

WALKING TOGETHER

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum



Oral Tradition

The Métis Oral Tradition

Excerpt from *Peoples and Cultural Change*

Government of Alberta ■





THE MÉTIS ORAL TRADITION

Excerpt from *Peoples and Cultural Change*

THE MÉTIS ORAL TRADITION

Métis people, like First Nations, have an oral tradition in which knowledge of Elders is passed to younger generations. In her book *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, Maria Campbell translated Michif stories from Métis Elders and wrote them using a special dialectal English. She wrote the stories phonetically to help the reader "hear" the stories as if spoken with an accent, almost as she might have heard them.

Excerpt from "Dah Teef"

Well you know
dat teef he never change his ways.
All hees life he steal.
He never work for a living like everybody else he do.
He have a good woman too
An a hell of a pile of kids.
Dey all turr out good dough
but dats cause hees wife he teach dem dah good way.

Hees not just dah stealing dats bad you know.
All dough dats bad enough.
Dah real bad ting is your kids and all your grandchildren.
Dey don got no good stories about you if your a teef.

An dah stories you know
dats dah bes treasure of all to leave your family.
Everyting else on dis eart
he gets los or wore out.
But dah stories
dey las forever.

Your Project

1. Read the excerpt from *Stories of the Road Allowance People* silently to yourself. Guess what some of the words mean.
2. Read the excerpt aloud, working with a partner. Pronounce the words phonetically. Which method of reading the poem was easier to understand?
3. Re-write the excerpt without the dialect. What effect does this have? Why do you think Campbell chose to write the stories as she did?
4. What does the excerpt tell you about the importance of the oral tradition in Métis culture?
5. Prepare an oral story that reflects your culture, or another culture that interests you. Practise telling the story many times, until you are ready to tell the story to others.
6. Tell your story to your class.