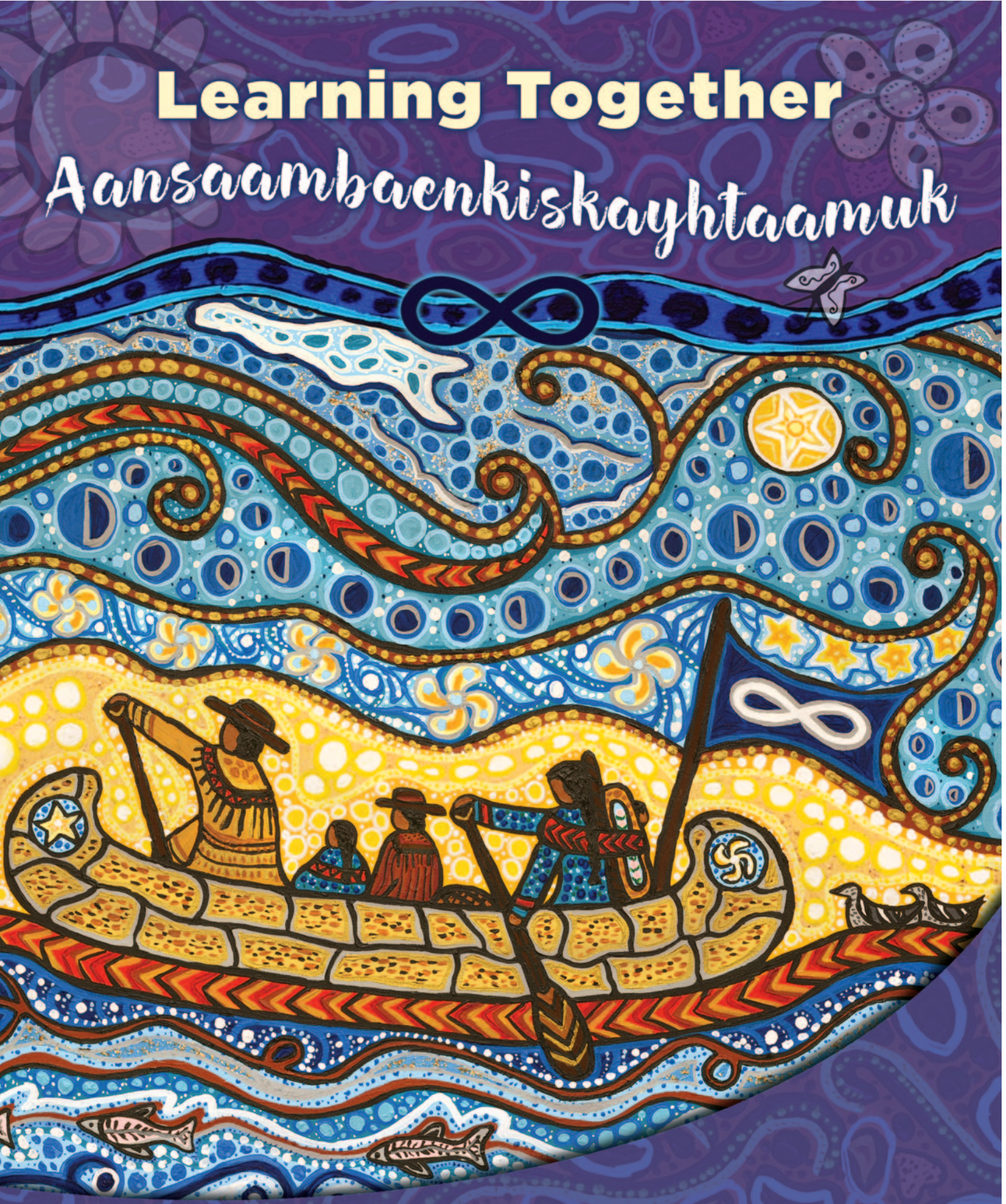
Learning Together

Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk



MÉTIS EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

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Disclaimer: This guide has been developed by Métis Nation British Columbia, Ministry of Education, in consultation with many Métis people, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers. However, we recognize that there may be different perspectives and viewpoints not represented in this guide.

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Métis Nation British Columbia's mandate is to develop and enhance opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services.

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“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together” was developed with input from early childhood educators, Métis families, and Métis cultural Knowledge Carriers across British Columbia. We thank everyone who participated in the process for sharing their heartfelt contributions and expert knowledge, including the following:

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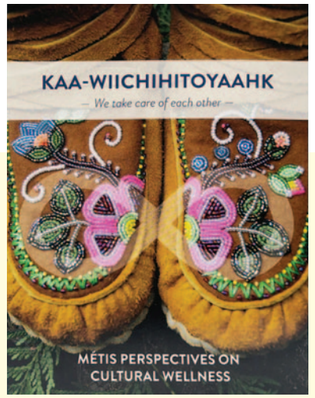
Aspects of **“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together”** have been adapted from MNBC’s “Kaa-wiichihitoyaahk: Métis Perspectives on Cultural Wellness.” “Kaa-whiichihitoyaahk” was developed through extensive interviews and engagement sessions with Métis Elders and youth from across B.C. It can be purchased from the MNBC website.



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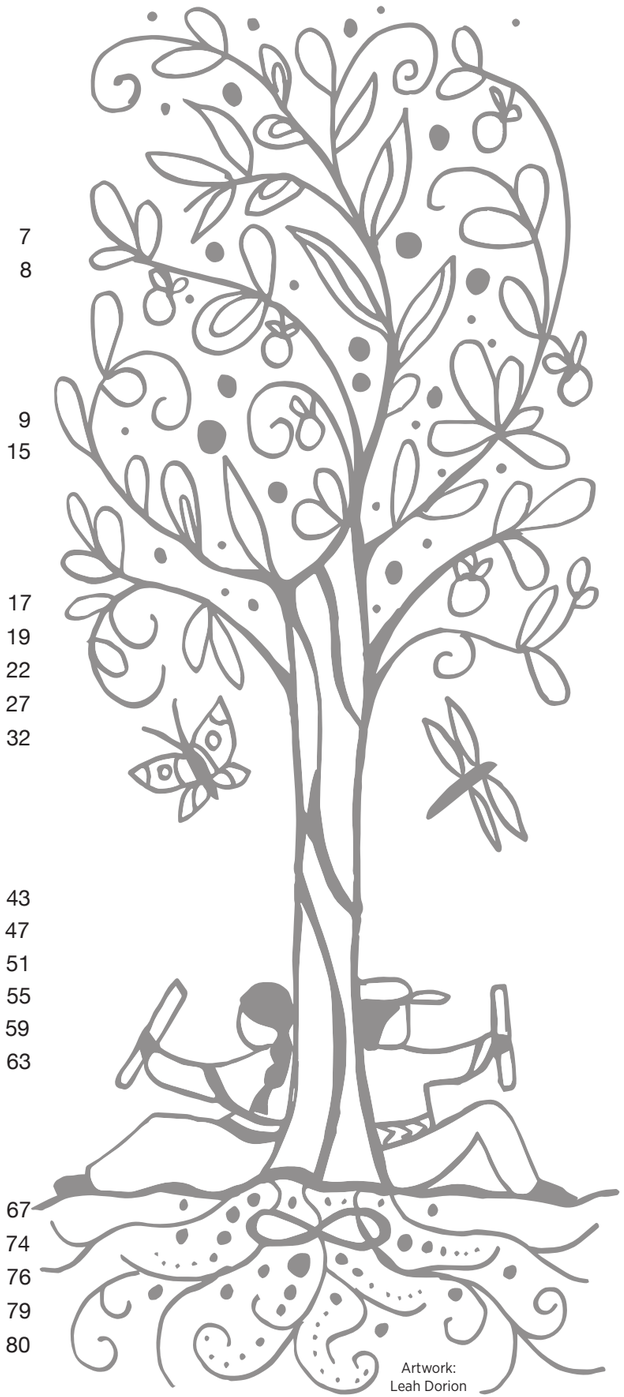

Artwork:
Leah Dorion

Illustration: Leah Dorion

The activities in **“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together”** have been developed to align with Métis values and with B.C.’s Early Learning Framework, B.C’s K–12 curriculum, and the Government of Canada’s Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework. These frameworks stress the important role of early childhood education in supporting positive personal and cultural identity and enabling reconciliation and justice. They emphasize the value for all children of bringing Indigenous worldviews and culture into early childhood settings. These frameworks also stress the importance of a “distinctions-based approach” that recognizes the uniqueness of each Indigenous cultural group and the rights of Métis people to self-determination in early childhood education.

Introduction

“We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on.” - Louis Riel, Métis leader

OVERVIEW

“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together” and related resources were created to support educators, families, and communities to explore Métis culture and identity with children from birth to eight years. Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) developed these resources to promote learning environments in which Métis culture is recognized and celebrated.

Learning about Métis culture and identity is vital to the well-being and belonging of Métis children and their families. Fostering a safe learning environment with Métis-specific content and approaches will support the cultural identity of Métis children because they will see themselves reflected in the learning environment and programs they attend. Using the Métis-specific resources will also lead to increased awareness of Métis identity and culture amongst all young children, their families, their communities, and early learning and child care professionals.

In this professional learning guide, we introduce you to various resources and provide ideas on how to use them in your learning environment. This resource is intended to support early learning and child care professionals to integrate Métis content and pedagogy into their work with young children.**“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together”** is for everyone—Métis and non-Métis—and can be used regardless of your connection with or knowledge of Métis culture and identity.

HOW THESE RESOURCES WERE DEVELOPED

“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together” was developed with extensive input from Métis people, educators, and families across B.C. MNBC developed a steering committee to oversee the development of the resources and sought input and expertise from the following groups of people:

- ❀ Métis children, parents, and families who shared stories of how their children use the resources
- ❀ Métis Elders and Knowledge Carriers who contributed cultural knowledge around learning and child-rearing
- ❀ Early childhood educators and primary grades teachers who contributed ideas for learning activities
- ❀ Curriculum development professionals and Métis researchers who brought together the input from the Métis community to create this guide

MNBC wishes to extend gratitude to all the people who generously contributed their time and openly shared their wisdom and experiences to create this guide. –Maarsii!

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together” has been developed for early learning and child care professionals working with children from birth to eight years of age, although the guide has applications beyond this age group. The guide uses a Métis pedagogy informed by Métis core values. These core values have been integrated throughout the guide and influence the learning activities and resources.

Section One ~ History & Culture ... of the guide offers a brief foundational overview of who the Métis are and why it is important to include Métis content and pedagogy in early childhood education. We recommend that you read this section first as it provides a grounding for the guide and the background knowledge needed to successfully use the Métis Early Years Resources.

Section Two ~ Métis Inclusion ... introduces the Métis core values related to learning. It also addresses the concept of cultural safety and provides tips on how to create a culturally safe learning environment to support the well-being of all children.

Section Three ~ Resources ...provides information on how to use the resources. This includes a description of the resources and suggested opportunities for learning and investigation. These suggestions have been created to align with the B.C. Early Learning Framework. This section does not need to be read front to back. This guide has been designed so that you can take out the pages on the resource you are using and keep them handy for reference.

Section Four ~ References ...of the guide provides some suggestions for further learning and resources to support you in integrating Métis perspectives.

It is important that educators take the time to review the Métis Culture and History and Métis Inclusion in Early Childhood Education sections, as these sections will inform and guide educators on how to use the Métis Early Years Resources in a way that is respectful and honours Métis core values

Illustrations: Mallory Blondeau, Leah Dorion

Métis Culture and History

WHO ARE THE MÉTIS?

Métis culture and nationhood is rooted in intermarriages and other social connections between European and First Nations people during the early North American fur trade period. The term Métis does not encompass all individuals with mixed Aboriginal and European heritage. Rather, it refers to a distinctive people who developed their own worldview, customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity that is separate from their First Nations or European forebears. The children of these couples were mixed Aboriginal people, but they were not yet Métis. Over time, these individuals chose to marry other mixed Aboriginal individuals, with such families creating distinct Métis kinship networks, communities, and cultural norms. Gradually, a distinct culture and Nation solidified over generations.

❀ ❀ ❀

Historic Métis communities emerged in the lands now known as B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories, as well as in Montana, North Dakota, and Idaho.

Métis people are recognized in the **Canadian Constitution Act** of 1982 as one of the three Aboriginal peoples of Canada (along with First Nations and Inuit people).

To be granted Métis citizenship, a person must demonstrate that they meet the national definition of Métis citizenship by providing evidence that they:

- ❀ Self-identify as Métis
- ❀ Are distinct from other Indigenous peoples
- ❀ Are of historic Métis ancestry (demonstrated through genealogical records)
- ❀ Are accepted by the Métis Nation (demonstrated through connection to a contemporary Métis community)

In British Columbia there are over 25,000 Métis Citizens registered, and almost 100,000 people who have identified as Métis but not yet applied for citizenship. The Métis Nation is self-governing and MNBC registers its own Métis Citizens.

Treeline Photography, Illustration: Leah Dorion

It is important for Métis people to not get lumped in with First Nation people when it comes to learning resources. We are not First Nation and we are not settler, we walk in both worlds, and it is a beautiful world on its own. – Christy Anderson, Parent, Castlegar, BC

At the time I was growing up, we didn't know that the way we were raised was with Métis values. It was a way of life. That's just how it was. And I think, too, that after I got older, I started to realize that I had a different belief system; I had a different way of looking at things and doing things than some of my European friends. – Métis Elder Earl Henderson

DIVERSITY OF MÉTIS PEOPLE

The Métis are a diverse group of Indigenous people. You cannot always tell that a person is Métis by their physical attributes, geographic location, or name. The best way to know if a person is Métis is if they identify that they are Métis.

Métis people express their culture in a variety of ways. They may be influenced more strongly by French, English, Cree, or other European and First Nations cultures. As a result, Métis people have passed down traditions, language dialects, and styles that demonstrate different aspects of the various cultures that have contributed to Métis identity. Métis people have been dispersed across the Métis homeland over the past 150 years. As they spread across Canada, different expressions of Métis identity developed.

As a result of the discrimination and racism that Métis individuals faced, many people hid their identity from their families. As a result, many individuals today are newly discovering and reconnecting with their Métis culture and identity.

Photograph: Louis Lafferty

Given the diversity of Métis people and experiences, assumptions that all Métis people are connected to their culture or share the same cultural practices should be avoided. It is important to recognize that Métis people have different levels of cultural knowledge and connection, and to respect how Métis people choose to express their identity.

