

*Métis Women:
Strong and Beautiful*

Métis Women: Strong and Beautiful
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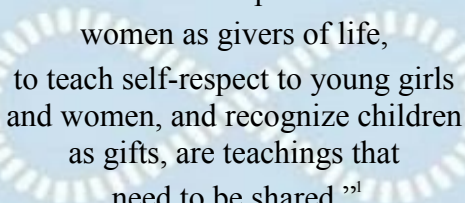
Special Acknowledgements:

Catherine Graham
Sonia Wesche
Métis Nation British Columbia
Native Women's Association of Canada
Women across the Métis Nation

Copies of this publication may be obtained by contacting:

Métis Centre
National Aboriginal Health Organization
220 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 1200
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5Z9
Phone: 613-237-9462
Toll-free: 1-877-602-4445
Fax: 613-237-8707
Email: metiscentre@naho.ca
Website: www.naho.ca/metiscentre

Under the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*, the term Aboriginal Peoples refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people living in Canada. However, common use of the term is not always inclusive of all three distinct peoples, and much of the available research only focuses on particular segments of the Aboriginal population. NAHO makes every effort to ensure the term is used appropriately.



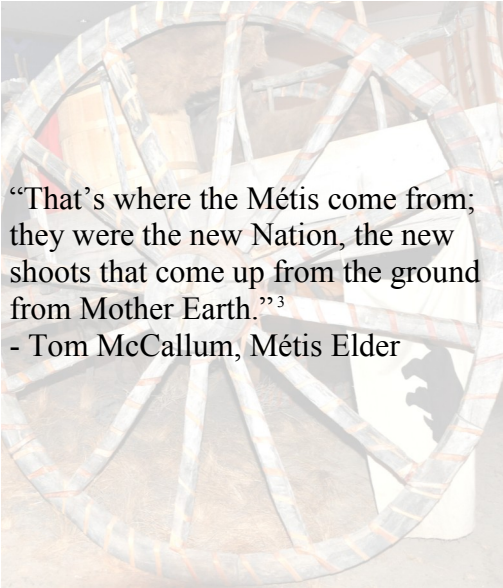
“To respect
women as givers of life,
to teach self-respect to young girls
and women, and recognize children
as gifts, are teachings that
need to be shared.”¹

-Angie Crerar, Métis Elder

Who are Métis?

Being Métis is not simply a matter of having mixed European and First Nations heritage. Métis are a distinct people with their own culture, language, values and beliefs.

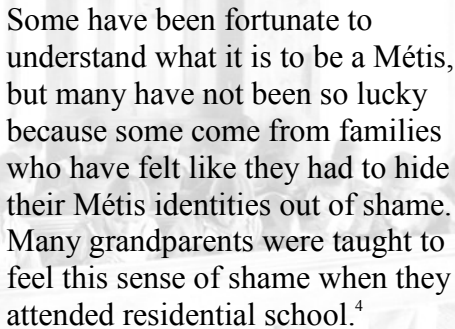
While Métis are a distinct people, there is a great deal of diversity among the population with regards to culture, language, values and beliefs, varying between communities and geographic regions.²



“That’s where the Métis come from; they were the new Nation, the new shoots that come up from the ground from Mother Earth.”³

