

Jean Teillet, BFA, LLB, LLM. (b. 1953)

Jean Teillet is a participating artist in the *Walking With Our Sisters* project. *Walking With Our Sisters* is an installation art project of 1,700 pairs of moccasin tops or “vamps” commemorating and representing an estimated 824 Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing in Canada since 1961.



This is a photograph of the thirteen pairs of vamps that Jean embroidered to honour her sister Pat. To learn more go to <http://walkingwithoursisters.ca>.

Jean Teillet, lawyer, professional dancer and actor, artist, choreographer, academic, and volunteer, is a Métis patriot of the highest order. It can be said without contradiction that the multi-talented Jean Teillet is the most respected practicing Métis lawyer in Canada. Jean Teillet is the great grand-niece of Louis Riel and the niece of Roger Teillet who was a Liberal MP and cabinet minister under Prime Minister Lester Pearson. She is a founding member of the Métis Nation of Ontario and what has now become the *National Aboriginal Moot* at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law. She has been called to the bar in Ontario, BC, NWT, and Manitoba. She is a partner of the law firm of Pape Salter Teillet. On March 30, 2012, she was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal by the Women of the Métis Nation General Assembly in Edmonton.

A former modern dancer, she left that profession to attend law school and pursue a career in Aboriginal Rights law. She was vice-president and secretary-treasurer of the Indigenous Bar Association of Canada. As a legal consultant to the Métis National Council, Teillet has been involved in the ongoing Métis legal battles with the government of Canada concerning Métis land rights, harvesting rights, commercial harvesting, and self-government. Jean Teillet was awarded the first ever *Lincoln Alexander Award* in 2002 by the Law Society of Upper Canada. This award recognized her outstanding contributions and commitment to the legal profession and to community service. In 2005, she received the *Aboriginal Justice Award* from the Native Law Students of the University of Alberta, which recognizes her outstanding contributions to Aboriginal Justice Initiatives. In 2007, the University of Windsor Faculty of Law created the *Jean Teillet Access to Justice Scholarship*. Her publication, the *Métis Law Summary*, updated regularly since 1999, is the best available resource on the law with respect to Métis people. It is available on the Pape Salter Teillet website at www.pstlaw.ca.

For 25 years, she worked in professional theatre as a dancer, writer, actor, teacher, choreographer, and director, with Toronto Dance Theatre, Toronto Workshop Productions, Danny Grossman Dance Company, Theatre London, Studio Seven, CKRC Radio, and several other performance organizations. She got her start as a teenager in Winnipeg writing and taping daily editorials at CRKC radio. Next she worked as a professional dancer and actress in Winnipeg and Toronto and choreographed for theatre, including several productions for George Luscombe at Toronto Workshop Productions.

Jean Teillet was a producer of live staged events for corporate and theatrical sponsors such as Major League Baseball, Toyota, Ontario Place, Kellogg's and Owl TV. She also produced musicals, puppet shows, plays, dance and even a circus. The venues included theatres, stadiums, auditoriums, schools, and outdoor amusement parks. She also produced records, books, musical scores and merchandise in support of these productions. In a long career as a visual artist she has had several shows and her work is in private collections in the United States and Canada. One of her pieces "The Two Row Wampum Belt" hangs in the Law School of the University of Toronto.



Jean Teillet was the lead lawyer on the *R vs Powley* Métis hunting rights case, which she argued before the Supreme Court of Canada on March 17, 2003. She was successful in this decade-long battle to reaffirm Métis rights under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* of 1982, when the Supreme Court handed down their decision to deny the Crown's appeal on September 19, 2003. Jean is a partner in the firm of Pape Salter Teillet, Barristers and Solicitors. She has been called to the Bar in Ontario, BC, NWT, and Manitoba. In her words: "The primary focus of my work as a lawyer has been to assist in the development of a healthy space for Aboriginal people within Canadian Society—a

space where Aboriginal people will be respected and valued as contributing citizens of Canada.” Jean Teillet’s pro bono legal work and community involvement has been extensive.

Jean has written about the notion of a pardon or other exoneration for Louis Riel in “Exoneration for Louis Riel: Mercy, Justice, or Political Expediency?” She takes the view that exoneration would likely have little to do with the Métis people or the cause for which Riel died. The interested reader can read her paper in the *Saskatchewan Law Review*, Volume 67, 2004: 359-392.

