Divo Ti Vyin? Where Are You From? Red River Métis Knowledge as Pedagogy

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Abstract

This article explores the integration of Red River Métis cultural identity into pedagogy, emphasizing the benefits for diverse students in the Canadian context. Using personal narratives and historical connections, it highlights the implications of land-based learning and critical historical analysis to infuse Indigenous perspectives into the elementary educational environment. The article investigates the historical and cultural roots of the Red River Métis, the impact of colonialism on their identity, and the role of Métis matriarchy in cultural continuity. Including Métis histories in the classroom is used to advocate for relational, land-based, and community-oriented pedagogies that honour Indigenous knowledge and promote reconciliatory education. The article also discusses the role of land acknowledgements and community-based events in creating inclusive connections to Indigenous epistemologies. By incorporating Métis pedagogies, educators can create inclusive, collaborative, and reflective learning experiences that support all students in understanding complex historical issues pertinent to their local geography and the broader Canadian society.

Keywords: Red River Métis, cultural identity, Métis, land-based learning, Métissage, critical relational pedagogy

Résumé

Cet article explore l'intégration pédagogique de l'identité culturelle des Métis de la rivière Rouge et met en évidence les avantages que cela peut offrir aux élèves issus d'horizons diversifiés dans le contexte canadien. À partir de récits personnels et de liens historiques, l'autrice met en lumière l'apport de l'apprentissage inspiré de la terre ainsi que de l'analyse historique critique pour intégrer les perspectives autochtones à l'école primaire. L'article se penche sur les racines historiques et culturelles des Métis de la rivière Rouge, sur les effets du colonialisme sur leur identité, et sur le rôle du matriarcat métis dans la préservation et la transmission culturelles. En incluant l'histoire des Métis en classe, l'autrice prône des pédagogies relationnelles, ancrées dans la terre et la communauté, qui honorent les connaissances autochtones et favorisent une éducation engagée envers la réconciliation. L'article aborde aussi le rôle des énoncés de reconnaissance territoriale et des activités communautaires pour créer des liens inclusifs avec les épistémologies autochtones. En incorporant des pédagogies métisses, les éducatrices et éducateurs peuvent développer des expériences d'apprentissage inclusives, collaboratives et réflexives qui facilitent la compréhension, par tous les élèves, d'enjeux historiques complexes et pertinents pour la société canadienne.

Mots-clés : Métis de la rivière Rouge, identité culturelle, pédagogie métisse, apprentissage inspiré de la terre

Introduction

I begin this piece by sharing my story, as Archibald (2008) suggests: "We come from a tradition of storytelling, and as storytellers we have a responsibility to be honest, to transmit our understanding of the world to other people" (p. 84). I grew up in the embrace of a large extended Métis family. Summer evenings were spent playing with my many cousins in the large backyard, running through my Pepayre's jardin with the smell of woodsmoke permeating the air. Memayre and Pepayre Garand had nine children during their long and loving marriage. Their devotion to their family was clear in everything they did. Pepayre Garand, an experienced stonemason, built a small granite house on the outskirts of St. Vital in what is now Winnipeg and cultivated a large vegetable garden with prairie fruit trees to feed his family. My familial ties to St. Vital can be traced back to my

ancestor Marie-Anne Lagimodière (née Gaboury), the maternal grandmother of Louis Riel. Her river lot ran west from what is now known as St. Mary's Road to the Red River in south Winnipeg (St. Vital Historical Society, n.d.). Macdougall (2012) explains that "Métis forged amongst themselves communities defined by their maternal ancestors and continued to redefine themselves via ongoing female familial connections to the land" (p. 449). Memayre Garand (née Nault), our family's matriarch, raised her children and every grandchild to be proud and outspoken. Family gatherings were loud and boisterous in their small home. A feast of Métis comfort food stretched into the living room, with people spilling onto the back porch. Generosity and joy lived there. Everyone was welcome, and nobody left hungry.

