

# Beyond Riel: Bringing Métis Content into the Classroom

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## Abstract

This article examines the under-representation of Métis perspectives in the Canadian education system and the challenges educators face in incorporating authentic Métis knowledge into their classrooms. Despite a growing emphasis on reconciliation and inclusion of Indigenous content in education, there remains a significant lack of resources and curricula specifically addressing Métis histories, experiences, and worldviews. The article highlights the necessity for Métis-specific educational approaches, drawing on the insights of Métis scholars and community voices. It discusses the development and implementation of a post-baccalaureate course, titled “Beyond Riel: Bringing Métis Content into the Classroom,” that aims to equip educators with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively teach Métis history and culture. Ultimately, this work seeks to promote a more nuanced understanding of Métis realities, facilitating meaningful educational experiences that support reconciliation and honour Métis contributions to Canadian history.

*Keywords:* Métis resources, Métis Education, implementation strategies, Indigenous Education

## Résumé

Cet article examine la sous-représentation des perspectives métisses dans le système éducatif canadien et les défis que rencontrent les éducatrices et éducateurs pour intégrer des savoirs métis authentiques dans leurs classes. Malgré l'importance croissante accordée à la réconciliation et à l'inclusion de contenus autochtones en éducation, une importante lacune persiste en matière de ressources et de programmes scolaires traitant spécifiquement de l'histoire, des expériences et des visions du monde des Métis. L'article souligne la nécessité d'adopter des approches éducatives spécifiquement métisses, en s'appuyant sur les connaissances de personnes métisses, chercheuses et chercheurs, actrices et acteurs communautaires. Il décrit la conception et la mise en œuvre d'un cours de post-baccalauréat, intitulé «Beyond Riel: Bringing Métis Content into the Classroom», qui vise à doter les éducatrices et éducateurs des savoirs et outils nécessaires pour bien enseigner l'histoire et la culture métisses. Plus largement, l'article entend promouvoir une compréhension plus nuancée des réalités métisses, contribuer à des expériences éducatives riches de sens qui favorisent la réconciliation et honorer les contributions des Métis à l'histoire canadienne.

*Mots-clés* : ressources pédagogiques sur les Métis, éducation métisse, stratégies de mise en œuvre

## Positionality Statement

Daañ lii Michif leu teeraañ d'niikinaahk eekwaa Daañ lii Anishinabek, Nehiyaw, Anishinew, Dakota, and Denesuline nishtam leu peeyii, lii kampoos d'yuniversitii di Manitoba pi d'yuniversitii di Winnipeg ashtewa. The University of Winnipeg campuses are located on the original lands of the Anishinaabe, Nehiyaw, Anishinew, Dakota, and Denesuline Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation; this is where we live, work, and study. I want to acknowledge that the power provided to draft this article was created in Treaty 5 territory and that the water in my tea came from Shoal Lake First Nation. It is crucial in academia to locate the researcher concerning the research (Absolon, 2011; Graveline, 2000; Kovach, 2021; McGregor et al., 2018). Positionality is addressed through the location of our nations, cultures, lands, and personal experiences (Absolon, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2017). Kovach (2009, 2017, 2021) stresses that knowing these details about a researcher makes biases explicit and adds credibility. As such, I will introduce myself first.

Laura Forsythe d-ishinikaashon. My name is Laura Forsythe. Ma famii kawyesh Roostertown d-oschiwak. My family was from Rooster Town a long time ago. Anosh ma famii Winnipeg wikiwak. Today, my family lives in Winnipeg. Ma Parentii (my ancestors) are Huppe, Ward, Berard, Morin, and Cyr. My ancestors worked for the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. My ancestors once owned Lot 31, the site of Rooster Town. I am descended from buffalo hunters. I am descended from voyageurs. I am descended from the victors at Frog Plain. I am descended from farmers, ranchers, teamsters, seamstresses, and tradesmen; I come from the working class that built Manitoba and the Métis Nation. I am a Manitoba Métis Federation citizen and a first-generation university student in the academy.

