



Taapitow Niiyanaan (Always Us)



Prepared by:
Sarah Widmer,
TRU 4th year BSW student



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The New People
(1690-1812)

Fiddling and Jigging



Our Fiddle music and Jigging are unique to the Me tis People. They help us maintain our culture and reflects our identity.

The Red River Cart

The Me tis People developed the Red River cart to transport goods across the Prairies. It commercialized the buffalo trade and today is one of the best-known symbols of Me tis culture



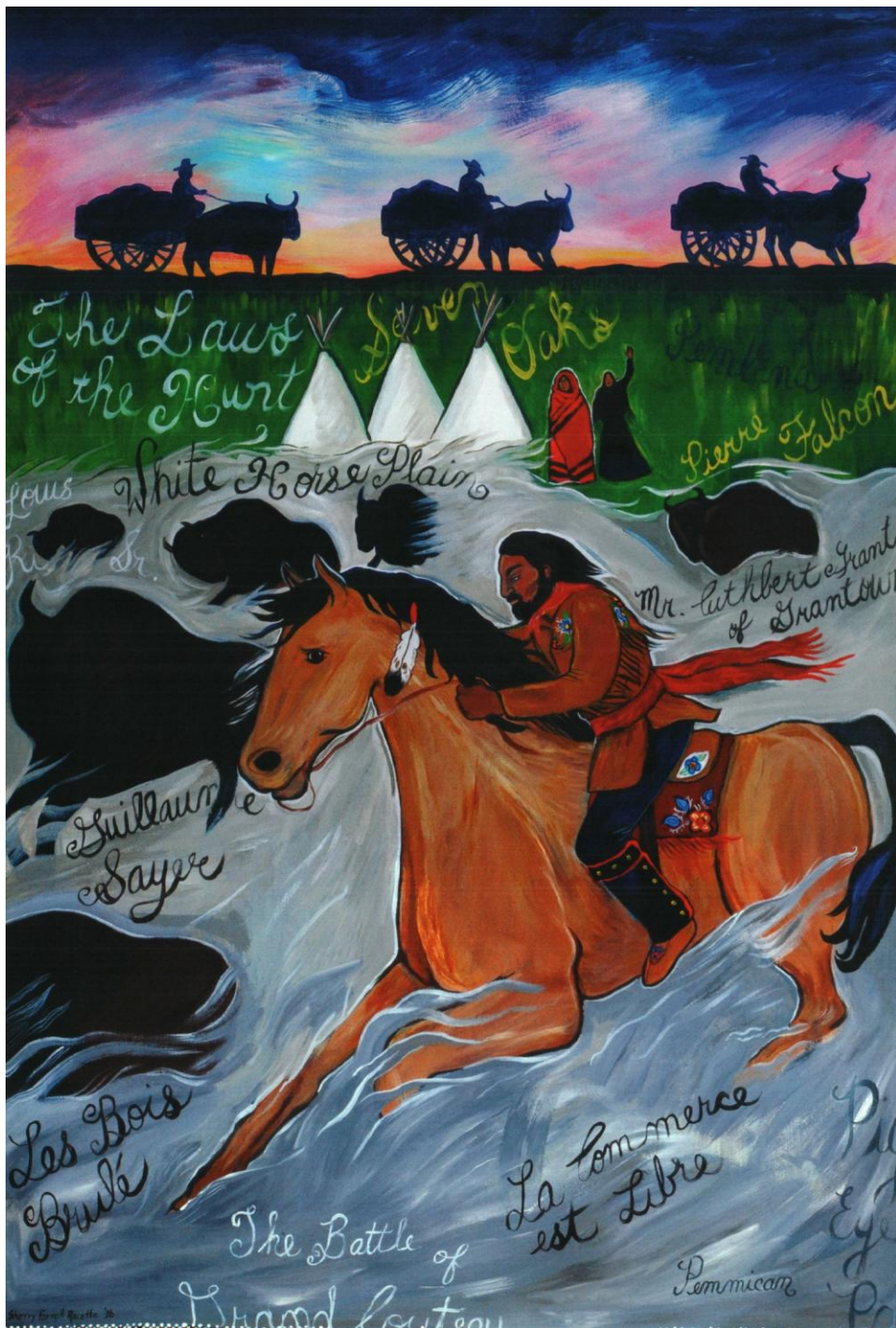
The Flower Beadwork People



The Me tis were famous for their floral beadwork, and were often called the 'Flower Beadwork People'. The symmetric floral beadwork, often set against a black or dark blue background, was inspired by European floral designs.