My father grew up by the river in St. Vital before it was developed in the late 1960s. He was the eldest son and spent time on the land with Pepayre in the area known as Chemin Dawson Trail, a historical travel route that linked the eastern provinces of Upper Canada with the Red River settlement and served as an important lifeline for Métis merchants to ship their products to the rest of Canada during the late 1870s (Spry, 1975). Though now a managed forestry area, these hunting grounds remained important to my family, and I often accompanied my father deer hunting in those woods. These trips were treasured opportunities for him to tell me stories about our family history. Our father-daughter hunting trips were less about having a successful hunt and more about spending time together in the woods, enjoying our surroundings, and reconnecting to the land. Vizina (2023) explains that possessing intimate knowledge of our territories is essential for Métis land-based teaching and learning as we become familiar with the local flora and fauna, topography, and seasonal changes specific to the land on which we belong. On the rare occasions when we did harvest a deer, I was expected to help prepare the animal by skinning, butchering, and deboning it for our table. During ice fishing trips, I was responsible for filleting fish, a daunting task in sub-zero temperatures without gloves. By helping my dad, I learned that birch bark makes the best fires and how to properly stack wood; he always wanted his daughters to have the skills needed to be independent. As Vizina (2023) explains, "For Métis, learning from observation and from other experienced practitioners enables integration of new knowledge and synthesis of knowledge from multiple sources" (p. 106). All these memories have made me proud to have developed a land-based skillset, a privilege not many urban-dwelling Métis women possess today.

Métis Scrip in the Red River

My family holds scrip for 80 acres of land in the parish of St. Norbert. Scrip notes were issued after the Manitoba Act, ratified in July 1870, resulting from the negotiations between the Red River Métis and the Canadian government. The Manitoba Act won statutory protection for Métis language, religion, and laws, including 1.6 million acres of land to be distributed to Métis heads of families in the province (Fiola, 2015). However, the Canadian government manipulated the Manitoba Act using multiple amendments to drive Métis people away from the land in which they had been born and that was rightfully theirs (Chartrand, 2021). As Milne (1995) points out, "the scrip system, rather than helping Métis retain their land, contributed to their loss, as many sold their scrip due to financial need or were targeted by speculators" (p. 33). Even before the scrip system, my ancestors were advocating for cultural autonomy as Métis and land rights in the face of Canadian expansion. My paternal grandmother's family, the Naults, played a direct role in the Red River Resistance in St. Vital. As human rights historian Derrick Nault (2022) reports:

> Naults and Riels followed the same matrilocal Métis custom in which husbands and children resided with or near mothers' families. Louis Riel and several Métis supporters commenced the Red River Resistance by forcing a team of Canadian surveyors to cease running lines across farmers' river lots in St. Vital Parish. It was on this river lot, Métis oral traditions claim, that André Nault first spotted the surveyors and, unable to speak English and make them cease their work, sought his cousin Louis Riel's assistance. (p. 7)

Understanding my ancestral Métis roots in the Red River settlement, the Resistance Movement, and the scrip system has led me to further explore how my culture and the effects of colonialism have influenced my identity.

The French Michif Language

Memayre and Pepayre Garand spoke French Michif, and I can vividly remember when relatives would visit their home, I would hear them speaking a version of French that sounded different from the one I was accustomed to. Bakker (1997) posits that Michif is a community-based language and is used by Métis only to communicate with other Métis; this