MÉTIS HISTORY

The Origin of Métis People

Métis history begins with the fur trade. Europeans first came to what is now known as North America in the 1500s, and by the 1600s, the fur trade had become one of the most significant economic ventures on the continent. The area now known as Canada was prized for its animal furs, which were used for clothing and hats in Europe and other parts of the world. For the first 200 years of the fur trade, European women rarely came to the interior of North America. European men working in the fur trade often married First Nations women. The children of these marriages grew up with influences from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Over time, they formed distinct communities with each other, and in a process known as **Métissage**, they intermarried over generations and developed a unique culture that was neither European nor First Nations, but Métis. These families developed unique Métis kinship networks, communities, and cultural norms. Gradually, a distinct culture and nation solidified over generations. Historic Métis communities emerged in Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories, as well as in Montana, North Dakota, and Idaho.

The Emergence of Métis Nationhood

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, Métis people living in the region of the Canadian prairies now known as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta were integral to the fur trade—men provided the hard labour required to transport furs, and women provided food and supplies to the fur traders. Many Métis men also become fur trade employees in clerical and leadership positions. The Métis worked together as a nation to hunt buffalo and developed shared rules and values for the hunt. The practices of the buffalo hunt are the origin of the foundational principles for the Métis governance system today. They provided critical supplies to the fur trade, most notably in the form of pemmican—dried buffalo meat mixed with berries, which was a staple of the fur trade. In the early 1800s, the Métis right to participate in the economy was challenged during the Pemmican Wars. The Pemmican Wars were a series of trade conflicts between the European-owned fur trading companies in the region, each of which wanted to control the trade of pemmican so that they could dominate the fur trade. In the Battle of Seven Oaks, the Métis fought for their rights to trade pemmican and for their autonomy as a nation. This event was an important step in establishing Métis nationhood. Around this time, they also started to migrate to B.C. in search of economic opportunities and began to form communities there. By the mid-1800s, Métis communities were established across B.C., and many Métis people played leadership roles as "founding families" of early B.C. settler communities.

Photographs: Louis Lafferty, MNBC Archive

Métis Fight for Their Rights

While Métis identity flourished in the prairies and B.C. in the mid-1800s, the influx of European settlers wanting to claim land in the area created a threat for the Métis. The Métis formed a provisional government to negotiate for their rights as the lands they lived on became part of the new country of Canada. This government, led by Métis President Louis Riel, developed the basis for the **Manitoba Act**, which outlined the provisions for the province of Manitoba to become part of Canada. The act promised that the Métis would be able to maintain ownership of the land they lived on, and that each of them would receive an additional share of land for future generations.

However, after the act was signed, this agreement was not honoured by the Canadian government. The Canadian government introduced the Métis land scrip system, distributing certificates that could be redeemed for land or cash. However, due to fraud, complex bureaucracy, and government manipulation of the rules, many Métis people did not receive the land they were entitled to. At the same time, they faced violence, racism, and exclusion at the hands of growing numbers of European settlers. In 1885, the Métis organized a resistance under the leadership of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, and they fought against the Canadian military forces in a series of battles. They were ultimately defeated at the Battle of Batoche, and many were driven out of their communities.

The Forgotten People

Between 1885 and 1982, the Métis were not recognized by the Canadian government, and their rights as Indigenous people were ignored. They became known as the "forgotten people." This was a time when they used their deep strength and resilience to protect who they were, their nation, their communities, and their culture.

Since the Métis were denied access to their homestead lands and were prevented from full participation in the mainstream economy through racist policies and practices, they often did not have the funds to buy land. As a result, many lived on road allowances, which are small strips of publicly owned land alongside rural roads. Living on the road allowances deepened the poverty that many Métis experienced at this time. Those who lived on road allowances were technically homeless, and as a result, they could not send their children to school, apply for bank loans, get electricity and telephone lines, or access municipal services.

When the Métis did establish a more permanent community, it could be demolished if Canadians wanted access to the land. In one notorious case, all 35 homes in the Métis village of Ste. Madeline, Manitoba, were burned down in 1938 as part of a federal government program designed to clear land and create pasture for settler farmers during the Great Depression.

Photographs: Prince Albert Museum

Between 1885 & 1982, the Métis were not recognized by the Canadian government & their rights as Indigenous people were ignored. They became the "forgotten people."

During this period, racism was prevalent, and many individuals experienced shame in relation to being Métis, leading to disconnections with their culture and identity. Because Métis have both European and First Nations genetics, they sometimes are not visibly identifiable as Indigenous—they may have blond hair, blue eyes, and a light skin tone. Métis families often found that those who "looked White" experienced less racism and violence than those who "looked Indigenous." Some Métis people who could blend in as non-Indigenous kept their identities hidden to stay safe and access educational and economic opportunities. In some cases, Métis people did not tell their children that they were Métis in order to protect them from the impacts of racism.

In other cases, Métis children were removed from their families and were never told of their cultural roots. Colonial governments attempted to assimilate Métis people into Euro-Canadian culture by removing children from their communities through:

❀ **Residential schools:** Some Métis children were enrolled in residential and day schools, where many endured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and were made to feel ashamed of their language and culture. Other Métis children were not able to go to school at all, because the residential schools would not take them since they weren't First Nations, and the local schools would not take them because they were Indigenous.

❀ **Hospitals:** Métis children with conditions such as tuberculosis were often taken to segregated "Indian hospitals" at great distances from their families and were kept there for many years. As in residential schools, these children often faced displacement, abuse, and discrimination.

❀ **The foster care system:** In the "Sixties scoop," Métis and First Nations children were intentionally removed from their families and placed with non-Indigenous families, often for dubious reasons.

As a result, many Métis people today have only recently reconnected with their Métis ancestry and are in the process of reclaiming their cultural heritage. On the other hand, some Métis people have always known they were Métis and grew up surrounded by Métis culture (and, in some cases, language) their entire lives.

Photographs: Prince Albert Museum

During this period, racism was prevalent, and many individuals experienced shame in relation to being Métis, leading to disconnections with their Métis identity. Because Métis have both European and First Nations genetics, they are not always visibly identifiable as Indigenous

Métis Political and Cultural Resurgence

Métis people have remained resilient and have consistently fought to have their identity recognized and their rights upheld. Beginning in the 1920s, they began to rebuild their government at both provincial and national levels. They established government bodies in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. They also established the Métis National Council (MNC) to provide a national voice for the provincial councils.

Métis people advocated to have their culture and identity acknowledged. As a result of this advocacy, Canada formally recognized the Métis as Aboriginal people in the **Canadian Constitution Act of 1982**. This recognition has paved the way for greater acknowledgement of their rights.

For over a century, it had been presumed by the government of Canada that Métis people had lost any Indigenous rights when they accepted scrip for their land. However, this was never part of the understanding of the Métis, who did not see taking scrip as a relinquishment of their rights, and who knew that the scrip system was unfair and exploitative.

In several significant Supreme Court cases, Métis people have been able to establish that:

- ❀ They have hunting and harvesting rights as Indigenous people.
- ❀ They have a right to define and govern their citizenship.
- ❀ The government of Canada has a responsibility to them as Indigenous people.
- ❀ Canada failed to uphold its promises to the Métis regarding Métis land rights in Manitoba.

The Métis have also received greater recognition as a self-governing nation. In 2017, the Canada–Métis Nation agreement was signed, which recognizes that the Métis Nation is a government and commits to supporting the well-being of Métis people in areas such as post-secondary and early childhood education, employment training, and housing.

Over the last several decades, more and more Métis people are reclaiming their culture and healing from the impacts of racism and colonialism. They are reconnecting with their roots and culture and coming together in their communities to celebrate their identity with pride.

Photograph: MNBC Archive

"Métis people are reclaiming their culture and healing from the impacts of racism and colonialism."

MNBC Senators

MÉTIS CULTURE

You can't learn language and culture from books. You have to learn right in your home, in your own community—our language is not lost as long as we're alive. Our language is still there. Our culture is still there. We just have to go find it. – Métis Elder Norman Fleury

Métis people have a distinct culture that arose during the fur trade in the 1700s and 1800s and continues to the present day. This culture is a product of the unique origins and history of the Métis people. Some significant aspects of Métis culture include the following.

The Michif Language: Michif is the national Métis language. It contains Cree verbs and French nouns, as well as elements of other First Nations and European languages. When Métis people were dispossessed of their homeland and dispersed from their communities, the Michif language became endangered. Many Métis people today feel strongly about the need to revitalize the Michif language before fluent speakers are lost.

Family Structure: The Métis have an extended multi-generational family structure known as kinship networks. Kinship networks are one of the most significant factors in structuring Métis economic, political, and social lives. Extended family members often have roles in raising children, who grow up surrounded by networks of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Métis people often take pride in tracing their roots back multiple generations. The concept of Wahkôtowin, a Cree word that expresses the interconnectivity and relationships we share with all things, is central to the Métis understanding of the social responsibilities and obligations held between members of the family and community.

Clothing and Artwork: Métis art often takes the form of distinctive clothing to display identity and culture, and traditionally, certain patterns and colours represent specific families. The time and care taken to create intricately designed clothing demonstrates the pride Métis people have in sharing their family connections and culture with others. Métis people are known for:

- ❀ Flower beadwork: A distinct style of beading is used to decorate items such as moccasins and clothing to represent family lines through specific patterns, to create jewelry, and more.
- ❀ Traditional dress: Moccasins, velvet or hide vests, buckskin jackets, shawls, and ribbon shirts or skirts are common traditional Métis clothes.
- ❀ Métis sash: Métis fur traders wore the sash and used it to help them carry furs and to survive in the wilderness, as the sash could play the role of a belt, scarf, sling, washcloth, bridle, rail marker, pocket, or rope. Today, Métis people wear the sash as a visible symbol of their identity.

Photograph: Louis Lafferty

MICHIF WORDS AND PHRASES

Hello: Taanishi
Good morning: Booñ mataeñ
See you soon: miina kawaapamitin
My name is: Mi ni owihôwn
Please: Madooñ
Thank you: maarsii

Dance and Music: Métis are best known for their fiddle music, which accompanies traditional dances such as Métis jigging—a lively dance with fancy footwork influenced by Scottish highland dancing, Celtic dancing, and First Nations powwow dancing. Métis dance involves the audience clapping, cheering, and playing the spoons to accompany the music.

Land-Based Practices: Hunting and harvesting practices connect Métis people to their traditions and their ancestors and exemplify the values of personal discipline and respect for all parts of the land and ecosystem. Métis people continue to fish, trap, hunt, gather, and prepare traditional foods and medicines today.

Métis Symbols: Métis people connect with their history and culture through the following symbols:

- **Métis Flag-** The Métis flag is the oldest flag Indigenous to Canada. The flag depicts a white infinity symbol in the middle of a blue or red flag. Today, flying the flag demonstrates Métis pride.
- **Red River Cart-** The Red River cart is a unique Métis design. These carts were a crucial means of transporting goods during the fur trade and buffalo hunts and allowed the Métis to establish trade routes between eastern and western Canada. Today the cart demonstrates the innovation and hard work of the Métis people.

Religion/Spirituality: Both First Nation and Christian spiritual practices influence Métis people. The French roots of the Métis people brought the influence of Catholicism, while Métis of English and Scottish descent were more influenced by Protestantism. At the same time, Métis communities have always had connections with the teachings of the land and ceremonies carried forward by their First Nation ancestors.

Treeline Photography

Métis Inclusion in Early Childhood Education

I really believe that kids need to learn about their culture, because learning about your culture is a gentle way of disciplining. But also it gives you a sense of pride in learning and in being good. Our culture teaches us that we're never alone. Our ancestors are always with us.– Métis Elder Earl Henderson

THE FORMATIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

The early years of a child's life play a critical role in their development. In these foundational years, most children form ideas about their own identity and are intrigued by the world around them. Because of this, early childhood educators have an important role in supporting children's development by:

- Developing healthy concepts of self-identity
- Developing an acceptance and understanding of difference (including race and culture) that does not reflect the racism prevalent in society at large

Concepts of Self-Identity

Research shows that children begin to develop a concept of their own identity from babyhood. For example:

- Before their first birthday, most babies react differently to a video of themselves than to a video of another person, and soon after they can distinguish between themselves and someone else's image in a mirror. By two years old, they recognize their own image in a photograph.
- During the first three years of their life, children learn their names, select words to describe and label themselves, and begin to build a narrative of their identity based on shared memories and stories.
- By age three, most children distinguish between different categories of identity, for example "child or adult" and "boy or girl" and develop early self-concepts based on easily defined and observed variables.
- As children grow older, they develop more complex and nuanced views of their own identity, including their cultural background. They also become increasingly aware of how they are viewed by others. Positive or negative images in society of people from the same background as themselves can influence a child's self-esteem.

The development of social identity in young children is particularly important to their well-being. A positive self-identity allows children to build a strong foundation of self-esteem, confidence, and resilience. Fostering a healthy sense of personal identity supports children to be more open to differences and people of other backgrounds than themselves.

Painting: Leah Dorion

Bear Clan Stages of Life by Leah Dorion

As a parent, you have to recognize and take pride in our history, especially when we talk about the Métis and how resilient we are and how we've gone through different resistances and survived. My grandfather said, "We never lost anything." As a matter of fact, we gained because it brought us together. Now we have a better connection. So we've got to reach out to our aunties and our uncles, and to our mooshooms and kookoms. We can build connections in our communities. The language is still there. The culture is still there. Wherever there are Métis, we have relatives. And we're all at home.– Métis Elder Norman Fleury

Concepts of Race and Culture

Research reveals that most children develop the ability to recognize racial differences at an early age. Children's perceptions of different races are heavily influenced by their immediate environment and the world around them. Children are innately curious and are able to recognize differences amongst others early on. For example:

- By six months of age, most infants will look longer at an unfamiliar face of someone from a different race than an unfamiliar face of someone from the same race as themselves.
- Between ages three and five, most children demonstrate cultural and racial biases. These biases may not match the views of their families because children are also influenced by their experiences in learning environments, their neighbourhood, the media, and their peers.