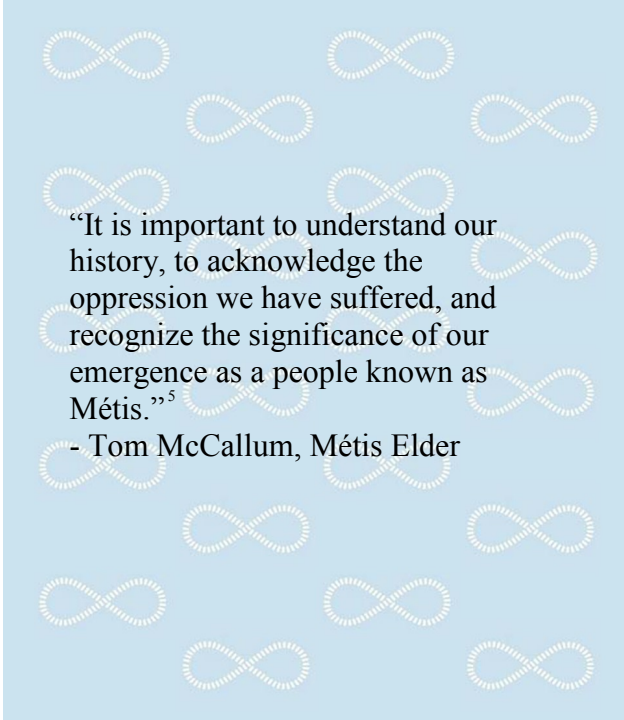
- Tom McCallum, Métis Elder

Photo Credit: Sonia Wesche

A faded, black and white photograph of a classroom. Several students are seated at desks, some looking towards the camera and others looking down. The room has large windows in the background, and the overall tone is somber and historical.

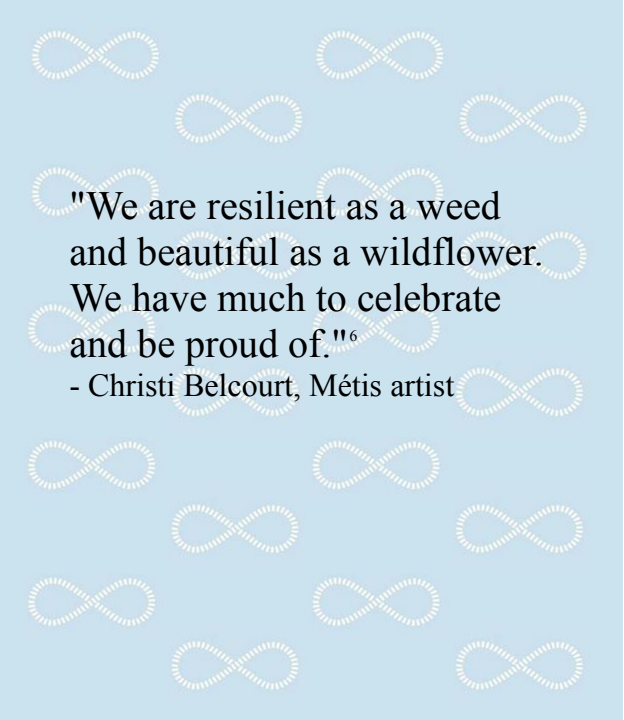
Some have been fortunate to understand what it is to be a Métis, but many have not been so lucky because some come from families who have felt like they had to hide their Métis identities out of shame. Many grandparents were taught to feel this sense of shame when they attended residential school.⁴

Image: Library and Archives Canada accession number 1936-271, PA-042133



“It is important to understand our history, to acknowledge the oppression we have suffered, and recognize the significance of our emergence as a people known as Métis.”⁵

- Tom McCallum, Métis Elder



"We are resilient as a weed
and beautiful as a wildflower.
We have much to celebrate
and be proud of."⁶

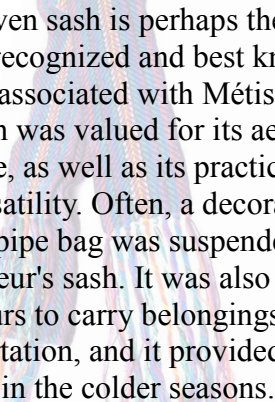
- Christi Belcourt, Métis artist

Métis Flag

The Métis flag, which emerged in the early 1800s, symbolizes the creation of a new society with roots in both Aboriginal and European cultures and traditions. The infinity symbol also suggests that the Métis Nation will exist forever.⁷

The Métis Sash

The woven sash is perhaps the most widely recognized and best known symbol associated with Métis culture. The sash was valued for its aesthetic presence, as well as its practicality and versatility. Often, a decorative beaded pipe bag was suspended from a voyageur's sash. It was also used by voyageurs to carry belongings during transportation, and it provided warmth in the colder seasons.⁸