Within my educational journey to become an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg, the story of my people was not told to me in my post-secondary classes. Despite having a Bachelor of Arts with a major in First Nations Studies, a Bachelor of Education in Indigenous perspectives from Simon Fraser University, a Master of Arts in Native Studies, and a PhD in Indigenous Studies from the University of Manitoba, not a single course I had taken spoke to Métis-specific content or research. The courses included few to no texts by Métis scholars. Not until I began my role as the Métis Inclusion Coordinator at the University of Manitoba—which aims to create awareness of Métis culture historically, linguistically, politically, and academically (Forsythe, 2021, 2022a)—did I realize how rare Métis inclusion was in the academy.

## **Introduction**

Education for reconciliation and inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is a priority for school divisions across Canada often appearing in strategic plans and statements. Years of research revealed that teachers are afraid of looking ignorant and racist (Pete et al., 2013), making mistakes (Chrona, 2022; Craven, 2020; Price, 2012), or misrepresenting Indigenous ways of knowing (Prest et al., 2021). To mitigate the lack of cultural competency to teach Indigenous knowledge, teacher education programs often require Indigenous Education courses (Madden, 2015; Newhouse & Quantick, 2022). There are also moves toward meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' worldviews and increasing emphasis on building relationships and challenging positionalities in curriculum documents (Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022). Unfortunately, in the K–12 classroom this education is often

pan-Indigenized, or homogenized into one Indigenous reality devoid of nuance (Forsythe et al., 2025); this homogenization can even be seen in post-secondary classroom settings as well. Wotherspoon and Milne (2020) argued for the need to portray diverse world-views when teaching about Indigenous ways of knowing and being due to such homogenous teachings impacting Indigenization.

Within this broad Indigenization, however, the individual experiences of Métis Peoples are often lost. This discussion in Pratt et al. (2014) extends to Indigenous Education efforts and the reality in Faculties of Education that “Métis-specific issues simply aren’t talked about, nor does publicly available disaggregated data exist to facilitate such a discussion” (p. 12). This absence of data, and of significant repositories of Métis-specific experiences, exacerbates discrepancies in learning opportunities and the ability of educators in K–12 to teach about the Métis. Continuing in that vein, Logan (2008), whose work explores Métis experiences in Residential Schools, writes that “Métis-specific information or academic study is in high demand; it is rare and often hard to find, even today” (p. 93).

Conversations around Indigenous Education have circulated for decades, gaining traction in classrooms across Canada since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published their *94 Calls to Action*, with calls 6–12 and 62–64 explicitly addressing Indigenous Education. However, within the TRC movement, due to the nature of the Indigenous umbrella scholarship (Forsythe et al., 2025), Métis-specific needs, histories, and awareness have not been fully addressed, leading to a lack of research-informed resources for educators (Forsythe, 2022a). Métis epistemologies, pedagogies, and praxes in K–12 education, along with resources to actualize bringing Métis content into the classroom, are desperately needed.

This article discusses the under-representation in the literature and school system noted by numerous Métis scholars in the discipline of education (Chartrand et al., 2006; Forsythe, 2022b; Pratt, 2019), while exploring pragmatic approaches to implementing Métis content into the education system in a good way by honouring the voices of Métis-specific curriculum and content creators. The article concludes by discussing prior work to ensure Métis inclusion by developing a Métis-specific course. It highlights the creation and implementation of the post-baccalaureate course “Beyond Riel: Bringing Métis Content into the Classroom” within the Faculty of Education. This effort aims to prepare teachers for reconciliation, bring Métis content into classroom, and address the need to include the rapidly growing Indigenous population in K–12 education across the homeland.

