

Lorraine Freeman née McTavish (1954-2005)

Cultural Educator and Conservator

By Lawrence Barkwell

Lorraine was the founder, past president and executive director of the Métis Resource Centre Inc. in Winnipeg. A Metis culture conservationist, Lorraine was born January 2, 1954 in Minnedosa, Manitoba, the daughter of Delmer Kenneth McTavish and Rita Marie LaRose. Lorraine, along with Theresa Breland, Doreen Breland and Shirley Meinxner, was a founding board member of the Metis Resource Centre (MRC), now called the Metis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre, in Winnipeg in 1995. She then served as executive director until illness forced her to step down from this position.

The MRC established the first western Metis specific website in 1996. It is one of the first Metis resources that people use in doing Internet searches. MRC started a Metis genealogical service in 1997 and opened a store, Metis Traders, in 1998. For many years Lorraine made presentations on Metis Culture to the schoolchildren of Manitoba and other interested groups. She literally spoke to hundreds of thousands of school children over the years. The extensive library and other materials that she collected made the MRC an essential stop for researchers from across Canada and the United States. The MRC website is the only resource, which provides Michif language lessons and provides streaming audio so that one can hear the language spoken. The MRC has also developed a brochure *Sur le Sentier des Métis*, which guides people to 20 of the most important Metis historical sites in Manitoba.

Lorraine credited her mother with instilling Metis pride in all her children. Her mother always said that Lorraine, being one of the lighter complexioned family members always wore who she was “on her sleeve.”

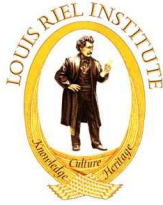
Lorraine was presented with the “Order of the Shawl” on November 19, 2005. Many of the testimonials at this event credited Lorraine with giving individuals pride in their Metis heritage through projects such as “Claiming Ourselves, Genealogical Project.” Everyone spoke of her unassuming kindness and her promotion of Metis music, dance, beadwork and history.

Lorraine’s most notable cultural projects were: publication of *La Lawng: Michif Peekishkwewin: The Canadian Michif Language Dictionary*, by Norman Fleury (Winnipeg: MRC, 2000), production of the video, *The Dances of the Metis: Li dawns di Michif* (Winnipeg: Metis Resource Centre, 2001) and *Michif Conversational Lessons for Beginners* (Winnipeg: Metis Resource Centre, 2002), by Rita Flamand. She also initiated the MRC newsletter *Buffalo Tales and Trails*.

Lorraine also collaborated with Dr. Lynn Whidden on the video, *A Metis Suite*, Brandon: All Media Musics, 199-. This exploration of Metis history and culture through traditional Metis music includes a video cassette, audio cassette and teachers resource guide. Written and Produced by Dr. Lynn Whidden of Brandon University. The set features Ray St. Germain, Narration, Derek Morphy, Conductor and Ron Halldorson, Music Director.

Another video project, *Metis Summer* was produced by Lorraine Freeman and Doreen Breland-Fines. It presents the joy and celebration of a Metis Summer and shows a traditional Metis Wedding, Voyageurs, Bannock making and Sash Dancing.

Lorraine had a long-time collaboration with Metis Elders Audreen Hourie and Jeanette Swain Goertzen as well as the Gabriel Dumont Institute in preserving and promoting Metis Culture.



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