The Red River Cart

Today, the Red River cart has become a symbol of Métis nationhood in western Canada. Historically, the Métis used the cart as an all-purpose utility vehicle, a raft, and a makeshift home. “While the inspiration for the Red River cart came from European carting traditions, the materials used were indigenous to the plains and its construction was distinctly Métis.”⁹

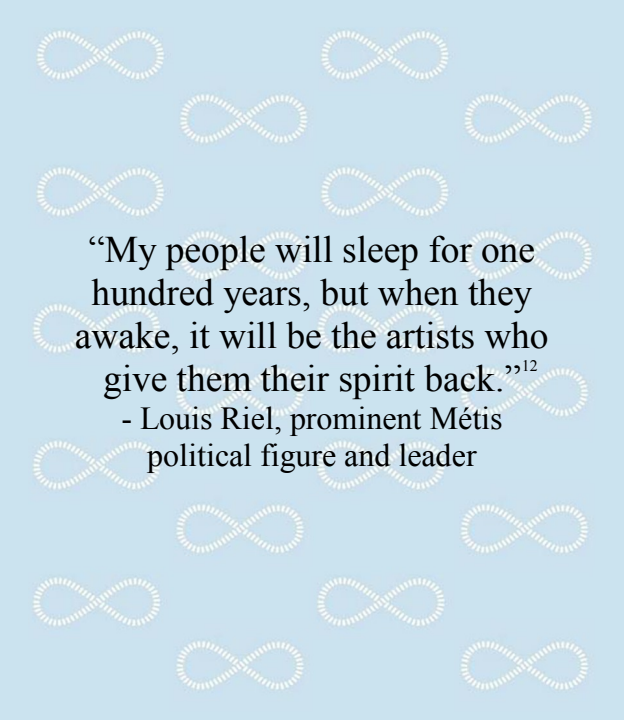
The Métis Fiddle

The fiddle has figured prominently in the lifestyle of the Métis people for hundreds of years. The famous Red River jig has become the centrepiece of Métis music, although it varies by region and performer. Since the European fiddle was very expensive during the time of Canada's early development as a country, many craftsmen learned to make their own.

Today, the fiddle is used in celebrations and fiddle and jigging contests, where the instrument symbolizes Métis nationhood and pride.¹⁰

Métis Jigging

The Red River jig, the unique dance developed by the Métis people, combines the intricate footwork of First Nations dance with the instruments and form of European music. Traditionally, dancing started early in the evening and could last until dawn. Witnesses were amazed by the energy and vitality spent on celebration, especially after the long, arduous workdays necessary to keep Métis communities running. Today, the Métis people still enjoy jigging, and have local, provincial and national dance teams that attend conferences, exhibitions and powwows.¹¹



“My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back.”¹²

- Louis Riel, prominent Métis political figure and leader

Food plays a very important role in our lives and in bringing us together as families and communities. Visitors were always welcome at the family table. ¹³

“If there was good food, there were stories, music and laughter, and from this came a richness that no amount of poverty or violence could completely take away. We were then and we continue to remain *kah tip aim soo chick*: “the people who own themselves.” ¹⁴

-Maria Campbell, Métis Elder and writer

Bannock is a traditional Métis food.

Recipe for Red River Bannock¹⁵

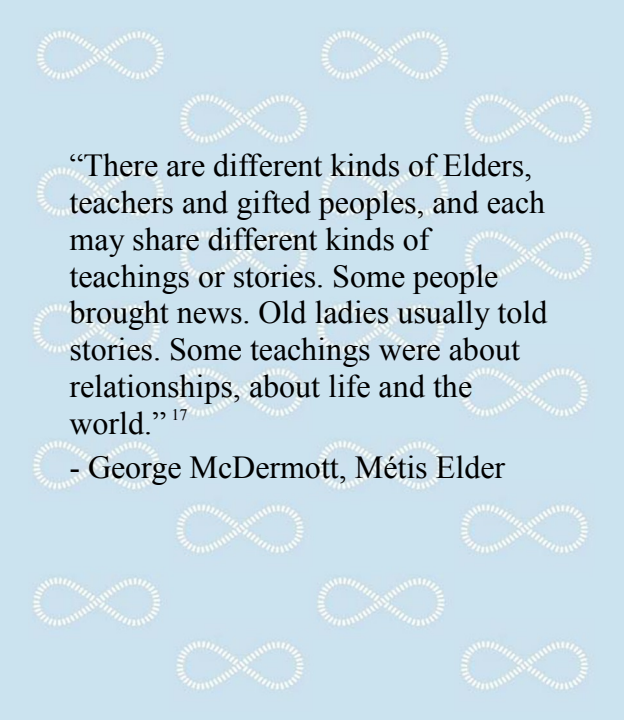
In a bowl place:

- ◆ 3 cups flour.
- ◆ 2 tbsp. baking powder.
- ◆ 1 tsp. salt.
- ◆ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar.

Cut $\frac{1}{2}$ cup margarine or shortening into mixture. Add enough cold water to make dry dough. Place in a greased frying pan and bake in 400F oven for 30 minutes. Add raisins for company bannock.

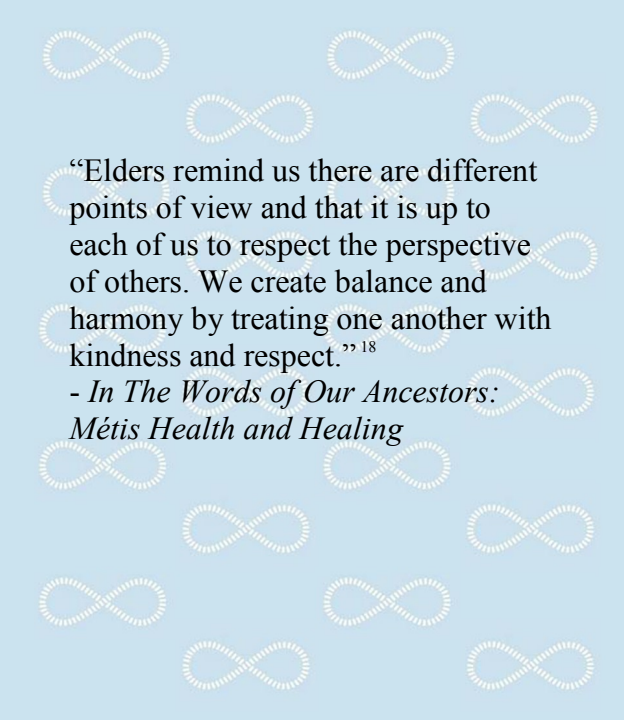


I am a strong and proud Métis person.
My pride makes me strong for my people.
My grandmother has taught me these ways.¹⁶



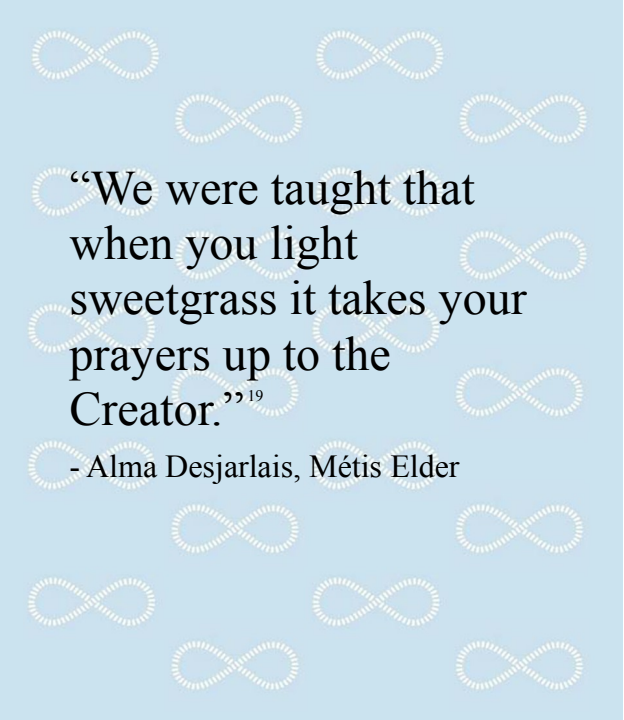
“There are different kinds of Elders, teachers and gifted peoples, and each may share different kinds of teachings or stories. Some people brought news. Old ladies usually told stories. Some teachings were about relationships, about life and the world.”¹⁷