## Issues of False Narratives and Under-Representation

From a Métis-specific perspective, the colonial narrative around Métis existence following the 1885 Battle of Batoche and the subsequent hanging of Louis Riel has resulted in generations of learners being taught that the Métis are traitors and rebels who stood in the way of Confederation. Métis Education scholar and poet Rita Bouvier stated, “When our history is provided only in one paragraph as the history of the country, speaking metaphorically...that’s just not satisfactory” (Forsythe, 2022b, p. 93). Some argue that, historically, K–12 education portrayed Métis as villains against the state, describing instances of Métis resistance as “rebellion” when resisting colonial subjugation (Boyer & Chartrand, 2022; Racette & Sammel, 2020). Métis author, artist, and activist Christi Belcourt recalls generations of her family experiencing the continuation of this false narrative regarding Métis history, which is taught in classrooms today throughout the country:

In my grade five class, I remember in the history book we were using; it said Louis Riel was a “traitor.” In an entire textbook on Canadian history, there was only one page on First Nations and then half a page on Louis Riel, who was presented as a traitor. (Forsythe, 2022b, p. 93)

Unfortunately, this remains an issue in K–12 classrooms. Gillies (2018, 2021, 2022) speaks to problematic classroom content as a continuing issue due to teachers themselves being taught this history in their own K–12 years. As Belcourt goes on to say, “We are stuck in this loop of ignorance, and I don’t see that really having changed” (Forsythe, 2022b, p. 95). Educators, having learned this false narrative, then perpetuate the narrative of Louis Riel being a traitor in their own classes, and the cycle continues. A brief online search in the fall of 2024 revealed numerous websites that are encouraging educators to implement this colonial narrative in their classroom by highlighting lesson plans that ask K–12 learners to debate if Louis Riel was a traitor or a hero. A search of the Teachers Pay Teachers platform revealed that educators are selling lesson plans—available for purchase at time of writing—featuring this very debate. The provincial Manitoba Education website features a curriculum teacher’s guide out of the municipality of St. Laurent, which includes a student activity that states, “Conduct a team deliberation on a controversial topic (e.g., Louis Riel, traitor or hero)” (Buors & Johnson, 2006, p. 15). The Alberta Professional Learning Consortium (2010) offers a teaching resource, titled *Social*

*Studies – Classroom Ready Resources (Division 3)*, which includes an activity (“Louis Riel: Hero or Traitor?”) that asks students to “come up with criteria as to whether Louis Riel was a hero or Traitor” (7.2: Following Confederation section). These lesson plans, and others like them, will continue to reinforce and spread false narratives as they are taught each year across the country—some are even held up as exemplars for showcasing multiple perspectives.

This brief internet search and the results it provided highlight the potential dangers of educators’ lack of both Indigenous awareness and opportunities to learn appropriate ways to implement Métis content in the classroom. Educators seeking to increase the level of Métis content in their classrooms could inadvertently be perpetuating racist views of the Métis. Especially surprising is the presence of this content on the Manitoba Education website, considering the Manitoba government’s 2023 enactment of Bill 206, *The Louis Riel Act*, which “bestows the honorary title of First Premier of Manitoba” on Louis Riel and requires that the Manitoba Education curriculum include the significant contributions of Louis Riel.

Since the Battle of Batoche, Métis in education have been largely ignored and excluded. Gillies (2021) documents the exclusion of Métis learners from provincial education from the 1880s into the 1940s while addressing the issues stemming from teacher education today.

This raises the question: How can this exclusion persist even in 2024? Poitras Pratt (2021) points to the words of Howard Adams in considering the “ways in which a colonial form of education strategically and effectively erased, subsumed, and demonized Métis realities” (p. 382). The exclusion of Métis reality (beyond the Northwest Resistance and the hanging of Riel) that has been perpetuated in K–12 learning has created a world where, as Métis scholar Emma LaRocque reminds us, “Nobody knew who the Métis were...I swear that they thought everybody died with Riel. That we weren’t here anymore” (Forsythe, 2022b, p. 93). In most provinces across the country, the story of the Métis in the social studies curriculum closed with the end of the resistance to Canada, resulting in Métis contemporary erasure.

