



Artwork by George Gingras

U is for Unique

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U si poor kishchi kaykway

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Métis culture is a one-of-a-kind blend of **First Nations**, French-Canadian, and Scottish **traditions**. The Métis emerged by the 1740s in the Great Lakes region and by the 1780s in what is now Western Canada. The Métis borrowed from their First Nations, European, and French-Canadian ancestors. They took these teachings and other cultural items such as foods, clothing, and entertainment and combined them. They then made a new culture that best suited their needs. Métis values show the influence of all their ancestors. These values include an independent and fun-loving spirit, respect for the **Creator**, skill at trading and in commerce, and a willingness to share with others.

Almost every aspect of Métis culture is a unique blending. This blending of cultures is most notable in languages such as **Michif** and **Bungee**. It is also seen in traditional Métis stories that blend **Cree (Nêhiyawêwin/Nihithawîwin/Nêhinawêwin)**, **Saulteaux (Nakawē)** and French-Canadian (Canadien or **Canayen**) folklore. Some Métis even mixed First Nations **spirituality** with Christianity. Métis music is composed in Cree, Michif, and French, while Métis dancing mixes First Nations **step dancing** with Scottish and French-Canadian jigging and **square dancing**. Traditional Métis clothing included First Nations items such as **moccasins** and **leggings** along with European items such as military-style coats and hats. The Métis mixed all these traditions to form new ones that did not previously exist. It is this mix of cultures that makes Métis culture unique.

Other Resources:

Barkwell, Lawrence J., L. Dorion, and D. R. Préfontaine, eds. *Metis Legacy: A Metis Historiography and Annotated Bibliography*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2001.

Barkwell, Lawrence J., L. Dorion, and A. Hourie. *Metis Legacy II: Michif Culture, Heritage, and Folkways*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2007.

The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture (www.metismuseum.ca).

