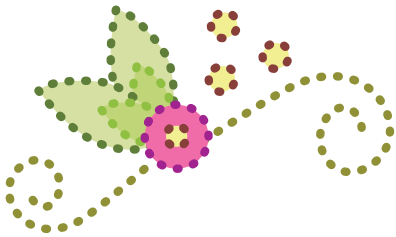
Being from a Métis Settlement, Elder Melba spoke about having a set land-base that she can connect with. The Elders shared that a lot of Métis children and youth may not have the same experiences with land. Other Elders noted that they have raised their children to be connected with the land. Elder Lynda Tilley shared her experience of sharing her connection to the land with her children:

I brought my children up on the land. My boys are great hunters and they know about our traditions with hunting. But I think a lot of children don't get that opportunity to go out in the wilderness and see a deer, maybe see a bear, which we have up in our area. To be up in the mountains, the fresh air—it's just a totally different atmosphere, totally free. Métis kids would absolutely go crazy up there and I would love that... to be able to go out in the country and enjoy life... be free. To a point where they're safe, mind you. And then maybe teach them some traditions. My son's great for this, my oldest boy, he knows the bush so well.

– Lynda Tilley

Relationships with land can be complicated for Métis people living away from their home territory and living on the lands of other Nations. The Elders talked about being visitors on other Nations' territories, and Elder Barb Hulme shared that in BC, Métis people are visitors, living on First Nations' lands. This can be complicated for Métis people living in BC who want to connect with the land, and also walk responsibly and respectfully towards BC First Nations people who are the rights-holders and stewards of these lands.

In part, being good guests as Métis people means recognizing and respecting the rights and relations that First Nations people have with their lands. Being a good guest can include seeking permission from local First Nations to follow protocols, as well as honouring the voices and needs of the local Nations.



4 "Metis Settlements," Otipemisiwak Metis Government, 2025, <https://albertametis.com/metis-settlements/>

Spirituality

The Elders' stories about connection to land were often connected to Métis spirituality. The Elders were clear about the difference between spirituality and religion, although Métis people may be connected with either—or sometimes both:

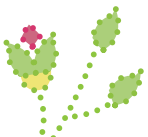
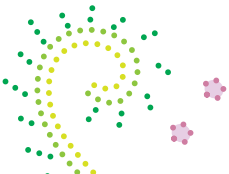
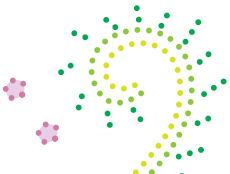
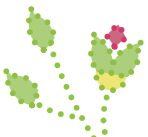
I think most Indigenous people, including Métis people, are very spiritual... it's something that we do and that we have always done. My father believed, my mother was a Christian lady, and my granny was a very devout Catholic, with a rosary and everything. So, we come from, and we've always been spiritual people.

– Patrick Savard

The Elders spoke about different types of spirituality, including the practice of ceremony and prayer. Auntie Marie Bercier reflected on the connection between spirituality and the land. She spoke about the importance of expressing gratitude to Mother Earth while interacting with nature. Similarly, Elder Lynda Tilley shared how prayer connects Métis people to each other, to the land, and to Creator:

I feel that when you sit and pray together, you come together. You have to have a belief in the Creator. Creator is one of our powerful teachers. If we don't have that, we don't have nothing. I think a prayer centres you right away and it's amazing after the prayer is done, how people feel. It connects. It connects to the Creator, it connects to the land, our whole being... I'm a very earthy person, and so I go by the creek and I sit there and, you know, go in with the water and you just give that, you say, "Thanks Creator for what we have," and not what we don't have. It's powerful. You hear the creek running and it's cool, it just really centres us. I think that's what our families need to be centred because once they're centred, they have a vision and when that vision comes, it comes strong.

– Lynda Tilley



Elder Betty Gladue shared that spirituality can also be simple, including the ways that her Métis practiced pêyâhtik, or meditation:

They call it meditation. My grandfather would call it pêyâhtik. Just be quiet and careful. He says, listen to the mosquitos. How could you listen to the mosquitos? Listen! And the wind, which direction is it coming from? The weather, he sits there and studies it, the environment. In the morning you would see him outside sitting, with his cup of coffee. That was his meditation.

– Betty Gladue

When the Elders spoke about spirituality and nature, they shared the importance of listening, being mindful, and expressing gratitude.

MÉTIS WAY OF KNOWING

The Elders shared that Métis identity can be a balance of different worldviews. This blending of traditions can be seen in Métis history including the Buffalo Hunt, where Captains of the Hunt were elected. This election process came from a western tradition. The ways that the buffalo were treated in the hunting process came from Indigenous worldviews. Elder Denise McCuaig explained this relationship:

When you think about the Métis Nation and the roles we played in the buffalo hunt and providing food, we didn't do that one lone hunter... we did that [together], electing a Captain of the Hunt and twelve-hundred people out on the prairies. It's the same way when we produced things, we often do that as a full family and a collective. That sense of belonging and being relational often happened around food and land activity... We can create that kind of space around traditional activities and gathering and sharing in food and being relational.

– Denise McCuaig

WHAT IS THE MÉTIS BUFFALO HUNT?

The buffalo hunt was an important part to Métis life in the prairies. It influenced Métis culture, ways of life, food, and trade. Organized hunts, which occurred in the summer, fall, and winter, involved entire families, with different roles assigned to different people. These hunts were led by the Captains of the Hunt. ⁵

5 Jean Teillet. *The Northwest is Our Mother*. (Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Canada, 2019).

Miyooayaan: Balance and Wellness

The Elders spoke about the importance of balance in terms of wellness, or miyooayaan. They spoke about how imbalance impacts people, and it can be seen in mental health challenges, addiction, poor self-esteem and confidence. It is important that Métis people take care of all aspects of their wellness, tending to their mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.

WHAT DOES MIYOOAYAAN MEAN?

Miyooayaan means feeling safe in your mind, body, and spirit. ⁶

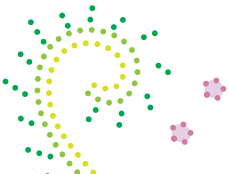
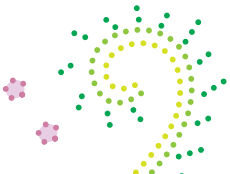


MÉTIS LANGUAGES

Many Elders shared stories about Métis languages and the importance of learning these languages. Elder Phil Gladue said, “Language is power, and no one can ever take your language away from you.” For many Métis Elders, language is an important part of Métis identity.

Some of the Elders were raised only speaking their traditional languages, while others shared that Michif and other Métis languages had been present in their lives without knowing it. Elders Jo-Ina Young and Stella Erasmus Johnson both shared memories of their kohkoms (grandmothers) speaking French-Cree and Michif to them, though they thought that their grandparents were speaking French.

6 Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services. “Belonging and connection assessment” (2024).



**WHAT LANGUAGE DO
MÉTIS PEOPLE SPEAK?**

Métis people spoke many different languages, including different dialects of Michif, Cree, and Bungi. Michif is a language spoken by Metis people that is mostly a blend of Cree and French. Cree is an Indigenous language in Canada that is widely spoken in many provinces—especially the prairies. Bungi is a language associated with the Red River Valley and is described as English-Scottish that is influenced by, Cree, Saulteaux, and Gaelic.⁷

Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson spoke about learning Métis languages and passing them on to children and grandchildren from a young age:

It's important once you know who you are... try to pick up some of the language, the dialect, doesn't matter which one that you learn, but be proud to say it. Greet yourself, niwihowin Stella Erasmus Johnson, my name is. Nimiweyihten: I like it, I love it. Kisâkihitin: I love you. These are important little things to greet your little grandchild or your child, to start showing them when you have children.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

The Elders explained that Métis people spoke different languages. Elder Larry Ahdemar spoke about the value of speaking Cree, given that there are many Cree speakers across different provinces:

Back where I come from, it was all Métis. There was probably only two or three who spoke Michif. Everybody spoke Cree, all the Métis spoke Cree back there.... I wish that more people would learn Cree... you learn Cree, you've got a whole Nation there you can talk to. You go to any city, I don't care where it is, there will be a Cree you can talk to.... Back home, where I come from, you learn Cree from when you were young, eh. Even our church on the reserve was in Cree and school was in Cree and all that..

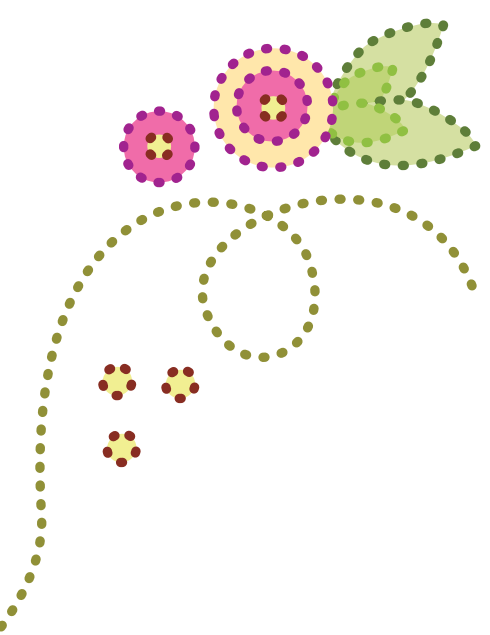
– Larry Ahdemar

Elder Barb Hulme spoke about her family's background as Bungi-speakers, which shows how languages reflect the diversity among Métis people:

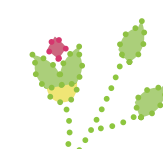
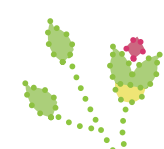
Within our Métis worlds, we've got at least three different dialects, so if we've got three different dialects of Michif, plus the fact that none of my family even spoke Michif, they spoke Bungi... then I'm coming from a totally different place than some of the others because of that.

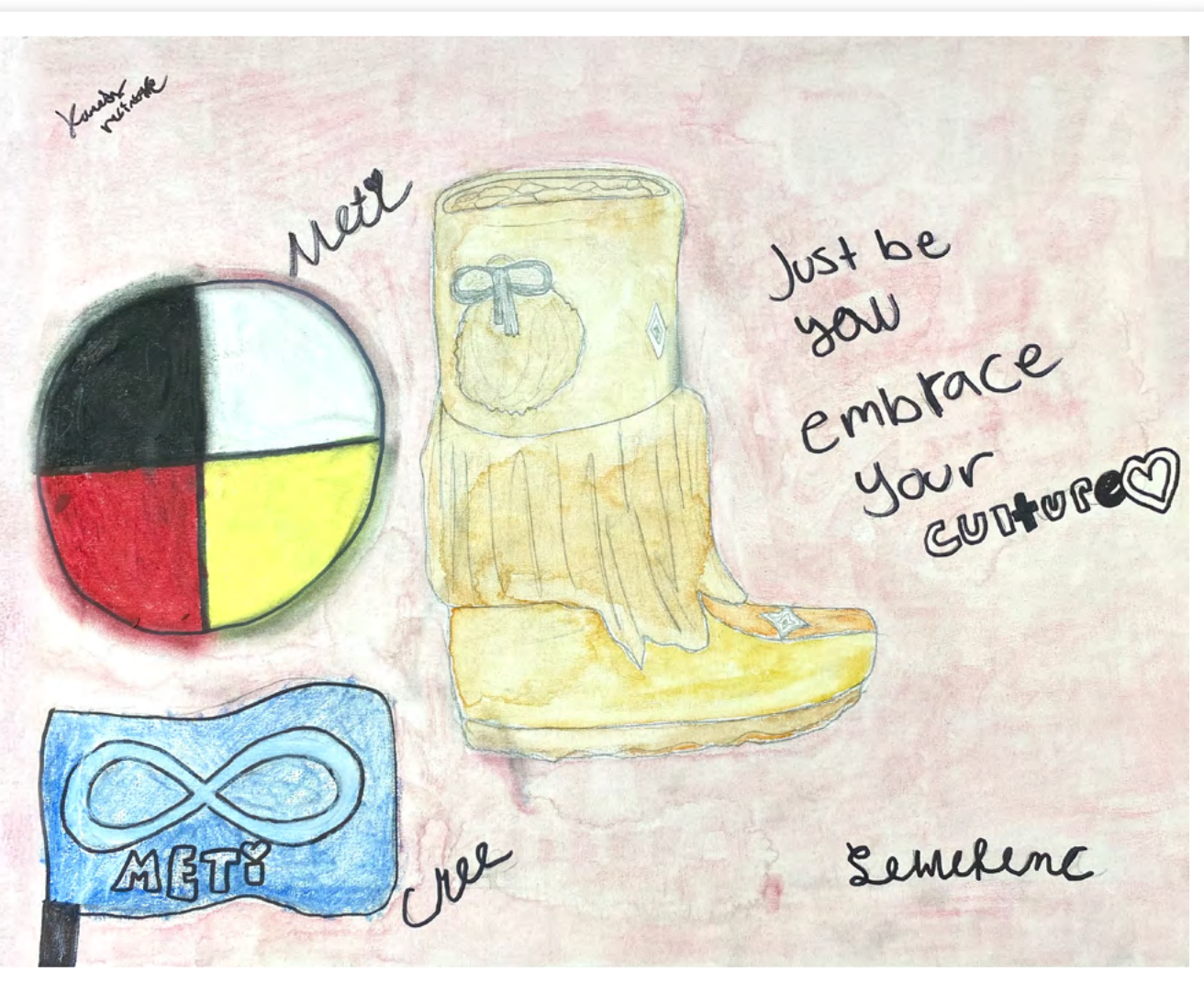
– Barb Hulme

Métis people have always spoken multiple languages. The Elders shared how important it is to honour and celebrate the diversity of Métis languages, and to understand that there is not one language for Métis people.

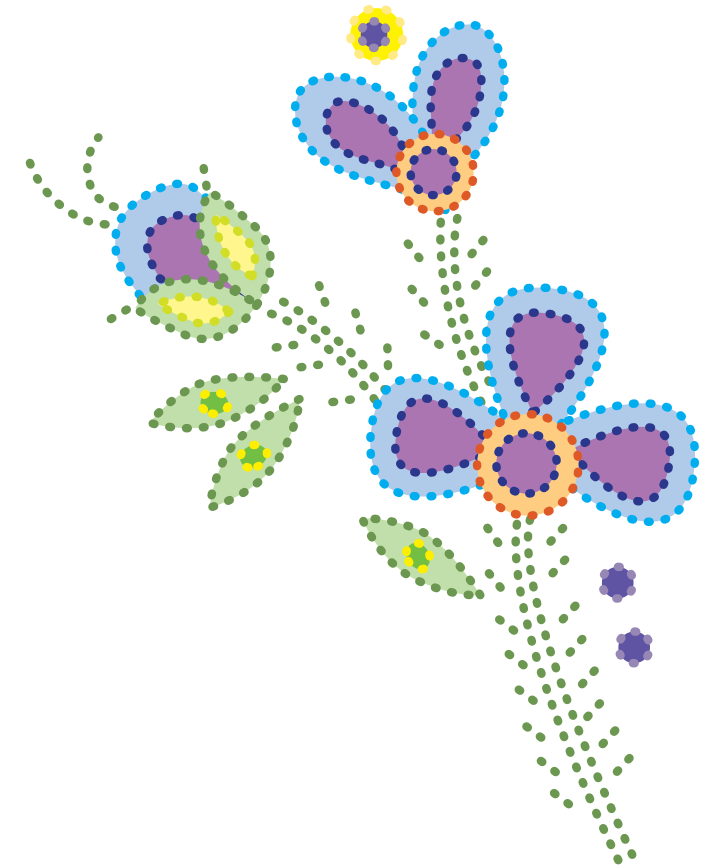


7 Lawrence Barkwell. "Bungee (Bunji) Language," Métis Museum, 2013, [https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/13482.Bungee%20Language%20\(new\).pdf](https://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/13482.Bungee%20Language%20(new).pdf)



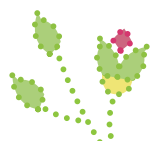


By Kennedy (Age 15)



CHAPTER 3

Métis Kinship Systems



MÉTIS KINSHIP SYSTEMS

The Elders spoke about Métis kinship, which includes connection to family, community, land, and all beings. This understanding of relatedness is reflected through Wahkotowin. Métis people also use the term La Paraanti to refer family, including kin who are both blood and not blood related.

Métis Families

Métis kinship extends beyond western notions of family which usually only include immediate family members. Elders described how traditionally Métis families were big, strong, and interconnected:

The most predominant thing for me when I think about growing up, is how interconnected we were as Métis families. When I think about my elementary and primary school experience, for example, a lot of my friends in school, they were having sleepovers and birthday parties and get-togethers. And I did that too, but I did that with cousins. It would have been rare for me to invite my third-grade friend to come for a sleepover at the house because outside of our school and work obligations. Almost all of our time was spent as a family together. I’m Métis on my mom’s side and she had six siblings and, so I think in terms of us—my generation—there was 17 of us and it was not unusual to spend the majority of weekends together. And I didn’t necessarily know that was a Métis way until I was much older... I was able to look back on that and go, oh, that’s an Indigenous way of being. A lot of my friends growing up, they didn’t necessarily have Sunday breakfasts with 21 of their family members, but we did. So, I’ve really sort of come to appreciate that that family connection was really strong, and I think that is the case traditionally.

– Denise McCuaig

WHAT IS KINSHIP?

Kinship is a term for the connections Métis people have to one another, including family members and community. Kinship also extends to other relationships, including those with the land and the spirit world.

WHAT IS WAHKOTOWIN?

Wahkotowin is Cree word and teaching that has been adopted and upheld across many Métis communities. Wahkotowin represents Métis people’s relationships and the social obligations that they hold to take care of each other. In its simplest form, *Wahkotowin* refers to kinship and relatedness. ⁸

WHAT DOES LA PARAANTI MEAN?

La Paraanti are family members, including those who are related and those who are not. La Paraanti include the trusted people who hold a responsibility to take care of each other. ⁹

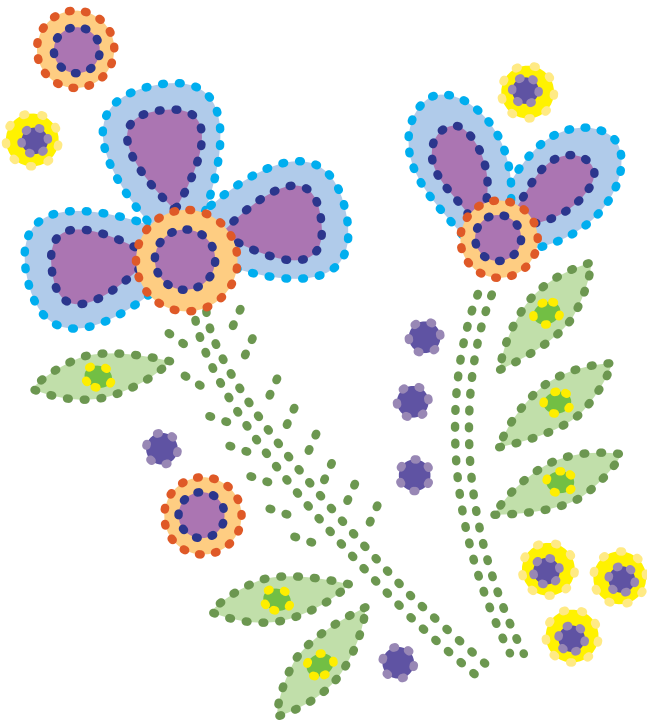
The Elders spoke about the importance of Métis children knowing who their family is. Families and communities created natural support systems for Métis people. Similarly, Elder Melba Sterling spoke about being raised by her whole family: “I was lucky that I was raised with an intact family. My parents stayed together until my father passed away, and my grandmother lived with us. I was lucky in that way because I was not taken into care.”

Traditionally, it was important that Métis people fully understood their family trees, as both Elders Stella Erasmus Johnson and Ellen Ahdemar explained, to avoid marrying their cousins. Elder Isabella Matheson* reflected on the value of living close to family:

I think having that extended family living close by helped with raising children... my aunts and uncles lived next door to my mom and my dad... I don’t know how I would have survived without the support... you didn’t have to pay babysitters. You didn’t have to have daycare because your family was there and we all shared each other’s kids, right? Somebody needed a break, or somebody needed to go out of town to do something, you know, the cousins came and stayed. I remember myself not getting along with my mom when I started to hit my adolescent years. It was okay, I didn’t have to go into foster care. I didn’t have to run away. I could go to my auntie’s house which was just next door—and she was often more reasonable than my mother to talk to—and I could stay there until things cooled off. Or I could go to the next house over, which was my grandma’s house, and hang out there until my mom and I could get along together again.