Generally, children pick up biases and stereotypes that exist in the society around them and imitate views and behaviours they observe in the world of adults. Early childhood educators can help to combat the development of racial bias in children by:

- Talking openly about race and culture with young children and not pretending that difference does not exist
- Presenting racism and discrimination in an accurate way, so children can understand how it works and recognize that it is a societal problem
- Encouraging meaningful contact between people of diverse backgrounds
- Addressing any racial bias between children seriously
- Encouraging children to think in complex ways, for example, to pay attention to multiple attributes of a person at once
- Modelling anti-racism and inclusion in their own lives

"Knowledge brings empathy. If we can teach our children from a young age about different cultures and their history it creates different thought processes for them and then it creates a world where people are more understanding and can talk about different cultures. Sometimes if we don't know we just don't say anything or we shy away from it. Knowledge is power and creates empathy and opportunities." – Anne McMeeking-Walsh (Early Years Family Navigator, Okanagan Boys and Girls Club)

Photograph: Henry Chan

I remember my grandparents, my Mooshoom and Kookom. They always stressed being proud of who you are. That pride gives you identity, and the values, and the culture, and the teaching of knowledge-keepers. We have an identity. We know who we are as Indigenous people. So learn your language, be proud, keep your head high. Let's move forward and let's promote who we are as a Métis Nation and keep the Michif language alive.– Métis Elder Norman Fleury

Why Métis Inclusion is Important

Incorporating Métis culture and identity within the learning environment promotes awareness, empowerment, and inclusion for both Métis and non-Métis children. While many Canadian educators have been making efforts to include Indigenous culture and history in the curriculum, much of the content focuses on First Nations and is not inclusive of the Métis.

Importance for Métis Children

Research shows that including Métis culture in early childhood learning environments can promote the following positive changes for Métis children:

- An increase in their language, motor and academic skills, and other developmental benefits
- An increase in their participation in learning
- A more positive transition to school
- An ability to participate in increasingly complex tasks with others
- An improvement in school attendance rates
- An improvement in their personal behaviour (e.g., showing respect in the learning environment, fewer aggressive behaviours, good decision making)
- An increase in self-confidence
- An improvement in self-concept and self-esteem
- An increase in resilience—helping to mitigate the psychological impact of adverse circumstances
- An improvement in physical health
- A decrease in suicide attempts and substance use in adulthood
- An improvement in relationships with friends, family, and the community

In order to reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada schools and early childhood education programs need to include the history and culture of Métis people as well as First Nations and Inuit peoples

Treeline Photography

"Métis children have not had the opportunity to see themselves represented at any level in the education system. I think it is important that Métis people are included in the curriculum because of the confusion that's been around. For example, many people don't understand the definition of Métis and there has been a lot of misinformation in the past. This learning is an opportunity to clarify things and help people understand what Métis means."
– Kim Hodgson, MNBC Citizen, Métis Family Connections Navigator Thompson & Okanagan

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"My grandchildren felt so proud when they included Métis content at their schools and they got to wear their sashes and share with the class what they know."
– Jody, Michif, Cultural Support Services Practitioner, Lii Michif Otipemisiwak, Family and Community Services

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"When we have visible Métis specific learning resources kids start to light up. They can see themselves and can start to feel proud of their Indigeneity."
– Christy Anderson, Parent, Castlegar, B.C.

Learning about Métis culture in early learning and child care programs is particularly important for Métis children who have been cut off from their cultural knowledge. Racism, residential schools, and colonial policies and practices of assimilation through the child welfare, health, and education systems left many Métis families unable or unwilling to pass down cultural knowledge from one generation to the next.

Geographic dispersal from the Métis homelands means that many Métis people did not grow up in communities with other Métis people. As a result, some Métis children are not exposed to their culture in the home environment, nor do they see their identity reflected in their community. For some Métis children, learning about their culture in an early learning environment may be the only opportunity for these children to connect with their Métis identity and to form supportive relationships.

This lack of cultural knowledge transfer is even more prominent for high numbers of Métis children currently living in the foster care system who may have limited access to cultural teachings and little to no connection to the Métis Nation. For these children, learning about Métis systems of belief, values, customs, and traditions in an early learning environment may be a rare opportunity to learn about their culture or build meaningful connections with kin.

When Métis children see their culture reflected in the world around them and are taught to be proud of who they are, they will be more likely to thrive and develop strong and healthy concepts of self-identity into adulthood.

Illustration: Leah Dorion

When I was an Aboriginal support worker in the schools, I was asked to take the Aboriginal kids out of the classroom to teach them about their culture. I said I thought it would be better if I go in and teach the whole class what I'm teaching. I wanted to be more inclusive, to share our culture and our language with other people so that they will be able to understand where we're coming from.– Métis Elder Stella Johnson

Importance of Métis Inclusion for All Children

Adults often believe that discussing differences will bring children's attention to something that would otherwise go unnoticed, and so they choose to not touch on these subjects at a young age. However, allowing a safe space for open and honest discussions about race and culture creates a greater awareness of cultural diversity among young children and prepares them to thrive in a diverse world and become better citizens in their communities.

In addition, exploring other cultures within your learning environment can:

- ❀ Foster empathy because they become more aware of the experiences of someone of a different race or cultural group
- ❀ Encourage open-mindedness because they are exposed to a diverse range of opinions, thoughts, and cultural backgrounds
- ❀ Help them develop an accurate concept of culture, race, and racism
- ❀ Create a sense of safety and comfort with these differences later in life
- ❀ Encourage them to cooperate with others
- ❀ Ensure they are better prepared for a diverse workplace and community

For these reasons, exploring Métis culture is important, even if you do not have Métis children in your learning environment. In addition, the history and culture of Métis people has been missing from the education system in the past, and it is an important part of our society that is valuable for all Canadians to learn about. The earlier we start including Métis content, the better we can increase the general public's awareness and understanding of the Métis.

In 2016, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action called on the education sector to "develop and implement Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history" and "develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs." The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples outlines the rights of Indigenous people, including children, to learn about and practice their cultures. In B.C., the K–12 curriculum and Early Learning Framework now integrate Indigenous content and perspectives through all curriculum areas. Teaching about Métis people, their history, and their culture is a critical requirement of the B.C. curriculum and contributes to reconciliation between Métis and non-Métis people.

Illustrations: Mallory Blondeau

ESTABLISHING A CULTURALLY-SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The concept of "cultural safety" is useful for educators wanting to create a learning environment that supports children to live out the full expression of their identity. Cultural safety is a term that was developed by Maori health-care professionals in New Zealand in the 1990s. This term has now become widely used across sectors.

A culturally safe learning environment is one in which children and adults feel comfortable fully expressing and embodying their cultural identity, values, and ways of being.

Educators wanting to create a culturally safe learning environment should consider the following:

❀ ***Culture is more than the visible or external components of a person's cultural background.*** We often think of culture as being about food, art, music, dance, clothing, and celebrations. While those are some of the elements that make up culture, a person's culture also manifests in the ways that they think (their worldview), the way they relate to others, their values and spirituality, their communication style, their concept of time, their relationship to the land, their views on family, and many other aspects.

❀ ***It is important to recognize the distinct culture of Métis people*** and not group Métis people in with other Indigenous people. Métis people need to see their unique culture reflected and valued in the spaces around them.

❀ ***Achieving cultural safety in a learning environment involves a partnership between educators and Métis children, families, and communities.*** Working in collaboration with Métis people to create a culturally safe environment involves listening, being open to new ways of thinking and doing, and creating authentic relationships and partnerships.

❀ ***Cultural safety involves acknowledgement of unequal power relations and the ongoing impacts of colonialism.*** Métis people have faced oppression throughout their history and that oppression continues to this day. To create a culturally safe learning environment, educators must be aware of power dynamics and consciously act to challenge inequality and to remove racism and discrimination.

❀ ***Cultural safety involves both individual and systemic change.*** It is important that each person within the system promotes cultural safety, but also that educators work together to address how the organization can collaboratively promote cultural safety.

❀ ***Cultural safety involves consideration of both the formal and informal curriculum.*** Including Métis culture in the formal curriculum would involve using Métis-specific learning resources, content, and curriculum materials. Including Métis culture in the informal curriculum would involve displaying symbols, pictures of role models, and reflections of Métis identity in the physical space, integrating Métis values and having Métis people present in the learning environment.

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"It's really important that we support families to feel welcome in our classrooms and that they see themselves reflected in what is happening in the classroom. Being able to bring in these resources helps families see themselves in the classroom and it becomes their classroom as well. It's not my classroom, it's their classroom too. They see that their identity and culture is important not just to me, but to them."
– Cari Rawling, (Early Childhood Educator)

❀ ***Cultural safety cannot be achieved in a single course or lesson.*** Becoming aware of Métis culture and history is the first step. Integrating knowledge of Métis people into the learning content is a lifelong journey.

❀ ***Cultural safety requires that educators reflect on the "Western" values and knowledge systems embedded in the education system.*** Educators can then begin to identify and change content and practices that privilege Western approaches and/or ignore or disparage Métis approaches. Using the Métis core values is a way to challenge the dominance of Western values.

❀ ***Educators who promote cultural safety adopt a humble and self-reflective approach.*** They don't see themselves as authority figures but rather as partners in co-construction of learning. It's important to recognize your own biases and assumptions, to be open to receiving feedback, and to embrace exploring new ideas and practices.

❀ ***Creating cultural safety is ongoing.*** Promoting a culturally safe learning environment means adopting the attitude of a lifelong learner when it comes to understanding another culture. It means continuously being aware of power dynamics and inclusion and improving your practice to create a learning environment that more fully supports the cultural identity of each child.

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"Visibility brings encouragement and curiosity."
– Adam Gauthier (University of Victoria Social Work Student)

Photography: Louis Lafferty

"Bii Bii Moccasin Circle" by Louis Lafferty Represents the child's first stage of life journey around the circle of life

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROMOTE CULTURAL SAFETY

There are many things you can do as an educator to promote a culturally safe environment. Some of these include:

❀ Doing your own learning about Métis culture and identity

❀ Making sure your learning environment has visible representations of Métis culture and identity (e.g., the Métis sash, photos of Métis families, and books about Métis people.)

❀ Using the Métis Early Years Resources with children to explore Métis culture and identity

❀ Working together with Métis community members (parents, children, Elders, and community leaders) to bring Métis voices, perspectives, and presence into your learning environment

❀ Thinking about your values and approaches and considering how you might use the Métis core values to enhance your practice by talking openly with children about culture, race, and discrimination as a societal problem—encouraging them to understand these issues and to feel they have a role to play in creating a culturally safe and inclusive community

❀ Learning about and sharing your own cultural identity to model cultural connection to children

❀ Remembering that it's okay to not know all the answers when exploring different cultures—it is important to stay humble and open to learning more, and to find answers to questions that might arise in the environment

❀ Exploring Métis culture as an immersive everyday thing, rather than only a couple of days or a week of the school year

❀ Collaborating with children about culture through areas and topics they are already familiar with and/or tangible objects, such as food, clothing, music, and dance

❀ Providing opportunities for at-home explorations that include family members and encourage family discussions about Métis culture. In some cases, educational materials for parents may be helpful—you can share the companion Guide for Parents and Community Members with them.

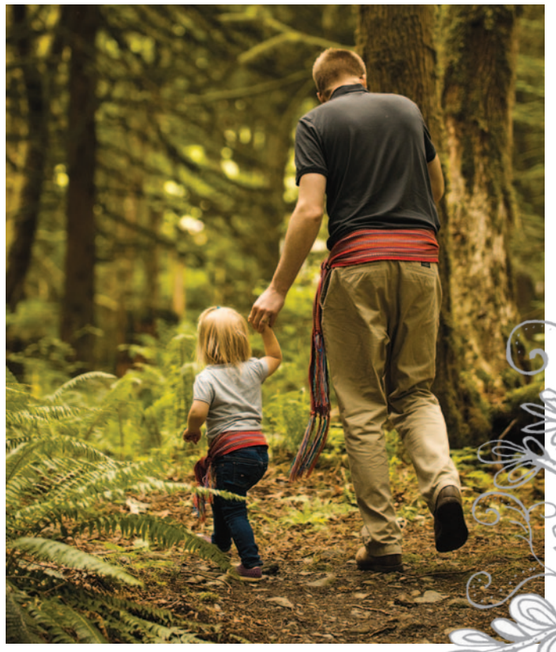
B.C. EDUCATOR STANDARDS AND INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY

Educators in B.C. are guided by nine professional standards. One of these is that "Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices to facilitate change." The BC. Early Learning Framework "acknowledges that there is value for all students when Indigenous content and worldviews are shared in early learning settings and classrooms in a meaningful and authentic way. Reconciliation requires educators to collaborate and build new relationships with Indigenous communities to better support the education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and families."

Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk means "learning together." This is happening right now. We have people who are Indigenous and non-Indigenous coming together to talk about reconciliation. We talk about empowerment. We talk about healing. We've come a long way. When I went to school there was nothing inclusive for Indigenous people, but now we're part of it. – Métis Elder Norman Fleury

CULTURAL HUMILITY

Learning about Métis people and their culture is a lifelong journey. Each person is at a different place in this learning—including Métis people themselves. It can often feel uncomfortable to speak about topics you are still learning about yourself. However, it is a respectful choice to try your best and learn alongside the children you work with. Modelling that you are on this learning journey together and do not have access to all the answers demonstrates a high degree of cultural humility.



Treeline Photography, Illustraion: Leah Dorion

In this journey of learning, mistakes will occur, but it is important to accept feedback gracefully and use it as a learning experience. This is cultural humility in action, which will open you up to new opportunities for learning about Métis culture.

Reflecting on Your Learning Environment

PLEASE INDICATE TO WHAT EXTENT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS REFLECT YOUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

	Not at all	Somewhat	Often	Notes for improvement
There are visual representations of Métis culture & identity in my learning environment				
Métis core values are integrated into my learning environment				
Métis content and learning resources are incorporated into my curriculum				
Métis culture and identity is included throughout the year				
I can and do explain to children who the Métis are				
I invite Métis adults (guest speakers, parents) to contribute in my learning environment				
I make an effort to learn more about Métis culture and identity				

COLLABORATING WITH MÉTIS PEOPLE

One of the key principles for educators to keep in mind is that, whenever possible, Métis people should be involved in bringing Métis content and knowledge into the curriculum and in making decisions about Métis education. Métis people often share the advice, **"Nothing about us without us."**

An excellent place to start is by connecting with your local Métis Chartered Community. Métis Chartered Communities are grassroots, volunteer-run associations that connect Métis people with local cultural events and support. There are 39 Métis Chartered Communities in B.C., so chances are there is one close to you. You can visit the MNBC website to find the location and contact information for the nearest Métis Chartered Community. ***However, keep in mind that because Métis Chartered Communities are run by volunteers, they may not have the capacity to engage with you due to limited time and resources***. Nevertheless, it is good practice to continue to invite them to participate, even if they initially decline.

Many people feel nervous about approaching Indigenous communities. Reaching out takes courage and initiative. You may make mistakes at first, but if you are willing to learn from your mistakes and address the gaps in your learning about Métis people, your actions will likely be well received.