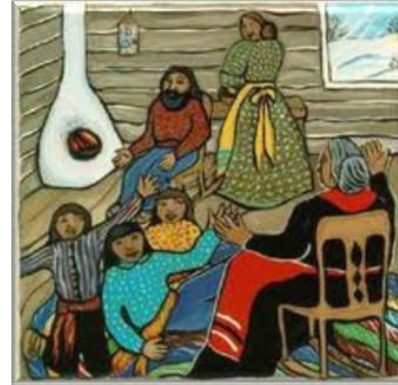
A New Nation Created

- ❑ The origin of the Me tis People dates back to the late 1600s when European fur traders began to marry First Nations women.
- ❑ The majority of the fur traders were of French, Scottish, Irish, and English decent and most often married women that were from the Cree or Anishinabe (Ojibway) Nations.
- ❑ Me tis culture developed through the combining of First Nations and European cultures. Creating a new and distinctive culture that recognized the valuable aspects of each culture and brought them together seamlessly.
- ❑ As the picture on the left shows, clothes were also a combination of European and First Nations traditional clothing.
- ❑ As the culture developed a new language was also created. Michif was a combination of the French, Cree and Anishinabe languages.
- ❑ The Me tis People made significant contributions to the development of western Canada. Due to their mixed traditions and their ability to speak multiple languages the Me tis men often worked as guides, interpreters, and provisioners to the new forts and trading companies (at the top of the picture on the left is a silhouette of men carrying canoes to represent this important aspect of Me tis history) or sometimes joined the military.
- ❑ By 1763 there were over 10 distinct Me tis communities along the major fur trade routes and near the new forts. The most notable of these communities being the Red River Settlement. These communities developed a unique political and legal structure with strong democratic traditions.



Les Bois Brûlés (1820-1869)

Family



Family is an important part of Métis culture because it helped to establish a close knit community and maintained the unique cultural identity that we had developed. Most importantly it linked us together for mutual support particularly in times of distress.

Our Flag

The figure in the center of a blue field represents the joining of two cultures and as an infinity symbol, represents the immortality of a nation.



The Métis Sash



The sash is a finger woven belt made of brightly colored wool and/or plant fibers approximately three meters long. Wrapped about the midsection, the sash was used to carry belongings during fur trade duties, but had many uses. Today, the sash is worn by all members of the Métis Nation as a symbol of nationhood and pride. The sash has been the most persistent element of traditional Métis dress, worn long after the capote and Red River coat were replaced by European styles.

This is Why We...

...create a warm, welcoming environment for children, youth and families to gather, greet those who enter our home with the images and sounds of our Métis People, begin our meetings with prayer, include the wisdom of our Elders in our practice, develop programs infused with our Michif language and Métis specific resources, include honouring ceremonies and celebrations as part of our practice, and encourage participation in our many cultural activities and events. We need to remember who we are, our dark but resilient history, the strength demonstrated by our ancestors and remember that we carry this strength within us.

As Métis People we lived and must continue to live with love, honour, dignity and respect knowing we belong to a strong, proud People with a unique heritage and cultural identity. We are no longer the 'Forgotten People'. Taapitow Niiyanaan – we have Always (been) Us. This is why our services at Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services must reflect our vision and incorporate spiritual, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing in our practice as it is through a holistic approach to child welfare services that we will help our children, youth and families remember where they came from and who they truly are and this is the root of all healing.

Respectfully and Maarsii
Colleen Lucier
Executive Director

Otipemisiwak

The Metis were-and are-a people distinguished by their independence, individuality and resilience. The Cree referred to Metis people as Otipemisiwak, which, loosely translated, means “the people who own themselves” or “the people who govern themselves”.



Way of Life

- ◆ Les Bois Brûlés - French for “charred wood” or “burnt wood” - the national identity used by French Métis to self-identify as a collective. Most likely a translation of the Anishnabek term “Wissakodewinmi” meaning “Half-Burnt Wood People”.
- ☐ The picture on the left identifies two very important aspects of the way of life for the Métis People. The silhouette at the top depicts independent Métis fur traders. The right to trade without being under the thumb of the Hudson’s Bay Company was a strong unifying factor of the Métis People.
- ☐ The second important aspect is the buffalo hunt. This was a source of great pride within Métis culture as it was the climax of cultural life that drew people together in a complex spiritual, physical, emotional, and economic intersection. It was extremely dangerous and the skills were taught strictly from a young age. Many of the games children played during childhood helped to develop courage and teach some of the skills required for the hunt such as hand-eye coordination and quick reflexes. The buffalo hunt was extremely structured and followed strict rules to protect the buffalo population for future hunts. An elected ‘buffalo hunt council’ enforced the rules of the hunt. These rules became known as the ‘Laws of the Prairie’.
- ◆ One of the major events of the early 1800’s was the Battle of Seven Oaks (June 19, 1816). A group of Métis led by Cuthbert Grant fought a group of settlers trying to restrict the independent trade of pemmican. This event is often said to be the birth of Métis nationalism.

“Métis identity is not based on genetics. What distinguishes Métis is their attachment to culture and communities that are distinctly Métis, rooted in a historic lifestyle that involved seasonal hunting, periodic return to fixed trading bases, and mobile art forms of song, dance, fiddle music, and decorative clothing. A central component of Métis distinctiveness is the Michif language.” (Tricia Logan)

Reconciliation

"We have survived through incredible odds. We very easily could have been absorbed into the mainstream society. The pressures were there from all sides. We are here. Despite direct assimilation attempts. Despite the residential school systems. Despite the strong influences of the church in Métis communities to ignore and deny our Aboriginal heritage and our Aboriginal spirituality. We are still able to say we are proud to be Métis. We are resilient as a weed. As beautiful as a wildflower. We have much to celebrate and be proud of."

(Métis Artist, Christi Belcourt)

- ♦ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action report requested that all levels of government in Canada commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care, establish agency accountability and national standards for Aboriginal child-welfare legislation, create culturally appropriate parenting programs, and acknowledge the history of Aboriginal Peoples when considering placement.
- At Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family & Community Services, our vision is that all Métis children, youth and families live with love, honor, dignity and respect knowing they belong to a strong, proud People with a unique heritage and cultural identity, and all those serving our People are accountable to this vision.



The Caves at Batoche
(1885)



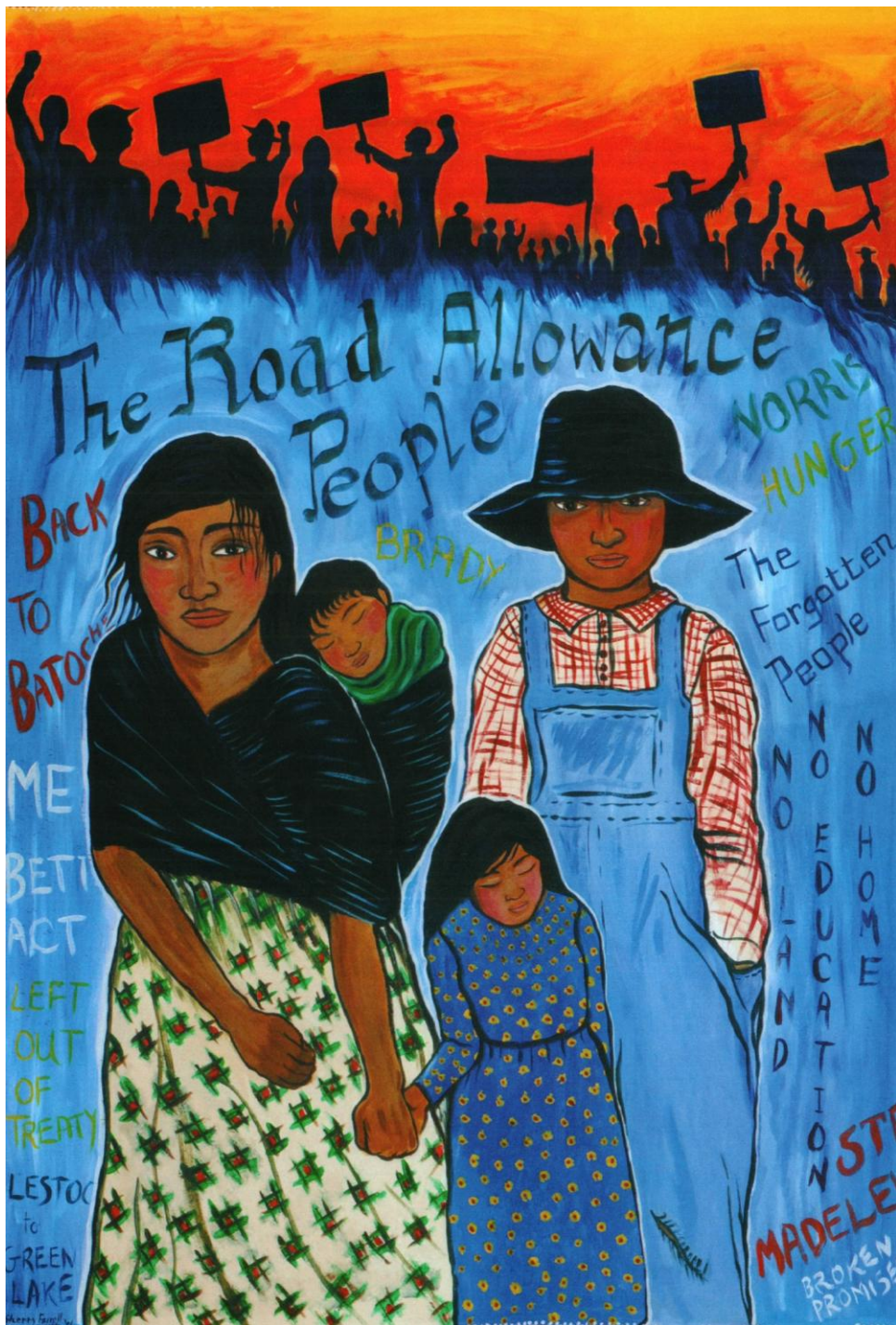
Giniigaaniimenaaning (Looking Ahead)