- George McDermott, Métis Elder



“Elders remind us there are different points of view and that it is up to each of us to respect the perspective of others. We create balance and harmony by treating one another with kindness and respect.”¹⁸

*- In The Words of Our Ancestors:
Métis Health and Healing*



“We were taught that
when you light
sweetgrass it takes your
prayers up to the
Creator.”¹⁹

- Alma Desjarlais, Métis Elder

Métis Language

The Métis developed a unique language called Michif, which has three distinct variations.²⁰

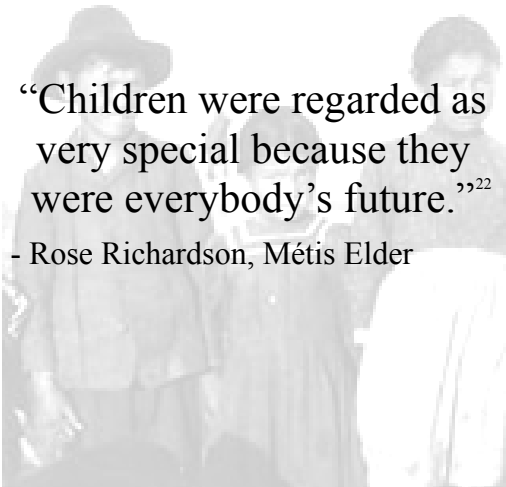
Tansi : “Hello”

Fii : “Daughter”

Maama : “Mother”

Nohkom : “Grandmother”

