



# Medicine Walk with Preston Huppie

## RLI Indigenous Language Experiences

### Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3



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*All RCTL resources have been carefully developed by RLI's team of Métis educators. If you have questions or concerns, please contact [education@rupert'sland.org](mailto:education@rupert'sland.org)*

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## Maskihkîy Language

### *Experiential Background Information*

The Métis Culture and Language project has provided the Métis Nation with the opportunity to connect and build relationships. Cree and Michif languages pass down lessons, stories, songs, knowledge, and traditions between generations. These stories and songs dwell within the heart of the Métis in preserving its culture and its connection to the land and the information that comes from it. Many stories are passed intergenerationally with the understanding of how Métis establish their relationships with their European and First Nations cousins, along with the vast familial connections to their Métis cousins. They speak of nature and its importance in respecting the earth, the animals, and plants. This knowledge provides insight of how to interact harmoniously and reciprocally. Within Region Three of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Melanie Lapp had the unique opportunity and honour to walk with Métis educator, Preston Huppie to discuss such stories and knowledge. Métis Language and Cultural Project Coordinator Melanie Lapp spent time with Mr. Huppie to share their experiences and listen to the stories that provide Métis foundational knowledge. Melanie and Mr. Huppie explored the importance of language and the implementation of language within a primary academic setting; each provided insightful information regarding authentic and engaging implementation for students.

### *Activity: Medicine Walk and Interview*

During the interview section, Mr. Huppie and Melanie alluded to the critical and powerful impact of land-based and language learning for students to connect to the culture. Mr. Huppie spoke passionately regarding the importance of portraying and dignifying Métis identity within the school setting for students. Throughout the interaction, both educators shared powerful experiences with regards to family and how their experiences with family (parents, grandparents, extended family, etc.) shaped who they were and how they perceived themselves throughout their schooling years. Mr. Huppie explains that while he was Métis, there was an immense disconnection of his family's place, as people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) did not perceive them as part of their culture. Explaining that while he knew they were different, he was not aware of how such adversities affected his parents and by extension himself.

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While conversing, Mr. Huppie expressed the importance of tying language to Métis identity. He explained that his parents found it more “beneficial” for their children to speak English as there was racism and even prejudice experienced if they were not fully versed in English.

As the interview portion concluded, Mr. Huppie and Ms. Lapp explored the medicines, or plants, that were explored previously by Mr. Huppie and how important it was for the Métis to remain connected to the earth and its ability to care for its peoples. Mr. Huppie demonstrated that for harvesting of the plant, an offering of generally tobacco, must be provided for the reciprocity of the relationship with the Earth, therefore it would not be a harvesting walk but rather a knowledge walk. Throughout the walk, Mr. Huppie explanations of both of sage and sweetgrass and the knowledge of which plant to be cultivated was explored along with how to respect the medicines.

Ms. Lapp and Mr. Huppie provided profound insight into the importance of honouring and dedicating learning within the classroom to Métis language, culture, and traditions. Continued below, a summary of Ms. Lapp’s experience within Region Three and her reflection of the Métis Language within an educational setting.

#### *Reflection by Melanie Lapp*

During her reflection, Melanie expresses the profound gratitude she has towards her opportunity to discuss the importance of the Métis people and culture with Elders, knowledge keepers, educators, and community members. “Living the Métis Lifestyle” is the phrase she provided in the experience of travelling and discussing the importance of this work she is doing. She explains that she was raised by her mother and grandparents, which allowed her to experience the Cree and Michif language, although never having had the opportunity to speak it fluently. It was beneficial for her to have the language embedded within her interview and medicine walk with Mr. Huppie. Melanie explained that the experience of conversing and learning from another Métis Educator was both powerful and insightful. Mr. Huppie provided both rich and authentic conversation embedded with the Cree language to resonate its meaning along with its understanding of the relationship with the land. Melanie explains that while she was learning about the medicines, Mr. Huppie also demonstrated how this could be implemented within a school setting and how Métis culture and language can be provided through land-based and language learning. She explains that there was a heavy presence of knowledge and respect within the interview and walk.

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Melanie provides thoughtful insights regarding the use of the medicine walk within the classroom and using language to guide the lesson. She explains that while Mr. Huppie is not a fluent speaker of Cree or Michif, his ability to use the language he is familiar with creates an authentic and engaging land-based and language learning opportunity for students. She addresses the idea that learning with students, whether learning language or land-based knowledge, helps them build connections with what they are experience and allows them to come to respect and learn from the land.

#### *Recommendations*

- Contact an Elder/Knowledge Keeper in building capacity within land-based and language learning
- Prior to the medicine walk, discuss with students the importance of the walk and the knowledge that comes from the experience
- Incorporation of various languages (such as: Cree, Michif, French, Dene) allows students to see language within the walk; language provides a deeper connection and understanding of the land
- Follow protocol - reciprocity with the land-based and language learning, respecting of Elder/Knowledge Keeper's knowledge
- Provide visuals of language; image and Cree/Michif word (paskwāwīhkaskwa- Sage, wīhkaskwa-sweetgrass)

#### **Related Videos:**

[RLI ILE Region 3 - Medicine Walk](#)

*Full Interview with Preston Huppie:*

[Medicine Walk Video 1](#)

[Medicine Walk Video 2](#)

[Medicine Walk Video 3](#)

Appendix A - Photographs (Medicine Walk and Interview)