phenomenon explains its use only in the presence of extended family. However, French Michif was never openly discussed by my grandparents, as my uncles and aunts were educated in the English school system. As a result, my father's generation became silent speakers, able to understand the language but who had lost their fluency and thus ability to pass French Michif on to their children. Language is one of the aspects of Indigeneity most deeply impacted by historical trauma and suppression (McKenzie, 2022). Michif encompasses multiple dialects; in some areas, Cree is foundational to Michif, and in others, there is more emphasis on French (Edge & McCallum, 2006). What is notable about Michif language is that it contains two phonological, largely intact systems, Cree and French (Bakker, 1997). To add to the confusion, speakers of French Michif refer to their dialect as "Michif," and Métis speakers of a dialect of Cree also call their language "Michif" (Papen, 2007). I had not realized my family still held on to French Michif until, by chance, I saw it written down and heard Memayre's voice leap off the page. When I read French Michif today, I hear Memayre Garand's voice speak to me in the way it is pronounced, the syntax, and the *joual* I overheard countless times growing up. It was so ubiquitous as to slip into my vocabulary, especially after my bibi was born, because it contained the loving words and idioms I associated with my experiences as a young child. I decided to adopt the use of Michif terminology in this article to share my experiences in the language of my ancestors, whose collective knowledge has led me to where I am today. I also wish to acknowledge the language of the Métis homeland, based on Armstrong's account:

> Indigenous peoples' languages are generated by a precise geography and arise from it. Over time and many generations of their people, it is their distinctive interaction with a precise geography that forms the way indigenous language is shaped and subsequently how the world is viewed. (McCall et al., 2017, p. 144)

Rediscovering my Métis language has largely been a reframing of my childhood experiences that have always been there, hiding in plain sight.

Métis Matriarchy in Action

Memayre Garand and Memayre Montsion were my first teachers; each was a matriarch, showing me traditional Métis values like independence and self-sufficiency, and skills like caring for others, baking galette, playing cards, and growing a garden. Ferland (2022) states that "Métis women were political and economic powerhouses in the nascent Métis Nation" (p. 20). My Memayre Montsion lived up to this assessment and oversaw all the social plans and major decisions affecting the family. The success of the Red River Métis has been due to the strength and determination of its women. Memayre Montsion's independent streak led her to leave Ste. Rose du Lac at age 17 to pursue her dreams of being a teacher and, later, a school administrator. Memayre Montsion remains fiercely self-reliant well into her late nineties, due in part to having been a working professional and raising my mother as a single parent during a time when societal expectations marginalized single-parent households. She has had a powerful effect on my academic progress, as she always urged her granddaughters to receive a university education. My goal of earning a master's degree in education is to honour her dedication to her family, as she was unable to complete her graduate degree. I have realized the foundational role that my family's matriarchs have played in my development and determination to succeed. Memayre Garand and Memayre Montsion continue to guide and inspire me. I bring my Métis identity and perspectives to my teaching to honour their legacies and the knowledge they instilled in me as a confident Métis woman.

Settler Colonialism in Education

As a child attending a French immersion elementary school in Winnipeg, I had limited opportunities to learn about Indigenous peoples or perspectives. In St. Vital, French Canadian culture and history were emphasized despite the well-documented historical connections to the Red River Métis and the parish of the Riel family. Despite Louis Riel having led the Red River Resistance, which began in St. Vital, treaties and the contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Canadian society were omitted from curricula; we students were not taught about the Indian Act, its exclusion of Manitoba Métis from acquiring Indian status, or that Métis children were forced into the Residential School system and were later caught up in the Sixties Scoop (Fiola, 2021). As Burke and Robinson (2019) explain:

> The Métis are one of the three distinct groups of Indigenous peoples recognized under the Canadian Constitution as "Aboriginal" (the other two being First Nations and Inuit); in spite of this official recognition, there is no general determination in the Constitution, nor is there consensus among Métis people, nor within Canadian society, about who can legitimately claim Métis identity. (p. 151)