While you may be familiar with local First Nations protocols in your area, it is important to learn about local Métis protocols. Due to the broad geographic span of the Métis Nation, there may be Métis cultural practices or teachings that are unique to certain regions. While many aspects of Métis culture presented in **"Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together"** are relevant for all Métis people, you may encounter specific teachings or practices that are not. An example of this might be found in the different Michif dialects used or how some Métis people introduce themselves (e.g., Métis-Cree or Cree-Métis). Forming relationships with Métis Knowledge Carriers in your region will help you to learn about local cultural practices.

Illustration: Leah Dorion, Photograph: MNBC Archive

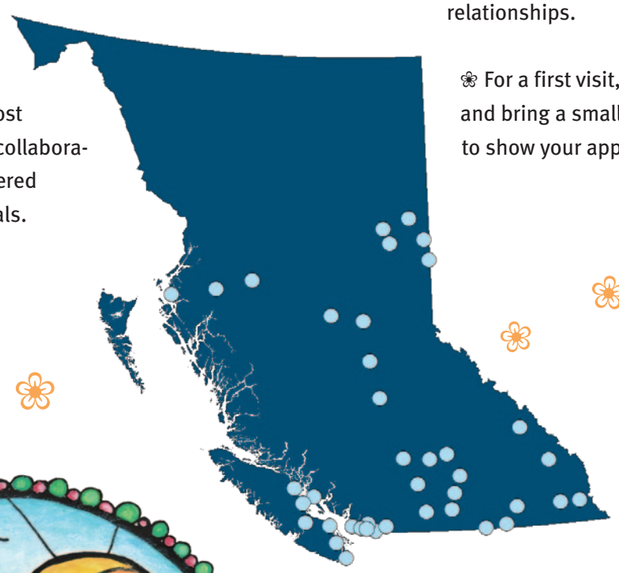
If you want to build a relationship with your local Métis Chartered Community, here are some things to consider:

❀ When developing a relationship, think long-term, not short-term/transactional. Take time getting to know each other and maintaining a relationship. Build trust by following through on what you commit to.

❀ Métis Chartered Communities generally hold events such as potlucks and gatherings that are open to the public. A great way to initiate relationships is with an in-person visit to one of these events to build relationships.

❀ Remember that relationships that are mutually beneficial and reciprocal are the most powerful, so think about how collaboration will also help Métis Chartered Communities to meet their goals.

❀ For a first visit, meet in person and bring a small gift and/or food to show your appreciation.



If you are unable to collaborate with Métis people within your community, it is still appropriate and encouraged for you to incorporate Métis content in your learning environment.

You can use the Métis Early Years Resources and continue to do your own learning with additional resources.

Illustrations: Leah Dorion, Kim Vizi-Carmen, Mallory Blondeau

That's what we're here for as Elders—to communicate culture, to teach the children so they can grow up and teach their children and continue that process so that culture isn't lostor it's regained and learnt again.– Métis Elder Earl Henderson

PROTOCOLS FOR WORKING WITH ELDERS

Métis culture reveres Elders as leaders and educators. Many Métis Elders spend time sharing about Métis identity in schools and other organizations. If you would like to build a relationship with a Métis Elder, you can start by reaching out to your closest Métis Chartered Community, Friendship Centre, or Indigenous support staff at your school or child care program to identify an Elder to work with. Working with Elders can be highly rewarding. Not only do they bring expertise in traditional knowledge, but also Elders often bring a certain energy to an interaction that impacts people's mindsets. Elders remind us of the larger picture as well as the moral and communal reasons for the work that we do together. Elders can also bring a sense of spirituality, laughter, and connection. Note that not everyone who is old is an Elder—an Elder is someone who has earned the respect of the community, so it is often best practice to identify an Elder through connection to a Métis Chartered Community.

Remember that Elders often have multiple responsibilities and receive many requests for their expertise. They may not always be able to respond to your invitation or request.

MNBC Archive, Treeline Photography

From left to right: Métis Nation British Columbia Métis Elders Stella Johnson, Ken Pruden & Marie Daniels sharing knowledge for community.

If you would like to connect with a Métis Elder to seek guidance or advice, or to provide a learning opportunity within your community or place of work, here are some tips to consider:

❀ Be clear on the Elder's role and prepare them by providing background information. Communicate how long you will need the Elder's service and the compensation that you will provide.

❀ Take every effort to ensure the Elder's physical and emotional comfort. This can include having appropriate seating, shelter, and warmth, especially if hosting an outdoor event.

❀ Provide nourishing food. Be aware of any dietary needs in advance.

❀ When sharing food, always make sure to serve Elders or allow Elders to serve themselves first. In some instances, it may be appropriate for someone else to bring the Elder their requested food and drink, although sometimes the Elder may prefer to serve themselves. You should always ask the Elder their preference and never assume one way or another. Check in with Elders regularly and offer to bring them snacks or drinks, and ensure they are comfortable.

❀ Do not expect Elders to read a lot of textual material. If reading is required, supply large print versions (14-point font or greater).

❀ Small physical gifts are often given ***in addition*** to honoraria. These could include food, cards, small items such as a mug or piece of artwork, or traditional medicines. If you don't know what to give, you can ask the Métis Chartered Community or Elder in advance.

Photograph: MNBC Archive, Illustration: Leah Dorion

❀ Elders should ***always*** be compensated for their work. This is a way of recognizing the value of their wisdom and accords with traditional protocols around honouring the role of Elders in the community. This should be budgeted for. Check with your local Métis Chartered Community or ask the Elder directly to determine an appropriate amount and form of honoraria.

Suggestions for Incorporating Métis Content in a Respectful Way

The following table provides a summary of recommendations to consider when incorporating Métis-related content within your early years setting

❀ Include Métis content and approaches throughout the year (not just in only one lesson or unit).

❀ Include Métis content and pedagogy even if you don't yet feel confident doing so. As you practice, you wil gain confidence. Along the way, seek out help and additional knowledge. It is okay to admit that you are still a learner in these subjects. If you do make a mistake, acknowledge it, and move forward.

❀ Take a holistic approach to learning that includes physical movement and social development. Incorporate games and play into your teaching.

❀ Use child-led approaches with the Métis Early Years Resources. There is no right or wrong way to use these resources.

❀ Include parents in the learning process, both Métis and non-Métis. This can be a great opportunity for parents to learn and for children to share their learning with their parents. If any parents have knowledge of Métis culture, this will provide an opportunity for them to share.

❀ Acknowledge and celebrate the distinct identity of Métis people.

❀ Admit that your knowledge about the Métis is limited and be honest when you don't know something.

❀ Share your knowledge on the Métis. Educate your families, colleagues, employees, and community members.

❀ Do your own learning about who the Métis are. This may involve independent research and un-learning some of the mistruths you've been told about Métis people. Don't assume all Métis people are happy to answer questions about their identity at all times. If you want to ask a Métis person about their culture, establish consent before asking, and ask them gently and with genuine curiosity. For example: "Would it be okay if I ask you some questions about being Métis? I'm interested to learn more if you feel comfortable sharing."

❀ Treat Métis people with respect. Act in anti-racist ways by stopping racism and other forms of oppression towards Métis people.

❀ Make sure to include Métis people in Indigenous events and practices (for example "Indigenous graduation"or consultation sessions with Indigenous peoples). Métis people want to be included and recognized for their distinct Métis identity.

❀ Ensure your learning environment has representations of Métis identity.

❀ Connect with your local Métis Chartered Community and see if there are areas in which you can collaborate, contribute, and build mutually beneficial relationships. Invite members of the Métis Community to come into the learning environment and share about Métis identity.

Illustration: Leah Dorion

Caregivers serve as role models for honest behaviour. Our Métis Elders are vital for honestly passing forward many cultural teachings to our next generations – Métis Elder Norman Fleury

Métis Core Values and Pedagogy

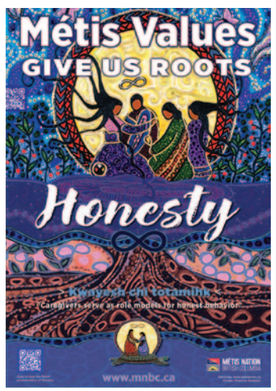
Pedagogy is about how you teach, not what you teach. Your pedagogy comprises your values and beliefs about teaching, your teaching style, and your inherent way of relating to learners. It is the art and science of teaching. It is one thing to include Métis content and resources within your existing curriculum, but a deeper connection to Métis culture can be achieved by incorporating a Métis values-based pedagogy. Métis cultural values are important ways of being and knowing that inform expectations for daily living.

The following pedagogical values were developed based on extensive community-based research with Métis Elders in Saskatchewan conducted by Métis artist and author Leah Dorion. These values are the foundation from which the Métis Early Years Resources have been developed and underlie the approaches to using and sharing the resources. The 12 Métis values are identified below in both English and Michif. We have also provided examples of how to link the Métis values to a Métis values-based pedagogy when interacting with children.

THE 12 MÉTIS VALUES IDENTIFIED IN BOTH ENGLISH & MICHIF

Honesty *(Kwayesh chi totamihk)*
Respect *(Kischiitaytamihk)*
Love *(Shaakihiwayhk)*
Sharing *(Taashkinikayen)*
Caring *(Pishkaymitook)*
Courage *(Kooraazh)*
Balance *(Balaans)*
Mother Earth *(Ni maamaa la tayr)*
Patience *(Pa iksitii)*
Strength *(La fors)*
Kindness *(Kitimakaymiwek)*
Tolerance *(Aanjeurii)*

We have also provided examples of how to link to Métis values to a Métis values-based pedagogy, when interacting with children.



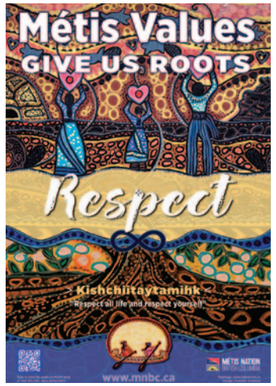
Honesty › *Encourage honesty by...*

› Modelling honesty if you are asked a question by a child and do not know the answer. For example, say "I don't know the answer, but we can find it out together."

› Finding opportunities to recognize honesty throughout the day. For example, "I like how Jamie shared that he forgot to put the puzzle away. He was very honest and helped to put it away before story time."

› Acknowledging that learning to be honest is part of a child's development and being patient while supporting them to develop this skill.

I talk to my grandchildren like they are normal people. I don't use baby talk because that was never done to a Métis kid when I was growing up. You were spoken to as a child but with respect. – Métis Elder Earl Henderson



Respect › *Encourage respect by...*

› Treating children with dignity. Get down to their level when speaking to them so they feel respected and seen.

› Taking time to listen when someone is sharing. If time does not allow, acknowledge that you do not have the time, but look forward to hearing about it later. Follow through on that promise.

› Walking through the neighbourhood and commenting on nature and animals that may cross your path. Show respect by picking up garbage, providing bird seed, or planting flowers for bees.

When I was young, that family connection was always there. Whereas today, family connections are so fragmented that a lot of people are just lost. And that's sad. If you're Métis you shouldn't be disconnected from your family. You should know where you are exactly, all the time. – Métis Elder Earl Henderson

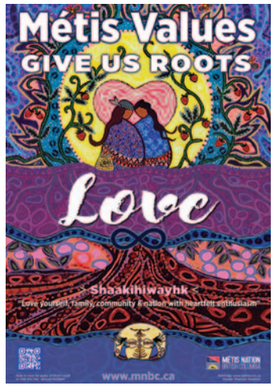


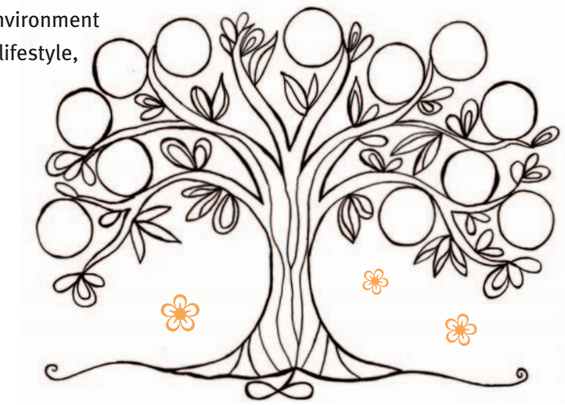
Illustration & paintings: Leah Dorion

Love › *Encourage love by...*

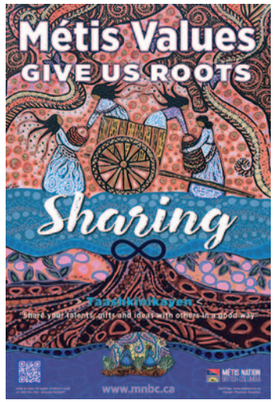
› Showing acts of kindness throughout the day. Give honest compliments, be a good listener, offer help, smile, and thank someone who you appreciate.

› Providing opportunities for children to love themselves. Create a strong sense of identity by providing an environment that reflects their culture, lifestyle, passions, and interests.

› Modelling self-love by speaking positively about yourself.



We try as best as we can to help each other as Métis people. When I was young, families all lived close to each other, so if somebody got a moose or whatever, they would share. We would share from ourgardens. If somebody didn't have enough, they were not left wanting. We made sure to help others so that nobody would be starving. – Métis Elder Stella Johnson



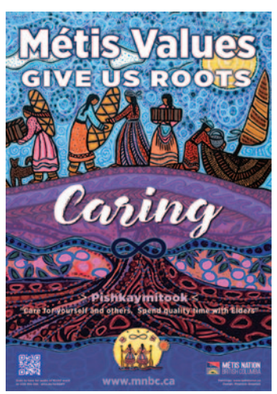
Sharing › *Encourage sharing by...*

› Recognizing that sharing is a collaborative goal that is often complex to children, and they may need encouragement in developing this social skill.

› Creating opportunities for all children to share their ideas and strengths with the larger group to create a learning community that works together in a good way.

› Allowing opportunities for children to develop sharing and turn-taking skills. Acknowledge when shared play is taking place, for example, "I saw that you were playing with those toys and gave one to your friend. That was a kind thing to do."

Everyone in the community helped raise the children. Uncles and aunts helped with the younger kids if they weren't behaving. If your auntie saw something that you did and wasn't happy with it, well, she would let you know. You were raised by your uncles and aunts and people in the community. – Métis Elder Stella Johnson



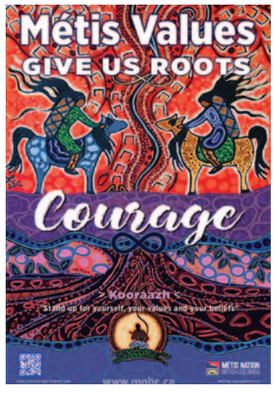
Caring › *Encourage caring by...*

› Allowing children to take time to care for themselves, friends, Elders, and the earth.

