

Maria Campbell, O.C., S.O.M. (b. 1940)

Maria Campbell is the elder and advisor on Traditional Protocol for *Walking With Our Sisters*, 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 large collaborative art piece will be on tour until 2020. Maria Campbell is a visiting Trudeau fellow at the University of Ottawa, and member of Métis Research Group, Institute of Canadian Studies.

Maria Campbell was appointed as an Officer of the *Order of Canada* on July 01, 2008. She previously had received the *Saskatchewan Order of Merit* on October 11, 2005 and the 22nd Annual *Distinguished Canadian Award*, presented by the Seniors University Group and the Seniors Education Centre of the University of Regina on May 18, 2006. In 1996, she was presented with a *National Aboriginal Achievement Award*. She has been also been inducted into the Margaret Woodward Saskatchewan Theatre Hall of Fame (2000).

Maria Campbell was born in April of 1940, on a trapline in northern Saskatchewan. She is the daughter of John (Dan) Campbell¹ and Irene Dubuque². The area where they lived was known as *Nukeewin* but is now called Park Valley. Their traditional trapping and hunting territory was across the *Puktahaw Sipi* (Net-Throwing River), now called Sturgeon River. She grew up speaking the Cree, Michif, and Saulteaux languages. Maria Campbell eventually became one of a growing number of people to speak out against the oppression of Aboriginal people. In 1963, she worked to establish a halfway house in Edmonton for women who were destitute or experiencing other personal crises.



¹ Born June 23, 1917, at Big River, died 1997. Dan Campbell was the son of Edward James Campbell (born January 28, 1881 in Lilly Plain, SK) and Maria Vandal (born circa 1894 in Shell River, SK). His parents were Mary-Sophia Dreaver (b: 1860 in South Branch later known as the Halcro Settlement), and Archibald Campbell (b: 1850 in Moose Factory). Maria Sophia was the daughter of Marguerite “Eh-She-Kashk” Mistawasis or Belanger (b: 1842 in Fort Carlton district) and James Joseph “Ma-mis-kittash-ko-ne-ko” Dreaver (b:c. 1840).

² Born 1919 at Mont Nebo, d. 1951.

During her career as a writer, Maria Campbell has educated the general public, and Aboriginal people about the Métis people of Canada. Her 1973 novel, *Half-Breed*, is one of the most highly regarded works of Métis literature. This book was one of the first works to challenge existing stereotypes of Indigenous women. Campbell writes of her experiences with discrimination and poverty while growing up as a Métis woman in Western Canada. *Half-Breed* can be found on the curricula of numerous high schools, Women's Studies, Native Studies, and Canadian Literature courses. *The National Post* in an article, "The Best of the Century" (Saturday October 2, 1999, Section B4), chose this book for its list of the twenty Canadian books of the century.



Picking medicine during a visit to the Bannock Point Petroforms, April, 2009
Photo by L. Barkwell



Picnic at Bannock Point, photo by Shirley Delorme Russell, April 2009.

In 1991, Maria Campbell was a contributor to Hartmut Lutz's, book, *Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991). In 1995, she published *Stories of the Road Allowance People*; a book containing translations of Métis stories based on the people's rich oral tradition. Her first children's book *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart) was written in 1977 because her grandson wanted to know where we got fire.

Maria Campbell has made numerous contributions to magazines such as *Maclean's* and is the author of *The Red Dress*, a film released by the National Film board of Canada in 1997. She has served as Writer in Residence at the Banff School of Fine Arts and taught Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan and was recently (2009) the Carol Shields Writer in Residence at the University of Winnipeg.

Over the years she has done numerous cultural presentations for Parks Canada at the Batoche National Historic Site. She is always in great demand to do readings from her work at Métis cultural events. Over the years, she has worked with numerous young Métis women to pass on Métis women's oral knowledge and teachings. On May 30, 2004, she was the recipient of the *Molson Award for the Arts*, acknowledging her substantial contributions to the cultural and intellectual heritage of Canada.



Sharon Conway and Georgina Liberty present a Métis Shawl to Maria at Manitoba Métis Federation, April 2009. Photo by Shirley Delorme Russell.

Maria Campbell's first professionally produced play, *Flight*, was the first all Aboriginal theatre production in modern Canada. Weaving modern dance, storytelling and drama together with traditional Aboriginal art practices, this early work set a stylistic tone that her most recent productions continue to explore. Two of her plays have toured extensively within Canada and abroad to Scotland, Denmark, and Italy. From 1985 to 1997 Ms. Campbell owned and operated a

production company, Gabriel Productions. She has written and/or directed films by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), including *My Partners My People*, which aired on CTV for three years. She was coordinator and member of Sage Ensemble, a community theatre group for Aboriginal elders, and is actively associated with the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company in Saskatoon as a cultural advisor.

