

Anne Gairdner (Anderson, Irvine), C.M., LL.D. (1906-1997)

At the time of her passing, the 91-year-old Anne Anderson-Irvine was a grandmother, a retired nurse, a teacher and a linguist who authored more than 90 books on Métis history, Cree language, herbs, legends and children's coloring books.

The late Dr. Anne Anderson was born on a river lot farm four miles east of St. Albert, Alberta. She was one of ten children of a Metis-Cree mother Elizabeth Callihoo and Metis-Scottish father William Joseph Gairdner.¹ The Callihoo family has its roots in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy.



Anne's early schooling was at the Bellrose School. At age ten she was sent to the Gray Nuns Convent just a few miles from her home. She found this to be a lonely existence and returned home after three years. She left the Bellrose School after grade ten because her parents thought that she had enough education. At the age of 16 her father died and she helped her mother support the family. After marrying William Callihoe in 1925, she moved to a farm five miles north of Spruce Grove where they raised two children.

Anne lived in Oregon for several years, and later married Joseph Anderson from Frod Lake in 1947. She worked there as a supervisor of the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement. In 1947, she took a typing course, which she felt was instrumental in making it possible for her to write the many books and legends she used to teach Cree

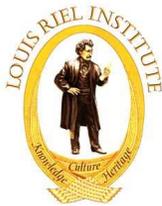
She married Alexander Irvine from Selkirk, Manitoba in 1979 and formed her own company, *Cree Productions*. She fought a long and hard with the schools in Edmonton and the University of Alberta to include Cree language instruction in their curricula.

¹ Anne's paternal grandparents were Gary Wishart Gairdner and Marguerite Bouvier. Margueite Bouvier's parents were Joseph Bouvier and Catherine Beaulieu. On her maternal side her grandparents were Jean Felix Callihoo (b. 1855 at Lac Ste. Anne) and Adele Nias Wayandi (b. 1876 at Fort Simpson). Her maternal great-grandparents were Jean Baptiste Callihoo and Angelique Bruneau.

She also developed the Dr. Anne Anderson Native Heritage and Cultural Centre, won the Alberta Achievement Award in 1975, the Order of Canada in 1979, plus an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Alberta, and the Edmonton Female Citizenship Award. Edmonton also named a park after her. This park is located at 105 Avenue and 162 Street and hosts a beautiful life-size bronze buffalo sculpture.

She started writing her first book at age 64, after retiring from her job as a nurse's aid. Before her death in 1997, she had written 93 books on the Cree language and Métis history. She collected artifacts and an extensive library of Native books which are housed by the Métis Nation of Alberta. Apart from her language tapes, Dr. Anne was probably best-known for her Cree Dictionary and her book, *The First Métis . . . A New Nation*.

Additional reference: Terry Lusty: *Alberta Sweetgrass*, May 12, 1997.



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