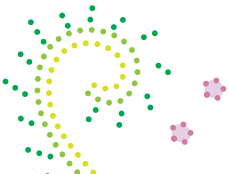
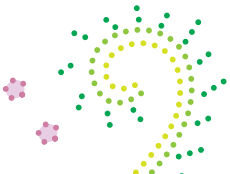
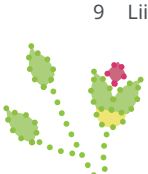
– Isabella Matheson*

Elder Isabella’s* reflections show how Wahkotowin and La Paraanti created natural supports for Métis families that kept them safe, by having extended family available to support parents.



8 Brenda Macdougall. *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan*. (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

9 Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services. “Belonging and connection assessment” (2024).





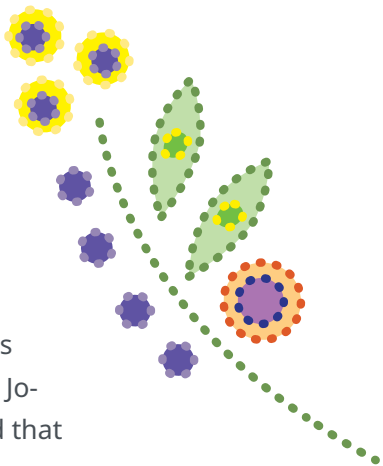
Grandparents and Other Supports

The Elders’ stories show the importance of strong connections to family—especially grandparents. Grandmothers were described as strong family leaders and matriarchs. Elder Barb Hulme remembered her own grandmother: “Grandma was the strength behind all of the kids and that, and, you know, you followed Grandma’s rules.” Many of the Elders shared stories about their families, including strong connections with grandparents. These stories illustrate the importance of different generations of family members having roles in raising Métis children. Elder Marie Zwingli spoke lovingly about how her grandmother shaped her into the person she became. She recalled, “I was raised mainly by my grandmother. She was extremely intuitive and strong. But discipline, it was all about me finding out for myself what would happen if I did a certain thing...”

Elder Marie shared that her family took care of her grandmother as she aged. When she was no longer able to take care of her home, her grandmother stayed with family members during the winter and would return to her own place for the summer. Elder Marie spoke about the importance of having family support for the matriarch in their family. All of her family members organized their summer holidays so that they could visit her on a set schedule, and she was never left alone.

In addition to the importance of grandparents, aunties, and uncles, Auntie Marie Bercier spoke about the role of godparents in Métis families. While godparents did not necessarily have a daily presence, they were “there to help if anything happened, they could mediate.” The role of godparents, as Auntie Marie explained, is similar to the traditional role of aunties and uncles. Forming circles of support around a family, all family members have special roles in upholding Métis children.

Elder Jo-Ina Young spoke about the significance of community support, which can bring so much value to a person’s life—particularly for children who may be struggling with self-esteem: “if they are part of the community from when they are little, they always have that support... that self-assurance, that pride in yourself.” Elder Jo-Ina went on to explain that community is an extension of family, and that a strong community is an incredible strength for young people.



KAA-WIICHIHITOYAAHK: TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER

When talking about Métis ways of raising children, the Elders often spoke about helping other families and supporting everyone in the community. Métis people often took care of each other when visiting. Visiting involved checking on people, asking how they are doing, and helping with practical tasks in the home. Elder Jo-Ina noted that visiting in her family always included helping out:

One of the things that I noticed... was that whenever you came to our house, you never just sat down and had tea and visited. We were always working, and you were always doing it with us... We never sat and did nothing. If we were in the yard, my mother always had an extra pair of boots out there.

– Jo-Ina Young

Elder Lynda Tilley also spoke about the importance of offering parents support when they need a break, noting, “with our tradition..., [parents] can go and

WHAT DOES KAA-WIICHIHITOYAAHK MEAN?

Kaa-Wiichihitoyaahk translates to “we take care of each other,” and it represents the ways that Métis people support one another.¹⁰

WHAT IS VISITING?

Visiting has always been common in the daily lives of Métis people. Traditionally, Métis people often cared for and kept loved ones safe through visiting.¹¹

10 Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services. “Belonging and connection assessment” (2024).

11 Cathy Richardson and Dana Lunn Seaborn. “Beyond Audacity and Aplomb: Understanding the Métis in Social Work Practice.” In *Wícihitowin: Aboriginal social work in Canada*, eds. Michael Hart, Raven Sinclair, Gord Bruyere (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2009), 114-132.



have their children looked after for a weekend or through the week, if they need a break.” Today, this is often called respite care, but it was an incredibly common form of support across Métis families and communities. For instance, Elder Francois Morrisette* shared how he would stay with an uncle or his grandparents during tough times at home:

If I had trouble at home, one of my uncles would come and get me and go to my grandparents or I would go to my other uncle’s farm and stay there until things cooled down or I had a different attitude...

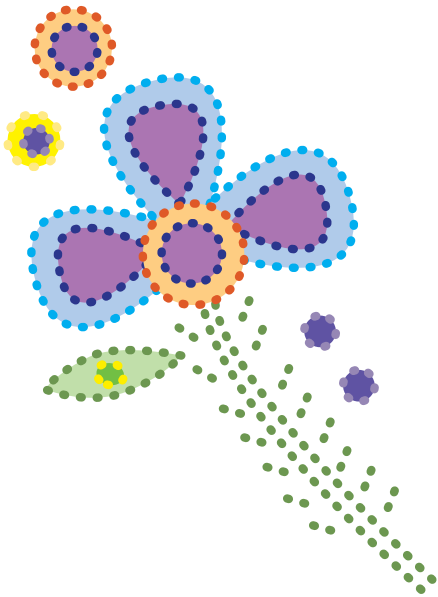
– Francois Morrisette*

Extended family members played important roles in raising Métis children and youth.

Kinship Care and Customary Adoption

Many Métis families cared for their relatives through kinship care and customary adoption. In traditional settings, there was no organized government or agency to support these arrangements. Elder Patrick explained, “they had to do that themselves, so, they did.” Several Elders shared stories about customary adoption and kinship care within their families. Elder Patrick Savard spoke about his family helping relatives, such as his father staying at an aunt and uncle’s house to help them with their farm work. Elder Patrick also shared that his father grew up with a cousin, who was adopted and raised as a sibling.

Elder Joyce noted that her family also cared for two of her cousins, at different points during her childhood:



WHAT IS KINSHIP CARE?

Kinship care involves extended family and/or community members caring for children who are unable to live with their birth parents. Kinship care can be temporary or longer-term.¹²

WHAT ARE CUSTOMARY ADOPTIONS?

Métis families also practiced customary care arrangements, including adoption. This involved Métis people caring for and embracing their relatives on a more permanent basis.¹³

If somebody needed help, you went and helped them. If somebody wanted you to look after one of their children, you took them. My parents took in my cousin when she was only about three years old and she lived with us then until she grew up, except for a couple of years. Then we had another cousin, a boy; his mother was having a rough time... he seemed to like our place, got along well with everybody, and we all loved him, so he stayed with us for a year. You didn't question, you'd just take them in. You were part of the family.

– Joyce Munro

The practice of welcoming people into the family went beyond relatives caring for children in their family. Elder Joyce shared that she would often bring home other children in the community who needed help or a place to stay:

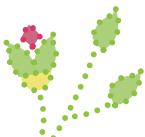
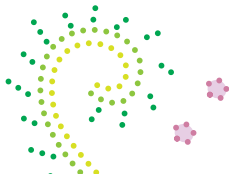
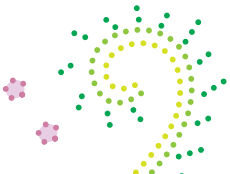
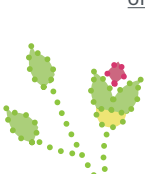
I don't know how my parents ever put up with me, but I was always dragging somebody home. I'd meet them and they'd need a place to stay so I'd bring them home. There was nothing ever said, you just moved your chair over and sat them down. I remember this one time I met this girl on the street, and I got talking to her and I asked “Well, where are you from?” Because that was just a little village, you knew everybody. She said, “I come from Northern Manitoba. I was travelling with some friends, and we came up here last night, and I don't know, they just left me. They're gone. So, I'm trying to get a hold of them.” Well, in those days, how would you get a hold of anyone? She had nowhere to go so I took her home and probably had to share my bed with her. She stayed with us for a couple of weeks. And then my mother found her a job babysitting for a neighbour, so she babysat there for a while until she saved up enough money... she was still living at our place, and she saved up enough money to go to Prince Albert, and get a room and a job there.

– Joyce Munro

Elder Isabella Matheson* shared similar memories of kinship care while she was growing up. When she was a child, her house was always full of people. Her family took care of children when their families were going through tough times. Elder Isabella* recalled that her bedroom was set up to create space for her relatives: “I never had my own bedroom. We always had like two sets of bunkbeds in every room in our house, so sometimes there was like 13 people at the dinner table.” Kinship care was practiced throughout her community. She shared that families and communities were closely connected, and the women in the community often knew when families

12 Jeannine Carrière, Julie Mann-Johnson, and Cathy Richardson, “In the Spirit of *Wahkootowin*: Kinship Affiliation as an Antidote to Divisive Identity Politics for Métis Children in Care,” in *Protecting Children: Theoretical and Practical Aspects*, eds. Kathleen Kufeldt, Barbara Fallon, and Brad McKenzie (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press, 2021), 169-185.

13 Krystl Raven, “Ka oopikhtamashook: Becoming Family,” *AlterNative* 14, no. 4 (2018): 319-325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118821170>



needed extra help:

Back when the matriarchs of the family saw what was going on, they would usually intervene before things got to that point where somebody got hurt or the family fell apart. And if the family was totally falling apart... it was like the grandmas and the aunties that took over... and there was adoption without being legally adopted.

– Isabella Matheson*

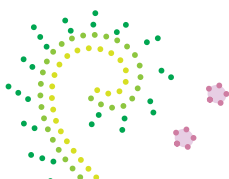
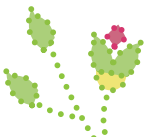
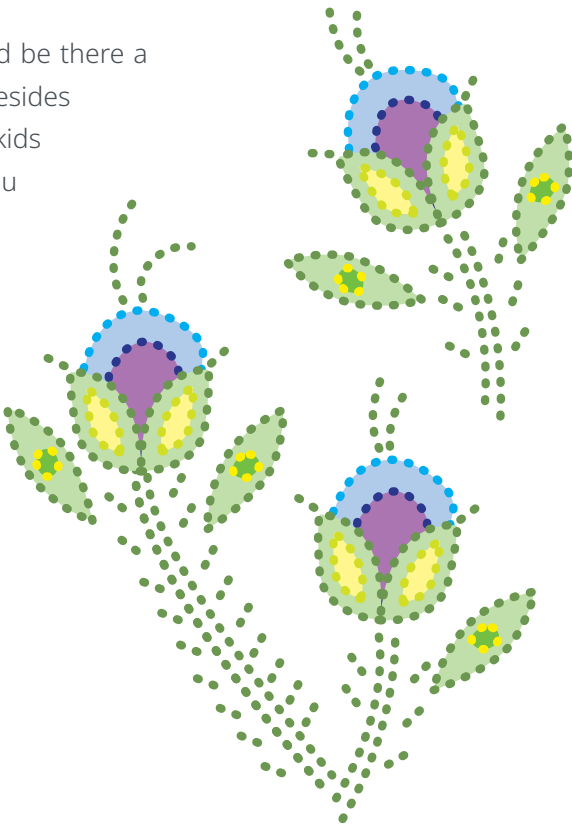
This approach to caring for one another allowed for Métis people to step in and prevent ministry-involvement for families.

In addition to the Elders' childhood memories about kinship care and customary adoption, Elder Fred Paquette spoke about his approach to parenting as a Métis father: “I raised three girls, besides my two. Their friends moved in. [One] moved in and she never left. She was 16 when she left... her parents, well they were having a hard time...” Elder Fred said that this practice was common in his family, as his mother would care for other children:

When I was growing up... my mother always took kids in. They'd be there a couple months, sometimes a year, and she always had them. Besides her own. See the custom was, they always took somebody else's kids in, whether one or two, and raised them in the bad times, you know?

– Fred Paquette

The practice of taking care of children went beyond each individual family, spanning throughout the community.



By Noah (age 8)



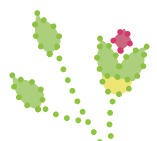


By Lily (age 4)



CHAPTER 4

Growing Up and Raising Métis Children



GROWING UP AND RAISING MÉTIS CHILDREN

This chapter includes of memories from the Elders about growing up, as well as reflections on their experiences of raising families.

Chores

Chores were a big topic for the Elders when they remembered what it was like growing up Métis. The Elders explained that chores were a daily part of life because there was always work to be done. Many Elders described the types of chores they were assigned in their families. There were some differences in chores across the stories, usually because of age and sometimes gender. For instance, Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson spoke about washing clothes and cleaning floors, while Elder Fred Paquette was tasked with splitting and packing wood.

Many of the Elders described farm labour as a daily task, as Elder Verma Kerr shared:

I guess it was probably a typical childhood. I mean, we were out on the farm. We didn't have friends to go and play with. We did what we were told to do, whether it was go get a pail of water or carry firewood in, feed chickens or whatever it was, we learned early. We learned to milk a cow. I was ten, eleven years old, I could drive the tractor... drive a team of horses on a rig raking hay. You got out there and did it, because it had to be done. We weren't a wealthy family, we were a poor family. There was six of us kids and we were dad's helpers, we were mom's helpers. You know, just get out there and do what you were told to do... We worked in the garden, we hoed the garden, we picked those awful potato bugs. Oh, I hated those. There was always something that had to be done. You had to do dishes and you had to sweep floors and as you got older, you know, it got a little heavier.

– Verma Kerr

On the farm, chores included feeding and tending to animals, hauling firewood and water, taking care of the gardens, and housework. Elder Dave Barron recalled the gardens that he and his brothers helped with during their childhood:

We grew great gardens. The first thing my dad did with the older boys when we arrived was dig up the big garden plot and start the garden. We were just in time to get a good harvest that year.

- Dave Barron ¹⁴

14 This story was provided in Elder Dave Barron's Biography from Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Children and Family Services.

Elder Larry Ahdemar spoke about similar tasks, sharing that many of these chores were necessary as they did not have any running water or electricity:

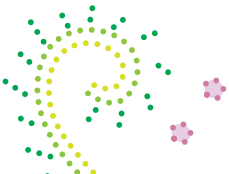
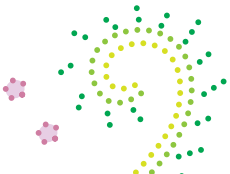
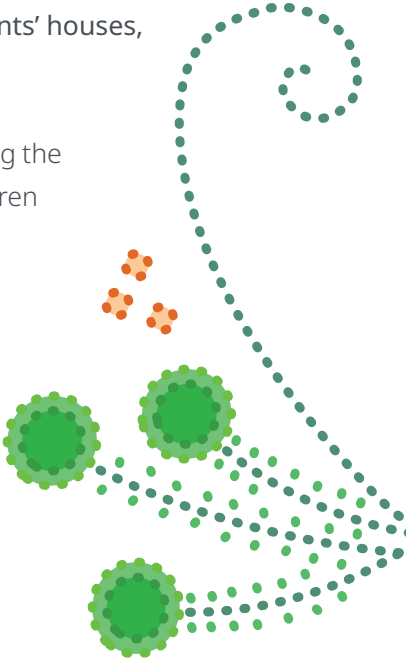
We had a hard life growing up, Métis life, and we were raised on a farm and had to work, you know. Had chores right after school, sawing wood, hauling water, cleaning the barn... we had animals. We had horses and a few cows, and lots of chickens. Yeah, and a big garden. Every year there was a big garden and that was a chore, eh, because we had to haul water.

– Larry Ahdemar

Elder Isabella Matheson* spoke about different chores for children of all ages, as she explained, "Once they were five or six, everybody had little tasks to do. You helped with the dishes, or you helped weed the garden, you know, just little things that were appropriate for your age." Chores were also expected at grandparents' houses, which Elder Marie Zwingli reflected on fondly:

My Grandmother's house was bursting with grandchildren during the summer holidays. Sometimes there would be 10 or more children sleeping on sheepskins all around her bed and wherever they could find space. The young boys slept in the hayloft. There were always chores to do before you would be allowed to go in the lake. Watering the vegetables, feeding the animals, chopping, and piling the wood for the winter, washing clothes in a very unique half barrel contraption that we took turns swinging from side to side. The milk separation was a daily occurrence. Every second or third day, Grannie would make 10 to 12 loaves of bread to feed all those hungry little faces. Her sour cream on a slice of bread was everyone's favourite. Everyone did their part. No fussing. Even the smallest ones would be given pails with chicken feed and would throw this to the free-range chickens. Those were fun times with all the cousins. I do not know how that tiny lady did all that she did with a smile and a peel of laughter when someone did something silly. Sometimes we put on little talent shows for her. Some liked to sing, others liked to watch. There was always a harmonica and guitar available. I do not recall bickering or fighting or any really bad behaviours. The bigger children always watching out for the younger ones, which was an unspoken expectation.

– Marie Zwingli



Chores were an important part of everyday life. They were often shared throughout big families and balanced with a lot of fun activities. Many Elders shared stories about how they developed a strong work ethic because they grew up doing chores:

We always, always had gardening. We always had a small farm. So, we would have a cow or two, we would have pigs and chickens, horses, and my dad always gardened, and we always picked berries. In all the years that I lived there in the beginning of my youth, we didn't have any electricity, we had no water, we had to do our cleaning by hand. So, I remember all the work, and my parents were both hard workers, so I learned a work ethic right from when I was young. Us kids and family had to help out, and mostly us girls did the work in the home and the boys did the outside work, but we could also do that. We would gather wood, we'd get snow, we'd get water, we'd scrub clothing on the washboard...

– Melba Sterling

Elder Melba said that her strong work ethic comes from the strict responsibilities that she had growing up. However, she also spoke fondly about a sense of freedom she had to wander about the land and interact with nature.

Elder Larry Ahdemar indicated that his work ethic was passed down across many generations in his Métis family, as he noted, “My grandpa and granny were very hard-working people, and that’s were my mom got her work ethic and that’s where we got ours.” Additionally, the Elders often shared how they learned how to work from watching their parents. Some of these Elders shared that they started working at a young age. Elder Fred Paquette recounted his first job:

I had my first job when I was eight years old... cutting wood. A guy came around, he owned the café, and he had to have somebody cut wood. There was nobody to do it, and I told him I'd take the job, and he said, “No you're too young.” He said, “I couldn't hire you. You gotta be 16,” or something like that. A couple of days later he was back. He changed his mind. So, all that summer, I cut wood. Then they got me washing a few dishes, then peeling potatoes... I always had a job.

– Fred Paquette

The value of a strong work ethic—and the way that chores can foster a spirit of hard work—were often carried over to the Elders’ own children. Children were brought up learning about work ethic through chores, as Auntie Marie Bercier recalled, “My children all had to work and whatever money they made, they got to spend on their own, under supervision of course. So, my oldest daughter was working, she decided that she was going to do housework.” In addition to sharing within their own families, the Elders were clear that all Métis families should pass on the lessons learned through working hard and completing chores.

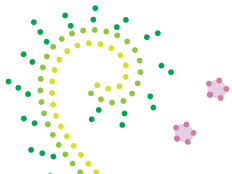
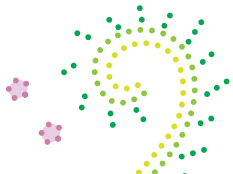
DISCIPLINE

Traditional approaches to discipline were described in many of the Elders’ stories. While there were different types of discipline that the Elders experienced when growing up, most stories included examples of teaching lessons through storytelling and gentle redirection, natural consequences, and positive role-modeling.

Storytelling and Gentle Redirection

Elder Lea Becker explained that storytelling and collective guidance were often used to teach Métis children, rather than forms of punishment. Elder Lea shared that in her family, “there isn’t the punishment per se; it’s life lessons through stories.” Similarly, Elder Francois Morrisette* explained the difference between western and traditional Métis forms of teaching children, with a focus on redirection and explanation:

I remember when I was growing up, a lot of my cousins whose parents were both Métis, they never got the word “no” too often. They were always stopped and explained and redirected. Whereas for ones who were kind of the European and



Métis, the word ‘no’ was quite used prevalently. I mean there was lots of times you thought your baby’s name was “No-No.” So, I think when it comes to raising the children, to raise them traditionally and culturally is the best way. Teach them who they are as Métis people and help them to understand why they did things in a certain way because it’s going to be helpful throughout their life.