Research indicates one of the issues that prevents the integration of Indigenous content into the classroom is that educators lack a basic understanding of Indigenous realities (Donald, 2009; Madden, 2014; Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2017; McGregor, 2017). Due to Indigenization in post-secondary and K–12 education being primarily First

Nations-focused (Forsythe, 2021, 2022a), there is a call by Métis Nations, scholars, and families to include Métis across the public-school curriculum. Forsythe (2022b) documents the words shared by aunts and grandmothers, who spoke of attempted erasure perpetuated by the colonial education system throughout the Métis homeland in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Regardless of geographic location, there is a prevailing ignorance of who the Métis are.

Generations of neglect and omission perpetuate the erasure in K–12 classrooms. Christi Belcourt shared the intergenerational issue, stating:

My daughter faces the same questions that I faced: same prejudices, the same stupid comments made, and we see that play out as each graduating class turns into adults that turn into people who sometimes take a position of power in government structures or within institutions where our people access. (Forsythe, 2022b, p. 95)

The repetitive reality of generations ignoring the work done to provide resources created by Métis scholars and community alongside the endless hours of research is a form of erasure. A lack of resources is not the culprit, as governing bodies, educational institutes (i.e., the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Rupertsland Institute), and scholars in education such as Rita Bouvier, Sherry Farrell Racette, and Verna St. Denis, to name a few, are producing Métis-specific content.

A remedy to these generational issues is for educators, administrators, and curriculum developers to use the decades' worth of Métis content creators' contributions to address these issues. By recognizing the ongoing systemic issues in both K–12 and post-secondary colonial educational systems, there is an opportunity for improvement and the possibility of inclusion of their publications to address their concerns.

## **Implementing Métis Content into the Education System**

Implementing Métis content into classrooms can be challenging for educators who were themselves taught in K–12 systems that either misinformed students or omitted any Métis history that followed the murder of Louis Riel in 1885. Taking on the responsibility to bring Métis ways of knowing and being into the classroom requires a three-step approach: (1) building knowledge, (2) collaborating with and honouring Métis educators, and (3) ensuring inclusion.

## Building Knowledge

While scholars and the community are asking educators to build the knowledge of their students, they first need to do some individual learning and reflection and build their library of Métis resources. After years of learning colonial narratives, this involves learning, unlearning, and relearning Métis histories (Fiola, 2021; Iseke, 2014; Markides, 2024). Educators need to explore the distinct culture of the Métis—while some components of Métis culture may remind educators of First Nations or European cultures, it is important to recognize and understand the unique ethnogenesis of the Métis. Scholars such as Brenda Macdougall, who authored *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Macdougall, 2010), draw on diverse written and oral sources to explore the emergence of a distinct Métis community at Île à la Crosse in northern Saskatchewan. Macdougall employs the concept of *wahkootowin*—a Cree term denoting a worldview that prioritizes family and values interconnectedness among all beings—to portray how the Métis negotiated with local economic and religious institutions. The book discusses how the Métis nurtured their unique society through marriage choices, living arrangements, adoption, the selection of godparents, economic decisions, and employment, all of which emphasized family obligation and responsibility. Educators can enhance their understanding of Métis ethnogenesis and other complex concepts with Chelsea Vowel's (2016) *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, & Inuit Issues in Canada*. The book features 31 essays that address common classroom questions and are essential for learning about Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

As an educator in Canada, it is also crucial to recognize the local Métis reality in this learning. Métis histories vary across the homeland, and learning about and understanding the location-specific experiences of Métis where you are can be very valuable. If educators are located outside the homeland, they can explore the diasporic experience of Métis living away from their ancestral territories.

**Figure 1**

*Map of the Extent of the Métis Nation Homeland Superimposed on a Map of North America*



*Note.* Adapted from Delgado and Forsythe (2025).