Her scholarly publications include:

- “What Might Have Been” *Métis Voyageur*, September/October 2002— an article on the trial of Louis Riel.
- “R. v. Powley: Métis Harvesting Rights in Canada”, Australia, *Indigenous Law Bulletin*: October 2001— a case study of *Powley* and how it developed Aboriginal rights law in Canada by expanding the law for Métis.
- “Métis in Search of Recognition” published by the *Pitblado Lecture Series* by the Law Society of Manitoba, 2002) — recognition is a key concept for all Aboriginal people. It is the foundation that is necessary before rights can be affirmed or accommodated. The paper examines the language issues, social theory and the political rights dialogues that have evolved surrounding the Métis in Canada.

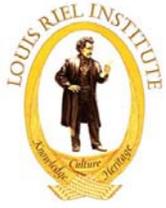


Christi Belcourt’s painting
“Portrait of Jean Teillet”
Part of the “Great Métis of My
Time” series.
2005-2007.

- *The Role of the Regulatory Regime in Aboriginal Rights Disputes in Ontario* (2005) —This paper was prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry. Part of this paper, with respect to the 19th Century history of the harvesting regulatory regime in Ontario, was co-authored with Dr. Frank Tough. The paper looks at the historical role of the regulatory regime as well as how it has been engaged in very recent events. The paper was published on the Inquiry’s website at: www.ipperwashinquiry.ca/policy_part/index.html.
- *Métis Law Summary* – this is an annually updated (since 1999) summary of the law with respect to Métis. The *MLS* traces Métis cases back to the mid 1800s. It includes scrip cases from the early 1900s and harvesting decisions of the Alberta Métis Settlements Tribunal. It tracks all Métis cases as they move through the courts. The *MLS* also provides a brief analysis of Aboriginal rights law as it applies to Métis. The *MLS* includes a new section on consultation and administrative tribunals. The *Métis Law Summary* is available on the Pape Salter Teillet website, in PDF format, at pstlaw.ca/resources . The *MLS* is also used in courses in the Native Studies Department at the University of Edmonton and by the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.
- “Exoneration for Louis Riel: Mercy, Justice or Political Expediency?” *Saskatchewan Law Review*, Vol. 67(1), 2004 at 359.
- “Old and Difficult Grievances: Examining the Relationship between the Métis and the Crown” – (2004) 24 *Supreme Court Law Review* (2d): 291-323.
- “Winds of Change: Métis Rights after Powley, Taku and Haida” – in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories*, Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Eds.) Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2007: 55-78.
- “Federal and Provincial Crown Obligations to the Métis” in *Métis-Crown Relations: Rights, Identity, Jurisdiction, and Governance* (ed: Frederica Wilson & Melanie Mallet) published by Irwin Law in 2008.
- “A Tale of Two Agreements: Implementing Section 52(1) Remedies for the Violation of Métis Harvesting Rights” in *Aboriginal Law Since Delgamuukw* (Ed. Maria Morellato, QC) published by Canada Law Books, 2009)
- “The Métis of the Northwest” —Masters Thesis, published by University of Toronto, 2008.

Jean Teillet has given numerous lectures in Canada and the United States. In Canada, at the Law Society of Upper Canada, at a conference of the Ontario Native Justices of the Peace, at the Native Studies Department in the University of Edmonton, at the Learned Society, for the Law Society of Manitoba, the Canadian Bar Association, Continuing Legal Education of BC, the Métis Nation Youth Advisory Commission and several times for the Indigenous Bar Association; in Cracow, Poland at the Jagiellonian University; in Nagoya Japan at Expo 2005; in Israel at the Ruppin Academic Center; and in the United States at the Canadian American Research Institute conference in NYC and at a Métis conference in Montana. These lectures usually revolve around Métis and Aboriginal rights and the relationship between Aboriginal people and the governments of Canada. Jean has also lectured at various law schools across Canada, including the faculties of law at the University of Windsor, the University of Manitoba, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Edmonton, the University of Toronto, York University, the University of Ottawa and the University of Victoria. These lectures include issues such as: working pro bono, access to justice, the relationship between environmental law and Aboriginal rights, Métis rights, aboriginal rights, and the role of an aboriginal lawyer.

Reference: Resume of Jean Teillet at www.pstlaw.ca/resources/Jean_Teillet-Resume.doc.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
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