– Francois Morrisette*

Elder Francois* went on to share the ways that he was redirected as a child:

It was strict, but it was also kind. It wasn’t demeaning like some of the western discipline is, and it was not a put down. It’s a teaching. The discipline is more of a teaching than it is a discipline. That’s how the majority of my cousins were raised, and I had a fair amount of that at home too, especially when my aunt came and lived with us. We had a lot more of the redirection and things like that.

– Francois Morrisette*

Elder Mazie Beeds once said that her father was strong but also gentle with the way he disciplined his children:

He was such a wonderful father because he did it all his life. I think he started when he was 13 or 14 so he had a lot of practice. He would get angry sometimes with us but he never raised a hand to any of us ever. His voice would go low and he would say “you shouldn’t do that” and everyone would just pay attention.

- Mazie Beeds ¹⁵

Interestingly, Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson also spoke about how you did not hear the word “no” too often:

Nowadays I think we hear more “no” and I think that’s the important thing is to have rules and regulations for our children, and we should teach them that by the time they’re five years old. They should know what is right and wrong, and given those strong guidelines to be respectful. That was always taught.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson



15 This story was provided in Elder Mazie Beeds' Biography from Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Children and Family Services.

Kohkom Stella spoke about the ways in which teachings around respect and responsibilities have been passed on to children. Traditionally, Métis children understood their obligations to the family, as well as the rules.

Natural Consequences

In addition to redirection, the Elders spoke about teaching children through natural consequences. Elder Isabella Matheson* recalled that she was never discouraged from physical activity, like getting messy outside, and if there were natural consequences to her actions, she learned from them. While this was likely a mindful choice, Elder Isabella* noted that it was also necessary since, “families were too busy trying to survive. Whether it was work or farming or food gathering or hunting, there was more energy put into that than into like all the minor irritating stuff.” Elder Isabella* explained that parenting styles have shifted over time, noting that many parents today tend to be excessively restrictive or overprotective. To these parents, Elder Isabella* recommended that they “save their energy for the big things.”

Positive Role-modeling

Elders also spoke about parents influencing their children as part of teaching. For instance, Elder Marie Zwingli recalled her grandmother’s approach to raising her through intentional role-modelling, with a focus on teaching her about common sense:

As I got older, my grandmother told me, “It’s your choice, so if you get hurt, that’s the lesson you’ll have to learn.” That’s how she approached any discipline or teaching. She taught by example and she led by example.

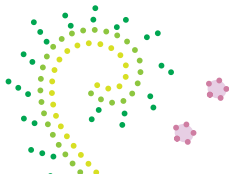
– Marie Zwingli

She explained that while many of her cousins thought that their grandmother was overly strict, Elder Marie appreciated that she was taught to be responsible for her actions.

Learning about Responsibility

The Elders spoke about the ways in which discipline taught them about being responsible. Elder Fred Paquette shared a story about how he learned about the consequences of stealing candy:

I’ll tell you a little story when we were taught not to steal. My mother sent my brother and I to the store with a note for some bread and that, put it on the bill. We went



there and the guy was busy, and there was this great big toffee... It was lying on the counter where he had the candies out, so we got our groceries and we were leaving, and I took one, and next day he was at the house and told my mother that we swiped a chocolate bar, and I guess they put it on our bill, and when Dad came home, Mom said, “We’ll let Granny punish them.” So, we got over there and the first thing she did was she marched us over to Granny and she was going to punish us. There was a show once a week and Granny said, “No shows, you’ll go to church for six months...” We sure learned that one. I don’t like toffee.

– Fred Paquette

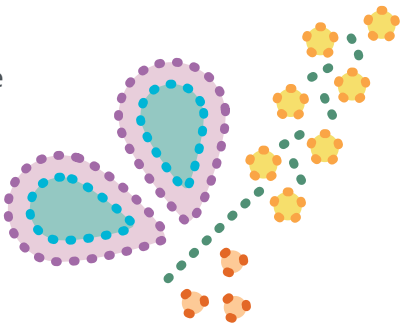
Elder Verma Kerr also shared that the discipline she received from her parents helped to teach her about responsibility. As a child, she knew that she had to follow through with her chores, because there were consequences if you did not abide by the family rules. In recalling these experiences, Elder Verma noted that she was never mistreated as a child, and that the discipline helped her to grow into a responsible person.

Across these stories, the Elders shared their experiences and did not judge the choices that their parents made. While some things in society have changed over time, the themes of redirecting, role-modeling, offering consequences, and teaching responsibility are all examples that may continue to be helpful for Métis families today.

Life Skills

Life skills are important for children and youth as they grow into adults and become independent as Otipemisiwak. Some of the Elders reflected on their experience of teaching life skills to their own children:

We tried to do our best to stay close to the land and to understand the natural way of life. The basics, and teaching life skills. What I call life skills is teaching a kid how to fix his bed when they get out of bed, how to clean their room, how to hang their clothes. Those are skills that are going to carry on for the rest of their life, no matter what they do, even if they are in the corporate



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE OTIPEMISIWAK?

Otipemisiwak is Cree for the “people who own themselves.”¹⁶ Today, it can be linked to independence as a strength among Métis people.

16 Bailey Oster and Marilyn Lizée. *Stories of Métis Women: Tales my Kokum Told Me*. (Calgary, AB: UpRoute, 2021).

world. Those are the skills they are going to need. The basic skills. And I see that we are not doing that with the children today because it has not been passed on to the generation, because everything is money. You can buy your way out of everything. Today there are a lot of young people who see their life, they gotta buy their way out of anything. It’s based on money. But the good part of life doesn’t cost you, really. That is the way we raised our kids is to be not only responsible but to be independent. Otipemisiwak. That’s where that word comes from. To look after themselves.

– Phil Gladue

Elder Phil shared that life skills create a foundation for independence—for living as Otipemisiwak. Similarly, many Elders also spoke about the value of addressing identity, culture, and healing from trauma in relation to teachings about life skills.

Survival Skills

In addition to teaching about housing and finances, discussions around life skills also focused on cooking and sewing. These practical skills are referred to as “survival skills.” Elder Lynda Tilley explained how cooking, while living on the land, is an exercise in creativity. Several Elders explained how traditional survival skills are still important today. Elder Denise McCuaig spoke about using traditional skills for food sovereignty:

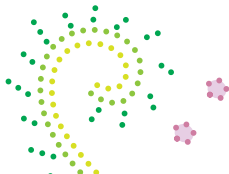
WHAT IS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

Food sovereignty involves people making their own decisions about their food systems. For Indigenous people, food sovereignty involves access to and connection to land to harvest food.

When floods cut our entire community off from our supply chain, I was grateful to know that my children can cook food from scratch, that they can grow their own food in a time when food sovereignty is a challenge, and I think that when we’re talking about child welfare, it’s not always the case but a great majority of the time we are talking about poverty and, so being able to have those traditional values and live more in those traditional ways with that traditional knowledge, it’s a way in which we can be rich, even when we’re impoverished.

– Denise McCuaig

As Elder Denise explained, traditional skills and activities will continue to be important for many generations to come.



Sewing was also described as a valuable life skill. Stories about sewing often included the importance of making and repairing clothing. Elder Jo-Ina Young shared that her mother used to create different styles of clothing for her to wear throughout her youth. With limited finances, many Métis families had to find creative solutions for clothing:

My grandmother didn't do beading, but she did a lot of sewing and mending... patching clothes and mending socks. Nobody does that anymore—they're thrown away. But we used to have those... I call them work socks, those woolen ones, and they're expensive so they showed us how to darn socks.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

My mother knew how to sew so she hit the rummage sales and rebuilt clothes, that kind of thing. So, looking at economy of effort and being able to create something nice out of something that didn't necessarily look nice previously, is the kind of thing that she did.

– Barb Hulme

In addition to being a practical skill, sewing was a fun way to pass time. Elder Verma Kerr said that after she learned to sew at a young age, she was tasked with patching overalls and jeans for her family members. Elder Melba Sterling shared that young people today should know how to complete basic sewing tasks, like attaching buttons, changing zippers, and hemming pants. The Elders would like to see these skills make a comeback among Métis youth because they are still very useful.

Gardening and Nutrition

The Elders spoke about the healthy meals that they would eat growing up. Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson spoke about how simple and nourishing their meals were: “We had good, hearty meals and I think that’s why we’re very strong and very healthy.”

In addition to hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering the Elders shared how gardening has been significant in many Métis families. Many Elders shared stories about the large gardens their families maintained. Elder Larry Ahdemar spoke about the importance of gardens for producing vegetables at a low cost: “we grew everything... a lot of root vegetables for winter. Potatoes, turnips, carrots, beets. You had to in those days because we had no money at all.” Similarly, Elder Francois

Morrisette* shared that gardening was necessary in order to support families:



The gardens were huge. Our garden would take up at least two or three city blocks, and we raised everything from corn, potatoes, beets, you name it, the whole vegetable thing. We raised it, we grew it. And corn on the cob was something we had all the time. I mean it was based on life, the way we were raised... You have to do this so that you would be ready for the winter. So, you did things seasonally so that you would be ready to go into the next season.

– Francois Morrisette*

Planting, harvesting, and preserving food were all seasonal activities. Gardening practices were also long-term, as Elder Fred Paquette remembered, “My mother always had a garden.” In addition to providing food for families, the Elders also spoke about the teachings that gardens can offer young people. Auntie Marie Bercier shared the lessons that she learned as a child, through caring for her own garden:

I think one of the primary things that I learned was planting the garden and watching it grow.... When children pick their first carrot, and they don't even bother to wash the dirt off or scrub it clean or anything else. They put it in their mouth, and nothing tastes this good! And so, you now have a child who will eat carrots and they'll eat tomatoes and they'll eat corn, you know? And then take them out in the wild and if they get strawberry, they think they're wealthy because it tastes so incredible. Even if you have to take wild plants and plant them in your garden. We can all do this, and we can insist that we have a community garden, that has the water, has the facilities that people can use and make use of it. In doing that, then the child becomes accustomed to having the responsibility, and having the joy for something that they took hold of and did. And I'm not saying that you have to have them cultivating this land from start to finish. They can weed, they can get down on their hands and knees and do some weeding. It teaches them to have some pride in something too.

– Marie Bercier

Traditionally, Métis people knew where the food came from and how it was prepared.

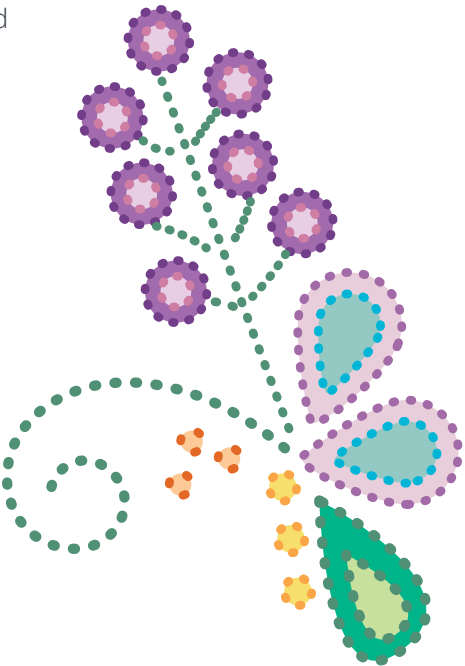
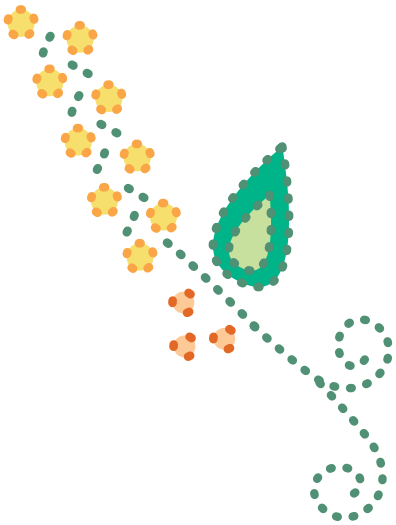
Elder Isabella Matheson* explained that Wahkotowin extends to relationships with the land—including the plants and animals that later become food: “It wasn’t distanced by having migrant workers pick it and then have it processed in a plant, then have it shipped and then have it sold to you. You saw the face of your food.” In these ways, gardening was an important topic for many of the Elders.

When they were living with the land, the Elders never experienced a shortage of food. In fact, it was not until Elder Francois Morrisette* went to his first grocery store that he recalls seeing empty shelves. Yet, many Elders shared stories about growing up in housing that did not have plumbing or electricity:

We never felt poor. We didn’t have running water and that but it’s just the area we lived in. We lived in my grandmother’s log house and then my dad bought a little house, a one-bedroom house, just across the road and it had power... it still had an outdoor bathroom but at least we had power. And he said, “Mum, why don’t you move in my little house?” Because he always worked on the railroad and was never around, and so that’s what we did, and we moved in there and the first thing my father bought was a TV. Oh, that was so exciting. We could actually watch the hockey games live, you know, and then grandma brought the catalog out and we looked for a washing machine, an electric one. I mean those were just great times.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

Similarly, Elder Barb Hulme highlighted that for her, having material things was not connected to happiness: “For me, all I can look at is did we have a lot of money? No, but was I unhappy? No.”



EDUCATION AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

While the Elders spoke about the importance of education, many also shared that school was a difficult place at times. Some Elders spoke about experiences of racism and discrimination when they were growing up.

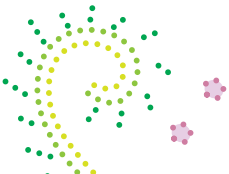
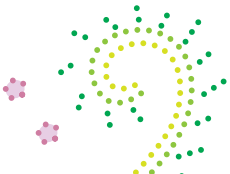
In standing up to bullying, Ellen Ahdemar went on to share that she learned that the best response is to “Always be proud of who you are; you make sure you know who you are, who your family is.” While there were many difficult experiences with the education system, Elder Barb Hulme noted that she truly enjoyed her education experience, as she noted, “I never had a timeframe where I didn’t enjoy being in school.”

Education was described in both a western sense and through culture and storytelling—both forms of education were described as important. Elder Phil Gladue explained that education can come through Métis storytelling:

I like to acknowledge my parents and my grandparents on both sides. My grandfathers on both sides I didn’t know. They were passed on before I was old enough, but I had other grandfathers—many over the years—because they used to take us in... and I learned a lot from those old people. I used to listen to them, and they used to tell stories. The way education was for the Métis—and maybe First Nations too—was storytelling. That is how we got educated was through storytelling. And I’m still doing that today. That is the only way I can write my history. A lot of the times it is humour too. And you have to be a good listener, because if you didn’t listen the Elders would not say anymore. They would stop because there was disrespect here. They wouldn’t tell you; they would just stop or leave. And that’s the way it was in our culture. And lots of the stories had to do with the land and the animals and the environment. Those are the types of stories we had. The stories that we could use and learn from it. Those are the kinds of stories.

– Phil Gladue

Elder Phil Gladue went on to explain that a cultural foundation is the most important form of education: “I always stressed get educated. No matter what culture, no matter who you are, get educated. Culture first. Your identity, your culture, your history, and then the mainstream education.”





The Elders spoke about the ways in which teachings should be openly shared with Métis children, youth, and families. This can be done through role modelling and sharing stories. Teachings can also be shared through cultural activities, like beading and cooking. Elder Isabella Matheson* emphasized the importance of bringing multiple generations together. For Elder Phil Gladue, one of the most important elements of sharing is to “create safety and honesty,” which is particularly important for children and youth, as he notes, “when we are happy that is when we learn the best.” Similarly, Elder Jo-Ina Young underlined the need for sharing teachings in a gentle way:

I think that is the way you teach anything. You don't reprimand or go, “You shouldn't have done that.” You teach it in a way where I can do that now, and that is the way of learning, I think because... if you embarrass people, they don't even want to learn about it, you know? You can trigger anger, too... Then you've lost them.

– Jo-Ina Young

Elder Jo-Ina's perspective is that shaming is not a good form of teaching. With a focus on productive and positive approaches, the Elders often spoke about sharing through storytelling, as well as through mentoring and role-modelling. For example, Ellen Ahdemar shared how values can be taught by demonstration:

Most of the time it was, I'll show you. So, we got taught to do things and then they would show us and then it's stuck in your head. Instead of having to learn it on your own, we always had teachers around us to show us how to do things.

– Ellen Ahdemar

Similarly, Elder Phil Gladue noted that he learned from Elders in his community, who observed and guided children as they grew up:

People are watching you all the time, since the time you crawled, people are watching you. And that's how you become an Elder. It starts down there when you are crawling. In a community, people are seeing how you grew up, how you carry yourself. Those are all values that you learn when you are younger. And people are seeing that, what you put into the community and how you help out, those are things that really make you a Métis. Not just take from the community but put in. So that's how I understood my Elders and my parents, my grandparents—watching them and not only talking about it but doing the actions.

– Phil Gladue

As Elder Phil explained, teachings begin from a young age, and this is viewed as life-long preparation to become an Elder.

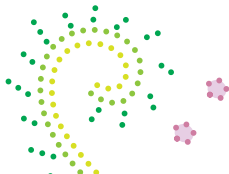
Everyone has a Gift

Several Elders shared that every person carries a gift. Some of the Elders shared their own gifts. Elder Lea Becker said, “My role as an Elder as I see it is to be a support to everyone... We all try our best and we're gifted in different ways.” Elder Jo-Ina Young also shared that all Métis people have their own gifts:

Everybody has their own gift. So, just because I do things that way, I mean, other people can go in, and they can do Métis cooking, or they might have knowledge about their own family or a story they'd like to tell. There are all kinds of things, there's not just one way of doing it. It's got to be a community going into these schools, it's got to be a community lifting up these children. It's like the Métis sash, that one string can be broken and it's really not doing any good. But when they're all together, they're a force to be reckoned with. They're strong. This one can be weak, but the rest of them are holding it together.

– Jo-Ina Young

As Elder Jo-Ina explained, it is a community effort to lift people up so that they can each discover the gifts that they carry.



LII BONN ZAAFAYR DI VII: THINGS YOU ENJOY DOING

While there are many things that can fit within lii bonn zaafayr di vii, the Elders commonly spoke about the fun they had during kitchen parties, their love of sports, their mixed feelings about technology, and the value of playing outside.

Kitchen Parties

Elders shared stories about growing up around lots of their own family and other Métis families. They would visit each other, play games, and have kitchen parties.

Gatherings and kitchen parties often included music, which was commonly shared in stories about happy Métis families, as Elder Lynda Tilley shared:

A happy home is music. I mean, the Métis, the First Nations, all were born with music and if it wasn't the fiddle, it was the drums and it was whatever. And I love, I mean, I play banjo... well sort of. But anyways, it's fun.

– Lynda Tilley

Elder Larry Ahdemar spoke about how important music was within his family while he was growing up. Similarly, Elder Marie Zwingli recalled her experience of growing up in a musical family, noting, “My oldest sister and her husband had a band, and they were always performing. So, on Friday night until Sunday night, they were performing and partying.” Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson shared that there was always music in her home, too:

There was always music around as Métis people. There was always music. If you couldn't play the music, then there was the radio to dance to or sing along to. Those were those special things. Métis love music and having fun and work hard. They work hard, have fun, time out to go and have some fun.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

WHAT DOES LII BONN ZAAFAYR DI VII MEAN?

Lii bonn zaafayr di vii includes activiites, friendships, sports, cultural events, and programs—all of the things that you enjoy doing.¹⁷



Kitchen parties, filled with music and dancing, were family and community events. Elder Isabella Matheson* shares that kitchen parties were seasonal in her family: "They [my family] would clear the living room out and everybody in the family again musical, so music was very important."

Elder Francois Morrisette* shared his experience with kitchen parties, which included learning to dance with family:

Wintertime was the best season because that's when you would go around and visit everyone, and you had a lot of dances. My grandma used to have these get togethers, even during the summer... they call them kitchen parties, but they used just to call them a gathering. All my uncles played an instrument. I remember my uncle used to sit and play the fiddle for hours and hours and hours. And my dad was a Scotsman and he couldn't jig but he used to call all the square dances so I remember my uncles got him one of these wooden crates that they put in the corner and my dad would stand on and call all these dances. And us kids, all our older aunts would grab us and try to get us to dance. And when you got tired, you just threw a bunch of clothes or coats under a chair and that's where you went to sleep until it was over... It was great because the whole family was always together and we learned to get along that way.