The Western curriculum I experienced as a young student in the 1990s centred many conceptions of settler colonialism, which served to displace Indigenous communities both conceptually and physically (Gaudry, 2016). My ancestors, like many Métis families, left the Red River settlement after the Northwest Resistance of 1885 and relocated to St. Pierre and Ste. Rose du Lac. Fiola (2015) explains that Métis identity went underground in Western Canada during this time. Métis were labelled as traitors and persecuted, resulting in the self-suppression of their identity. Settler colonialism is a persistent social and political system in which settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to erase the Indigenous Peoples and culture that were there when they arrived (Arvin et al., 2013). My family's homestead and culture were a casualty of settler colonialism, and its dominance continued to be reproduced through the curriculum into my early years studying within the public schooling system. Indigenous history was omitted. Consequently, Indigenous Peoples and their respective identities were made invisible through the lack of representation of their voices and worldviews. I did not have an Indigenous teacher until I entered the University of Winnipeg. In 2017, Métis teachers only accounted for 7.6% of the total educators across the province of Manitoba. Moreover, there was only one teacher of Michif in the entire province (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017). These figures demonstrate an ongoing need for qualified Métis teachers in our schools and a focused effort to increase Michif language programs to disrupt provincial settler colonial curricula that continue to erase Métis experiences. We must recognize and integrate the full range of Métis histories into larger discussions in educational settings and ensure that there is space for the Métis cultural experience in the classroom.

Indigenizing Education through Métis Perspectives

I sought a career as an educator to include Métis histories, perspectives, and contemporary issues in the classroom and use Indigenous experiential learning opportunities to engage students. Children should see diversity reflected in their teachers. It is a common error to view teaching as a neutral practice in which teachers are supported by dominant social norms (Maclean, 2004) that function to undermine Indigenous history and knowledge. The lack of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies in the classroom is harmful to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students because it leaves them open to accepting racial hierarchies and entrenched societal attitudes about Indigenous issues (Bishop et al., 2019). An inclusive classroom provides an educational environment in which all students' identities are promoted and an equity-based and anti-racist approach to learning is deployed. I am influenced by the work of Donald (2009), who put forth the concept of Métissage, a place-based, relational, and ecologically conscious epistemological framework from which to advance the curriculum. Similarly, Métis experiences reflect relational, land-based, and community-oriented pedagogies (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012). Métissage, while not a Métis theory, creates a space where both Indigenous and Western theories can be acknowledged, woven together, and honoured, which reflects the place we as Métis find ourselves in, as we don't exclusively ascribe to Western ways of interacting with the world (Burke & Robinson, 2019). At its heart, Métis pedagogy is based on collaborative and cooperative learning (Maclean, 2004). When we teach our students to acknowledge the relationships around them, we begin the process of empowerment by acknowledging their lived experiences.

As a bilingual English and French teacher in the Winnipeg School Division, I have taught in classrooms from kindergarten to Grade 5 in both ethnically and socio-economically diverse areas of the city. I have always felt most comfortable teaching Grade 4, because the curricular outcomes include the history and geography of Manitoba and a science unit on habitats, outcomes that focus on the relationships between land and living things, which lend themselves to an Indigenous pedagogical approach. I have always been keenly aware of my place as an Indigenous person in a colonial institution. Conflict, whether intentional or not, has arisen over ways of teaching from a Métis perspective versus the Western school system's entrenched product-based teaching philosophy. Far from being an isolated incident, resistance to change and the trivialization of Indigenous

pedagogy by non-Indigenous colleagues, parents, and policy makers is intentional and designed to evade a more profound engagement with issues of Indigenous rights and sovereignty (Clarke et al., 2019; St. Denis, 2011). These attitudes are prevalent in the Canadian Prairie context that often privileges Whiteness while marginalizing Indigenous Peoples and racial minorities; these dynamics shape educational narratives and intercultural relations (Schick & St. Denis, 2003). Indigenization and reconciliation are increasingly promoted in educational settings; however, authentic decolonization and Indigenization within schools remain elusive (Chung, 2019). Education systems reflect social norms and values, and educators help shape those values, so if they work with integrity, they can help learners understand Indigenous systems of knowledge (Chrona, 2022). There is more work to be done to decolonize our teachers and educational spaces and to foster meaningful dialogue among teachers to recognize their roles in perpetuating dominant discourses (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014; Dion, 2007). However uncomfortable it may be for those disrupting the status quo in our schools, Maclean (2004) explains that "teaching against the grain provides many students with learning opportunities they may not otherwise experience" (p. 75). The Indigenization of our schools can only be achieved with critical relational pedagogy and self-reflection to better recognize the roles that educators have long played and continue to play in the support of colonial narratives.