› Creating a buddy program with older children, youth, and Elders.

› Getting to know more about the children, their cultures, their passions, and daily lives. Just listening is a great way to demonstrate you care.

You have to have courage to pass on our culture and values. And when you do so, it gives you more courage to move forward, to share with others. – Métis Elder Norman Fleury



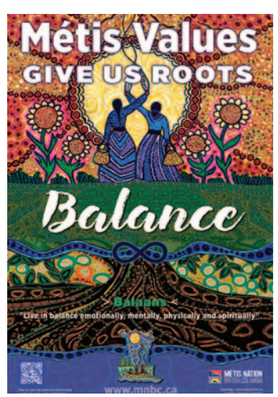
Courage › *Encourage courage by...*

› Allowing children the opportunity to resolve issues organically and develop the concept of standing up for themselves. Offer guidance and support them in the process, but do not always resolve issues for them.

› Introducing new experiences such as story sharing in front of their peers to help children to practice courage when speaking in front of others.

› Sharing stories of times when you had to use courage and stand up for your values and beliefs, even when you were scared.

We always went berry picking as a family. My grandmother told us to only pick from your waist to your shoulders. She said you have to leave some for the birds that rely on those berries as well. And you need to leave the berries below the waist for some of the little animals that live off the berries. She was very strict about not picking a bush clean. You must always leave some to share with the birds and animals.– Métis Elder Earl Henderson



Paintings: Leah Dorion

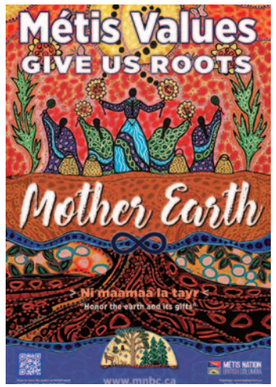
Balance › *Encourage balance by...*

› Creating a specific space where children can go when they want to calm their mind and body. Share with them the importance of taking time for themselves when things get overwhelming or when they feel big feelings and need a break.

› Following the children's lead, allowing them the opportunity to explore based on their individual needs.

› Starting the day outside to release some energy before entering the learning environment.

My uncles taught me how to hunt and fish and snare rabbits. They taught me how to make snares when I was around eight years old so I could snare rabbits for stew and soup. They taught me how to live and survive in the bush—to track, to watch for signs, and to listen to the sounds. They always told me that the bush is the safest place to be because the birds and the animals will tell you if there's something around that shouldn't be there.– Métis Elder Earl Henderson



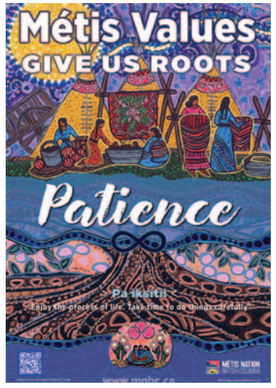
Mother Earth › *Honour Mother Earth by...*

› Creating a learning environment that incorporates the natural world inside and out. Gather items through outdoor adventures with children, such as flowers, cedar boughs, tree branches/sticks, pine or fir cones, berries, rocks, and other finds.

› Showcasing natural items from nature and their different uses. You might also seek out Elders to share natural plant medicines and their traditional uses.

› Having the children plant and water their own seeds to watch them grow.

If we weren't playing, then we were working in the garden. We always had jobs to do, no matter how old we were, because a lot of our families relied on our gardens. We had a huge garden, and one of my jobs was to weed the vegetables. So I would be up early in the morning and out there weeding. And I swear to God that those rows were so big and so long that by the time I got to the end of the row, the weeds were already growing again at the beginning. – Métis Elder Earl Henderson



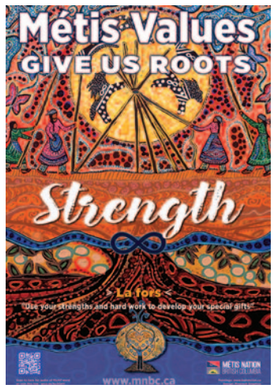
Patience › *Encourage patience by...*

› Providing each child with the time to learn at their individual pace. Each child's journey takes time, and it is key to allow that journey to develop individually.

› Offering children options to finish tasks or projects at times throughout the day. For example, create a space for unfinished projects to be safely kept so they can be worked on later.

› Listening when a child is sharing or telling a story. Give them time to focus, showing engagement without the need to rush. If time does not allow, come back to it at another time.

We learned to be self-sufficient as Métis people. The Cree word "otipemisiwak" means "we are our own bosses." We don't depend on others. We try to be successful and self-sufficient. Those, I think, are the big Métis teachings: to be self-sufficient and to prepare for whatever the challenge is going to be.– Métis Elder Stella Johnson



Strength › *Encourage strength by...*

› Creating opportunities for children to discover, develop, and share their strengths and interests. Recognize that every child is different, and create an open learning environment with a variety of opportunities for self-discovery.

› Sharing your special gifts. If singing, art, or even how fast you type is your strength, display this to the children.

› Inviting Métis community members with a variety of talents to showcase their skills. Invite them to share their story of how they came to discover this strength and what they did to grow.

Kindness is so important because there are people who are vulnerable. Some people can't take care of themselves. And you've got to be humble and modest—you do that through kindness. – Métis Elder Norman Fleury

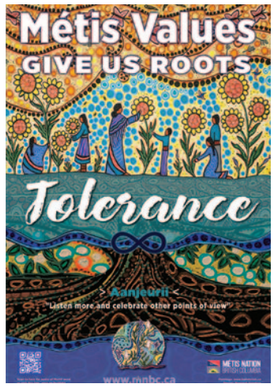
Paintings: Leah Dorion

Kindness › *Encourage kindness by...*

› Creating opportunities for children to gift to others, share stories, help peers, and welcome Elders and babies.

› Creating a giving tree—a space where children can leave items others can use, for example, food for a food bank, warm mitts for children, used books/toys. Reading Leah Dorian's The Giving Tree will help the children understand the concept and give them a base to expand their ideas.

› Acknowledging when you observe children engaged in acts of kindness.



Tolerance › *Encourage tolerance by...*

› Supporting children to tell stories, share, or present ideas. This will allow them to learn to listen, to gather details of stories, and to grow and learn from the experience.

› Working together on creating something. Through working with others who may have different points of view, children begin to understand that it is okay to disagree with others, but it doesn't lessen the importance of their input.

› Supporting children to manage their emotions by taking time to be with them through the process and build their capacity for self-regulation.

I always tell my grandchildren that they're part of the Red River Settlement and I explain to them what that is. And I try to explain what it is to be Métis and to be proud of being Métis – Métis Elder Earl Henderson

SHARING ABOUT WHO THE MÉTIS ARE

The first thing you will need to be able to do to use **"Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together"** is to share with children who the Métis are. The explanation will depend on the age level you are working with. The following examples have been developed collaboratively by Métis and non-Métis educators.

Ages birth to three: A long time ago, explorers came to this place where we live, which is called Canada. The explorers met the people that lived here already. They started families together. They shared music and made special clothes and art. They hunted buffalo. The people were called Métis. Their children, grandchildren, and all the children in their family since then are also Métis.

Ages three to five: A long time ago, explorers came from across the ocean to live on this land that we now call Canada. Many explorers started families with the people who were already living here. The children from these families began to dress their own way and speak their own language. Eventually, there were so many of them that they came to be known as the Métis people. The Métis people wore a red sash, hunted buffalo, danced to fiddle music, and wore beaded flowers on their clothes. The Métis people today still do all those things that their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents did years ago. It is what we call their Métis culture.

Ages five to eight: The Métis are a group of people whose ancestors are both European and First Nations people. They developed their own unique culture, language, clothing, and traditions. The Métis were fur traders and were well known for their buffalo hunts. The Métis are one of the three groups of Indigenous people in Canada, the other two being First Nations and Inuit.

Adult: The Métis are a distinct Indigenous culture and Nation whose ancestry stems from intermarriages between European and First Nations people during the early fur trade period in North America. The term Métis **does not** refer to all people who have mixed First Nations and European ancestry. Instead, it refers to the specific cultural group that arose over multiple generations within the Métis homelands. Métis people today share a distinctive worldview, customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity that is separate from their First Nations or European ancestors.

Métis Early Childhood Resources

That's the secret to making learning fun—be interactive. Make everybody participate. You've got to think that with all the students in your class, everybody will be able to do something, and if you know your students well enough, you'll know what task they can do.– Métis Elder Stella Johnson

The following section is intended to help educators feel prepared to use the Métis learning resources provided with the **"Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together"** guide. Each section includes:

❀ Background information that describes the cultural significance of the learning resources provided
❀ Suggested opportunities for learning and investigation
❀ Critical reflection questions for educators to self-reflect and explore their own thoughts and practices with honesty and purpose

This section has been developed in alignment with the B.C. Early Learning Framework and K–12 Curriculum. The opportunities for learning and investigation in each resource encourage a pedagogy of listening, critical reflection, collaborative dialogue, and pedagogical narration. In alignment with this approach, we encourage play, open-ended activities, and child-led exploration.

I let the children ask the questions. Why are we always asking them questions and giving them the answers? I like to say, "Well, what do you think?" or "What can you ask me?" because they're so inquisitive. I know how the curriculum works—you've got to teach the subject by a certain time and everything is time-limited—but I think we need to spend a little bit more time with what is very important to the children. We need to let the kids use their minds instead of us just telling them everything.

– Métis Elder Stella Johnson

Painting: Leah Dorion

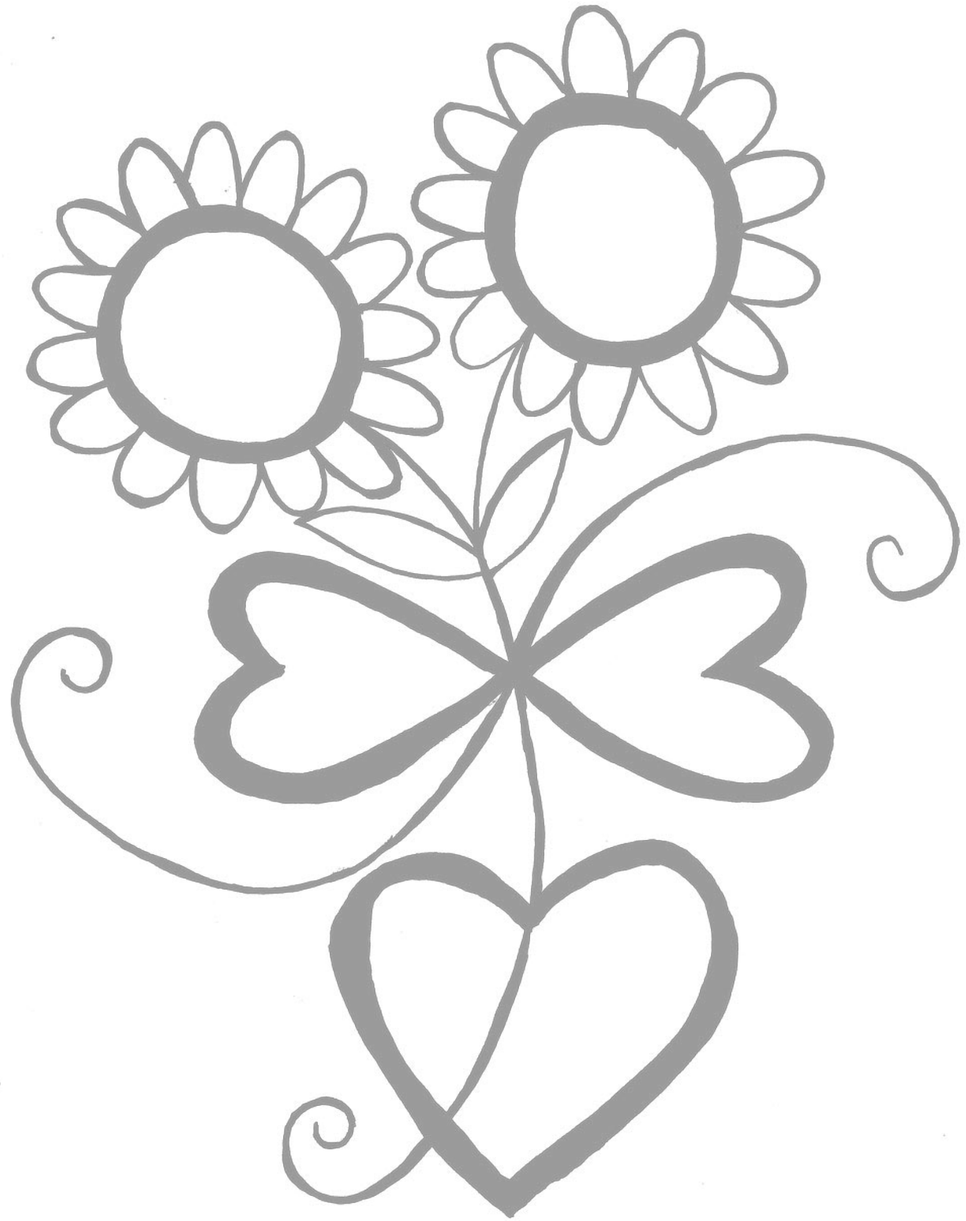


Illustration: Leah Dorion

Overview of Resources

Métis Sash		**A Métis Sash** *(in both adult & child sizes)*
Louis the Buffalo		**A soft buffalo built for child-sized hands**
Métis Flag		**A small Métis Flag**
***The Giving Tree*, By Leah Dorion**		**A book about Métis Values**
Métis Core Values Set		**A series of resources centred around Métis core values, including a poster series, play mats, puzzles, lacing boards & colouring book**
Metal/Music Spoons		**Musical Spoons for play & decoration**

Treeline Photography; Illustrations: Leah Dorion

Illustration: Leah Dorion

Resource 1: The Métis Sash

Treeline Photography

"I wear the sash because of my ancestors. It was a tool for the Métis—we used it for many things, whether you were out hunting, if you needed a sling, rope, thread, a belt—so it's just one of our items. We're the only people who wear it. There are many different colours that all represent something different—the colours are very meaningful for us. It's tightly woven, and that represents who we are as a community—we are cohesive and unity makes us stronger."– Métis Elder

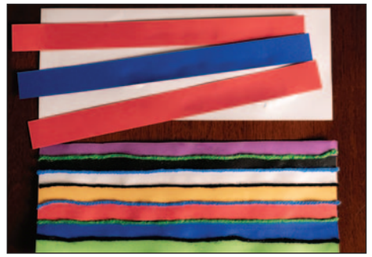
Why the sash is important

The Métis sash is one of the most distinctive article of Métis clothing and is considered by many Métis to be a visible symbol of their identity. It was originally known as *une ceinture fléchée* (*or sayncheurflayshii* in Michif) meaning "arrow belt" because of the zig-zag pattern. They were created from European wool, using a First Nations finger weaving technique that is still often used today. Each handwoven sash takes hundreds of hours to create.