– Francois Morrisette*

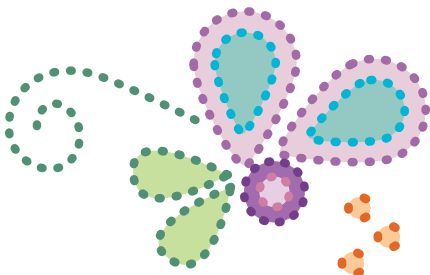
Additionally, Elder Ellen Ahdemar recalled how she was always included in kitchen parties as a child:

Growing up, we were included in everything. Sometimes we'd be sleeping underneath the table or sometimes my dad would play for dances... We all had to learn to play the guitar, if you wanted to be a part of that family, you had to get up there and sing and help and go and get the older people, in those days, to, a lot of them didn't have partners, so there you were half asleep trying to dance at night time with dad playing the fiddle.

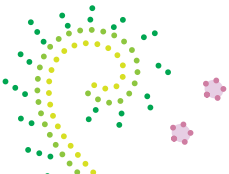
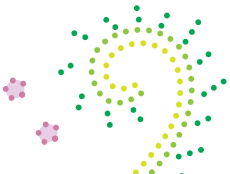
– Ellen Ahdemar

WHAT ARE KITCHEN PARTIES?

Kitchen parties are seasonal gatherings held in many Métis family homes. Kitchen parties are full of music and dancing.



17 Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services. “Belonging and connection assessment” (2024).



Kitchen parties tended to be large family events, where multiple generations would participate. The Elders spoke fondly about how fun it was to be included in these parties.

Sports

In telling stories about their childhoods, some of the Elders described their competitive spirit, which they channeled through sports. Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson recalled her gift for all kinds of sports: “I was allowed to play all the sports that I could. That was strong in our Métis culture. We were all very competitive even amongst each other in the family.” Elder Larry Ahdemar shared that it was perhaps his talent that led to an unpleasant reception in the field: “I was pretty good at sports, and they would boo at me, eh. You know, I was pretty good. And whether they didn’t like it because I was good or because I was Native, Métis, I don’t know.” In addition to participating in organized sports, some Elders spoke about the fun they would have playing games with neighbourhood children in the streets. These games were described as good fun that required little money.

Technology and Play

The Elders spoke about the first time technology was introduced into their lives. For instance, Elder Melba Sterling said, “I remember the first time I saw a telephone, the first time I saw a TV. It wasn’t until I was 15.” Technology was described as both helpful and challenging when it comes to parenting. Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson spoke about the challenges that come with introducing technology to young children, and how it can be used too much: “I love technology. There’s a lot of great information and great things but there’s too much technology given to these kids at an early age.” She also noted that society is still learning about the impact that technology can have on sleep and other important aspects of human development.

Elder Mazie Beeds also shared that she appreciates how people can find information about Métis culture on the internet: "It’s all on the internet. Find it! I love the internet it’s like living in a museum." ¹⁸

18 This story was provided in Elder Mazie Beeds' Biography from Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Children and Family Services.

So, while technology can be helpful, it can also be overused. The Elders would like to see children, youth, and adults limit their screentime and spend more energy being physical and connecting to the land. Elder Larry Ahdemar advised that children and youth should “get off that little computer thing... get out and go play some ball or go for a walk.” Additionally, Kohkom Stella Erasmus spoke about the importance of connecting with nature: “go out and experience the world, go smell the roses or the dirt or whatever. And dirt has a very nice smell if you have that nice clean dirt. There’s just so much out there.” Clearly, there was a common theme of encouragement for connecting with nature, being active outside, and taking a break from technology. The Elders believe that children, youth, and adults may all benefit from listening to this guidance.

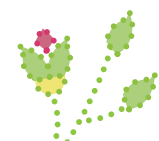
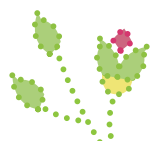
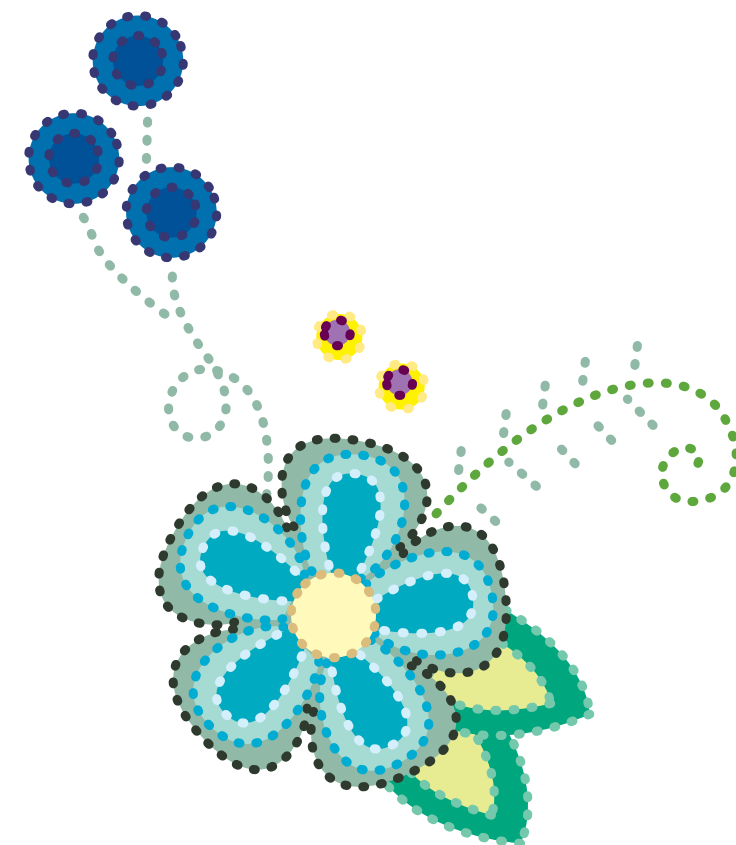




By Emerance (age 4)

CHAPTER 5

Métis Values



MÉTIS VALUES

Values arose throughout the stories, perspectives, and teachings that the Elders shared. These values were each described in a Métis way.

Respect

Respect is an important part of restoring traditional Métis ways of caring for one another. Respect was described as loving and valuing yourself, and your people. In terms of respect for self, Elder Phil Gladue shared, “my mother, she taught me how to love myself. That’s what she taught me: love yourself. Know who you are. Be respectful to yourself.” The Elders shared that in addition to having love and respect for yourself, it is important to show respect for each other. Elder Verma Kerr explained that respect is the foundation for positive relationships. Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson explained the importance of having rules and guidelines for children to teach them ways that they can show respect for themselves, as well as respect for their family:

Children should know what is right and wrong, and given those strong guidelines to be respectful. That was always taught... respect everyone. There are other things out there. You didn't go breaking things or damaging other people's property or anything, and you looked after your own clothing because that's all you had.

– Stella Erasmus Johnson

The Elders also highlighted that they were raised to respect Elders. Elder Verma Kerr explained that these teachings carry forward beyond childhood and into adulthood. She would like to see more effort put towards teaching children to respect and listen to their Elders.

Elder Melba Sterling shared some of the ways that she has been teaching youth about respect and responsibility in terms of self, others, and property:

The other thing I talk to the kids about is the three R's: respect for yourself, respect for others and responsibility for your actions. So that's all they need to know to start with.... I talk to them [the youth] about respecting a house because whether you are renting or owning, you need to respect a house because a house is looking

after you. It's a roof over your head and you need to respect it by maintaining it, by looking after it, and cleaning it because a house needs to be maintained.

– Melba Sterling

The Elders spoke about ways of teaching children and youth about respect through land-based activities. They explained that appreciation for land and animals can influence the way you treat them. Specifically, Elder Ellen Ahdemar explained that witnessing her father hunt taught her to value each animal’s life and to never waste any parts of the animal. Elder Lynda Tilley explained how land-based teachings influence all other areas of life, noting, “when you have respect for the land, you have respect for yourself, and you have respect for the people you deal with.” The values that Elder Lynda taught her children through land-based teachings have been passed on across generations.

RESPONSIBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Responsibility and independence, including how to take care of yourself, were important values in the stories that the Elders shared. This included stories about learning leadership skills and self-sufficiency at a young age. Elder Jo-Ina Young spoke about the strong leadership skills that Métis women have had throughout history:

My mom was a very powerful woman. My dad was very, very kind and very, very nice. But you can see, and I'm called bossy at times... I think that's just an assertive Métis woman and I think that the Métis women through history, you see that they were very strong and very strong-willed and that. So, you could see that coming up through my family too.

– Jo-Ina Young

For many Elders, independence and leadership skills are positive qualities for Métis people to have. Some Elders spoke specifically about nurturing healthy independence for Métis children:

I think that we need to give the children more autonomy. This hovering we do now, I feel like it's almost disrespectful to the children. They will get themselves into difficulties. Children and young people today need to learn how to problem-solve so that they can get themselves out of situations. We cannot always jump in and

fix everything for them. Making mistakes is what creates learning. Most children know right from wrong by the time they are ready to go to school and interact with other children. We want to celebrate their successes and not focus so much on their mistakes. As long as we are not rushing in to fix everything for them, they will evolve.

– Marie Zwingli

As Elder Marie shared, these teachings will help to build up children’s self-esteem and set them up for a positive future.

TOLERANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness and tolerance were described as important values in supporting other people in the community. The Elders highlighted tolerance and forgiveness as some of the most important values in Métis families and communities; forgiveness and tolerance help to mend the rifts within Métis communities. These values are particularly important when supporting community members that are re-connecting with their Métis culture, identity, and community connections.

LOVE AND KINDNESS

The Elders spoke about the power of leading with love and supporting each other in the community. Elder Lea Becker said that love has a ripple effect, where your impact will be much broader than you originally imagined: “if you share love and continue the good work, it’s not going to fail. I think it will travel and it will get bigger. That’s how I see it, like an ice cube just melts and spreads all over.” Elder Melba Sterling shared that while there is kindness in the world, it is important to increase efforts of supporting one another:

Encouraging kindness and doing kind acts for each other—I try to do that every day. Lots of times, what I’ll do is if I know one of the youth is having a hard time, I’ll take a little bag and I’ll just hang it on their door and I’ll put some little thing

on there: a chocolate bar, maybe a candy, it could be a t-shirt that they admired, something... just anything. So, I hang it there and they know who it’s from, but I don’t say who it’s from, so they always thank me for that. So just little acts of kindness I try to do. Or I phone... I have quite an extensive list of friends here and there, and out of the blue I’ll just phone them and say, “I was just thinking about you, how are you doing?” Just touching base. Those are just simple things and I think to try and teach them.

– Melba Sterling

Elder Ellen Ahdemar said that she would like to see more opportunities to teach young people about the Métis practice of supporting others in the community:

I think our young people should be taught that they should help each other. You know, if there was someone down and out in our community, everyone was out there. They were all helping get the wood in, if the dad broke his leg or something, everybody would be getting that wood in before winter. I think kids should learn that kind of stuff and don’t run away from work.

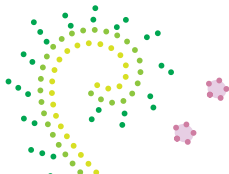
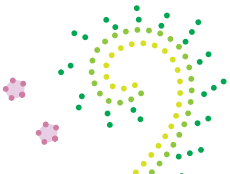
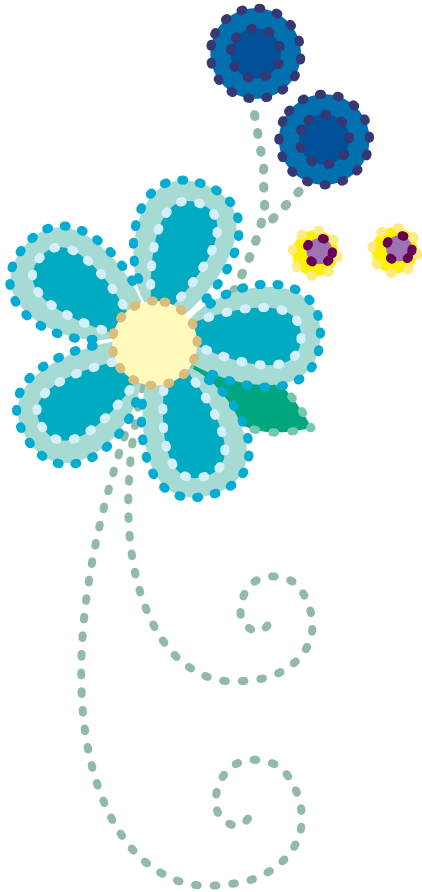
– Ellen Ahdemar

Elder Joyce Munro shared a story about how she encourages young people to assist others, noting that helping others is what Métis people do:

We were at the vegetable gardens in Ashcroft and this woman was putting stuff in her trunk and I told [the youth], “Go over and help her. It doesn’t look like she’s having an easy time,” and [the girl] didn’t want to go. I said, “You’re a Métis. Get over there and help her.” So she did, and she came back all happy because she’d helped her, so things like that I’d teach her, to help out.

– Joyce Munro

Elder Joyce demonstrated a positive way of instilling Métis values and traditional practices while mentoring young people. This is another step towards bringing back Métis values and ways of being.



GENEROSITY AND GRATITUDE

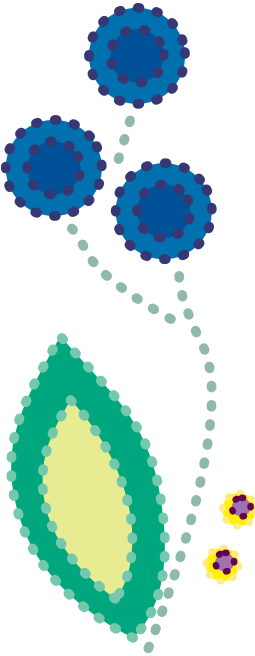
The Elders shared strong examples of generosity and gratitude that have existed for many generations. Even when families were living in poverty, they found ways to share what they had in order to help and lift each other up. Elder Joyce Munro spoke about the tradition of helping each other and sharing with others in need. With a similar perspective, Elder Lea Becker shared her father’s practice of sharing what he had, even if he did not have much for his own family:

This was something that I didn’t understand growing up because I wasn’t raised in a big nucleus of Métis people, but my father would empty our cupboards to give to somebody who was hungry and so that’s one thing that I noticed was the sharing and giving of the people to other people who hurt.

– Lea Becker

As Elder Lea explained, people did not need to be well off in order to be generous. Métis families often shared the limited resources that they had without question. Additionally, Elder Barb Hulme explains that sharing is a responsibility among Métis people—both in terms of sharing tangible items, as well as knowledge.

In addition to being generous, the Elders demonstrated the importance of being thankful for everything in life.



PRIDE

The Elders’ stories show that pride is a strength among Métis people. Auntie Marie Bercier explained that pride is not related to arrogance, as is often taught in western culture:

The White man says pride is bad. But it’s not. It depends how it’s put to use. If it’s because you’ve accomplished something good, then yes, but if it’s pride because you’re a millionaire—but in the meantime you’re not a very good person—to me that’s being prideful, that’s not because you’ve earned it.

– Marie Bercier

Elder Mazie Beeds shared that her father taught her to be proud to be Métis:

We were raised that we should be proud of what we were. We were strong independent people, that the government never gave us anything, that we worked for what we got, that we were well mannered, well dressed. Being Metis was something to be proud of. There is so much to our heritage that should be applauded and celebrated.

- Mazie Beeds ¹⁹

Several Elders shared that all Métis children and youth should be proud of who they are. And more specifically, Elder Joyce Munro spoke about how learning about Métis culture and identity is important for developing a sense of pride for Métis children, youth, and families:

I think it makes them proud of who they are, in that they have a place of belonging... They get to know who they are... You see, I never had to deal with that [the shame] because well you knew right from the beginning who you were. And I think we were lucky because we were never ashamed that we were part Indian. That’s what they called us in those days, or half-breeds.

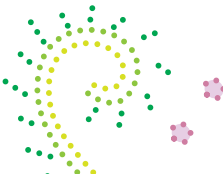
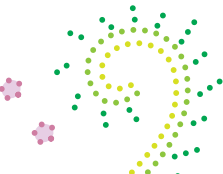
– Joyce Munro

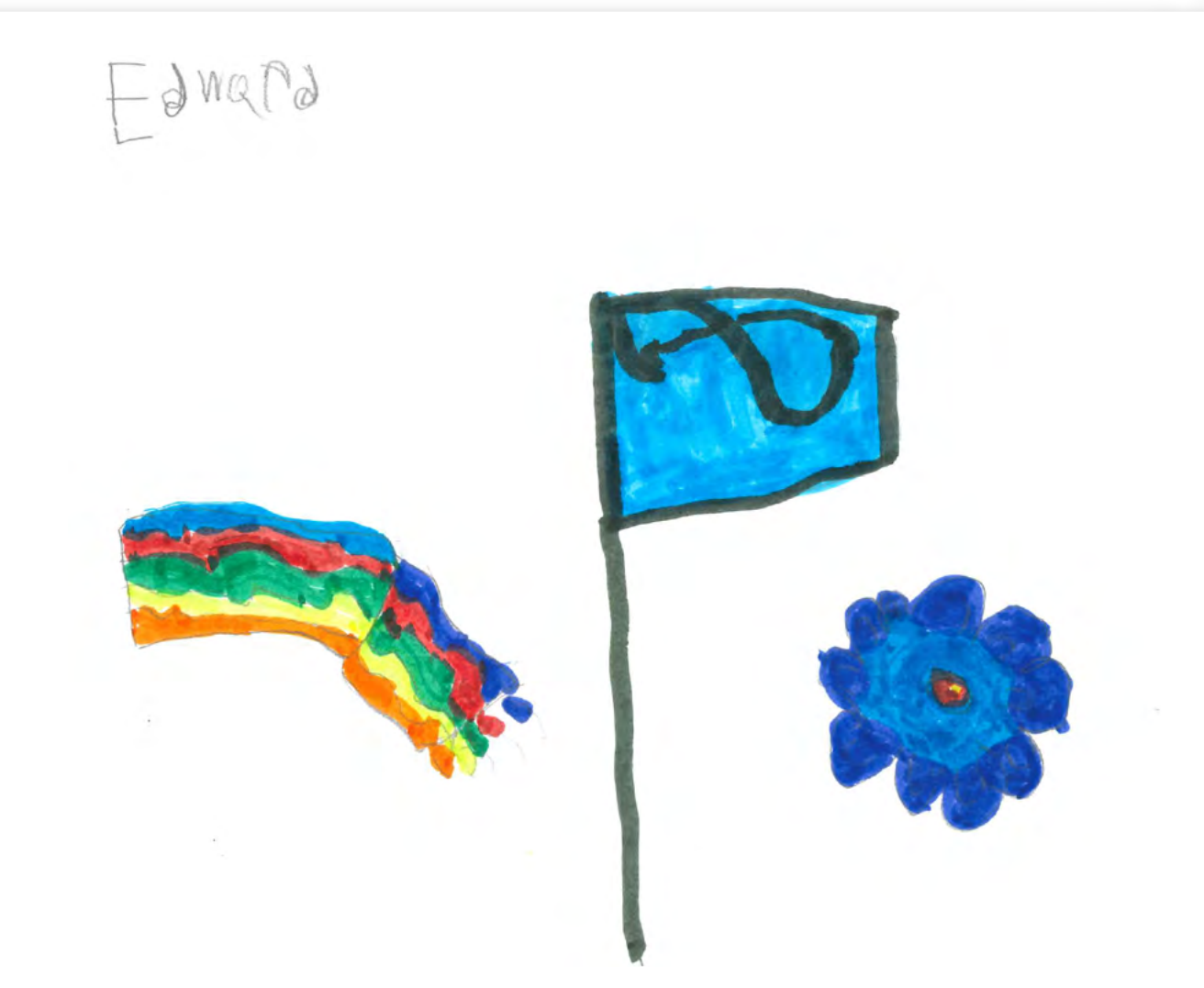
As Elder Joyce shared, it is important dedicate time and resources for lifting up younger Métis people to ensure that they can develop a sense of who they are.

HUMOUR

Lastly, the Elders spoke about the value of finding humour and joy in life, as they spoke about creating opportunities to laugh and to visit others. Elder Melba Sterling shared, “That’s one thing that I really enjoy is just talking and laughing and visiting. I really enjoy that. I use humour a lot... Yeah, we laugh a lot. I really enjoy it. It just brings me joy.” Similarly, Elder Phil Gladue stated, “You have to have humour. You can’t be so serious. I never want to be too serious.” Humour is a way to share joy, which has been an important part of thriving families and communities.

19 This story was provided in Elder Mazie Beeds’ Biography from Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Children and Family Services.