Students should have ongoing opportunities to engage in Indigenous-led perspectives to become more informed adults in Canadian society. A Métis pedagogical approach is beneficial in our schools because it is steeped in a land-based teaching and learning philosophy, traditions that support a sustainable approach to life by integrating holistic concepts of social, environmental, and economic foundations (Vizina, 2023). However, educators should be sure that they are including authentic Métis perspectives and culture to avoid problematic "New Métis" identities that prioritize mixed-race settler ancestry while neglecting the historical and cultural development of legitimate Métis communities (Brown, 1993; Gaudry & Leroux, 2017). As Gaudry (2013) makes clear, "small-m métis are defined as mixed Indigenous and European from a diversity of backgrounds, and big-M Métis are defined as descended from the Red River Métis people" (p. 77). Meanwhile, the result of using a racialized description of mixed ancestry allows for anyone with a single Indigenous ancestor to claim oneself as Métis, which undermines the stories and struggles of our communities, and the authenticity of our Indigeneity (Macdougall, 2012).

How might we then create professional unlearning and pedagogical opportunities for teachers and students to learn that the history of the Métis nation is tied to colonization, dispossession, and assimilation, which continue to impact Métis people today (Fiola, 2021)? Especially when dominant narratives continue to misrepresent and stereotype Indigenous identities across the curricula? For Métis educators such as myself, such curricular misunderstandings continue to arise when others do not appreciate our people's specific stories, histories, and cultural expressions, which set them apart as a nation. To do so, teachers can engage with local Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and artists to grasp diverse perspectives (Dion, 2007). By infusing Métis culture into the classroom, educators are helping to provide context for Métis histories and experience.

Understanding Our Land Acknowledgement

As a Métis teacher, one of my curricular objectives is to provide authentic Indigenous land-based learning experiences that encourage relationality. Métis ways of knowing, doing, and being have always had deep roots in our lands. Smith (2023) states that because "the land itself is a witness to what occurs on it. When we acknowledge the land, we understand that the land can hear us and see us practicing our pedagogies in respectful ways that honor Mother Earth and ourselves" (p. 6). The Western education system we use in schools is not as familiar with this relationship (Wood & Judson, 2022). In many elementary schools in Manitoba and across Canada, a land acknowledgement is read in the morning announcements. However, Wark (2021) criticizes land acknowledgement practices as having devolved into box-ticking exercises, symbolic gestures that serve to reinforce settler innocence, and attempt to rewrite Indigenous and settler-colonial history. In comparison, experiential land-based educational opportunities can foster healthier environmental relationships for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021). Educators can strive to promote the explicit understanding of the land acknowledgement through the lessons and projects they bring into the classroom and the wider school environment.

During my service as Indigenous Education Chair, our school established an annual Indigenous land-based learning celebration called Wahkohtowin Day. Wahkohtowin is a Nehiyawewin natural law that informs us that we have a responsibility to each other, human and more-than-human, all our relations. The event is structured to provide a voice

to the Anishinaabe, Nêhiyaw, and Métis Peoples who reside on Treaty 1 territory while providing experiential land-based knowledge opportunities. These experiences included Mikiwap Tipi pole teachings, Nehiyawewin language storytelling, Métis fishing practices, seasonal harvesting, Anishinaabe winter and summer outdoor games, and presentations by the Treaty Commission of Manitoba. These sessions intend to create space for understanding the cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous Peoples, moving beyond superficial differences to appreciate deeper, contextual differences (Chung, 2019; Martin & Pirbhai-Illich, 2016). This project has been well received by the school community, with students and parents provided with multimodal ways of engaging with the land from different Indigenous views relevant to the territory on which the school is located. Students' connections to learning are honoured by the creation of a schoolbook comprised of a collective of each student's representation of what Wahkohtowin means to them. By becoming participants in Indigenous ways of being and knowing on the land, school communities can begin to deepen their understanding that a proper Land Acknowledgement establishes a relationship. A Métis pedagogy offers space for the inclusion of other Indigenous perspectives, as educators who try to increase their knowledge of the natural world with Indigenous cultural knowledges are well equipped to understand and help learners understand the role human impact has on the land, water, and air (Vizina, 2023). This relationship links people and places by outlining epistemological protocols that serve as the foundation for this connection (Smith, 2023). Using community-based events, relationships are cultivated and commonalities shared, leading to a better understanding of Indigenous worldviews.