The traditional homeland known as the historic Métis Nation homeland, including the land in west-central North America traditionally used and occupied by the Métis, spans five provinces, a territory in Canada, and three states in the United States of America (Delgado & Forsythe, 2025). Much like First Nations' contact with European colonizers, there is no one story to learn when building knowledge about the Métis' experience. Depending on location across the homeland, Métis have experienced different incursions with the colonial government and have different timelines regarding Confederation. Métis have adapted to their environment and set up communities since the inception of the Métis Nation, leaving behind a legacy and wealth of knowledge for learners to explore.

Edited collections like *A People and a Nation: New Directions in Contemporary Métis Studies* and *Around the Kitchen Table: Métis Aunties' Scholarship* provide readers with many Métis voices who share their knowledge and experience with the reader. In *A People and a Nation*, the authors, many of whom are Métis, provide readers with various perspectives to understand the complexity of historical and contemporary Métis nationhood and peoplehood. The book includes multidisciplinary chapters on identity, politics, literature, history, spirituality, religion, and kinship networks, focusing on current Métis experiences. *Around the Kitchen Table* transcends patriarchal perspectives to document and celebrate the academic contributions of Métis women. The narratives pre-

sented in this edited collection encompass a variety of disciplines, including social work, education, history, health care, urban studies, sociology, archaeology, and governance. Contributors integrate their personal experiences into discussions on spirituality, material culture, colonialism, land-based education, sexuality, language, and representation. For educators looking to abide by the advice of Battiste (2013) on unlearning, relearning, and seeking out Métis-authored content that shares Métis ways of being and knowing, reading these anthologies is an excellent first step.

### **Collaborating With and Honouring Métis Educators**

When it comes to adopting Métis pedagogy in land-based teaching and learning, Métis thinkers such as Vizina (2023) have already provided concrete ways to collaborate and honour Métis ways of knowing and being. These approaches typically highlight the use of choice and adaptation for learners as a way to embed a Métis worldview. The work of Iseke (2010) especially demonstrates this—the author sat with Elders, asked them for their interpretations of education, and listened as the Elders spoke of the need to include Indigenous histories, cultures, and pedagogies in the K–12 system. Moreover, they stressed the importance of bringing Métis ways of knowing and being into the class through ceremony. Scott (2020) suggests bringing Métis pedagogy into the classroom by respecting learners' abilities and gifts and affirms that this directly honours their learners. In contrast, Gaudry and Hancock (2012) ask to move beyond and decolonize our collective understanding of Métis-ness as it relates to education through the following two steps:

- 1) a pedagogical consideration of methods for fostering the intellectual skills and orientations necessary to analyze critically the colonial narratives of Métis-ness that confront students; and 2) an exploration of Métis possibilities that are grounded in Métis experiences and relationships within and between communities. (p. 8)

Lifting up these scholars' work on Métis pedagogy, we see no one way to do this work. By making minor adjustments to our practice, we can align our practice with Métis ways of knowing and being. By utilizing the curriculum and resources created in the Métis community, we can create an environment for learners that increases their Métis awareness and, for those who are Métis, their sense of self, which, according to Forsythe and Lawton (2024), is integral to true Métis inclusion.

One can adapt and incorporate the work of Métis thinkers who create and teach using a Métis pedagogy. However, it is more challenging to become, or transform one's own pedagogy to be, Métis. It is an impossible task. One cannot become Métis. Therefore, honouring and collaborating with Métis thinkers who have gifted valuable tools to the classroom is the way forward. Apprehension and fear often dominate educators tasked with bringing content into their classrooms (Howard, 2016; Poitras Pratt & Hanson, 2022; Riley et al., 2019). Where does an educator start when attempting to collaborate with Métis thinkers and bringing their scholarship into the classroom? Identifying resources and establishing a personal library of Métis materials is crucial. These resources can facilitate collaboration with Métis voices. Moreover, members of the Métis community have created numerous exceptional materials. Across the homeland, three institutes specialize in Métis Education. The Louis Riel Institute was established by the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) as a self-governing institution, and it is tasked with promoting awareness of the values, culture, heritage, and history of the Métis. As a charitable non-profit organization, it serves as the culture and education authority of the MMF, providing programs and services on behalf of the MMF. The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, located in Saskatchewan, focuses on renewing and developing Métis culture through research, materials development, collection and distribution of Métis materials, and designing, developing, and delivering Métis-specific educational programs and services. The Rupertsland Institute (RLI) Métis Centre of Excellence is dedicated to lifelong learning. The institute aims to enhance educational outcomes from kindergarten through Grade 12 and is committed to supporting the educational aspirations of Métis citizens in Alberta. Each has varying degrees of materials available to educators.