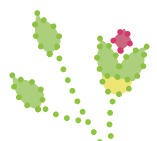


By Edward (age 13)



CHAPTER 6

Conclusion to Elders' Stories

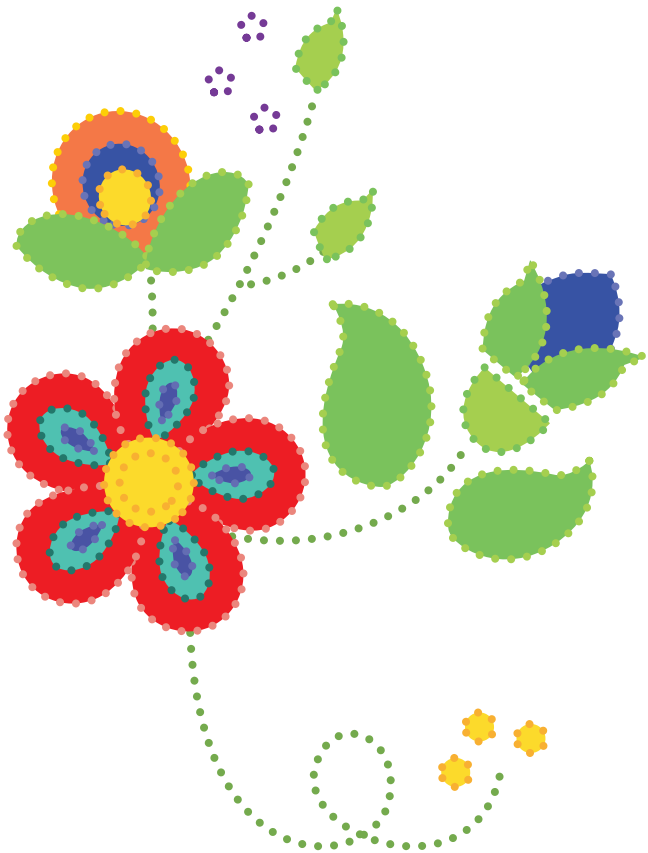


CONCLUSION TO THE ELDERS' STORIES

This book presents a collection of Métis Elders' stories, including reflections from both childhood and child-rearing, and the values that guide Métis families—past and present. The Elders' stories included journeys of understanding what it means to be Métis, opportunities for sharing teachings about Métis culture and identity with others, and the terms that Métis people have used to define themselves. They also spoke about connection to land and spirit, different ways of knowing, and Métis languages. The Elders shared teachings about Métis kinship; in many of their families, culture was embedded in systems of care so that children never grew up without family.

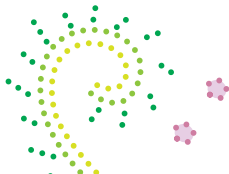
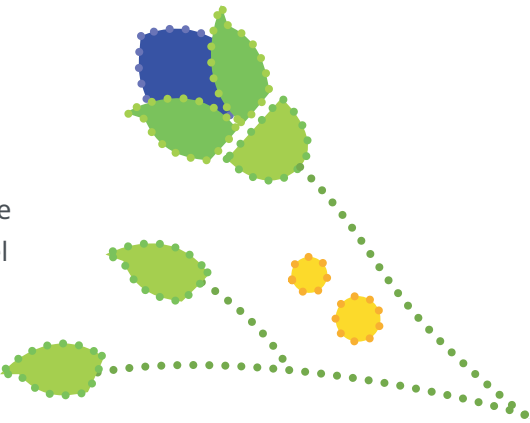
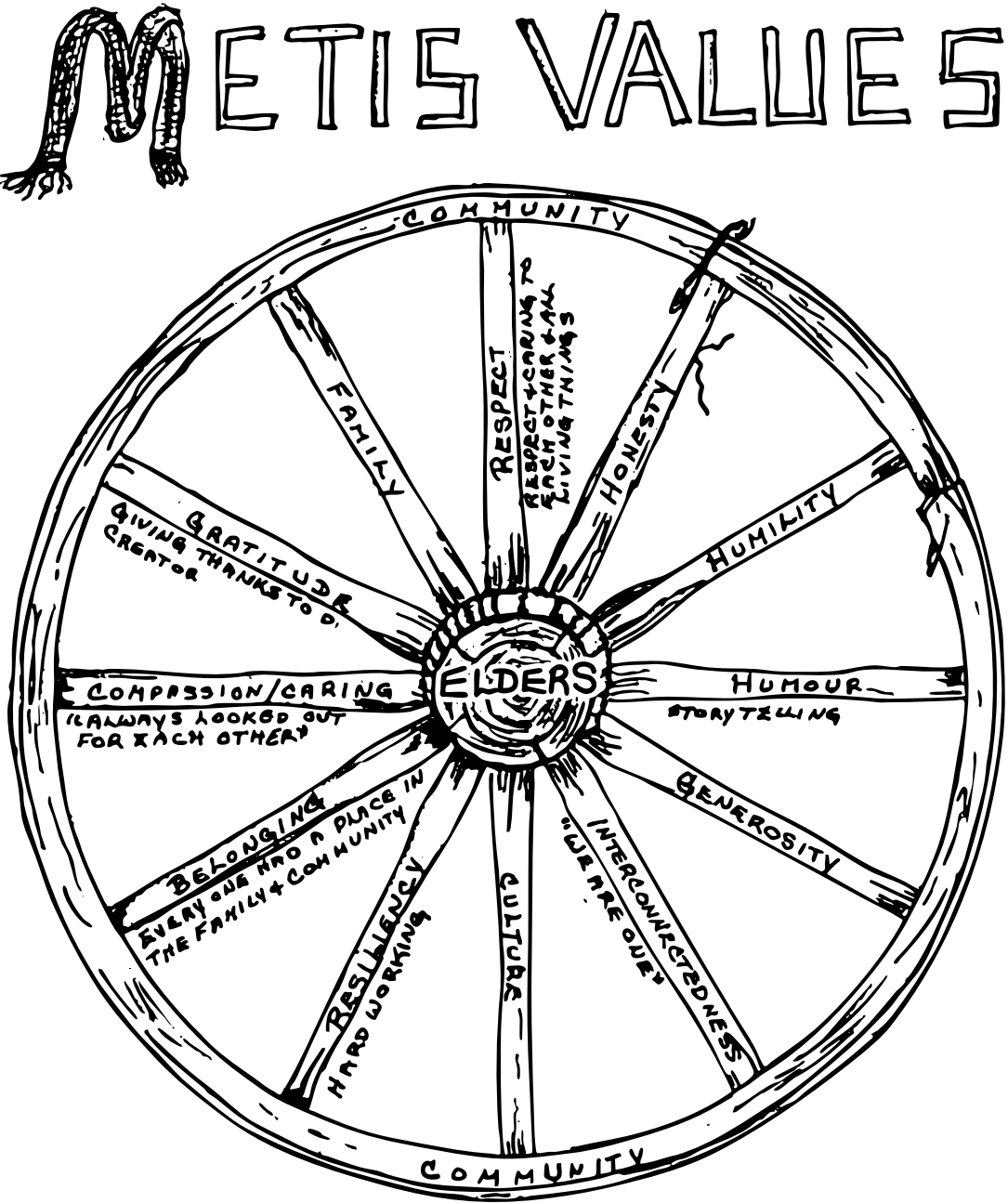
In speaking about their experiences during childhood, as well as their reflections from raising their own children, the Elders provided many interesting stories. They spoke about the chores they had during their childhood, as well as the connection between childhood chores and the development of a strong work ethic. They described what discipline was involved within their families, touching on diverse experiences during their childhoods and later as parents. They also spoke about the fun that was had during kitchen parties, as well as sports and play. Topics discussed also included life skills; these are survival skills that many Elders believe have become less common, but are still important in the world today.

While they did not aim to provide a complete list of all Métis values, the Elders covered many including respect, responsibility and independence, tolerance and forgiveness, love and kindness, generosity, pride, and humour. Within each of these areas, the Elders speak about the ways that they were taught about traditional values, as well as



ways for sharing teachings with others. With respect to values, it is also important to acknowledge the work of the late Elder DeeDee Hurd, who illustrated a Red River Wheel model of traditional Métis values (Figure 1).

Figure 1. A visual depiction of Michif Values illustrated by Michif Elder DeeDee Hurd





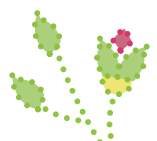
Elder DeeDee Hurd’s model highlights some of the values shared by Elders in this book, including respect, generosity, love, humour, and gratitude. Her depiction of resilience aligns with the Elders’ stories of work ethic, survival, and ingenuity. The Michif Values Wheel also highlights the importance of family and community, culture, belonging, and honesty; these are principles that are reflected within the Elders' perspectives on Métis identity and kinship.

With generosity, the 20 Métis Elders represented in this book have shared the richness of Métis teachings for raising children and supporting families. The teachings include lessons, beliefs, lived experience, and morals. Each of these messages is rooted in Métis culture.

The Elders have been clear about the importance of sharing these stories with Métis children, youth, and families widely. Traditionally, teachings were shared through many different generations; the Elders are eager to find new ways of sharing as families work to strengthen their own ways of returning to culture, language, and teachings. The teachings shared here may contribute to the remembering and reclaiming of family stories, and the ability to share these memories with the future generations.

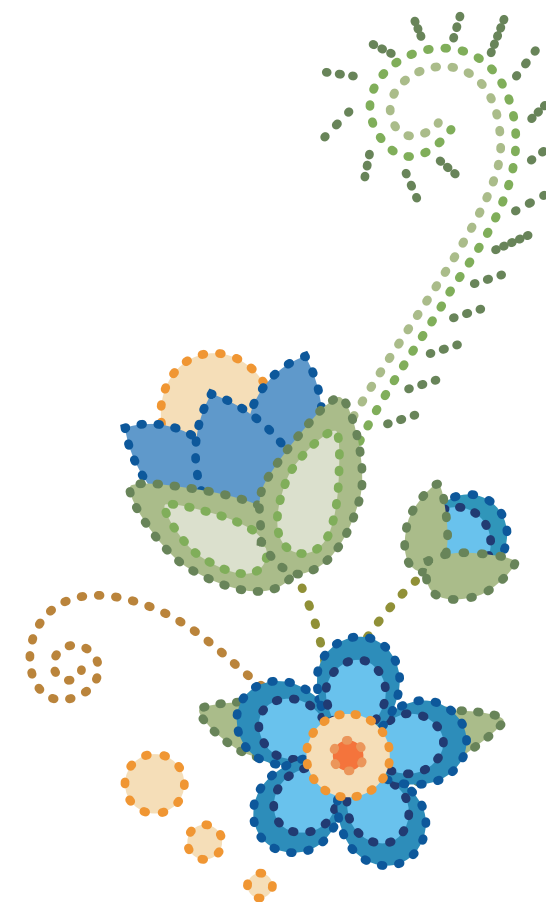


By Ben (Age 6)



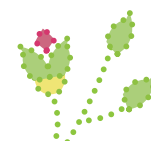
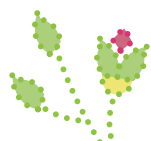


By Chloe (Age 20)



APPENDIX A

Prayers



PRAYERS

This section includes a collection of prayers that were written and collected by Métis Elders who have supported and worked at LMO. This section begins with prayers and songs in both Michif and English. In some cases, a phonetic translation is also provided. The next section shares prayers that express gratitude. Following this, there are prayers that were written to support Métis children, youth, and families at LMO. The final section of prayers includes those for special occasions and holidays.

Prayers and Songs with Michif Translation

Generic Prayer – Written by Elder Norman Fleury ²⁰

Li Bon Jeu, nutr Kriiateur, li kooraaih miyinaan, paray chii itayhtamaak, kwaayesh kapimoutayhk, maarsii chii itwayah ka.

Li Boñ Jew, not Krii-a-tour, li coor-aazh me-yi-nawn, paw-ray chee tay-ta-mawk, kway-yesh kapi-moo-take, marsee chee t-way-ak ka.

God, our Creator, give us courage; let us be of one mind, make us righteous, thankful, and proud.

Kishchiitayimoyaahk. Lii Michif wiichihik aansaambl chii atouchkaychik, sourtoo lii vyeu chii aapachihayahkoo.

Kisk-chee-tay-imo-yak. Lee Michif we-chi-hik awn-sawmb chee tooshkawchik soor-too lee vee-you chee aw-patch-i-haya-kook.

Help the Métis to work together especially utilizing our elders as teachers and preparing our youth for the future.

Li zhen chii kishinamawachik poor li taan ki vyaen. Li Bon Jeu, la direksyoon miyinaan, itayta chimiyoutayhtamak, li shmaen.

Li zhen chee kish-nama-wa-chik poor li tawn ki vee-yañ. Li Bon Jew la di-rek-syoon me-yi-naan i-tay-ta chimi-you-it-ay-ta-mak, li sh-mañ.

God, give us direction and inspiration as we build a road for the Métis Nation in this country.

Chii oushihtaayaak pour la Naasyoon di Michif ota dans nutr piyii. Sa praan lii famii di Michif chii shoohkshichik kishpin la.

Chee oosh-taw-win-awk poor la naw-sy-oon de Michif ota dawn not pie-yee. Sa prawn lee fam-ee di Michif chee showk-shi-chik kis-pin la.

We must have strong Métis families in order to have a

Naasyoon di Michif chii shoohkaak. Maarsii, d’twaanaan

Naw-sy-ooñ di Michif chee show-kawk. Maar-see d’twn-naan

Strong Métis Nation. Thank you and amen.

Louis Riel – Written by Elder Dave Barron; Michif translation by Elder Norman Fleury

Ga nakamoon enn shaansoon
poor kiiya
I’ll sing you a song,

Pi li vyayloon ka kitooshchikew
And the fiddle will play,

Louis Riel pimatishiw
Vivila Louis Riel,

Louis Riel, Louis Riel, Louis Riel,
Louis Riel,
Louis Riel, Louis Riel, Louis Riel,
Louis Riel,

Nutr shef Louis Riel
Our leader Louis Riel

Kaahkiiyow lii Michif Ka mamoo
nankamoowuk ooma la
shaansoon
Let every Michif join in this song,

Giniraal Dumont pimatishiw
Vivila General Dumont,

Giniraal Dumont, Giniraal
Dumont, Giniraal Dumont,
Giniraal Dumont
General Dumont, General
Dumont, General Dumont,
General Dumont

Giniraal Dumont pimatishiw
Vivila General Dumont.

Ga kitooshchikaan enn tune avik
moon vyayloon
I’ll play a tune on the fiddle today

Poor la klosh di Batoche aen pay
kiiwayt
For the return of Bell of Batoche,

Shaywaypish la klosh,
shaywaypish la klosh
Ring that bell, ring that bell,

Shaywaypish la klosh,
shaywaypish la klosh
Ring that bell, ring that bell,

Shaywaypish la klosh di Batoche
Ring that bell of Batoche

Kaahkiiyow lii braav Michif
To all the brave Michif

Kii Nipoowuk poor lii drway
Who died for the cause,

Tipaymishoowuk
Otipemisiwak,

Tipaymishoo, Tipaymishoo,
Tipaymishoo
Otipemis, Otipemis, Otipemis,

Tipaymishoo, Tipaymishoowuk
Otipemisis, Otipemisiwak.

Poor toot lii braav faam ka
niipowichik akootii leu zom
To all the brave ladies who stood
by their men,

Tipaymishoowuk
Otipemisiwak,

Tipaymishoo, Tipaymishoo,
Tipaymishoo
Otipemis, Otipemis, Otipemis,

Tipaymishoo, Tipaymishoowuk
Otipemisis, Otipemisiwak.

Ga nakamoon enn shaansoon
poor kiiya
I’ll sing you a song,

Pi li vyayloon ka kitooshchikew,
And the fiddle will play,

Louis Riel pimaatishiw,
Vivila Louis Riel,

Louis Riel, Louis Riel, Louis Riel,
Louis Riel,
Louis Riel, Louis Riel, Louis Riel,
Louis Riel,

Nutr shef Louis Riel
Our leader Louis Riel

20 For audio, go to: <https://www.Métismuseum.ca/resource.php/149529>



Métis Prayer – *Written by Elder Dave Barron; Michif translation by Elder Norman Fleury*

Nutr graand isprii, Maarsii poor li maajii, ita ka wiikiyahk pi li bitaen ka kii miiyahk.

Great Spirit, we thank you for the food, shelter and clothing you have provided.

Maarsii ditwaan poor kahkiyow lii bonn zaafayr di vii alaantoor niyanaan.

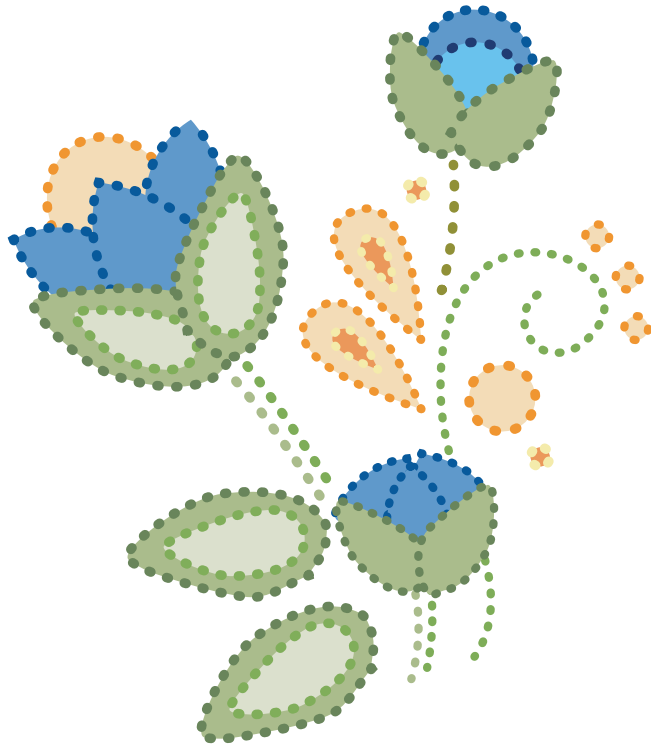
We thank you for all of the good things of life around us.

Maarsii poor nutr bonn aamii pi nutr koonpaanyii aen miiytooyaahk.

We thank you for the good friends and companionship we extend to each other.

Di kriiateur, ooma kishchi, Maarsii poor kahkiyow ka kii miiyiyaahk daan li moond, la pae, la saantii pi la bonn vii.

To the creator, above all, we thank you for the wonders, nature, peace, health and tranquility.



Métis Prayers of Gratitude

Dinner Blessing – *Written by Elder Mazie Beeds*

Creator, bless this meal and all that it celebrates. Bless the hands that have prepared this bounty.

Bless the farmers and workers who tended the gardens and harvest from which we feast.

We thank you for the nature which surrounds us.

We thank you for the plants, animals and the serenity which is a part of this beautiful city of Kamloops which we call home.

We celebrate your wondrous ways and we thank you as we celebrate this gathering.

Maarsii.

Métis Prayer – *Written by Elder Melba Sterling*

I would like to take a moment to recognize the traditional lands that we are currently on, where the original 215 were found, honored and will be forever remembered. I would like to take a moment to also acknowledge that many of us are visitors to this territory where we live, work, laugh and play. We walk alongside the Secwépemc peoples who teach us to be responsible stewards of this beautiful space. Hiy hiy, Maarsii.

Dear Creator, we ask that you bless our Métis people who are gathered here today.

May we continue to be proud, adventurous, industrious, independent, resourceful, adaptable, hard-working and resilient.

Please recognize our creativeness; in our ability to problem solve in how we can make use with what we have.

We also ask you to honour our entrepreneurs and appreciate them for their achievements and dedication.

Please help us to teach our young to gain an appreciation for conservation, a respect of the environment.

Help us to learn all we can, so we may pass this information to the future generations.

Please help us in reclaiming and maintaining our Métis heritage and values.

Please bless our Métis Flag, which represents our European and Aboriginal ancestries.

Our infinity symbol, that shows that Métis people will exist forever.

Our fiddle, so we can continue to share our music and dances.

Bless our hands, head, and heart so we can continue our sewing and beading.

Bless our sash, so we can protect it for future generations.

Bless our Métis Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Bless our children and youth, so they can balance and continue with our past, present and future traditions.

Help our children and youth, so they can be proud of their heritage.

Please give us strength as we continue into new chapters of our lives.

Creator, give us peace when we feel anxious; comfort us when we feel discouraged.

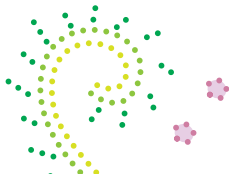
Give us courage when we are fearful; hope when we despair.