The sash is typically worn wrapped around the waist for men or over the shoulder for women. Today the sash is often worn as ceremonial dress to honour people for their achievements and to recognize membership in a Métis community. Wearing the sash connects Métis people with their ancestors and their Métis identity. As the sash has always been used as a tool, it's perfectly acceptable for children and adults to play with the sash and use it for various purposes.

The sash was not just a decorative item. It was used for many practical purposes:

- A belt to hold the coat closed or the pants up
- Muffler or scarf
- Sling, bandage, or tourniquet
- Washcloth
- Bridle or saddle blanket
- Pocket
- Trail marker or sewing kit (by removing the threads at the end of the sash)
- Back support when holding heavy objects
- Rope (useful to portage canoes)
- Honouring one's success in a buffalo hunt
- As a calendar system (threads were used to mark days on the trapline)



Opportunities for learning and investigation

- Offer children the Métis sash for them to explore. You may choose to engage in conversations about how the sash was used as a working tool for various purposes.
- Ask the children what they think the sash could be used for. How would they like to use the sash?
- Offer opportunities to engage in imaginative play, both indoors and outdoors, with the sash. This could look like measuring, carrying objects, using it as a rope, etc.
- Provide materials (e.g., ribbon, tissue paper, yarn, pipe cleaners, construction paper, cloth) for children to create their own sash by weaving or gluing.
- Share stories that talk about the sash
- Do the Red River Jig while wearing the sash

Treeline Photography, Illustration: Leah Dorion

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Well-being & Belonging

› How can I provide opportunities for children to explore, create, and collaborate using the resources?

› How can I create a learning environment where children feel welcomed to share their ideas, perspectives, and feelings?

Engagement With Others, Materials & Land

› In what ways are community members invited and welcomed into my program to enhance cross-generational, cultural and relationship building?

› In what ways do I create opportunities for children to engage with the land, waters, & people in our community?

Identities, Social Responsibility & Diversity

› How can I foster experiences that enhance children's pride in their identity?

› How can I support children to reflect and learn more about their identity, culture, and community?

Communications & Literacies

› How might I invite children to share about their family cultural knowledge?

› How might I encourage children to express themselves through language, art, sound, music, & other means?

As the sash has always been used as a tool, it's perfectly acceptable for children and adults to play with the sash and use it for various purposes

Photography: Louis Lafferty

Illustration: Leah Dorion

Resource 2: Louis the Buffalo

Why the Buffalo Is Important

Buffalo are an integral part of Métis culture and history. Beginning in the 1700s as the Métis population grew and became more connected, they began to work together as a Nation to hunt buffalo. The buffalo were critically important to the fur trade and the Métis people in the Red River and surrounding areas. Buffalo hunting brought Métis people together, helped sustain their way of life, and enabled the Métis people to become significant contributors and beneficiaries within the economy.

Métis buffalo hunts were highly organized events that involved strict laws and a governance model that included elected leaders and positions. The Buffalo hunts often occurred once in the summer and again in the autumn. Métis men, women, and children went along on the buffalo hunts as they needed as many people as possible to transport all the buffalo hides and meat back to their homes. The buffalo hunt was also an important social gathering. It provided families with the opportunity to visit with extended family members and friends from different communities.

During a single buffalo hunt, Métis hunters could accumulate up to a million pounds of meat. That is the equivalent weight of 40 school buses! The meat was divided among all of the hunters and their families to ensure that no one went without.

Today, the buffalo holds a special place in the hearts of Métis people. Although Métis people no longer conduct buffalo hunts in the way their ancestors did, they still revere the animal for the important role it played in the development of the Métis Nation.

HOW BUFFALO PARTS WERE USED

Not a single part of the buffalo went unused

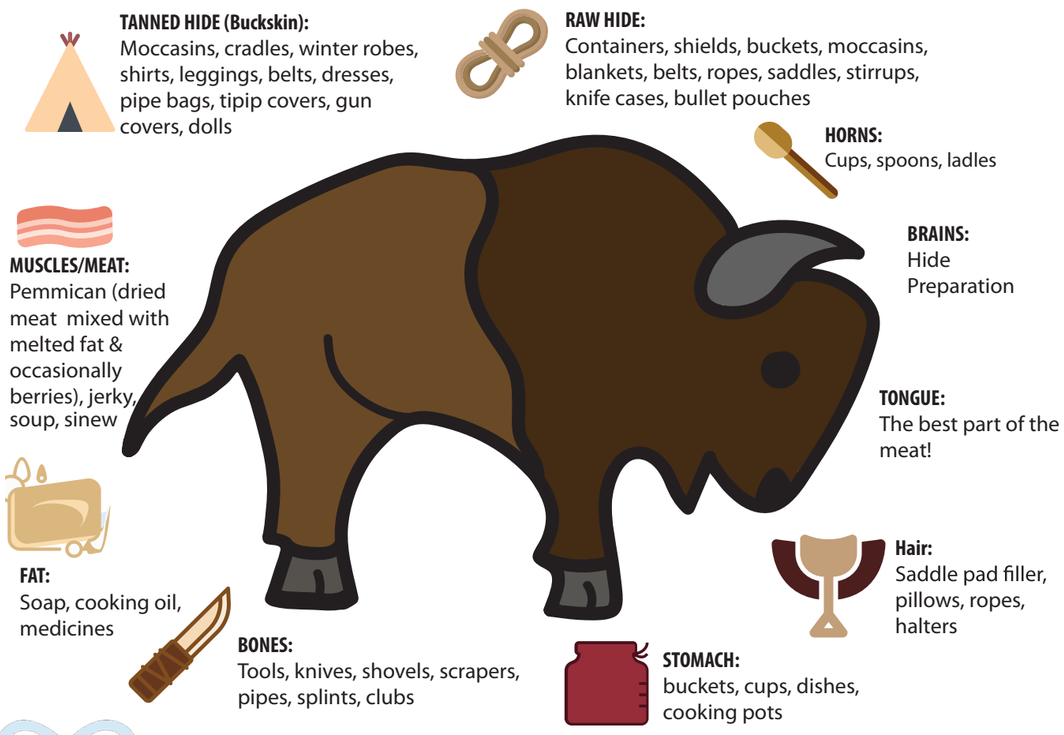


Illustration: Mallory Blondeau

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND INVESTIGATION

- Create a space to ask questions about the buffalo and share about the importance of buffalo to Métis people.
- Provide resources on the various ways the parts of the buffalo were used (e.g., pemmican, moccasins, tools).
- Help children visualize the buffalo by using tape to mark on the floor how big a buffalo is.
- Pretend to walk like a buffalo with the children.
- Leave out maps that show buffalo habitats.
- Invite children to play buffalo hunt tag with some children being hunters and others being buffalo.
- Take Louis outdoors and let the children interact with him in the natural environment.
- Create a Louis the Buffalo "buddy" system. Give the children each a turn taking Louis home to share with their families and care for it. Provide an opportunity for children to share what they did with Louis.
- Share stories and songs about buffalo that have Michif words with English translation (buffalo = lii bufloo).
- For older children: Organize a trading post game where children can pretend to trade pemmican for goods such as buttons, coins, beads, beans, cloth, blankets, fur, and wood. Let the children decide the value of each item and negotiate a fair trade.

"Louis" the buffalo is named after our Métis hero Louis Riel.

The buffalo represents resilience and strength.

Treeline Photography

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› In what ways are Elders and community members invited and welcomed into my program to enhance cultural & cross-generational relationship building?

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Communications & Literacies

› How might I invite children to share about their family traditions and cultural knowledge?

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Treeline Photography

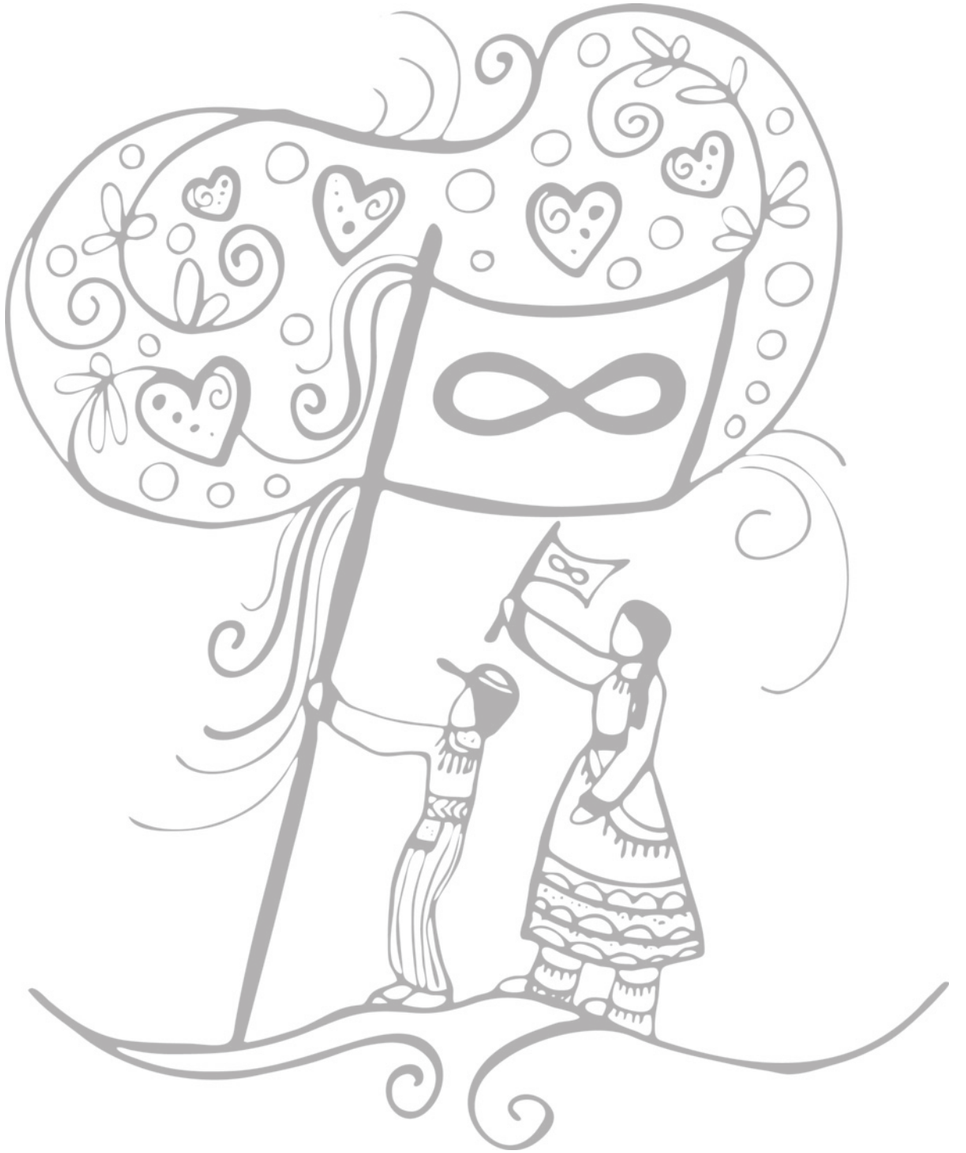


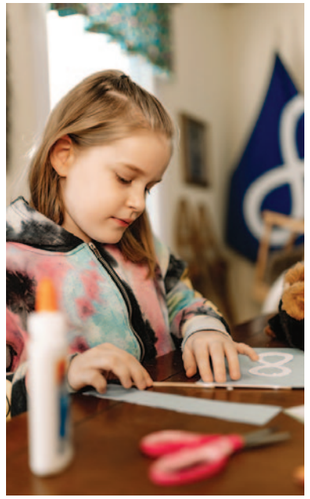
Illustration: Leah Dorion

Resource 3: The Métis Flag

Photography: Louis Lafferty, Treeline Photography

The Métis flag is the oldest flag Indigenous to Canada, predating the Canadian maple leaf flag by about 150 years. The flag depicts a white infinity symbol in the middle of a blue or red background. The infinity symbol on the flag represents two cultures coming together and that the Métis culture will exist forever.

The Métis flag was first used by resistance fighters and in times of battle. Today you can spot the Métis flag being displayed proudly by Métis people and at special events and celebrations, such as Louis Riel Day and National Indigenous Peoples Day.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND INVESTIGATION

❀ Offer the Métis flag in the learning environment where children can choose to investigate it. Welcome them to engage with the flag however they'd like, and create a space for them to ask any questions they may have.

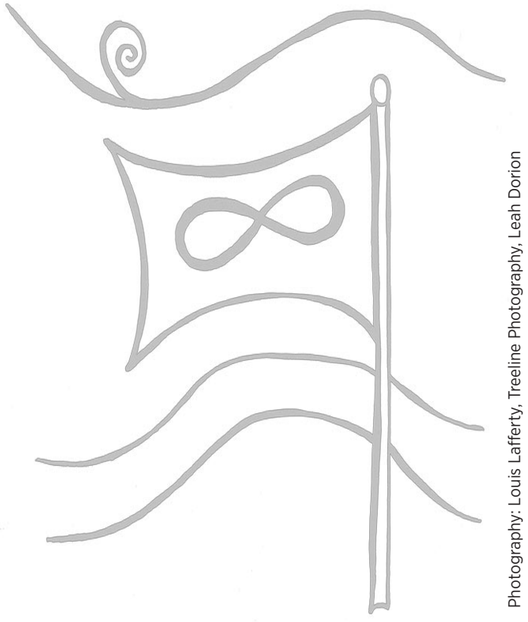
❀ Engage children in conversations about the concept of infinity: infinity represents something that is boundless or endless; something that goes on and on forever. Invite children to think of some examples of things that are infinite.

❀ Engage children in conversations about two different groups of people coming together. What might the First Nations people and European settlers have had in common? What did they learn from each other?

❀ Provide children with materials to make their own symbols and flags.

❀ Turn on fiddle music, and welcome the children to dance freely with the flags.

❀ Share songs that use the word flag and replace with the Michif translation: *Li Paviiyoon*.



Photography: Louis Lafferty, Treeline Photography, Leah Dorion

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Well-being & Belonging

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Engagement With Others, Materials & Land

› In what ways are Elders and community members invited and welcomed into my program to enhance cultural and cross-generational relationship building?

› In what ways do I create opportunities for children to engage with the land, waters, & people in our community?

Identities, Social Responsibility & Diversity

› How can I foster experiences that enhance children's pride in their identity?

