

Myra Laramee, Ph.D.

Myra Laramee is the daughter of Mary¹ and Ernie Guilbault. The Guilbaults are considered to be pivotal in the founding of Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). Mary Guilbault served on the MMF Board of Directors from 1975 to 1978 and held the Education Portfolio. During 1986-1988, her daughter, Myra Laramee served on the MMF board.

In 2009, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported:

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has named longtime Winnipeg educator Myra Laramee as the recipient of this year's prestigious Outstanding Aboriginal Educator Award. Laramee will receive the award in a ceremony in Ottawa this morning. Laramee retired two years ago as principal of Niji Mahkwa School after 35 years of teaching in the inner city. She has spent the last two years writing curricular materials. "Aboriginal teachers have an important role in encouraging and sustaining aboriginal culture in Canada," said CTF president Emily Noble. "We are delighted to honour Myra Laramee, a Cree/Métis educational innovator from Manitoba, who has shown lifelong passion and commitment to aboriginal education in her province," Noble said.



Laramee lived on Flora Avenue as a baby, spent her life in the inner city, and she's passionate about the people who live there and the kids who come to inner city schools for an education. "It's a brand of teacher that comes here to the inner city, a kind of teacher that comes here and stays," Laramee said in an interview

¹ 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. Mary serves on the Board of Directors of the Louis Riel Institute.

when she was retiring from Niji Mahkwa. "My mom taught me if there aren't brown-skinned people on the other side of the counter, when brown-skinned people come, what's life going to be like for them?"

Laramee quit school in Grade 11 — a guidance counsellor, she said, told her to forget about being a doctor and accept that she would be a secretary and raise her kids— but she returned to the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre.

Her mother, a longtime provincial social worker, showed her a Brandon University brochure for the Winnipeg Centre Project. "A number of us made a verbal commitment" to stay in the inner-city schools. "I knew in my first year of teaching, I wanted to be in a position to make a difference," she said. Niji Mahkwa and the neighbouring Children of the Earth High School offer Aboriginal languages and aboriginal culture and heritage as part of their curriculum. The area bounded by Arlington, Jarvis, Salter and Selkirk is almost totally forgotten for recreation and green space — except for the school and the Boys and Girls Club, Laramee said. "We had sex-trade workers (on the corner) when my kindergarten kids got off the bus. I knew I had to be respectful to those women," and so she was respectful, and they've since moved elsewhere. Laramee came to Niji Mahkwa in 1995 when she was vice-principal at Hugh John Macdonald School.

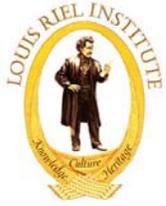
By: **Nick Martin, Winnipeg Free Press**

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Myra Laramee received the *Ka Ni Kanichihk Keeping the Fires Burning Award* on June 14, 2012. This award honours *Okijida Ikwe* or "Big Hearted Women." Big Hearted Women exemplify the seven sacred laws of honesty, courage, respect, humility, sharing, caring and love by sharing their knowledge, talents and experience to help keep their families and communities strong. Myra is the Elder for the annual Shawane Dagoiwin Aboriginal Education Research forum in Winnipeg. Currently, she is a cross-curricular specialist at the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. She also worked as the Director of Education Reform at the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre.

Laramee, Myra. "Making Sense of Aboriginal Education in Canadian Public Schools: A Case Study of Four Inner City Elementary Principals and Their Vision of Aboriginal Education." *First Nations Perspectives*, 1, 1, 2008: 57-73.

Laramee, Myra. "Teaching and Learning as an Act of Love: An Examination of the impact of Seven Traditional Indigenous Teaching Practices in Teacher Education and on Teacher's Classroom Practices." Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba, Education. Winnipeg: 2013.



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