Support us when we are lonely; give us wisdom when we feel confused.

Help us show kindness and caring to others; help us to show honesty and respect.

We ask that you continue to guide our people, help us to walk tall, have gratitude and be proud of who we are.

Maarsii.



Métis Prayer – *Written by Elder Peggy Koroll*

Creator,
I honour You today with a full heart.
Maarsii for the sacred gifts of life, of love, and of community.
I lift my voice to You for our children and our youth- watch over them, guide them, and protect their spirits as they walk the Red River road.

I ask You, Creator, to bless our elders.
Wrap them in strength, provide them with all they need, so they may continue to share their knowledge, their laughter, and their sacred stories.

Be with our Métis adults, Creator.
Help them remember that they are not alone-that we are a village, a nation woven together like a sash.
May they feel the embrace of their people, and may we all come together to create the belonging every heart longs for.

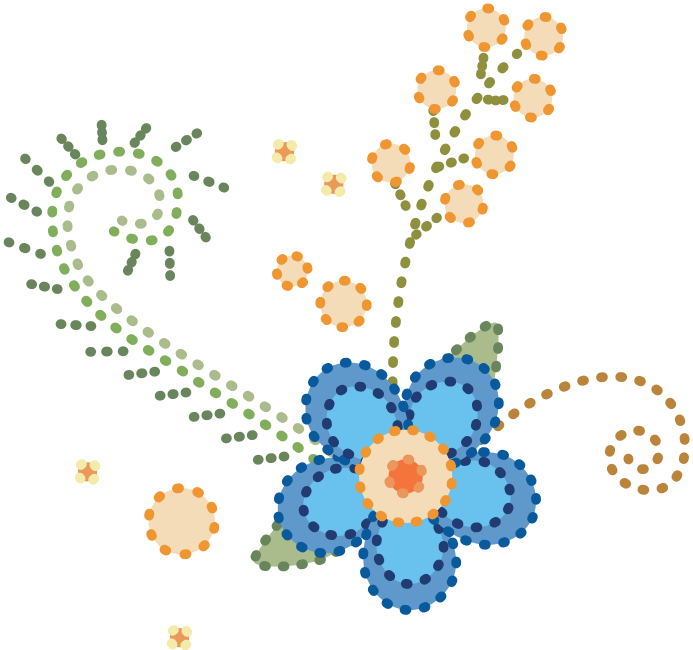
Maarsii, Creator, for this time we are given here on Mother Earth.
For the breath in our lungs, for the gifts we carry, for the teachings we share.

I honour our ancestors-those who came before us.
If not for their strength, we would not be here.
Their courage in struggle, their fight for our Métis rights-we remember, we carry, we continue that fight with pride and purpose.

May we walk forward together, holding our youth, our children, our elders, our families, with love, with culture, with kinship.

Bless this land beneath our feet, bless our food, our health, and the love that surrounds us.

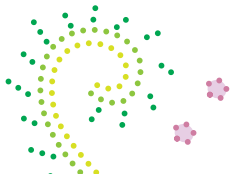
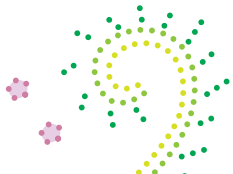
Keep our hearts strong, Creator.
Maarsii. Amen.



“Everyday Thanksgiving” ²¹ – *Adapted by Elder Joyce Munro*

Even though I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings, thank you, Creator, that I can hear. There are many who are deaf.
Even though I keep my eyes closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, Creator, that I can see. Many are blind.
Even though I huddle in my bed and put off rising, thank you, Creator, that I have strength to rise. There are many who are bedridden.
Even though the first hour of my day is hectic, when socks are lost, toast is burned, tempers are short, and my children are so loud, thank you, Creator, for my family. There are many who are lonely.
Even though our breakfast table never looks like the picture in magazines and the menu is at times unbalanced, thank you, Creator, for the food we have. There are many that are hungry.
Even though the routine of my job often is monotonous, thank you, Creator, for the opportunity to work. There are many who have no jobs.
Even though I grumble and bemoan my fate from day to day, and wish my circumstance were not so modest, thank you, Creator, for life.

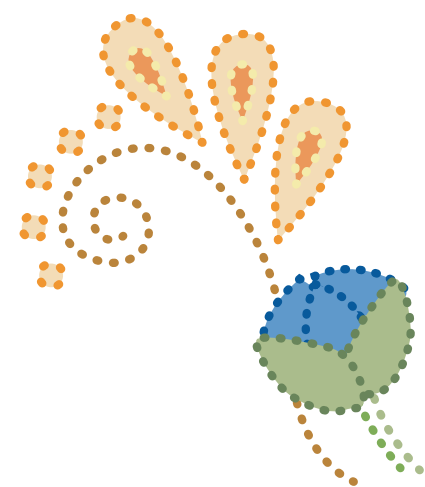
21 Author unknown.



Prayers for Supporting Métis Children, Youth, and Families

Prayer – Written by Elder Dave Barron

I pray to the Creator of the world, the universe, and far beyond
We ask for guidance and support
To help our Métis families
To be loving and caring parents
Who protect their children from harm
And nurture their physical,
Mental and emotional spirit and wellbeing.
May the Great Spirit
Who works in weird and wonderful ways
Help us through a world of evil and vice.
Maarsii Otipemisiwak



Prayer – Written by Elder Joyce Munro

Dear Creator,
Opening your heart to a child may not change the world.
But for that child, the world will change.
God, our creator, we give thanks for this day.
Provide us with direction and one mind as we help with these children and their families.
Bless us and this wonderful centre we have to gather in.
Maarsii.

Mediation Closing Prayer – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

Beloved Creator, we are grateful for the inroads we have made during this mediation. The respect which has been shown to each other, as well as the understanding, openness and the considerations given to ensure positive results for this most precious family.
We ask for your blessings for all the youth, children and their families, as well as your assistance in the preparation of a wholesome, healthy life.
Thank you for this day and the goodness which surrounds us.
Maarsii, Meegwetch, Amen, and all my Relations

Meeting Guidance – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

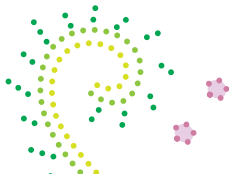
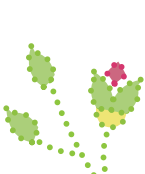
Dear Creator,
We humbly ask for your guidance throughout this meeting.
Keep us thoughtful and respectful of each other.
Keep us strong in heart and mind.
Let our communication be clear, concise and mindful of others’ feelings.
We pray Creator for you to continue to guide our people, especially our children and youth and to keep them strong.
We ask for strength for our leaders and elders.
We ask for guidance for those who are troubled and for comfort for those who are sick in spirit or in body.
We thank you for the life we live, and for all that you give to sustain us throughout our lives.

Mediation Prayer – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

Creator, we thank you for this day and for all the blessings you have bestowed upon us.
We ask for your guidance with the children, youth and their families who pass through our lives. Please keep us strong, patient, understanding and loving towards them so that they become strong full of confidence and assured of a bright and successful future.
Guide us throughout this mediation. Keep our hearts and minds open. Keep our words clear, concise and mindful of each other's feelings. We ask for your blessings, comfort and strength as we strive towards a positive and loving conclusion for this family and all who are involved.
Maarsii

We Must Keep Our Métis Families Together – Written by Elder Dave Barron

I pray to the Great Spirit and the Creator who guides the sun, the moon, and the stars.
Please help us humble, Métis parents and those entrusted to care and love our unique Métis children in special care.
I ask again for the powers of the Great Spirit to help these Métis families to heed the many temptations of the World today.
Remember: divided we are weak; together we are strong.
Otipemisiwak.



Prayers for Special Occasions

Louis Riel Feast Prayer – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

Let us thank our Heavenly Father, the Creator, for the opportunity given us tonight to share in this feast to respect Louis Riel, our great leader who led The Métis Nation, with pride, dignity and honour throughout his life. Bless the hands of our Métis Family who took the time to shop and prepare this bountiful dinner.

We also ask the Creator to continue to guide our Métis Community here in Kamloops and we thank Colleen Lucier, and all her staff and supporters at the LMO office, including the Ministry of Children and Family Development for this night of celebration with open hearts and love.

We pray Creator for you to continue to guide our People, especially our Children and Youth to keep them strong, we ask for strength for our Leaders and our Elders, and for guidance, for those who are troubled, we ask for comfort for those who are sick in spirit or body.

We thank you for this beautiful land we live in, and to teach us to love and honour all your creations.

Maarsii. Meegwetch. Amen. And all my Relations.

Christmas Feast Prayer – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

Let us thank the Creator for this gathering during the holiday season and we ask Him to bless the hands that have shopped for and prepared this feast for all of us. Bless all those who are travelling to be with family throughout Christmas and New Year season. Keep them safe on the roads. We ask that you comfort those who are alone or lonely. We promise that we will do our best in sharing with those who are less fortunate.

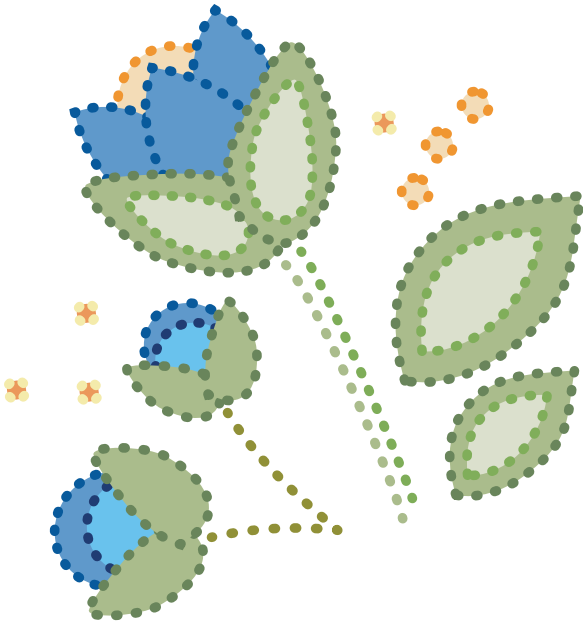
We pray for you to continue to guide our People, especially our Children and Youth to keep them strong. We ask for strength for our Leaders and our Elders, and for guidance for those who are troubled.

We ask for comfort for those who are sick in spirit or body.

We also ask the Creator to continue to guide our Métis Community here in Kamloops. Please bless this centre, the leader Colleen Lucier, and all the staff and supporters at the agency for this night of Christmas celebration with open hearts.

We are grateful and thankful for all the blessings we have received over the past year. We look forward to the beginning of the New Year and we ask that you assist and guide us to live with all others in peace, joy, love and fellowship.

Maarsii



Graduation Prayer – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

Creator, we have gathered here to celebrate the graduation of our youth as they take another step forward in their lives.

We ask you to bless our graduates and all who attended.

Give our youth the strength and wisdom to move forward and embrace their lives in a good way. Bless them with kindness, understanding and the ability to choose positive paths.

We are so proud of them and we know our future is in good hands as they move forward full of knowledge, hope, courage and the ability to succeed in whatever they choose as a vocation.

Bless them with the ability to accept and celebrate the diversity within this great country of ours.

We ask this in your name Creator. You are our strength and our guide.

Maarsii

Mother’s Day Celebration Prayer – Written by Elder Mazie Beeds

Dear Creator, thank you for this special day and the opportunity for us to gather to celebrate our Mothers, Grandmothers, and all those who care for our precious children.

Bless the hands that shopped for and the hands that prepared this luncheon for us all to enjoy.

Bless all the Mothers and give them patience and understanding to raise the most special gift that is bestowed upon us in the form of our children. We know they are our strength and our future and we ask you to help us all to keep them strong in all aspects of life.

Bless our Métis community and give us the ability to understand each other, to celebrate the diversity within each of us, to live our lives fully and under the dome of your protection and care.

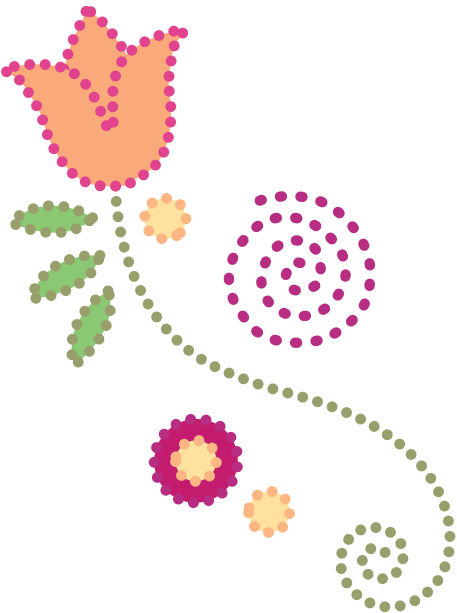
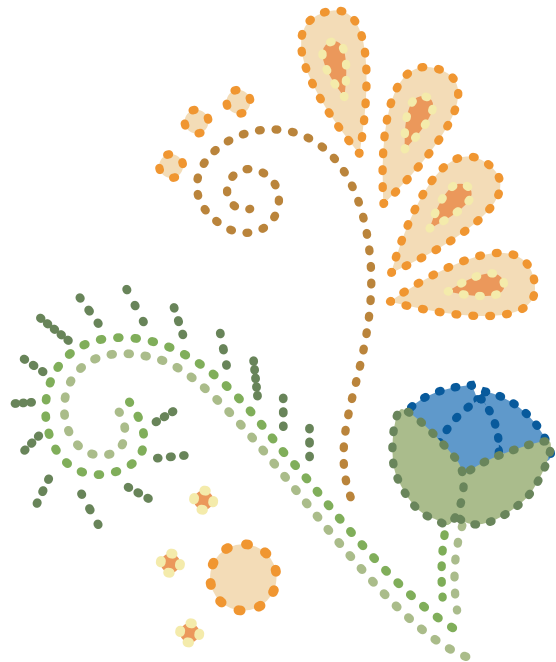
We pray Lord for you to continue to guide our People, especially our Children and Youth to keep them strong, we ask for strength for our Leaders and our Elders, and for guidance for those who are troubled, we ask for comfort for those who are sick in spirit or body.

We thank you for this beautiful land we live in, and to teach us to love and honour all your creations.

Amen, Maarsii, Meegwetch, and all My Relations.

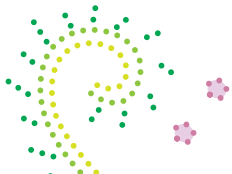
Aboriginal Day Prayer – Written by Elder Marie Ann Zwingli

Creator,
We come before you to ask for strength and guidance. We humbly ask you to bless this day and all that it means to us.
We honour our past and present leaders, Chiefs, Politicians, and Elders.
We honour all those who have struggled throughout the years to keep, protect, and maintain our Aboriginal rights with the dignity and respect that is so prevalent within our communities.
Bless our Youth and our Children. Help us to guide them safely into adulthood with pride and knowledge of their culture and past, as well as an awareness of what a great, diverse and forgiving country we all live in.
Bless them with kindness, understanding, and the ability to love and care for each other unconditionally. Let us always remember they are our future. Give us the strength and awareness to support them, love them, and honour them so that they will in turn become our Leaders, Politicians, Elders, Lawyer, Doctors and whatever they aspire to become.
This is our day; our chance to celebrate, recall and remember just what we have accomplished and what we have overcome. Let us continue to honour our gifted leader Louis Riel and his right-hand man. Gabriel Dumont. Let us talk more about our past, our culture, our steadfastness, as well as our dignity, pride and assurance of our culture, our values, and our beliefs. Go forward strong and true.
Maarsii



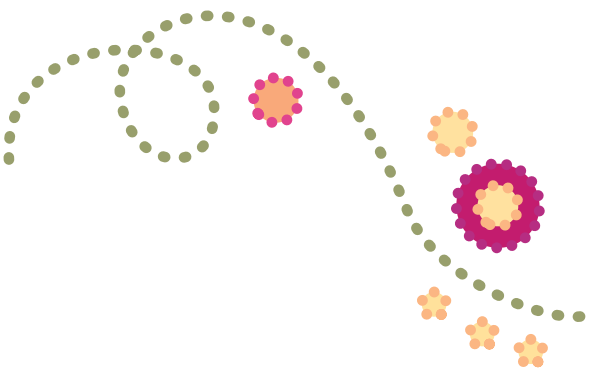
APPENDIX B

About the Elders



ABOUT THE ELDERS

This section includes biographies for most of the Elders who generously contributed to this book. Some of the Elders wished to be anonymous and are not included in this section.



Elder Ellen Ahdemar

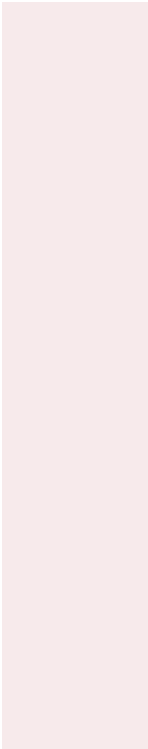
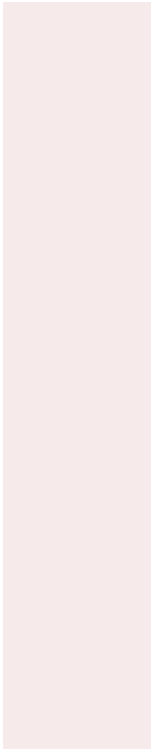
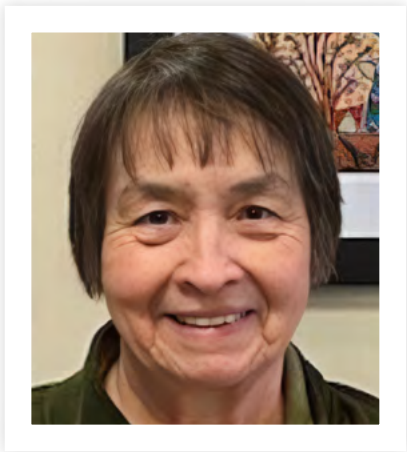
Elder Ellen Ahdemar was born in Edson, Alberta, and now lives in Ashcroft, BC. She has nine siblings, three children, three stepchildren, and five grandchildren.

Elder Ellen always knew that she was Métis. She acknowledges a history that formed her family over many generations. Both of her parents were “half breed”—this was a term that Elder Ellen used until “Métis” became more common.

She is Métis/Cree on both sides of her family, and she was raised in the Métis way, which included looking after one another, being kind and honest, showing respect for others, and teaching young people about survival skills. Survival skills include cooking, housekeeping, and always having wood available. Growing up, her dad was a logger and played fiddle. He also had a trapline and would dry meat for the family. Her mom also trapped, tanned hides, gardened, pickled, made moccasins, beaded, and collected plants for medicines. She also took orders for knitting, sewing, baking, and canning.

As a youth, Elder Ellen worked in the service industry after school; she was a dishwasher, cook, and greeter. Later she went to college and worked in payroll and bookkeeping. She also held positions as a program coordinator and office manager. She also worked as an employment counsellor, life skills coordinator, program office, and community development officer.

In her work supporting youth at LMO, Elder Ellen enjoys sharing her life experiences, assisting youth with employment goal-setting, and connecting youth community resources. She also provides one-on-one mentorship to help youth learn about survival skills, including cooking and sewing.



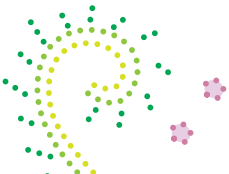
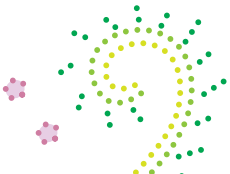
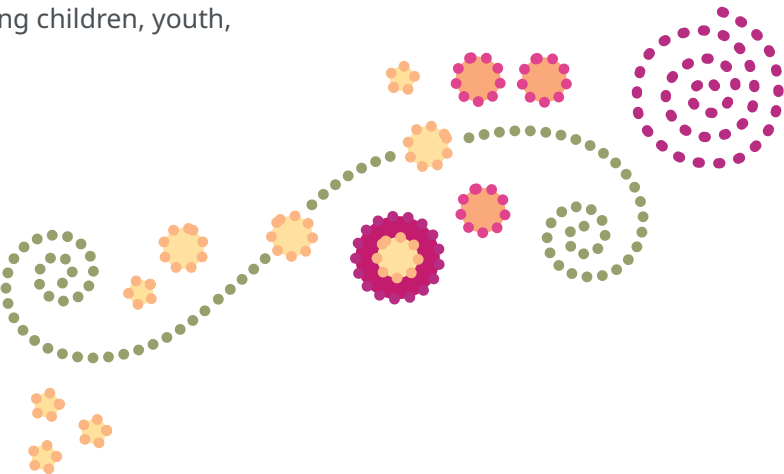
Elder Larry Ahdemar

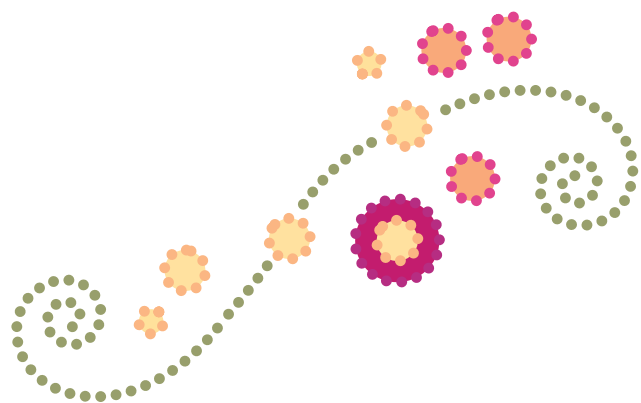
Elder Larry Ahdemar was born in Ahtahkakoop, Saskatchewan, but currently resides in Ashcroft, BC. He has 15 siblings, 6 children, and 13 grandchildren.