› How can I support children to reflect and learn more about their identity, culture, and community?

Communications & Literacies

› How might I invite children to share about their family traditions and cultural knowledge?

› How might I encourage children to express themselves through language, art, sound, music, and other means?

Treeline Photography, Dustin Wilhelm/DOOMEDcreative

Today you can spot the Métis flag being displayed proudly by Métis people and at special events and celebrations, such as Louis Riel Day and National Indigenous Peoples Day

Illustrations: Leah Dorion

Resource 4: The Giving Tree by Leah Dorion

The Giving Tree book includes an accompanying narration CD in English and Michif

The Giving Tree **by Leah Dorion** is a charming story that focuses on the boyhood reminisces of Moushoom as he describes finding the "Giving Tree" with his mother and father. Steeped in Métis culture, this vibrantly illustrated children's book is a beautiful retelling of a traditional story. It emphasizes Métis core values and beliefs including strength, kindness, courage, tolerance, honesty, respect, love, sharing, caring, balance, patience, but most importantly, the connection with the Creator and Mother Earth.

Photography: Louis Lafferty, Treeline Photography

Leah Marie Dorion is an interdisciplinary Métis artist raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. A teacher, painter, filmmaker, and published writer, Leah views her Métis heritage as providing her with a unique bridge for knowledge among all people. She has numerous creative projects to her credit, including academic papers for the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, books for children, gallery showings of her art works, and numerous video documentaries that showcase Métis culture and history.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND INVESTIGATION

- Create a welcoming environment for children to engage in listening to the story. Ask questions to further extend the learning, such as:
  - › What does giving mean to you?
  - › Why do you think it is important to give back when you take something from the tree?
  - › What could you put in a giving tree?
  - › What would you want to find in a giving tree?
- Find a tree outdoors and leave items for others to find. Items could include painted rocks, small figurines, decorative items, seeds, or positive messages.
- Make bannock and have a picnic under a tree.
- Provide children with props, and encourage them to reenact the story, or invite them to tell the story in their own way.
- Draw or build the outline of a tree, and then provide materials for children to attach messages of kindness, leaves, and branches to the tree

"I remember my Dad teaching us to make bannock on a stick.
We loved to cook on an open fire with our dad.
My dad taught us to make our bannock like Beaver tails.
We made the pattern of Beaver tails on the dough.
Dad always made learning fun for us kids"

- Leah Marie Dorion, Métis Artist & Educator

Treeline Photography, Leah Dorion

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Communications & Literacies

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Treeline Photography

Resource 5: Métis Core Values Set

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Métis Core Values
A full description of the Métis core values and information on ways the values can be incorporated into your early childhood learning space can be found on page 32

The Métis Core Values set includes resources featuring the vibrant & colourful art of Métis artist Leah Dorion. Each resource has been created to express the 12 Métis core values. Within the series you will find:

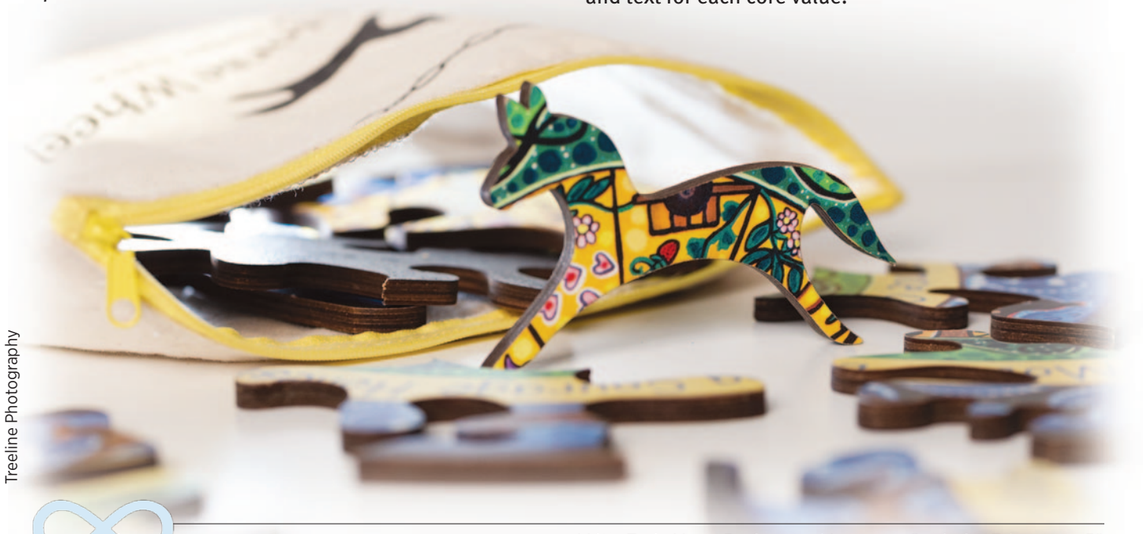
Poster Series – 12 posters featuring artwork by Leah Dorion, each poster highlights a Métis core value in both English and Michif.

Play Mat – A circular play mat that features the 12 Métis core values in similar colour and style as the poster series.

Puzzle – One horse and one buffalo-themed puzzle featuring the 12 Métis core values.

Colouring Book – A colouring book featuring the Métis core values.

Lacing Boards – Wooden lacing boards with an image and text for each core value.



Treeline Photography

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND INVESTIGATION

- Choose one of the Métis core values and have a conversation about how it can be enacted in daily life. Invite the children to reflect on each value through discussion, drawing, writing a story, or acting/playing out what that value means to them.
- Engage in conversation about what values are important to you, and welcome the children to speak about what values are important to them.
- Invite children to build the puzzle as a team.
- Take the play mat outside and provide an opportunity for children to take turns gently tossing a pebble onto the mat. Wherever it lands, engage in conversation about that value.
- Create a song using the 12 core values. For example: “I am honest, I am loving, I am kind….” using the tune to any children’s rhyme.
- Create a Michif word-of-the-week game based on the core values.
- Invite children to create art as an expression of what values are important to them.

Treeline Photography, Illustrations: Leah Dorion

CRITICAL REFLECTION

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Treeline Photography, Illustrations: Leah Dorion

The Metis core values continue to guide me as a parent. Our Metis core values and cultural teachings keep me grounded and rooted when I am challenged in own parenting.
-Leah Marie Dorion

Illustrations: Leah Dorion

Resource 6: Metal Spoons

Photograph, Louis Lafferty

My Uncle Johnny would play the fiddle and other uncles played the guitar and sang and somebody would play a washboard or a Jew's harp. My uncles, with all the boys, would come in on Friday and move all the furniture outside and cover it up. Then the whole living room and part of the kitchen was a big smorgas-bord—a place to eat and dance. My dad, who was Scottish, stood in the corner on a little box and called all the square dances and reels. When the kids got tired, we went to sleep under the chairs or on coats on the floor. Then when everybody was ready to go home, they just scooped us up and took us home and put us in our beds. .
– Métis Elder Earl Henderson

Music plays an important role in the Métis lifestyle and culture. Music is involved in community events, gatherings, and in family homes (often known as "kitchen parties"). Métis music is influenced by folk fiddling from Ireland, Great Britain, and France, and by the structures of First Nations music. Music can also be unique to families, who may have their own styles, tunes, songs, and dances.

The fiddle is a common musical instrument played by Métis people and is a key instrument within traditional Métis songs, such as the Red River Jig. The spoons often accompany the fiddle music as it gives a clapping rhythm to the song. The beat of the music played with the spoons is similar to Celtic hand drumming, the Scottish bagpipes, and some First Nations songs.

››› A pair of metal musical spoons is provided in the Métis Early Years Resources ‹‹‹

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND INVESTIGATION

- Create a space for children to investigate the spoons and ask questions.
  Encourage children to create their own songs, rhythms, and beats using the metal spoons.
- If desired, share the following video: How to Play the Musical Spoons.
- Put out spoons and masking tape and welcome children to make their own spoons
  (Hint: In order to create a gap between the spoons to make a clapping noise,
  roll a piece of masking tape into a small ball and place it between the two spoons.)
- Create an opportunity for children to take spoons outdoors and make music.
  Encourage them to create musical instruments from natural materials and compare the sounds.
- Turn on the Red River Jig, and allow children to dance freely.
- Create an opportunity for children to display their musical talents using the metal spoons with their peers.

On the weekends my grandmother would always have a dance.
Those dances were one of the best times
that I can remember growing up.
– Métis Elder Earl Henderson

Jesse Holland, Treeline Photography

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Well-being & Belonging

› How can I provide opportunities for children to explore, create, and collaborate using the resources?

› How can I create a learning environment where children feel welcomed to share their ideas, perspectives, and feelings?

Engagement With Others, Materials & Land

› In what ways are Elders and community members invited and welcomed into my program to enhance cultural & cross-generational relationship building?

› In what ways do I create opportunities for children to engage with the land, waters, & people in our community?

Identities, Social Responsibility & Diversity

› How can I foster experiences that enhance children's pride in their identity?

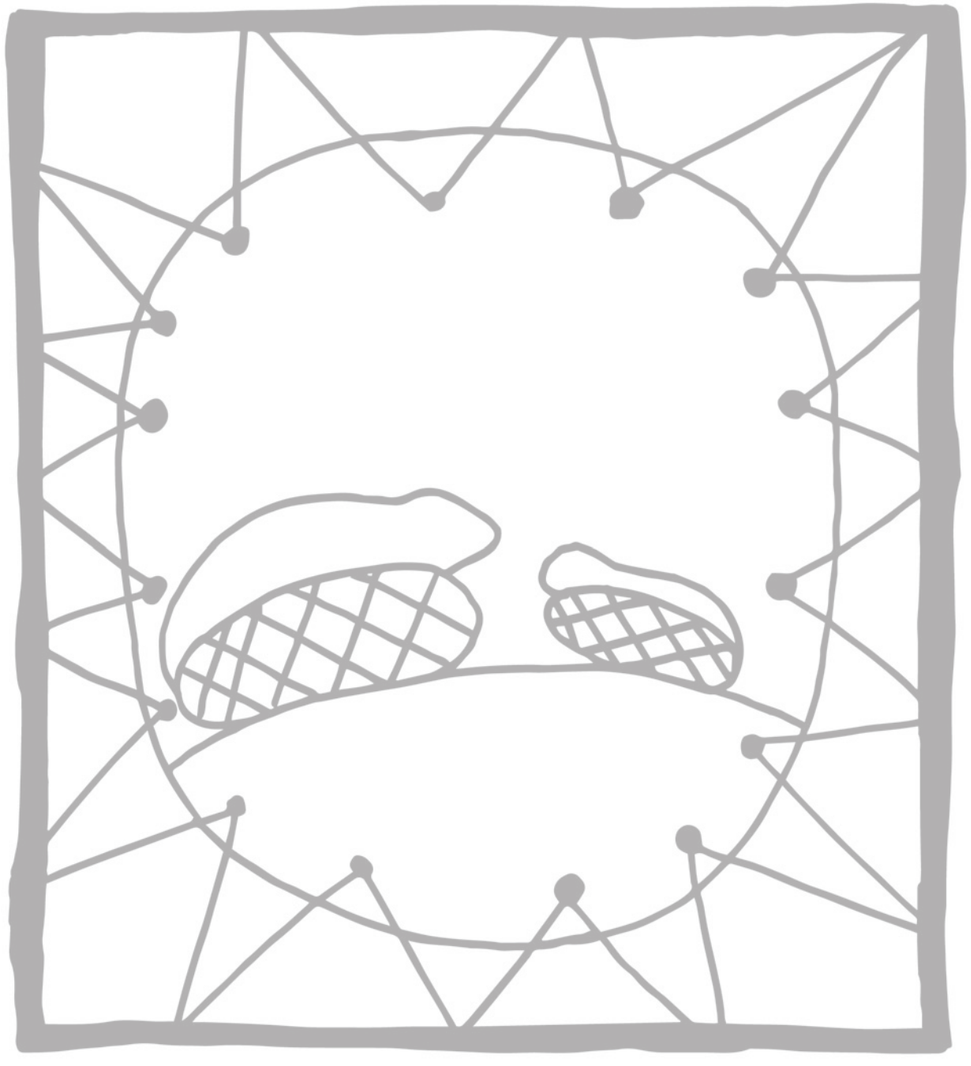
› How can I support children to reflect and learn more about their identity, culture, and community?

Communications & Literacies

› How might I invite children to share about their family traditions and cultural knowledge?

› How might I encourage children to express themselves through language, art, sound, music, and other means?

Painting: Leah Dorion



Illustrations: Leah Dorion

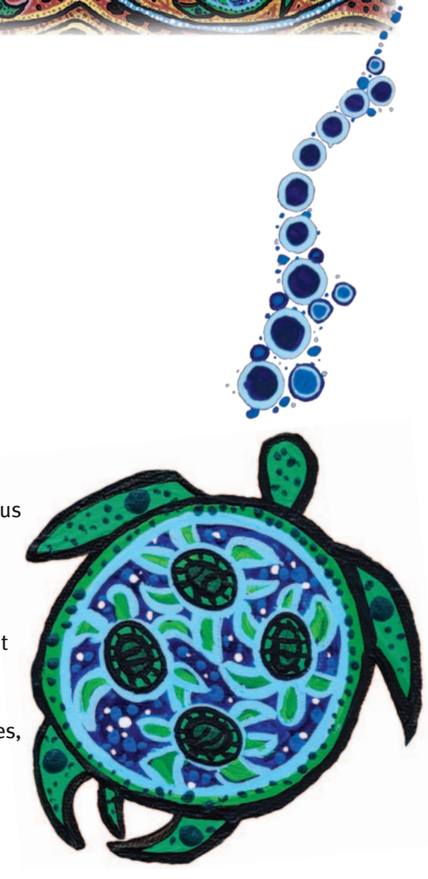
Paintings: Leah Dorion

MÉTIS NATION

Early Learning & Child Care FRAMEWORK

The Métis Nation has a vision for ELCC in which Métis children and families throughout the Homeland are provided with culturally relevant, self-empowering ELCC programming and services that focus on the development and maintenance of strong Métis families and communities across the lifespan, beginning at birth.

Métis Nation ELCC will promote the healthy growth and development of children and families through experiences grounded in Métis culture and community ways while Métis-specific wrap around services, programs and policies will support their ongoing well-being.