***Engaging with Métis resources.*** Educators often struggle with knowing what resources to utilize in their classrooms. They are fearful of getting it wrong (Leddy & O'Neill, 2021) and unsure which resources to trust (Danyluk et al., 2024). The following section will provide guidance for resources created in partnership with various Métis governing bodies and educational institutions.

**Videos.** Educators can use technology in the classroom to utilize resources like *Red River Cart Adventures* by LRI. This series, created early in the pandemic, features 13 videos with Métis educator Teresa Byrne sharing stories, doing activities, and making crafts from household items. Each episode also includes songs, Michif language, or a "Métis Minute," a collection of 26 segments covering topics ranging from identity, York boats, veterans, and traditional foods. The "Métis Minute" segments are also available

on the Manitoba Métis Federation YouTube. The Manitoba Métis Federation also offers a series called *Meet Up with Mason*, which follows a young Métis boy who learns and plays with a variety of special guests who join to teach Mason new skills.

**Education kits.** Hands-on materials aid in the teaching of complex subjects as they create a sense of wonder. Various resources are available across the homeland, such as Métis resource kits. For example, the Louis Riel Institute has K–12 resources including picture books, educational books and history texts, real furs, sinew, hides, and capotes. The teacher guide includes academic articles along with artifact photos and information. Another source of Métis-authored and Métis-created materials is the Gabriel Dumont Institute, which has Métis Culture Resource Kits. Each kit includes a series of books, such as *Road Allowance Kitten*, *The Giving Tree*, and *The Flower Beadwork People*, as well as videos and a colouring book.

*Métis Memories of Residential Schools: A Testament to the Strength of the Métis* was created in a collaborative effort with respected Métis Elder Angie Crerar, author Jude D. Daniels, Canadian artist Lewis Lavoie, the Rupertsland Institute (Billie-Jo Grant), and the Werklund School of Education (Yvonne Poitras Pratt). This resource comprises 24 impactful narratives and serves as a valuable educational tool designed to recognize, highlight, and share the experiences of Métis Residential School Survivors.

## Figure 2

*Métis Memories of Residential Schools: A Testament to the Strength of the Métis (Art Inspired by Samantha Pratt)*



Each narrative is featured on a tile (Figure 2), which together create a mural that delves into various aspects of the Métis Residential School experience when flipped over. Each tile includes teaching statements, reflection questions, and links to learning more or activities that can be brought into the class. This resource is available online and can be ordered in puzzle or sticker form through the Rupertsland Institute.

**Lesson plans.** Fear comes from not knowing who and what to trust. When seeing lesson plans made in the community by Métis, it can be challenging to know where to turn. The Louis Riel Institute does not have lesson plans or curriculum developed at this time but has stated it is of interest (personal communication, October 21, 2025). The Gabriel Dumont Institute features over 80 lesson plans within its virtual museum. Many of these plans accompany their publications, such as the “Bringing Métis Children’s Literature to Life” series, which includes a teacher’s guidebook by Wilfred Burton. The guidebook aids in teaching about the Métis and employs strategies that promote literacy development (listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing). The stories in this guidebook are created by Métis authors and illustrators, presenting traditional and contemporary Métis culture. The Rupertsland Institute offers lesson plans developed from a Métis perspective and based on five foundational knowledge themes: Languages of Métis, Métis Culture and Traditions, Homeland History, Métis in Alberta, and Métis Nation Governance. These themes are explored within five grade groupings—kindergarten, Grades 1–3, Grades 4–6, Grades 7–9, and Grades 10–12—with increasing complexity of content. The lessons cover Métis script, history, identity, and Red River cart challenges. Educators can expand their foundational knowledge by incorporating Métis content into lessons that align with contemporary educational practices. For those looking to bring the voices of Métis into their classroom, these three institutes are an excellent source of information supported by the Métis community.