He described his childhood as “pretty tough, living on the road allowance,” and explained that he faced prejudice. His mother raised him in the Anglican religion, while also instilling the children to have pride in who they are.

When he first moved to BC, he worked in a sawmill. In the 1970s, he moved to Kamloops. He worked at Kamloops Indian Residential School until the late 1980s. He received his Journeyman Carpentry/Plumbing & Electrical Certification around this time. Over the next 35 years, he worked in maintenance and took care of government buildings and other institutions. He also volunteered in youth in sports, including hockey and baseball.

He is active in mentoring children, youth, and families at LMO.





Elder Lea Becker



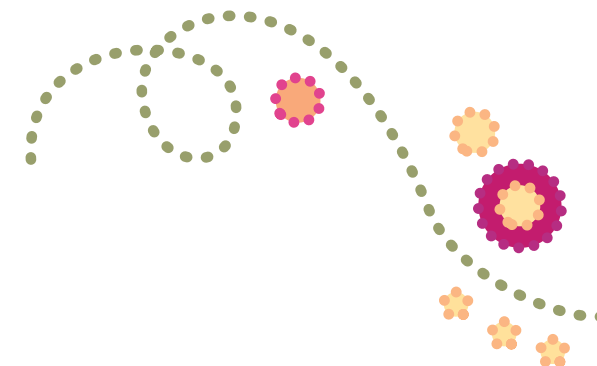
Elder Lea Becker was born in Nelson, BC, but currently lives in Kamloops. She has two siblings, four children, and six grandchildren.

When asked about growing up Métis, Elder Lea said, “I can’t recall hearing the word Métis growing up. I didn’t grow up learning the Métis cultural customs because it was frowned upon to be Métis back then.” Her dad’s experience of growing up Métis included learning traditional Métis ways, like making Bannock over the fire and picking chamomile when he had a stomach-ache.

As an adult, Elder Lea worked in many fields including child and youth counselling, telephone operating, working in the aluminum industry, and being an industrial first attendant.

In her work supporting children, youth, and families at LMO, she aims to teach others to be non-judgemental, willing learners, who are respectful and humble. She also focuses on building relationships and support systems, with a focus on love and humour.

Elder Lea was described by others as a kind, sweet, and cheerful person who is both genuine and generous. Elder Lea is light-hearted, with a great sense of humour. Her laughter and joy are evident when she is present. She is delightful and enjoyable to be around—always smiling and laughing and creating a positive work environment. Elder Lea is someone you always want to be around. She is gentle and loving, supportive of children and families. She has the kindest smile.



Auntie Marie Bercier



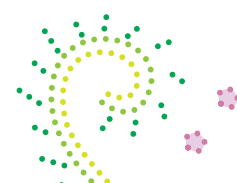
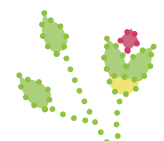
Auntie Marie Bercier was born in Boggy Creek, Manitoba, and has recently lived in Abbotsford and Chilliwack, BC. She has eight siblings, four children, and several grandchildren. She lives with her adorable dog, Benji.

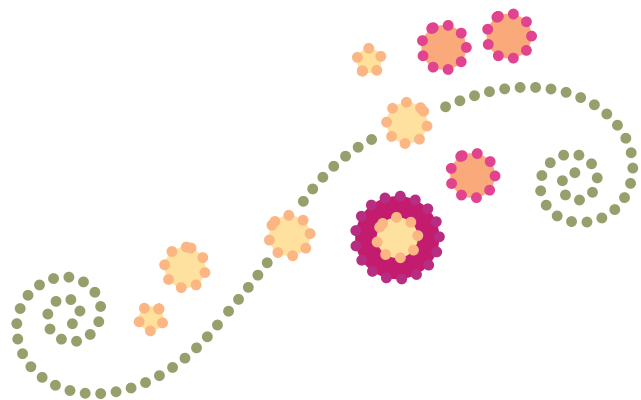
Auntie Marie was removed from her mom’s care as an infant and adopted. She later went to residential school. After her time in the residential school, she lived with her Auntie Mary, who raised her well. Her Auntie Mary was a doula. Auntie

Marie has shared many lessons around gardening, some of which are featured in this book.

In her adult years, Auntie Marie worked as a registered pastor, celebrating families at weddings and baptisms, as well as supporting people in hospice care. Auntie Marie has also maintained a strong presence and leadership within the Métis community as a founding member of the Fraser Valley Métis Association.

Auntie Marie has supported Métis students in the University of the Fraser Valley’s Métis Community Support Worker Program, and has volunteered with the Abbotsford School District. Auntie Marie has also supported a number of families in her local chartered Métis community and serves as a member of MNBC’s Early Childhood Education Community of Practice.





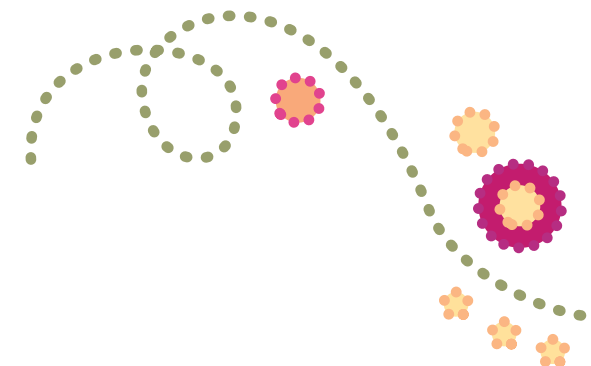
Elder Betty Gladue



Elder Betty Gladue lives in Surrey, BC with her husband, Phil. They met in 1963 and raised their family in Moccasin Flats—a Métis community in Northern BC. Betty was very involved with raising her family while Phil was away working. They involved their children in many different activities, and focused on instilling a positive sense of independence.

Elder Betty is a fluent Cree language speaker. Her traditional name is Awasis, which means “little child.” She is a passionate advocate for education and a supporter for Indigenous youth to develop important skills. She can be found as the life of the party—often playing the spoons—at a number of Métis cultural and community events. She is a wonderful story-teller.

Elder Betty has worked as a cultural advisor in the Medicine Wheel Facilitator Training program and is a member of the Elder’s Council for the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. She has also supported Indigenous peoples’ wellness through the Aboriginal Brotherhood and Sisterhood program with Forensics Psychiatric Services Commission. Her work supporting Métis children, youth, and families also spans her involvement in a variety of grassroots initiatives, as well as her work with Métis Nation British Columbia.



Elder Phil Gladue

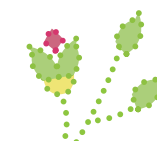
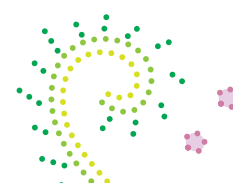
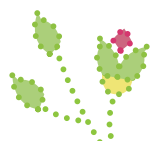


Elder Phil Gladue was born in High Prairie, Alberta and now lives in Surrey, BC. He has ten siblings, three daughters, and two grandchildren. He met his wife Betty at a dance over sixty years ago.

Elder Phil grew up in a small Métis town where all of the families and friends were connected as a community. He considers himself very fortunate to have grown up speaking the Cree language. He learned how to snare rabbits and fish, and he would check his snares after school. He learned how to harvest different medicines respectfully. He grew up connected to the fur trade, with his father trapping and hunting over the years.

Elder Phil has worked many different jobs over the years, including on pipelines and dams, logging, on railroads, and stooking grain. He has also been working in schools since 1997 sharing about Métis history, culture, and the fur trade. He also teaches traditional knowledge, works on language revitalization, leads opening ceremonies and land acknowledgements and supports the education of learners of all ages. He has worked as a Resident Elder for the Justice Institute of British Columbia, for public school districts, and on different governance boards. He is a member of the Senate with Métis Nation BC. He supported the Forensic Psychiatric Services in Port Coquitlam for over twenty-five years and also supported the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

Elder Phil was awarded the Queens Jubilee Medal and the King Charles medal and has been a candidate for the Vancouver Aboriginal Awards. Across many roles, Elder Phil has played an important role in supporting Métis children, youth, and families.



Elder Barb Hulme

Elder Barb Hulme was born in Selkirk, Manitoba and now lives in Victoria, BC. She has two stepchildren. She and her husband, Stan, have been married for over fifty years.

At the age of 17, Elder Barb began nursing school. She graduated with a diploma and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She then entered the Canadian Armed Forces and rose to the rank of Major. She is a founding member of Métis Veterans BC where she advocates for veterans, attends ceremonies and committees representing Indigenous veterans, integrates culture such as through creating beaded poppy kits, and provides guidance for various events and initiatives.

In 1997, along with other community members, Elder Barb founded the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria. She has supported the community through many roles since then as a Board Member, administrator, historian, genealogy advisor, citizenship coordinator, and grant writer. She has also generously shared teachings and cultural skills.

Elder Barb is currently a Métis Elder-in-Residence at the University of Victoria. She has been involved in the UVIC’s Elders Voices program for over three years and has supported students with cultural learning over many years. She is also part of the HUB for the Masters of Nursing program, and works with MNBC to support nursing events and provincial initiatives. She has been part of many committees and hiring panels at UVIC.

Elder Barb has been an important support and mentor to many Métis children, youth, and families. She has encouraged and supported many youth to become involved in community and leadership.

Elder Barb holds many roles supporting community including with the Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue, the North American Indigenous games, the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, the School District 61 Elders Council, and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre Elders group. She is a long-time supporter of the Times Colonist book sale, volunteering for over 21 years. She has also helped with fundraising for people in need through church clothing sales for over 15 years.



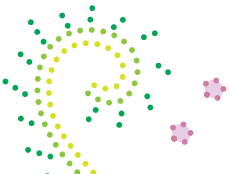
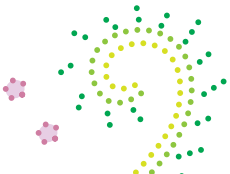
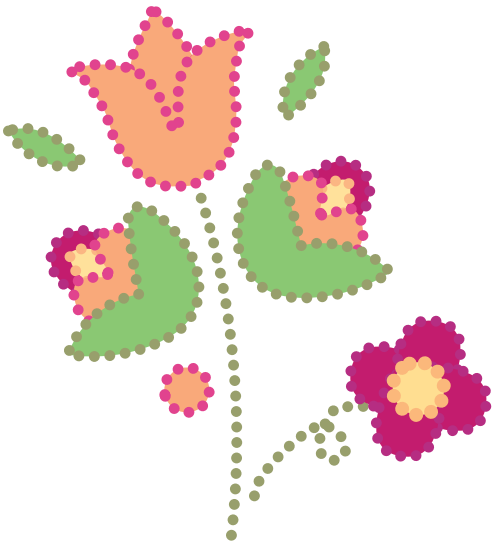
Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson

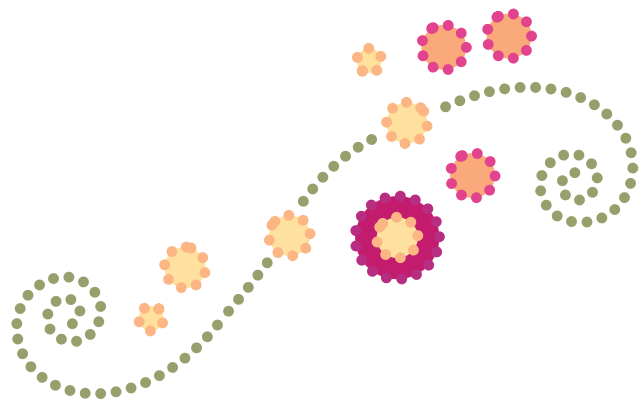
Kohkom Stella Erasmus Johnson was born in McLennan, Alberta and now lives in Nanaimo, BC. She has four children, six grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren. She was married for twenty-two years.

Kohkom Stella and her brother were raised by their grandmother in a log house without running water or electricity. Their grandmother taught them the Cree language. Kohkom Stella is a fluent speaker of both Cree and Michif, and has spent many years sharing language with others. Kohkom Stella provided the Cree translation for “Sapo Miskisik,wa Ohci Atim “Through the Eyes of a Dog” by Nicole Lodge. Her grandmother taught her to harvest medicines like yarrow, peppermint, sage, and laboom tea. She also learned to set snares to catch rabbit and prairie chickens.

Kohkom Stella completed a long-term care aid program in Dawson Creek in 1981. In her adult years, she worked in healthcare, hospitality, and supporting students in schools. She has attended many Indigenous graduations and sashed many youth at ceremonies and Métis Nation BC youth events. She also worked in the Métis community as a support worker. She has been a Métis Elder-in-Residence at Vancouver Island University for over thirteen years. Across these roles, Kohkom Stella has played an important role in supporting and mentoring many Métis children, youth, and families.

In 2025, Kohkom Stella was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal from Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak in recognition of her efforts and achievements in Métis cultural revitalization and reconciliation.





Elder Verma Kerr

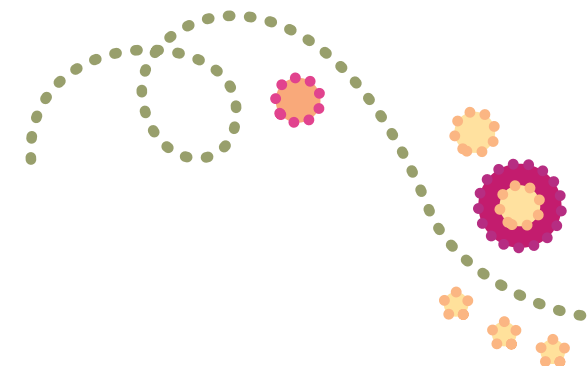


Elder Verma Kerr was born in Boissevain, Manitoba and now resides in Kamloops. She has six siblings, five children, and nine grandchildren.

Her father was German, so it was her mom that filled her in on the Métis side of her family. Growing up, Verma helped her mom in the house; she did housework, and also learned to knit and sew. She made her own clothing, and did general handywork in the house. Growing up, Verma also lived with her memere (grandmother) for a little bit.

As an adult, Elder Verma worked in hairdressing, dry-cleaning, laundry in the hospitals, and cooking—all jobs that were on her feet. Today, she continues to keep busy as a Métis artisan.

In her work supporting children, youth, and families at LMO, Elder Verma aims to teach children about manners and kindness. She also likes to teach beading, embroidery, knitting, sewing, mending, and general handywork.



Elder Denise McCuaig



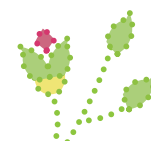
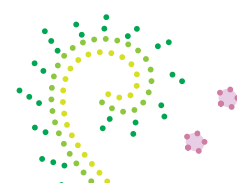
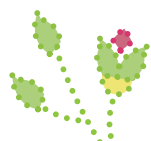
Elder Denise McCuaig was born in Edmonton, Alberta, and now resides in T'kumlups te Secwepemc. She has two siblings, four children, and seven grandchildren.

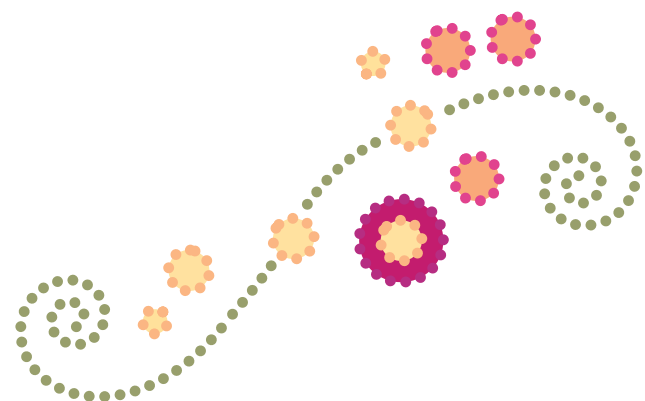
While growing up Métis, Elder Denise was very connected to her family. She spent time with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins almost every weekend. Her family is part of a well-recognized and established Métis community in Saint Albert, Alberta.

One of her favourite memories is blueberry picking with her family. When she was in the sixth grade, she experienced racism and othering for the first time, after that expressing her pride in being Métis. This had a significant impact on her and she did not claim her identity again until she was in her early 20s.

In terms of her career, Elder Denise has spent the last 28 years working in health and social services—providing Indigenous perspectives and improving patient safety.

In her work at LMO, she enjoys mentoring children, youth, and families. She is interested in fish scale art, beading, dream catchers, pine needle baskets, dot art, teachings of blood memory and epigenetics, Métis identity, healing circles, and grieving ceremony.





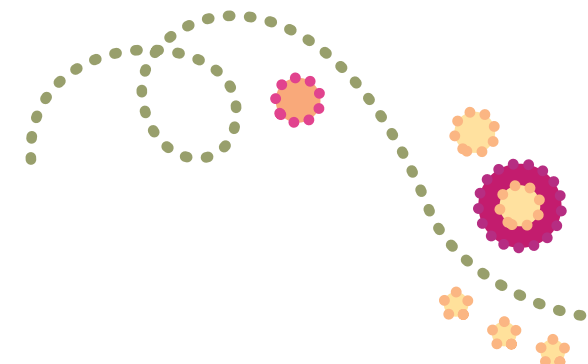
Elder Joyce Munro



Elder Joyce was born in Big River, Saskatchewan, most recently residing in Clinton, BC. She had three siblings, three children, and three grandchildren. She passed away in 2025.

She described her experience growing up Métis as being raised with strong family values and respect for Elders. Her father was a trapper who mainly trapped muskrat and beaver. As an adult, Elder Joyce enjoyed cooking and working as a bookkeeper. In her work with children, youth, and families, she was always willing to share her knowledge openly.

Elder Joyce was described by others as hilarious and wise, as well as a great baker. She was a kind and soft-spoken person, often giving “grandmotherly” vibes. She was calm and approachable; families shared that Elder Joyce’s calm nature made them feel safe and at ease during meetings. She brought peace to each space she was in and was a wonderful person to spend time with. She was also very giving—providing guidance, direction, and compassion.



Elder Fred Paquette

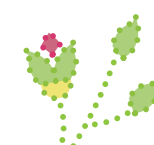


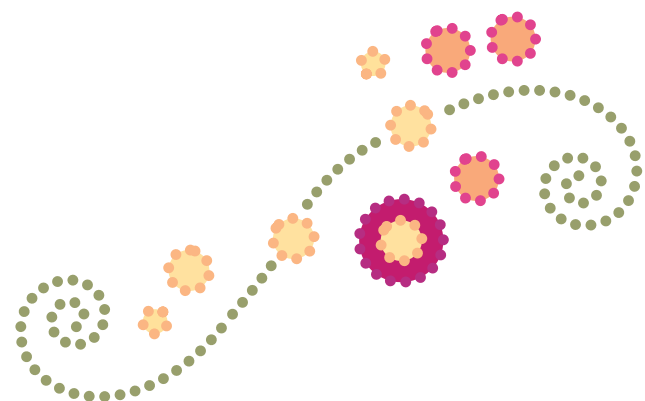
Elder Fred Paquette was born in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, and now resides in Merritt, BC. He has two siblings, two children, and three grandchildren.

Before moving to Yellowknife, his family lived in big trapper tents that were dug out. Elder Fred said that he was never cold, even in -50 and -60 weather. His family lived traditionally on the land and ate rabbit and moose. They were clothed in Hudson Bay coats. When he was little, they would speak Michif and French. As an adult, Elder Fred worked in sawmills, and as a lumberjack.