Paintings: Leah Dorion

Métis Nation Early Learning & Child Care Principles

The Métis Nation proposes that a Métis Nation ELCC system be built on the basis of the following principles:

1. A nation to nation and government to government approach.
2. This Framework aims to build on and support existing or future bilateral and tripartite processes that are in place between Canada and the Métis Nation as a part of ongoing work to address pressing socio-economic issues of the Métis Nation.
3. Métis Nation communities that have decision making authority over areas that impact them are most likely to be successful at closing socio-economic gaps for children and families.
4. Métis Nation ELCC programs and services will support improved education, health and social outcomes for young Métis children, rooted in Métis culture.
5. Métis Nation ELCC programs and services will be delivered by the Métis Nation, through existing well-developed governing bodies that have accountable, effective program delivery infrastructures in each of its regions and can ensure the design and delivery of Métis-specific programs and services for its youngest citizens and their families.
6. Métis Nation ELCC programs and services will promote the self-governance and self-determination of the Métis Nation.
7. Métis Nation ELCC programs and services will be guided by considerations of efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, relevance, inclusivity, and strengthening of Métis culture, language and community.
8. Métis Nation ELCC programs and services will be informed by evidence and knowledge that includes traditional and community-based knowledge, best practice information, and data gathered from research and evaluation.
9. Métis Nation ELCC program and service implementation will be collaborative in nature, characterized by a ared commitment to partnering, developing and leveraging existing and new networks, and fostering linkages to improve overall program coordination, connection and continuity in programming and services.
10. Partnerships and collaborations will be undertaken in a climate of mutual respect, relationship building, renewal and cooperation.
11. The Métis Nation expects a shared accountability with other levels of governments and ELCC service providers to maximize opportunities for Métis citizens, communities and the Nation.

Paintings: Leah Dorion

Métis Nation Early Learning & Child Care Goals

The overarching goal of a Métis Nation ELCC system is to create and enhance early learning supports for Métis children and their families by ensuring ELCC programming is anchored in Métis culture and the unique needs of Métis children and families. Realizing this goal involves a focus on:

1. Creating Métis-specific programming and services to support the early learning and developmental needs of Métis children and families, developed and delivered by the Métis Nation, through its Governing Members.
2. Supporting improved access to existing programs for Métis Nation children and families.
3. Creating program flexibility that is appropriately tailored to regional characteristics and distinct needs of local families and communities.
4. Supporting Métis Nation-building, and promoting self-governance and self-determination, with ELCC as a critical step to this end.
5. Integrating Métis culture, languages and values into the design and delivery of ELCC programs for Métis Nation children and families.
6. Promoting, whenever possible, the employment of Métis Nation individuals as early childhood providers.
7. Supporting ELCC providers, from inside or outside the Métis Nation, to be trained and educated in early childhood education and the cultural ways of the Métis Nation, thereby enhancing their competency in working with Métis Nation children and their families.
8. Supporting improved education, health and social outcomes for young Métis Nation children with a focus on health promotion, nutrition, education, Métis culture, parental involvement and social support.
9. Offering transparency and accountability to Métis Nation citizens, communities, government partners and other stakeholders.

Paintings: Leah Dorion

Métis Nation Priorities & Strategies

The Métis Nation has identified the following priorities and strategies:

1. Operationalize responsive and effective ELCC policies and programming to be designed and delivered by the Métis Nation for Métis children and their families that is focused on long-term (10+ years), sustainable transformation and change.
2. Create new culturally relevant and supportive ELCC spaces for young Métis Nation children and their families supported by predictable, flexible, long-term and sustainable funding approaches.
3. Establish and staff Métis Nation ELCC facilities with specific mandates to deliver Métis culture-based ELCC programming for Métis Nation children and families.
4. Identify and draw upon evidence-based, research-informed best practices that are grounded in Métis Nation traditional knowledge so that ELCC experiences and opportunities are responsive to Métis children and their families.
5. Develop and implement Métis-specific curricula and training programs that provide accredited educational opportunities to develop the knowledge and competencies of teachers, early learning specialists, and child care providers working with Métis Nation children and their families, developed with and delivered through Métis Nation institutions.
6. Create Métis Nation specific culture-based resources and materials to support the training of early childhood educators in post-secondary programs and the recipients of ELCC programs and service.
7. Establish learning and information-sharing mechanisms focusing on Métis Nation knowledge, best practices and relevant research.
8. Work collaboratively to develop a performance measurement approach to track and monitor program activities impacts over the short, medium and longer terms.
9. Provide programs and services that prevent Métis children being taken into care and that support Métis children in care as part of more comprehensive Métis Nation wrap-around supports.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is anyone of mixed Indigenous/non-Indigenous heritage Métis?

No. Métis people are part of a specific Nation and culture, so *Métis* is not a general term for any person of mixed Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage. To be a Citizen of the Métis Nation, you must demonstrate that you:

- ❀ Self-identify as Métis
- ❀ Are distinct from other Indigenous peoples
- ❀ Are of historic Métis ancestry
- ❀ Are accepted by the Métis Nation

Are Métis people Aboriginal?

Yes. Métis people are one of the Aboriginal groups recognized in the Canadian Constitution: Indian (First Nations), Métis and Inuit.

Do Métis people pay taxes?

Yes. Métis people do not have any tax exemptions.

What rights do Métis people have as Indigenous people?

Métis rights include rights to practise elements of Métis culture, including harvesting, language, religion, and law. The Canadian Constitution recognizes the rights of Métis people but does not define what they are. Métis people have used political and judicial means to assert their rights. Métis people have the legal right to define citizenship and to protect the integrity of citizenship. The Métis people assert a right to self-governance, but colonial governments have not always acknowledged this right.

How do you know if someone is Métis?

You cannot tell by how a person looks, dresses, or acts if they are Métis. You know a person is Métis if they tell you they are Métis.

How Métis are you?

All Métis people are 100% Métis. The idea that the percentage of First Nations identity defines a Métis person originates from the concept of "blood quantum," which was imposed on First Nations people through the Indian Act and is grounded in a racialized view of identity. Métis people do not use blood quantum definitions of identity for their citizens.

Illustration: Leah Dorion

Frequently Asked Questions

Do Métis people have a language?

Michif is the national Métis language. It is a unique language that developed as the Métis people became a Nation. Michif has Cree verbs and French nouns, but it is distinct from both French and Cree. Like most national languages, Michif has regional dialect variations. Some Métis people have unique connections to other Aboriginal languages due to their heritage or community, such as Cree or Bungi, a Métis language which consists of Scottish-English influenced by Gaelic, Cree, and Saulteaux (Nakawemowin).

Do Métis people prefer to be called Aboriginal or Indigenous?

Métis people prefer to be called Métis (or sometimes, Michif). While some may also identify with the term Aboriginal, others may prefer Indigenous. If you are unsure, the best approach is to ask.

Why is it important for Métis children to learn about their culture in their learning environment?

Building a positive cultural identity at an early age can significantly improve the physical, emotional, mental, and social health outcomes for Métis children.

Why is it important non-Métis childeren to learn about Métis culture in their learning environments?

Creating greater awareness of cultural diversity among young children can prepare them to become better citzens and expand their empathy and understanding of other cultures, as well as to explore the important contributions of Métis people to Canada.

How do I connect with Métis people in my community?

There are 39 Métis Chartered Communities in B.C., so chances are there is one close to you. You can visit the MNBC website to find the location and contact information for the nearest Métis Chartered Community. When reaching out to a Chartered Community, please be mindful that they are led by volunteers who often have a significant amount of administrative and project tasks underway. If there is no Métis Chartered Community close to you, you may consider connecting with a nearby Aboriginal Friendship Centre. These Centres sometimes have connections to Métis people living nearby. In the rare case where Community-level options do not exist, you may consider contacting MNBC's Ministry of Education to source out possible connections close to you.

Where can I go to learn more about Métis people?

To learn more about Métis people, visit the MNBC website, which has several resources.

Artist Statements

TITLE: FAMILY VOYAGE *(2021) By Leah Marie Dorion*
ABOUT THE ART
This contemporary artwork represents how Métis families historically travelled through their homeland together in birchbark canoes. These two Métis parents work together in partnership to ensure the safe voyage of their entire family. Stars, moon and wind influenced the travel strategies used by Métis river travellers, so the symbol of the North Star is painted on the front of the canoe for protection and safety. Today Métis people still use the North Star for navigation and guidance. Also, observation of the wind was important for canoeists; therefore, this Métis family has a Métis flag mounted on the rear of the canoe to identify wind direction as they paddle. The four winds symbol is painted on the rear of the canoe as a prayer for gentle winds as they travel together. Wind flows gently around the family as they journey together and make lasting memories.

TITLE: CLIMBING THE GIVING TREE *(2020) By Leah Marie Dorion*
ABOUT THE ART
In this painting, three Métis children play on the Giving Tree, which is the focal point of this artwork. The cultural significance of the Giving Tree is explained further in the book The Giving Tree, written and illustrated by Leah Marie Dorion. In this artwork, there are hearts around the tree to express the love and joy the children have while learning through play, which is a key Métis cultural learning methodology. In the roots of the Giving Tree are sash pattern symbolism and the Métis infinity symbol, two cultural icons that are important expressions of Métis identity through the generations. Since the Métis are known as the "Flower Beadwork People," there are beautiful spring blossoms all around the canopy of the tree to symbolize the rebirth of Métis culture and the season of spring, when children get out into nature to witness the wonders of the natural world.

TITLE: BEAR CLAN STAGES OF LIFE *(2014) By Leah Marie Dorion*
ABOUT THE ART
This artwork visually represents the four hills of life a person climbs as they go through the four stages of life from birth to old age. The first yellow-ocher-coloured bear symbolizes the first stage of life. It has a single circle on its body to show that its journey of life is just beginning. The second black bear represents the second stage of life, our youth. As such, the bear has two circles to show more lived experience. The third red-ocher-coloured bear symbolizes the adulthood stage of life, and it has three circles placed on its body to show more knowledge acquired. The white bear represents the fourth and final stage of life, Eldership. This white bear represents the wisdom gained from travelling all four hills of life.

Artist Statements

TITLE: WALKING WITH BEAR CLAN *(2015) By Leah Marie Dorion*
ABOUT THE ART
his painting tells the story of walking with our children along the path of life. The adult and the child both use their walking sticks to support them to walk safely and securely along the river valley. As the two walk together, they are joined by their ancestors from the Bear Clan and the Sturgeon Clan. The river symbolizes the importance of flowing through life, and the rising sun speaks to the daily guidance and vision we all need to keep steady on the path of life as we walk in unison with our children.

TITLE: MÉTIS STAGES OF LIFE *(2021) By Leah Marie Dorion*
ABOUT THE ART
This painting tells the story of moving through the four stages of life from birth, youth, adulthood and Eldership, as represented by the four hills of life metaphor. These four hills of life represent the hills we all have to climb in order to move through each of the four stages of life. Each hill has it blessings and challenges. Located under the hills of life are four turtles bonded by the flowing infinty symbols, which show our need to be connected to the earth and water. On each of the four earth turtles' backs are smaller turtles that represent the growth process and wisdom we all gain as we grow. Water is life and the underground water current connects everything in this artwork; the sacred water moves like a DNA strand through the tree of life to represent our Métis ancestral connections that flow through us all. The ancestor tree in the painting provides a protective canopy over the Métis people; in the canopy of the tree is another representation of life cycles: flower, fruit, maturity and our eventual return to spirit among the stars. The breath of life enters us at birth and leaves us all when we go back to spirit. Life is a beautiful and mysterious journey.

TITLE: SINGING TO THE ASPEN *(2015) By Leah Marie Dorion*
ABOUT THE ART
Singing to our children helps creates a calm and peaceful atmosphere and surrounds our children with love and belonging. In this painting, the baby is secured to the tree of life in a beautiful cradleboard, while the mother singings to her baby with a hide rattle. While in the cradleboard, the baby is able to observe the rest of the family members pick sweetgrass. The cradleboard method of parenting is a way for children to observe how to harvest medicines in order to prepare them for these responsibilities when they get older.

Illustration: Leah Dorion

Glossary

Aboriginal and Indigenous: *Aboriginal*, in the Canadian context, encompasses First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. The term *Aboriginal* refers to peoples who inhabited a territory prior to non-Indigenous colonization and settlement of Canada. In Canada, use of the term *Aboriginal* has declined in recent years, and there has been increased use of the term *Indigenous*. The term *Indigenous* refers to the original inhabitants of a territory. In everyday language, the terms *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous* are often used interchangeably—for example, in B.C., what was once the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation is now known as the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Colonialism: Colonialism is a system through which settlers take control over land and people, imposing a dominant worldview and system of governance, while exercising political power over the territory's Indigenous people.

Culturally safe learning environment: A culturally safe learning environment is one in which children and adults feel comfortable fully expressing and embodying their cultural identity, values, and ways of being.

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

Michif: Michif is the national Métis language that emerged alongside the birth of the Métis Nation. Michif is a complex and unique language that has French nouns and Cree verbs. Michif has many regional and community dialect variations, such as Michif-Cree, Michif-French, Île-à-la-Crosse Michif, and Turtle Mountain Michif. Some Métis people are multilingual or have connections to other languages and/or dialects, including Cree or Bungi, a Métis language that consists of Scottish-English influenced by Gaelic, Cree, and Saulteaux.

Oppression: Oppression is the exploitation, based on perceived inferiority, of a group of people who share a collective identity (such as race, class, cultural background, religion, gender, sexuality, age, language, or ability). Oppression involves an abuse of power by one group at the expense of others, which hinders the oppressed groups from accessing resources and fully expressing their freedom. Oppression is systemic because it is embedded within the structure of society, its institutions, and day-to-day life. Those who benefit from oppression are often unaware of or in denial about the existence of oppression.

Pedagogy: Pedagogy is about how you teach, not what you teach. Your pedagogy comprises your values and beliefs about teaching, your teaching style, and your inherent way of relating to children and learners. It is the art and science of teaching.

Racism: Racism is oppression based on race, when one group exploits and hinders the freedoms of another racial group. Racism can be both personal (between one individual and another) and systemic (between systems or institutions and groups). People and communities that are impacted by racism may have less access to opportunities and experience disproportionate health and societal challenges.

Resilience: Resilience is the ability of a person or group of people to endure challenging circumstances, recover from them, and survive into a future in which they can thrive. Cultural identity and teachings promote resilience by acting as protective factors in the face of socioeconomic inequalities and colonial oppression.

A note on intentional capitalizations: Certain terms within this document have been intentionally capitalized, as per MNBC conventions, to show respect. These include Elder, Métis Chartered Community, Métis Citizen, and Métis Nation.

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“Aansaambaenkiskayhtaamuk ❀ Learning Together”

has been developed for early learning and child care professionals working with children from birth to eight years of age, although the guide has applications beyond this age group. The guide uses a Métis pedagogy informed by Métis core values.

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