Land as Teacher: A Local History Unit

Our family has a cottage at Buffalo Point First Nation on Treaty 3 territory. Memayre Montsion leased and cleared the land with the help of my dad when I was a baby. Throughout my childhood, we all pitched in to build the cottage. Sometimes my job was to leave the adults alone to their work while my sister and I were given an ice cream pail with instructions to "explore." Through these excursions, I formed a deep connection with the natural world. We picked pembinas (saskatoons), raspberries that grew in thick, prickly patches everywhere, and beaked hazelnuts whose furry sheaths made our hands itchy. We observed leopard frogs, garter snakes, and deer mice in their natural habitats.

We learned through taking risks and engaging with our surroundings. In the summer, we crisscrossed the island following deer trails through the bush. During the winter, we rode our snowmobiles across the muskeg. We became friends with the children who lived there and now that we are all adults, we greet them at local community events where we bring our children for opportunities to play and build their own relationships.

As an educator, I encourage students to foster meaningful connections and relationships with the land. Mary Jane McCallum, a local community member and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples, History and Archives at the University of Winnipeg, presented research on the history of the Glenelm community at our school's Indigenous education professional development session. She provided records of the Métis families who resided on the local river lots and included first-hand accounts of the people who grew up in Kildonan during the 1860s. River lots at the time were described as based on the lot system of Lower Canada, where the front of each lot was cultivated and the rear used as pasture, the houses made close to each other along the Red River, resulting in tightly knit communities that offered protection, transportation, and help from neighbours (Warkentin, 1959–1960). McCallum's research led to the creation of a land-based multidisciplinary unit for students in Grades 4 and 5: I sought to create experiences that increased students' understanding of the land by utilizing the true history of the land in their neighbourhood. The local histories unit was developed in partnership with our school division literacy support teacher and Métis way of life teacher. Our collective goal was to include Indigenous land-based education within lessons to foster a deeper insight into language, stories, cosmologies, and land rights (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021). The first lesson was developed with the resource *Walking Forward: Learning from Place* to facilitate planning an outdoor learning activity grounded in the First People's principles of learning (Wood & Judson, 2022). The introductory lesson was comprised of a community walk from the school grounds to the riverbank in Elmwood Park in northeast Winnipeg. Students recorded their observations by answering the following guiding statements: "I notice," "I wonder," and "It reminds me." This exercise encouraged students to slow down, quiet their minds, and use their senses to connect their neighbourhood and their physical bodies to more abstract concepts of place. Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island have universally emphasized the importance of respectful listening and silent, attentive observation (Blenkinsop & Fettes, 2020). Through silence and using their observational skills, the students created space for new encounters. Once we reached

the riverbank, a large bald eagle perched overhead, swooped over the students, and soared across the river. This serendipitous encounter led to excitement in the student group and led to questions regarding the flora and fauna that share the land in our community.