**Ensuring inclusion of Métis Peoples in the classroom.** The third step is inclusion. It sees K–12 educators working with the Métis community and bringing in resources, but also bringing Métis people, thinkers, community members, and Knowledge Keepers into the classroom. Depending on location, there may be opportunities to connect with Métis locals, charter communities, or organizations. Outside the homeland, educators can connect with folks to come in through videoconferencing. If educators are uncertain about whom to invite, seeking guidance from Métis community members, nations, or organizations regarding potential speakers is advisable. Many of these nations

maintain lists of speakers who can address various topics. It is crucial to approach this outreach respectfully and appropriately. Sharma and Shannon-Baker (2023) remind educators to compensate guest speakers appropriately for their time. Manitoba's *Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools: Guidelines* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2023) outlines using the concept of the Four Rs (relevance, relationship, reciprocity, and respect) when bringing in guests, which is a helpful tool for educators considering inclusion in K–12.

The following are a few commonly asked questions when it comes to inviting a Métis speaker into your space.

- *What topics can educators invite Métis Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members to speak on with their learners?*  
Surprising but true: Métis can speak about more than just identity. Seek out guest speakers who bring traditional and contemporary ways of being into the classroom. Often, the conversation stalls at who the Métis are instead of branching out to all the conversations that could illustrate who the Métis are through raising Métis awareness through all things Métis.
- *Are there different protocols for Elders, Survivors, colleagues, or educational liaisons in the Métis context?*  
Yes, and these protocols will also vary by community and geographic region. Not all Métis practise traditional Indigenous ceremonies and accept tobacco as a gift. Experience has shown some prefer tea or jam. The gifted item must be useful (Kuokkanen, 2007) and demonstrate thoughtfulness (Meissner, 2022). Offering a choice signifies an educator's understanding that there is a spectrum of belief systems within the Métis Nation, ranging from devout Catholics to traditional spirituality like those in the First Nations and Inuit communities.
- *What if educators do not have the funding to bring in Métis speakers?*  
The harsh reality is that there is a funding disparity for Métis-specific content, which results in less Métis inclusion in the classroom (Forsythe, 2021). Although K–12 and post-secondary education institutions have committed to Indigenization, the financial support required to actualize it has not been fully realized (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Stein, 2025). With that reality, there are ways to ensure Métis inclusion happens in the classroom by using

Métis-authored books that bring contemporary Métis scholars' voices into the classroom. Including Métis identifiers in the classroom (e.g., sashes or infinity symbols), featuring pieces by Métis artists (e.g., Christi Belcourt or Katherine Boyer), or displaying pictures of famous Métis figures (e.g., Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, or Thelma Chalifoux) creates a sense of belonging and raises Métis awareness.

Implementing the shared responsibility of integrating Métis knowledge and practices into the classroom involves a three-step approach: (1) building knowledge, (2) collaborating with and honouring Métis educators, and (3) ensuring inclusion. Using the resources and strategies above, the way forward is one informed and supported by the Métis community, which can alleviate the fear paralyzing educators into inaction.

### **“Beyond Riel: Bringing Métis Content into the Classroom”**

As educators in the K–12 system call for further training on Indigenizing their curriculum, fear prevents forward movement (Dion, 2024; Oskineegish, 2015; Riley et al., 2024; St. Denis, 2010). Research exploring pre-service teachers concludes there is a disconnect between the intention and preparedness of those graduating from Faculties of Education across Canada, resulting in fear (Deer, 2013; Marom, 2016; Rodríguez de France et al., 2018; Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022). Research indicates that teachers and pre-service teachers require more training to feel comfortable attempting Indigenization.

