

Mary Bowers Guilbault. (b. 1930)

Mary and her late husband Ernie Guilbault are considered to be pivotal in the founding of Manitoba Metis Federation. Mary served on the MMF Board of Directors from 1975 to 1978 and held the Education Portfolio. During 1986-1988, her daughter Myra Laramée served on the MMF board.

Mary was born on June 19, 1930 in Fisher River, Manitoba, the daughter of Elijah and Priscilla Bowers. She grew up speaking Cree on the Fisher River First Nation. She spent many of her childhood years on the land with her parents and grandparents, trapping, hunting and fishing.

In the fall of 1943, the Indian Agent whisked her away to Residential School, first at Brandon for several years, then to Birtle Manitoba where she completed high school. It was at this time that she became convinced that education was of great importance in order to compete within the larger society. She is a retired social worker from the Manitoba Department of Health and Social Services. She worked in this position for twenty six years.



Mary met Ernie Guilbault shortly after completing school and they married on June 23, 1950. Ernie Guilbault was born and raised in Fannystelle. They settled in Winnipeg and raised five daughters, all of whom completed post secondary education and obtained employment in various professional fields, from education to social work. She is the grandmother of nine grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren.

In 2008, the *Mary Guilbault Metis Bursary* was established in her honour at the University of Winnipeg.

Mary Guilbault: photo courtesy of Shannon Allard

Mary's contributions to the community include:

- The housing study that resulted in the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development
- An upgrading program that became nationally recognized and adopted by Canada Manpower
- Forming the Aboriginal Court Communicators Program with Judge J. Rice, Judge Ian Dubiński and Dorothy Betz.
- The establishment of the Prince of Wales/Princess Ann bursary for Metis students
- The establishment of counseling and tutoring services for the faculties of Nursing, Education and social Work at Brandon University and the University of Manitoba
- The establishment of satellite universities in northern Manitoba resulting in Assiniboine College and Keewatin College
- The establishment of the Median Credit Union

- President of the Board of Kinew Housing in 1970
- Member of the Board of directors on Metis Women of Manitoba

In recent years she has been sitting on the following boards:

- The Elizabeth Frye Society of Manitoba
- The All Nations Traditional Healing Centre Inc.
- The Louis Riel Institute, as an appointee of the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy

For the last few years she has also been a presenter and Elder at the *Shawane Dagoiwin: Aboriginal Education Research Forums* in Winnipeg. Thus she continues to provide guidance to vast numbers of Aboriginal youth and adults. In promoting the traditional cultural values of the ancestors, she says “for me, the revitalization of my culture and traditional identity many years ago has assisted me with issues that have traumatized me in the past. Understanding the wisdom and spirituality of our ancestors brings many benefits into the everyday lives of our people.”

The Mary Guilbault Bursary, a Metis student bursary has been set up to assist Metis youth in attending post-secondary education in Manitoba.



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