In the classroom, student groups were given multiple historical survey maps of their community from 1820 through 2024 and asked to record their observations and share them during our class discussion. Several students commented on changes in the division of the land, the earlier maps depicting long divided sections connected to the river, and the shift to city blocks and roads in more recent maps. This exercise provided context for students to learn about the historical river lot system in Kildonan and the importance of equitable access to the Red River for early inhabitants of the area. Students were quick to point out that the traditional city blocks limited access to the area's resources along the river and began to question where the Métis homesteads had gone. Métis communities existed in and around Winnipeg before its inception. Here Toews (2020) uses the concept of suburbs nullius, whereby Métis history has been deliberately erased, and instead imagines the periphery of our city as vacant or settler farmland, available to be turned into urban subdivisions. The swift transformation of the school area from river lots to roads also demonstrated the concept of the Métis diaspora, the mid- to late-19th-century separation and migration of Métis families from traditional lands and their impact on Métis identity and community structures (Fiola, 2021; Pannekoek, 2001). The historical survey map lesson allowed students to develop critical and positionality awareness and a better understanding of how social position, privilege, and oppression are interrelated (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). Education should be engaged in interrupting the myths of colonization (Schick & St. Denis, 2003). This lesson exemplified how students can understand more complex issues of colonization, suburbs nullius, and the Métis diaspora when given appropriate resources and foundational knowledge on which to draw.

Students' connections to, and relationships with, Indigenous plants found in our area was facilitated by identification during community walks in the neighbourhood and through Métis beading lessons. First-hand accounts of the local area in the 1840s show that there was a large swamp with tall reeds; growths of tall poplar, oak, ash, and elm; and nut willows, high-bush cranberries, pin cherries, choke cherries, raspberries, and wild plums (McCallum, 2024). Students were provided with pictures of Manitoba plant species and examples of Métis beadwork designs that reflected the complex relationships between plants in each habitat. Métis beadwork functions as a form of storytelling to

communicate. Teaching these skills helps normalize, integrate, and highlight Indigenous art into day-to-day life (Mackie & Nordstrom, 2024). Through beading and creating Métis-style art pieces, students began to see how Métis people were inspired by the land around them to adorn their clothing and items. Students pushed through their frustration at learning a new skill, and this was an occasion to teach them about the more meditative aspect of beadwork that places process over product. The act of beading can promote Indigenous ways of knowing, providing insight into worldviews and understandings of respectful and authentic relationships (Ray, 2016). The importance of regional knowledge is emphasized, as Indigenous teachings are often specific to landscapes, including local Indigenous histories and practices, and creating a deeper connection between students and their environments (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021; Chung, 2019). By conceptualizing how the land around them is a source of learning and inspiration, students developed a far more profound appreciation of the natural world.

Knowledge Keepers in the Classroom

My dad is a lively, wonderful storyteller. I invited him to my classroom to share some of his land-based experiences with my students. Much of Métis pedagogical knowledge can be learned from Métis Knowledge Keepers and those who grew up on the land (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012). My dad brought his warm homemade galette with raspberry jam, and my students sat around him on the carpet, mesmerized. He recounted adventures berry picking with my Pepayre and runs-in with bears, and he talked about his childhood on his grandparents' homestead in an area colloquially known as Nault's Coulee. It was important to have my father come and build a relationship with my students so that they could learn about Métis life from multiple sources. Stories told by Métis reveal a way of life based on experiences that identify relationships that are important to the Métis as a people (Edge & McCallum, 2006). These experiences range from living on the land as trappers, being carriers of language and knowledge, surviving forced assimilation, and reclaiming cultural practices (Mackie & Nordstrom, 2024). Ferland (2022) eloquently explains that "Métis learners are part of a balanced landscape, and that knowledge, represented by leaves that fall and return to the land, feed and enrich learning foundations" (p. 16). However, when seeking guidance from cultural Knowledge Keepers, we must be mindful to follow Indigenous protocols such as offering honoraria, cloth, and tobacco

(Vizina, 2023). This reinforces the sacred relationship between learners and Knowledge Keepers and establishes a basis for reciprocity. My father has now taken up the role of Pepayre in my family. He enjoys sharing his personal stories and land-based teaching with young people and gently guiding their love of and connection to the land.