Recognizing the gap in teacher education after working in the Faculty of Education through the post-baccalaureate program at the University of Winnipeg, the course “Beyond Riel: Bringing Métis Content into the Classroom” was created as a special topic course that launched in 2023. The course explores a pragmatic approach to implementing Métis content into the classroom in a good way, by honouring the voices of Métis-specific curriculum and content creators and addressing the hesitancy created by not knowing which resources and methods to utilize in our classrooms. This course covers the following topics: culture, history, linguistics, and governance. Highlights for educators who take the course include lesson and unit plans created in the community, building relationships with local Métis organizations and the Red River Métis nation, best practices for inviting guest speakers into schools, and strategies to deal with Métis-specific pushback found in both schools and classrooms.

Throughout the course, learners strive to:

- Increase their awareness about Métis Education pedagogies.
- Develop awareness about how each educator can implement Métis inclusion resources into the classroom in authentic ways.
- Understand how to incorporate Métis teaching methodologies and ways of seeing into the classroom.
- Collaborate with others on how Métis contributions can be incorporated into personal pedagogy in keeping with provincial curricula.
- Explore current issues related to Métis Education.

Within the course, learners build knowledge through individual activity, collaborative activity, and reflection. Throughout the offering, learners complete a series of approximately 25 readings, written by Métis scholars, focusing on aspects of Métis ways of being and doing to inform their teaching practice. Learners engage in in-person and online discussion forums to enhance their understanding and assert their knowledge of Métis cultural practices and traditions. Learners reflect on their strategies for implementing Métis-specific teachings in their future classrooms throughout the course.

### **Student Testimonial**

It was a pleasure to be in the ST: Beyond Riel course this semester. Within this course, I have found various resources and articles helpful in strengthening my self-confidence and developing my teacher resource library. When I first started the course, I knew that I was seeking to continue deepening my understanding of the Métis culture and find ways to continue to infuse all Indigenous cultures into the physical education setting. This knowledge-seeking has become of interest to me as I continually address my concerns of teaching Indigenous content in an authentic way.

Within the course, the demonstration of the educators' learning is a pragmatic approach, as the learning outcomes are not achieved by writing research papers. Instead, outcomes are achieved by challenging themselves to identify lesson plans created in Métis community to implement in their classrooms, reflecting on the words shared by Métis guest speakers and the impact this sharing will have on their teaching practice, speaking to how they will embed Métis knowledge into their existing lesson plans, and creating a lesson

plan outlining one story of Métis dispossession. Post-baccalaureate students leave with a sense of purpose and are equipped with tools to actualize their learning. More institutions must create nation-specific and pragmatic approaches for educators to support Métis learners and increase Métis awareness in our K–12 system.

## Conclusion

As a pillar of the future of education reconciliation and inclusion of Indigenous perspectives as a priority for K–12, this article explores pragmatic approaches to implementing Métis content into the education system by lifting up the voices of Métis-specific curriculum and content creators. Avoiding the pitfalls of misinforming or misleading learners that Métis died with Louis Riel or that they are descended from traitors should be avoided—a logical approach, yet research demonstrates both continue to happen in the Canadian school system. Utilizing the resources from Métis-created and Métis-supported institutes such as the Louis Riel Institute, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the Rupertsland Institute can aid in alleviating the fear of using the wrong materials and provide easy access to resources in multiple mediums. As institutions, both in K–12 settings and post-secondary, prepare to include the histories and lived realities of Métis, there is a need for pre-service and post-baccalaureate courses to educate their learners and prepare teachers both for reconciliation and to address the need for including the rapidly growing Indigenous population in K–12 education across the homeland. These calls must be answered; the tools to actualize them are above.

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