He enjoys teaching families and youth how to make bannock. He also aims to teach families life skills when they need it, and skills that are used in the bush.

Others have described Elder Fred as a loving, caring, and gentle person. Elder Fred is engaging and brings joy to others. One person said, “Anytime I walk into a room and Fred is there, I feel as if I am at home.” He is respectful, safe, and comfortable—creating feelings of belonging. Elder Fred is compassionate, understanding, and he makes people smile. He is also known to have a gift with babies, children, and youth like no other. Elder Fred was also described as “the grandfather I’ve never had, always taking care of others.” He is knowledgeable and thoughtful. He speaks up when he needs to and holds space for others. He is known to be quite a storyteller, with “the best jokes!”





Elder Patrick Savard

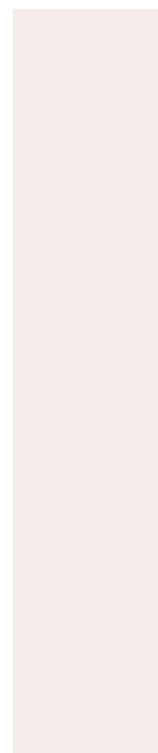
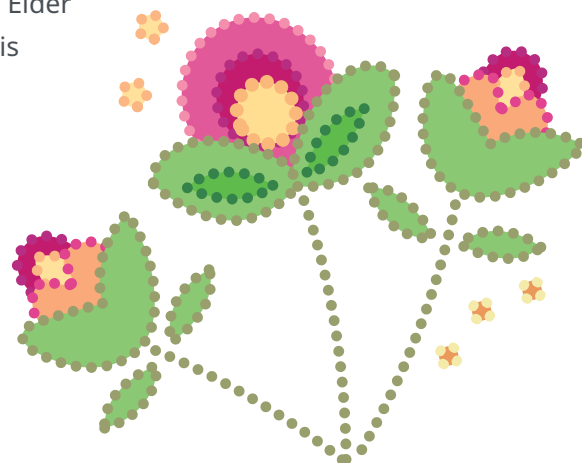


Elder Patrick Savard was born in Vanderhoof, BC and now lives in Kamloops. He has seven siblings, three children, and six grandchildren. He was raised with strong family values and learned how to respect all Elders.

As an adult, he worked as a machine operator and a heavy duty mechanic. He also worked in road construction, and as a part-time paramedic.

In his work with LMO, he enjoys sharing stories and doing land-based activities with children, youth, and families.

Others have described Elder Patrick as a wise, authentic, and compassionate person who offers excellent advice and guidance. Elder Patrick is respectful, talkative, honest, and easy-going. He is also compassionate, as “his presence in the room offers a feeling of comfort and confidence. He is always willing to share from his heart, see the best in others and reach out to support in any way he can.” Elder Patrick is known as a great listener who is patient and supportive of families. He is knowledgeable and passionate about Métis culture, and generous with sharing his teachings. He also “has great ideas about how to incorporate Michif culture and knowledge into practice.” Elder Patrick is said to “see the absolute best in everyone.”



Elder Melba Sterling



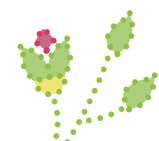
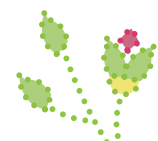
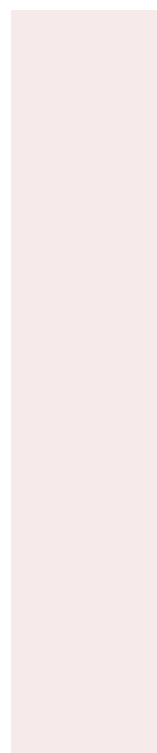
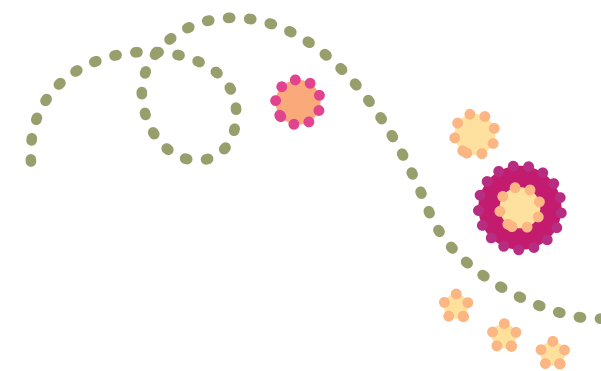
Elder Melba Sterling was born in Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement and now lives in Kamloops. She has seven siblings, three children, and one grandchild.

Her father was Cree and her mom was Cree and Scottish. Her family spoke Cree at home, and she learned English from her older sister and at school. Her family lived in a log home, which her dad built. They did not have power or running water, so they would go to the creek for water. She has said that that life was hard, but her dad was a hard worker. They lived on a small plot of land with chickens, pigs, horses, and cows.

Her family had a garden and she learned how to harvest and can vegetables. They also picked and canned bush berries. Her family went to small, local hall to listen to music. They learned all the dances at school and home. At age 15, Elder Melba had to leave home to go to boarding school.

As an adult, Elder Melba worked at a non-profit as a Youth Worker, working with children and families. She was also a foster mom to three teenage boys. Later she worked as a Family Support Worker, an Employment Counsellor, and a Children’s Advocate. She also worked in program design and delivery, as well as policy development, for the Province of Alberta. While working full time, she also did contract work for 20 years. Her contracts included offering workshops in Life Skills and Homeownership across Canada. She retired in BC in 2006 and became a snowbird and travelled.

In her work with LMO, she enjoys sharing traditional values and life skills with youth and families. She focuses on respect for yourself and others, responsibilities for your actions, and work ethics. She also teaches cooking, canning, and budget management.



Elder Lynda Tilley

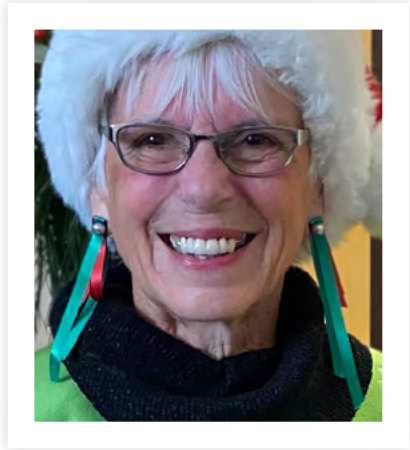
Elder Lynda Tilley was born in Hartney, Manitoba, and now resides in Kamloops. She has seven siblings, three children, four grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Growing up Métis, her family practiced Métis culture through trapping, hunting, berry picking and living in traditional ways. Elder Lynda described herself as an outdoor girl who spent most of her life living in the bush and on the land. She has strong family ties and grew up receiving many teachings from her Auntie. She was taught to honour all living things and give back to the earth, like providing tobacco after a hunt. As a whole, she was taught to be a strong Métis woman.

Elder Lynda had many careers throughout her life. Traditionally, she worked on the land with lumber, on the ranch, and cooking during the harvest. She also worked in restaurants and in the catering business.

Elder Lynda has noted that it is important for Elders to share love and respect with children and give families a place of belonging. She supports children, youth, and families in the Métis way, which includes sitting down together and talking about issues when they happen. She stands by the Métis code of ethics, meaning that it is a collective job to help each other, and to work together to keep families together. She grounds herself in her work by thanking the creator through prayer.

Others have described Elder Lynda as a beautiful person who is protective, sweet, warm, and loving. She is both strong and spunky, with fun and welcoming energy. Elder Lynda has a generous spirit and “an enormous health and is always ready with a welcoming or healing hug, and kind words of encouragement.” She provides comfort to families through her nurturing ways and her sense of humour. She is also open with sharing her Michif teachings. She is also passionate and “a bundle of fun and energy.” One person said, “Her hugs are filled with love and she rejuvenates everyone with her positive spirit.”



Elder Jo-Ina Young

Elder Jo-Ina Young was born in Northern Saskatchewan in Prince Albert. When she was a baby, her family moved to Vancouver Island where she grew up. She now lives in Sooke, BC with her husband Vince. She has two siblings, two children, and five grandchildren.

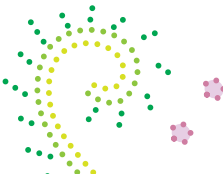
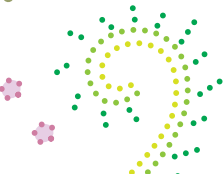
While she was growing up, Elder Jo-Ina did not know that she was Métis; however, she recalls that she was still raised in a very Métis way. Her mother was creative and entrepreneurial, and they harvested food such as berries. Her father worked in many different jobs including

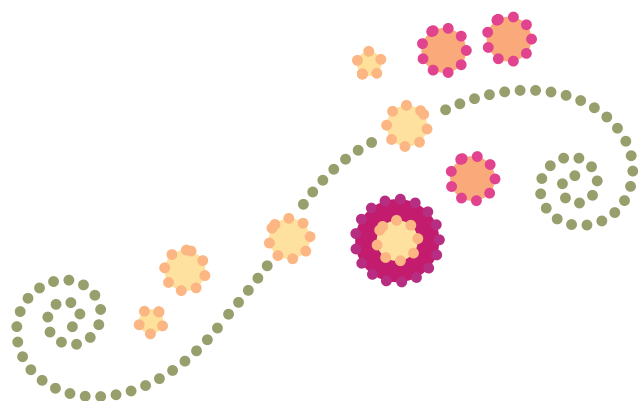
as a sailor, on the railroad, owning a gas station, building a curling rink, and owning a restaurant. After the early passing of her mother and having to face her own mortality with health issues, Elder Jo-Ina began seeking out her family story. She discovered a rich Métis heritage with her relatives including Maxine and Ambrose Lepine, Peter Fidler, Alexander Henry the Younger, Sophie McDougall, Doris McDougall, and Howard Adams.

Elder Jo-Ina has served on the board of Island Métis Family and Community Services for over seven years. She is the former Métis Women’s Representative for Métis Nation of Greater Victoria and also served on their Board of Directors for nine years. She represents the Métis community on the Indigenous Education Council and holds the position of Métis Elder in Residence for School District 62 and Métis Elder for St. Michaels University School. She was a Métis Elder with Royal Roads University for three years supporting Métis students. She supports workshops and events through Métis Nation BC. Throughout these roles she works hard to walk gently and respectfully as a guest on First Nations lands.

Elder Jo-Ina has brought her passion and skills to many different jobs, including as a seamstress for movie sets, working as a florist, working at an upholstery shop, working on a cruise ship, and working for her mom’s business sewing team. She has also worked for government, and has owned and operated a trucking business, and worked in furniture sales where she was the first woman in the company to receive an award for top sales.

Throughout these roles, Elder Jo-Ina brings a passion for sharing her knowledge and skills with Métis community, through workshops, presentations, mentoring others, and finding ways to bring people together. She has led Métis beading, embroidery, sewing, and jigging workshops. She is a talented Métis artist, and her work has shown in different venues, including the Sooke Fine Arts show. She also won the Lifelong Learning Victoria Community Leadership Award. Elder Jo-Ina teaches students about Métis people and culture through presentations with her puppets, Rosie McDougall, Batoche the Buffalo, and Scruff the Sasquatch using her skills in ventriloquism, which she honed as a child so she could talk to her friends in class without being caught.





Elder Marie Zwingli



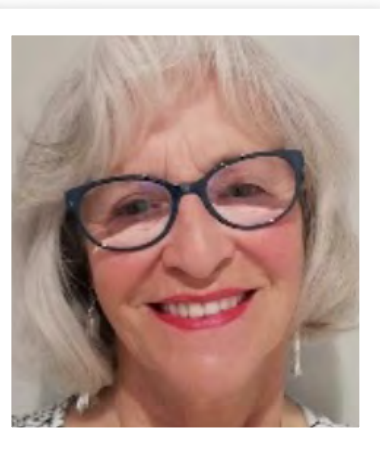
Elder Marie Zwingli was born in Northern Saskatchewan and now lives in Kamloops. She has 12 siblings, two children, and four grandchildren.

She grew up in extreme poverty with a Road Allowance Family. She spent a lot of time with her grandmother who taught her about values and beliefs. She got the chance to go to school, but some of her siblings did not.

As an adult, Elder Marie became a Pediatrics and Neonatal Intensive Care Nurse.

In her time with LMO, she has aimed to conduct herself with integrity. She values fairness, hard work, kindness, and respect. In her work with young people, she feels it is important to support them to learn who they are. She hopes that she can help young people achieve their ultimate potential and to be humble.

Staff, parents, and youth at LMO have described Elder Marie as talented, hardworking, and a great listener. Elder Marie is knowledgeable and insightful, as well as passionate. She is also kind-hearted, generous, and caring, with "a heart of gold." She is knowledgeable about child development and passionate about educating families and supporting best parenting practices. She is a generous teacher who takes a strengths-based and encouraging approach to guiding families. One person said, "She shares her enthusiasm for learning with everyone. She is so knowledgeable about childhood development. She is an innovator and educator." Elder Marie provides many gifts with her nursing background and is able to intertwine that knowledge with our Métis ways.



HONOURING THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED ON

There are a number of Elders whose knowledge and contributions have shaped this book, as well as the foundation of LMO. Elder Joyce Munro passed away in 2025. She was instrumental during each stage of the creation of this book and will be deeply missed. Elders Dave Barron, DeeDee Hurd, and Mazie Beeds passed on before the process of creating this book began, but their illustrations and prayers have lived on both at LMO and in print here.

Elder Dave Barron (1921 – 2017)



Elder Dave Barron was born on a small farm in San Clara—a small Métis community in northern Manitoba. He was the seventh of ten kids to his parents. He was a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He passed away on October 13, 2017 at the age of 96.

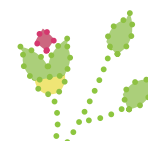
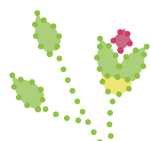
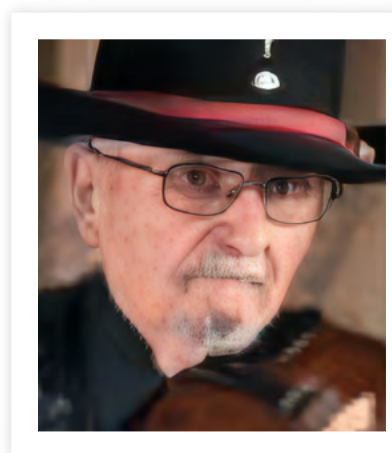
Elder Dave said that life growing up was tough, as many families—including his—were dealing with poverty. His parents worked as farmers, and his father also worked as a carpenter, but they were

greatly impacted by the depression. When his family moved away from the farm, they lived in a roadside Métis community. His family later moved to Mafeking where they grew a large garden and hunted moose, deer, rabbits, and birds. They also harvested berries and fished. As he grew up, Elder Dave's first job was as a fisherman and he later worked as a carpenter. He also served in the Navy and was a World War II Veteran.

Elder Dave was influential in forming and continually supporting LMO. He named the agency, gifted prayers, held Honouring Ceremonies, and co-founded the Michif Elders Council. He was foundational in creating LMO's programming, including cultural programs and the ways that Métis children, youth, and families are supported overall.

The staff at LMO have said, "It is from Elders like Dave Barron... that we strive to practice child welfare in a Michif way. Learning to speak our Michif language is an important step towards this goal, and to embracing true reconciliation."

Elder Dave's contributions to this book include the many prayers that he has offered, as well as excerpts from his biography at LMO.



Elder Mazie Beeds
(1942 – 2019)

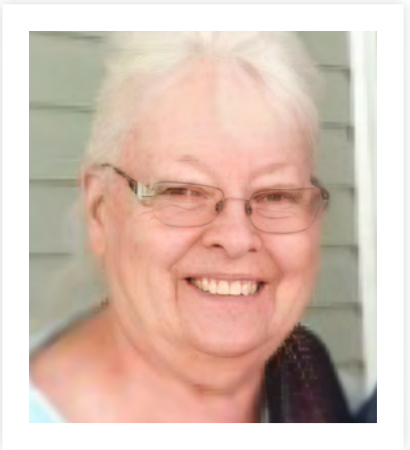
“In 2019, LMO lost one of the original members of the LMO Michif Elders Council and long-standing mentor and knowledge keeper, Mazie Beeds. Mazie gave us so many gifts and was very much an extension of our Michif Team. There are very few pictures of our gatherings and family honouring celebrations in which Mazie is not present. We are so grateful for the legacy she left us through her many writings, prayers and teachings. Mazie touched so many lives, including mine, and her Métis pride will be felt within our agency for many, many years to come.” ²¹

Elder Mazie was born in Big River, Saskatchewan. She was the youngest of five children. Her father was Métis (Cree/Scots), and her mother was Ukrainian. Her father was a trapper, and he also worked as an interpreter for the Cree and Métis people at the trapper conventions. Her mother and father raised their children with love. Elder Mazie’s parents travelled in many different ways, including by oxen, dog sleds, horse and sleigh, and wagon. She described her family as kind and generous, which is common in Métis culture.

Her family moved from Saskatchewan to Clinton, BC in 1954. She had two children, as well as many nephews and nieces. She lived in many places throughout BC and the territories, eventually moving to Kamloops.

Elder Mazie was a member of the Two Rivers Métis Society, which she joined as soon as she moved to Kamloops. She supported Métis children and families through the weekly Family Circles hosted by Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services, and attended many events and celebrations. She enjoyed discussing Métis heritage and sharing knowledge with Métis children and youth.

Elder Mazie’s knowledge is reflected in the prayers she offered and aspects of her story—which are included in this book.



Elder Deanna (DeeDee) Hurd
(1947 – 2022)

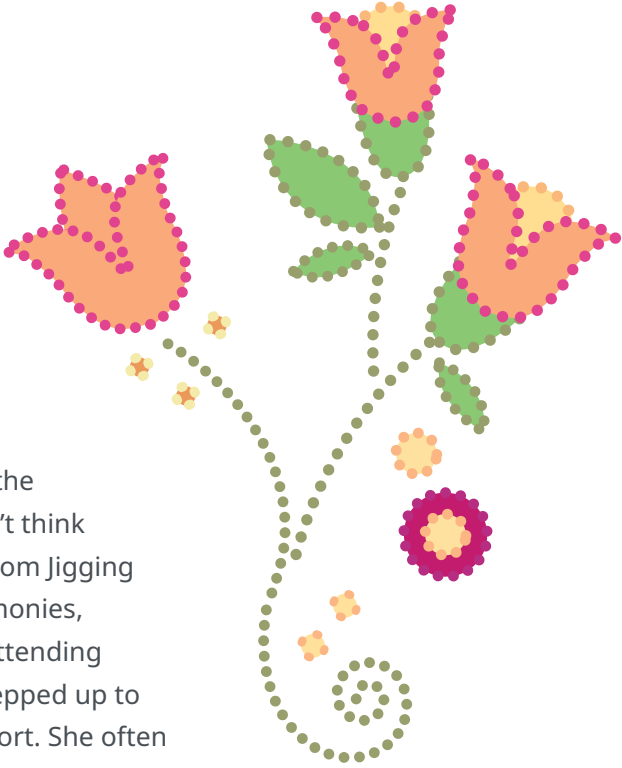
Elder Deanna (DeeDee) Hurd lived in Merritt, BC. She was married to Pete Hourie and had two children and three grandchildren. She passed away on June 17, 2022.

Elder DeeDee was an amazing supporter of Métis children, youth, and families—supporting the work

of Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services. She was a founding member of LMO’s Michif Elders Council. Her husband, Pete, also served on LMO’s Board of Directors.

Recalling Elder DeeDee’s many contributions to the work at LMO, Colleen Lucier said, “I honestly can’t think of any event... in which DeeDee wasn’t there... From Jigging classes, traditional arts classes, honouring ceremonies, meetings with MCFD, attending Family Circles, attending court.... DeeDee was always there.” She often stepped up to directly care for families who needed extra support. She often advocated for children to be returned to their families. Elder DeeDee has been described as humble, courageous, caring, compassionate, and generous. She was a trusted Elder for many. Colleen Lucier also said, “DeeDee had a huge heart and so many gifts that I will remember, and that will be remembered by many and for many generations to come.” ²²

Elder DeeDee’s contributions to LMO also led to the development of Kikékyelc: A Place of Belong. She had a significant impact on the lives of many Métis children, youth, and families. Elder DeeDee also carried many cultural, spiritual, and artistic gifts. Her depiction of Métis values in a Red River Cart Wheel has shaped practice at LMO and is included in this book.



21 Colleen Lucier, Personal Communication.

22 Colleen Lucier, Personal Communication.