Métis History in the Classroom

It remains important to incorporate a meaningful inclusion of Indigenous content in education, content that addresses racism and colonialism and recognizes the unique position of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Although Canadian schools have pledged to work toward reconciliatory education, these strategies continue to deploy a pan-Indigenous approach to Indigenous epistemologies, grouping Métis and Inuit cultures with First Nations into a single uniform category (Scott, 2021). When considering Métis ways of being and knowing, our gift is the ability to draw on the ancestral knowledges of those whose land we collectively share, including other Indigenous Peoples, our European relatives, and new Canadiana, and then joining these traditions in an innovative Métis way (Vizina, 2023). Métis teachers possess a unique skillset that deserves much more recognition in Canadian school systems. Métissage can support reconciliation in our schools by merging historical perspectives to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action while supporting the rising number of Métis students (Scott, 2021). By exploring the history of Métis in their Red River homeland, students gain awareness of the contributions and geography of resistance to racial capitalism that played out on those lands (Toews, 2020). Incorporating interrelational Indigenous perspectives into Canada's history allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the events that have shaped our land, offering a more nuanced context that moves well beyond colonial narratives that continue to enforce settler innocence and benevolence while absolving the injustices of the past by excusing the colonial project for having good intentions. For many, as McCallum (2024) reminds us,

> Indigenous history seems to unfold somewhere else, somewhere other than where one lives now. This separation from Indigenous histories is made worse when public histories are based in inadequate, false, and misleading narratives. This reality is even more challenging when these accounts—

> accounts that perpetuate racist assumptions about Indigenous absence and peaceful colonization—are about your own neighbourhood. (para. 1)

It should be the goal of educators to provide students with a rich history of the land and address the full implications of the colonial project.

Divo Ti Vyin? Where Are You From?

We are shaped by who we are and where we come from. The land I grew up on, the kinship I share, and my love for those who taught and raised me are inextricably linked to what I bring to the classroom. As an educator, I bring my culture, language, and life experiences into what I do, how I live, and how I relate to others around me. As a Métis woman, I can walk in two worlds, embodying the spirit of Métissage by blending both Indigenous ways of knowing and Western ideas. Students benefit from these shared connections, which assist us in understanding our roles, responsibilities, and reciprocal obligations as relatives (Fiola, 2021). There is a need for an ongoing transformative approach in education that prioritizes Indigenous perspectives and the development of an ethical awareness among educators to engage with Indigenous epistemologies, including the land and its stories, and contribute to a more equitable educational landscape (Chung, 2019; Dion, 2007). This emphasizes the need for educational institutions to challenge the denial of colonial history and commit to justice and fairness for Indigenous students (St. Denis, 2011). Teachers involved in cultivating Indigenous languages must be aware of, prepared for, and responsive to the effects of historical trauma and acknowledge the role that language can play in healing journeys (McKenzie, 2022). All teachers must engage in reflective and collaborative practice and planning to create an inclusive educational environment that infuses Indigenous knowledge, places Indigenous voices at the forefront, and includes Indigenous pedagogical approaches in the classroom and beyond (Clarke et al., 2019). Métis pedagogies offer a way forward by infusing multiple ways of knowing, collaborating, and incorporating both Indigenous ways of being with ingenuity and a balanced approach to life that benefits all learners.

The home of Memayre and Pepayre Garand served as a base of operations for family gatherings, celebrations, and cultural learning. Their small granite house fostered Métis pride, identity, and joie de vivre. Surrounded by the laughter of aunties, uncles,

and cousins, I learned who I was, nested amongst my people. Memayre Garand recently passed into the spirit world at the age of 94 to be reunited with Pepayre. They were both laid to rest in St. Vital Cemetery on River Road in Winnipeg, close to their ancestral river lots—the same land on which they lived and raised their children with love and strength. Their lives are now woven into the Red River Métis homeland along the river's banks. Though they are no longer here to guide me, I honour the knowledge they shared and embrace the responsibility to pass on the same cultural teachings to those who follow, just as they once did for me.

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