

All My Relations

When I think of Metis culture and what it means to me as a First Nations woman of mixed ancestry, as a mother, as a community member, and as an educator, I think back to my conversations with my father. I am grateful he took the time to answer my many questions.

As an indigenous youth myself, I often met discrimination I did not understand. I often heard words and conversations I did not understand. It seemed that as I grew, I found myself wrapped in a predetermined identity, that I did not understand.

One thing I did understand through my Indigenous roots, is that I am a part of this land through the blood of my mother, and her mother before her, and her mother before her, and her mother before her on and on until the beginning of Turtle Island, when the first woman/mother fell from the sky.

Through this teaching my father taught me that the Metis are as much a part of the Great Turtle as I am. He taught and cautioned me early on of policy and lateral violence being tools of which, the government uses to plays tricks on Turtle Islands peoples and our visitor brothers and sisters, in such a way as they begin to consume each other and evil is allowed to thrive amongst the people. Much like the Windigo stories. With this came stories of visitors, wars, speeches, broken treaties, ethnogenesis and the Indian act.... And the taking away of mothers.

Mostly, I will always remember the way he spoke/speaks of the power of women. Always the strength and resilience of Indigenous women. The building of nations through women. The connection to water, the moon, the land.... And to each other, through the women. It is these lineages and connections that have held fast to weave so much of Metis culture and kinship across Turtle Island and through the tapestry that weaves what is now commonly referred to as Canada. With these stories my father told me of a time when all people of Turtle Island were accountable to only the Great Laws of Peace, with sacred responsibilities to self, water, the land and all relatives, beholden to no two-legged human.....

I reflect on these things now as I consider the culture, history and sharing I have had the honour to be a part of, the weekly joining together of women within the Metis Nation and community. It is through these lineages and connections of women, that as much as in the past, still today, our Metis relatives weave so much of their culture throughout our communities as I consider my friends and relatives the Metis or OTIPEMISIWAK: The People Who Own Themselves....for these teachings I am grateful- All My Relations

Lesley Garlow