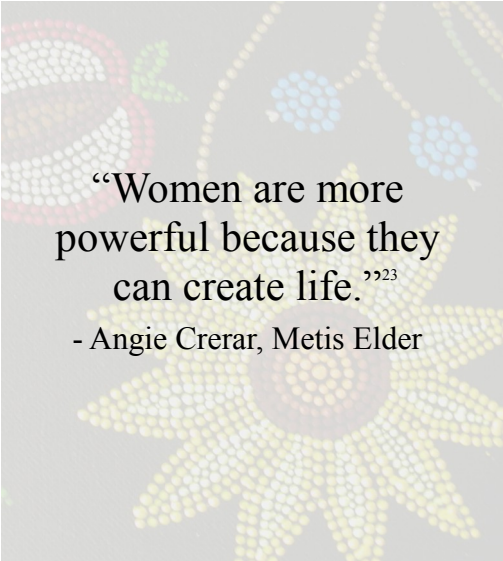
Kisakitin : “I love you”²¹



“Children were regarded as very special because they were everybody’s future.”²²

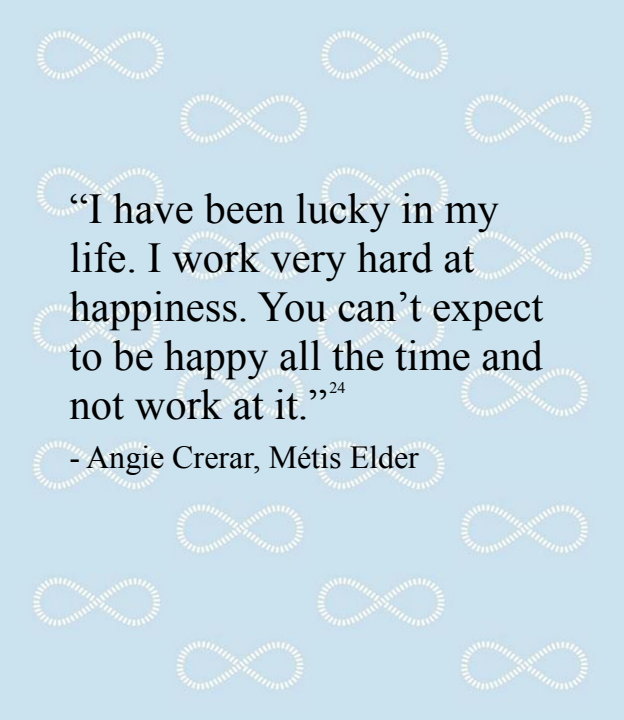
- Rose Richardson, Métis Elder

Image: Library and Archives Canada, accession number 1936-271, PA-044554



“Women are more powerful because they can create life.”²³

- Angie Crerar, Metis Elder



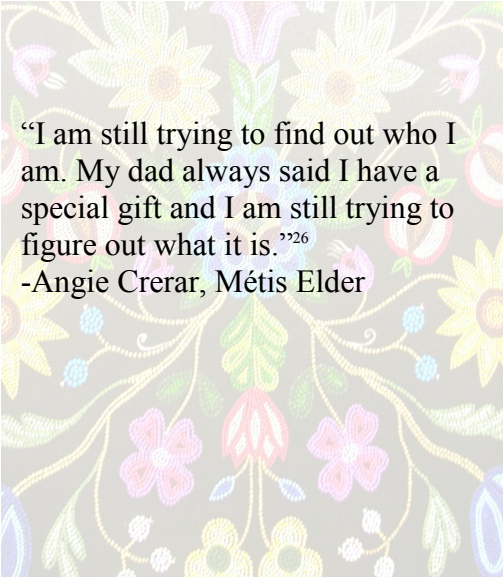
“I have been lucky in my life. I work very hard at happiness. You can’t expect to be happy all the time and not work at it.”²⁴

- Angie Crerar, Métis Elder

“Each of us has a gift. All people have gifts. These are gifts from the Creator.”²⁵

- Tom McCallum, Métis Elder



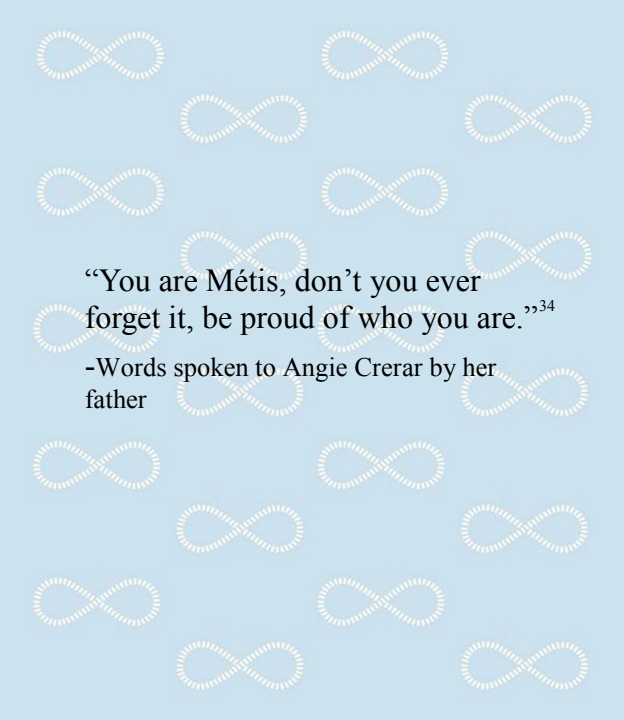


“I am still trying to find out who I am. My dad always said I have a special gift and I am still trying to figure out what it is.”²⁶

-Angie Crerar, Métis Elder

Strong Métis Women

- ◆ Christi Belcourt, artist.²⁷
- ◆ Christine Welsh, documentary film maker.²⁸
- ◆ Honorable Senator Thelma Chalifoux, first Métis woman appointed to senate of Canada in 1997.²⁹
- ◆ Kim Anderson, writer and educator.³⁰
- ◆ Maria Campbell, author, playwright, filmmaker, academic and Elder.³¹
- ◆ Marilyn Dumont, writer and poet.³²
- ◆ Tantoo Cardinal, film and television actress.³³



“You are Métis, don’t you ever
forget it, be proud of who you are.”³⁴

-Words spoken to Angie Crerar by her
father

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