"The story begins in the bottom left corner of the glass, with your eye moving upwards in the left panel to the top window, and flowing down the right window to the bottom right corner. The glass design tells a story. It is a story of Aboriginal people, with our ceremonies, languages, and cultural knowledge intact; through the darkness of the residential school era; to an awakening sounded by a drum; an apology that spoke to the heart; hope for reconciliation; transformation and healing through dance, ceremony, language; and resilience into the present day."

(Métis Artist Christi Belcourt)

Resistance

- ♦ Métis People were determined to maintain a land base and pursue a distinct way of life despite the constant encroachment of colonialism. This periodically generated open conflict (ex. The Battle of Seven Oaks).
- ♦ After Confederation and the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Federal Government, Louis Riel led 210 men in the occupation of Lower Fort Garry. He then set about electing and setting up a provisional government that created a list of rights for the Métis People. These rights were eventually incorporated into the Manitoba Act of 1870. These actions helped to procure rights to land for the Métis and created the province of Manitoba. This became known as the Red River Resistance.
- ♦ A similar attempt was made to assert the rights of the Métis at Batoche in 1881 but this failed when the Canadian militia was brought in to forcibly settle the problems with the Métis. While Louis Riel was considered a hero to the Métis People, he was tried for treason by the Government of Canada and subsequently hung. The settlement at Batoche was destroyed and many Métis People were displaced again.
- ♦ The picture on the left depicts the Battle of Batoche. At the top is the silhouette representing Riel and his men fighting the Canadian militia with the red background depicting the fire that destroyed Batoche. The main part of the picture shows the women and children hiding in the caves surrounding Batoche.
- ♦ The Manitoba Act promised the Métis 1.4 million acres of land to be distributed as land entitlements called scrip. However, dispute over the terms of distribution, sharp dealing by unscrupulous land agents, and outright corruption by government officials deprived most Métis of the land allotted to them.



**A Forgotten People - The Spirit Returns
(1885-1980)**

A Forgotten People

- ② After the loss at Batoche the Me tis People were rapidly dispossessed of their land and were quickly forgotten by the government. The majority of the Me tis People lived in utter poverty.
- ② Many displaced Me tis were forced to build homes and communities on the tracts of land between properties that were allotted for roads. This made them vulnerable to having their homes destroyed. They became known as the Road Allowance People. The children in the picture represent the living conditions and poverty Me tis People suffered during this time.
- ② In one generation the Me tis People had gone from the center to the margins of society. They were not accepted by First Nations People because of their European heritage and they were not accepted by white Canada due to their First Nations heritage. During this time, identifying as Me tis was not safe, therefore, if one could assimilate into white Canada that was sometimes seen as the only hope for survival.
- ② During the Great Depression Me tis People were among the most impoverished in Canada. Neither the provincial government or the federal government would take responsibility for them. Each claiming that they were the other's responsibility.
- ② During the time of the residential schools many Me tis parents tried to have their children enrolled so that they could get some form of education. Often the schools wouldn't allow them in because they weren't "Indian" enough. Some schools needed to up their student count to get the money they wanted and so would petition the government to let Me tis attend. Me tis children were, of course, subject to the same abuses as the First Nations children and added to that they were looked down on by the First Nations children for being too white.
- ② All these circumstances led Me tis People to regain their fighting spirit and fight for their rights. This is depicted in the silhouette portion at the top of the picture.