The Maria Campbell publications list:

- Campbell, Maria. *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, translated by Maria Campbell; paintings by Sherry Farrell Racette. Revised Edition. Saskatoon, SK: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2010.
- Métis Electoral Consultation Panel (Sask.). *Métis governance in Saskatchewan for the 21st century: views and visions of the Métis people: a report prepared by the Métis Electoral Consultation Panel; submitted to the Saskatchewan Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations*. Regina, SK: Métis Electoral Consultation Panel, 2005.
- *Stories of the Road Allowance people*; translated by Maria Campbell; paintings by Sherry Farrell Racette. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1995.
- Campbell, Maria and Harry Daniels *One More Time*. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada: Author, 1995.
- *Give back: First Nations perspectives on cultural practice*. Maria Campbell, et al. North Vancouver: Gallerie Publications, 1992.
- Griffiths, Linda and Maria Campbell. *The book of Jessica: a theatrical transformation*. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1989, Playwrights Canada Press, 1997. This play won the Chalmers Award for Best New Play and a Dora Mavor Moore Award.
- Campbell, Maria. *Achimoona*. Saskatoon, SK: Fifth House, 1985.
- Campbell, Maria. *Halfbreed*. Halifax, NS : Goodread Biographies, 1983, c1973.
- Campbell, Maria. *People of the buffalo: How the Plains Indians lived*. Illustrated by Douglas Tait & Shannon Twofeathers. 1st paperback ed., rev. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1983.
- Campbell, Maria. *Cheechum's Enkelin: Autobiographie einer kanadischen Halbindianerin*; [übersetzt aus dem Kanadischen von Roswitha McCoppin]. 1. Aufl. -- München : Frauenoffensive, 1983, c1981.
- Campbell, Maria. *Riel's people: How the Métis lived*. Illustrated by David MacLagan. 1st paperback ed. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1983.
- Campbell, Maria. *Halfbreed*. 1st Bison book ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982, c1973.
- Campbell, Maria. *Riel's people: How the Métis lived*. Illustrated by David MacLagan. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1978.

- Campbell, Maria. *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit*. Illustrated by David Maclagan. Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1977. Illustrated by David Maclag
- Campbell, Maria. *Halfbreed*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam, 1979, c1973.

Maria's film and video credits include:

- *Journey to Healing* (Writer/Director) (1995)
- *La Beau Sha Sho* (Writer/Director) (1994)
- *Joseph's Justice* (Writer/Director) (1994)
- *A Centre for Buffalo Narrows* (Writer/Director) (1987)
- *My Partners My People* (Co-Producer) (1987)
- *Cumberland House* (Writer/Director) (1986)
- *Road to Batoche* (Writer/Director) (1985)
- *Sharing and Education* (Writer/Director) (1985)
- *The Red Dress* (Writer) (1977)
- *Edmonton's Unwanted Women* (Writer/Director) (1968)

Maria Campbell, in earlier times, attended the residential school at Beauval, Saskatchewan for one year. She has gone on to earn an MA in Native Studies from the University of Saskatchewan. She has received honorary doctorates from the University of Regina (1995), York University (1992), and Athabasca University (2000). She has taught Métis history and the study of oral traditions at universities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. Dr. Campbell is a visiting academic at the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research, Athabasca University.

Maternal Genealogy:

- Grandfather: Pete Dubuque
- Grandmother: Philomene Morissette, b. April 3, 1896.
- Great-Grandfather: Norbert Surgil Morissette, b. October 10, 1858, at Beardy's Reserve.
- Great-Grandmother: Judith Starblanket, b. 1860 at Sandy Lake.
- Great-great-Grandfather: Antoine Kamiyoahcahkwcw Ahtakakoop Starblanket.³
- Great-great-Grandmother: Judith Belanger Mistawasis, b. 1843,
- Great-great-great-Grandfather: Pierre Belanger Mistawasis.
- Great-great-great-Grandmother: Anne Awasis Mashe Nah Sho Wishk.
- Great-great-great-Grandfather: Norbert Jean Morissette, b. 1838 at St. Boniface.
- Great-great-great-Grandmother: Betsy Braconnier, b. 1848.

Métis Scrip:

Campbell, Mary; address: Prince Albert; claim no. 1731; born: 1860 at South Branch, Saskatchewan; father: Ma-miskittash-ko-ne-ke (Métis); mother: Charlotte Eh-she-kashk (Métis or Indian); married: 1874 at Prince Albert to Archibald Campbell; children living: Mary, John, Edward and Christy; children deceased: Albert, died: Fall, 1886; scrip for \$240.00

³ (1837-1896)

Morisette, Norbert - Concerning his claim as a head of family and as heirs to his two deceased Métis children, Betsy born 1858, died 1871 and Ambroise born 1865, died 1878 - Address, Fort Carlton - Born, 1838 at St. Boniface - Father, Arselme Morisette, (French Canadian) - Mother, Thérèse, (Indian) - Married, 1856 at Red River to Betsy Braconnier - Children living, eight (names on declaration) - Children deceased, four - Scrip for \$160.00 - Scrip for \$480.00 - Claim 1334.

RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-b , Volume 1330 , Reel C-14940

Morissette Jr., Norbert - Concerning his claim as a child - Address, Carlton - Born, 1859 - Father, Norbert Morissette Sr., (Métis) - Mother, Betsy Braconnier, (Métis) - Married, 1877 at Carlton to Judith, Starblanket Ahtahkakoop (Indian) - Children living, three (names on declaration) - Children deceased, one - Scrip for \$240 - Claim 1408.

RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-b , Volume 1330 , Reel C-14940

Moricette, Norbert; heir to his deceased daughter, Judith; Moricette; address: Duck Lake, Sask; born: 21 Sept., 1879 at Carlton, Sask; died: Fall, 1889 at Muskeg Lake, Sask; father: Norbert Moricette (Métis & deponent); mother: Betsy Braconnier (Métis); scrip cert.: form D, no. 551 for \$240.00; claim no. 251.

RG15 , Interior , Series D-II-8-c , Volume 1360 , Reel C-14992



Compiled and Edited by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute