

## REFLECTION

# Composing *Louis Riel's Dream*: Exploring the History of the Red River Settlement through Family Stories and Music

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## ABSTRACT

The author discusses six compositions she created between 2013 and 2021. In the process she gained insight into her mixed heritage, the meaning of “Métis,” and the complicated relationships she and her family have with their heritage and living at the intersection of settler and Indigenous values. Observing Canada’s political landscape and issues facing Indigenous peoples, the author comments on the current Red River Métis court fight over rights and identity. The creative process enables her to explore the personal effects of colonialism, find her voice, and heal her wounds.

### ***GREETING IN THE CREE LANGUAGE:***

*Tānisi*

*Karen Nitisyīkāson*

*Winnipeg (wee nih pek) kayāhtē-ōhci-nīya*

*Joyce Clouston nikawiy, Lenore Birston Clouston nōhkom*

*kitōhchikēwin nikiskinwahamākān*

*kīhci-kiskinwahamātōwikamikōhk*

*Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo*

## **Introduction**

I am a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation and grew up in Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of the Anishnaabe, Ininiwak, Anishininiwak, Dakota, and Dene peoples and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. When I moved to Waterloo, Ontario a little over four years ago, I knew very little of the Haudenosaunee people. I am honored to have learned from and collaborated with a number of Haudenosaunee peoples, and to have been welcomed at the Woodlands Cultural Centre and the Mohawk Chapel. I still

have a lot to learn about this area, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Indigenous peoples who took care of this beautiful land for thousands of years. I hope to grow these relationships and knowledge as I continue to live here.

I have always known I was a Red River Métis, but I haven't always known what that means. In the last ten years I have been doing a lot of exploring and learning about my family history in the Red River settlement and what it means to have a mixed European and Métis heritage. These explorations often occurred first through my compositions and then through research and family conversations that grew into more compositions as my curiosity led to new revelations.

To provide a path through these explorations, I have divided the core of this article into five Parts. Part I sets the stage by considering the question of defining "Métis." Part II looks at three pieces I have written about my Métis grandmother Lenore Clouston. It is thanks to her that I knew I was Métis, and it is through explorations of her life in my compositions that I discovered more about what it means to be Métis and about the history of the Métis people. In Part II I also describe how my collaborations with my mother, Joyce Clouston, began. Part III reviews a piece I wrote about my settler heritage on the theme of mental illness, specifically about my great-great grandmother Matilda Clouston. She moved to the Red River Settlement around 1866 and spent the final twenty-five years of her life in the Manitoba Asylum. In Part IV I discuss two recent pieces about my Aunt Beverley that were inspired by the writing of Joyce Clouston. Part V returns to the question of defining Métis.

## **I        Definition of "Métis"**

Growing up, I thought "Métis" meant people with mixed European and Indigenous heritage. But I was wrong about this. I was close to my Métis family, and although I grew up in the city of Winnipeg, we visited the family farm at least once a month, and anyone I met with mixed heritage was Métis. But of course they were, as we were in the Red River Settlement! As I started meeting Indigenous peoples from across Canada, I realized that there was a unique identity specific to my family and the Métis centered in the Settlement.

Who exactly are the Métis? The French word basically means “mixed.” The Cree word for the Métis is *Āpihtawikosisān*, which means “half of the people,” or *Otipēyimisowak*, which means “the people who command themselves” or “independent people.”<sup>1</sup> The word my ancestors were called, because my family heritage is English and Indigenous, was “Halfbreed.” But that doesn’t tell us who the people are or how they became the Métis Nation. Recently, the Manitoba Métis Federation left the National Métis Council, partly over the definition of who is and who is not Métis. In a press release about the withdrawal, David Chartrand, the president of the Manitoba Métis Federation, says this:

This decision to leave was not an easy one... we asked our 2019 Annual General Assembly to give us the direction to pull out of [the Métis National Council] should [the Métis Nation of Ontario] continue to be allowed a seat at the governance table while they – by their own admission – have nearly 80% non-Métis Nation Citizens in their registry. Our Assembly of 3,000 delegates unanimously supported the resolution ... we feel compelled to protect and support those who derive their section 35 rights from the Red River Métis, also known as the Manitoba Métis – which is the origin, heart, and core of the Métis Nation.<sup>2</sup>

The section 35 rights Chartrand is referring to is Section 35 of the Constitution Act (1982) that states:

35 (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed. (2) In this Act, “aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.<sup>3</sup>

The definition of Métis that was adopted by the Métis Nation in 2002

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel’s People, the Métis Nation* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2019), 476.

<sup>2</sup> Press Release, September 29, 2021. See Manitoba Metis Federation Website: <https://www.manitobametis.com/news/mmf-withdraws-from-mnc-focus-on-being-the-national-voice-for-the-red-river-metis>, accessed Oct. 6, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-13.html>, accessed Oct. 11, 2021.

comes from Article III of the Manitoba Métis Federation Constitution:

Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation.<sup>4</sup>

In summary, to become a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation you must (1) self- identify as Métis, (2) prove that you have Métis Ancestry, often through records of who was given *scrip* (see below), and (3) be an accepted member of the Métis community. I completed the application with my brother in 2017. But my mother and a number of her siblings had their Métis cards for years!

## II Métis Grandmother Lenore

### ♪ *Born by the River*<sup>5</sup>

The first piece I wrote that explicitly taps into my Métis heritage began as a celebration of my Métis grandmother, Lenore Clouston. The piece for string orchestra, titled *Born by the River*, was commissioned and premiered by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra in February 2013.

My grandmother was a farmer, visual artist, and local (Selkirk) community activist. She came of age during World War Two when her own family's Indigenous roots were hidden (her grandparents spoke Cree, but this was not talked about). Through her art she explored her multicultural past so that her children and the following generations could be proud of their heritage. My grandmother's hospitable Métis family was the center of the community and my Scottish-settler grandfather, who lived in the area, often gathered with the other youth at my great-grandparents' farm. It was there that he learned to play fiddle. As a child I spent much time at my grandparents' farm near Selkirk, where the tradition of music making and community gathering continued. My grandmother Lenore would sit at the

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<sup>4</sup> The MMF constitution (confirmed most recently in 2019). See [https://www.manitobametis.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MMF\\_Constitution\\_2019.pdf](https://www.manitobametis.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MMF_Constitution_2019.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> <https://youtu.be/vrobwFlzhxM>. Excerpt of *Born by the River*. Note measures 200-241. Commissioned, premiered, and performed by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra with conductor Anne Manson on February 19, 2013 at Westminster United Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

piano laying the foundation for the pieces while my grandfather played the fiddle. I remember dancing the night away with my siblings as the music swirled around us, hearing the constant presence of my grandmother singing and laughing as she banged the chords out on the piano. For a few years I also learned some fiddle tunes myself and played with my grandparents.

For this reason it is a fiddle tune that is the background of this piece—the first time I used a fiddle tune in my music. The tune shows up in fragments and is the major rhythmic pulse throughout the work. The other musical material in the piece comes from my grandmother's first name, Lenore. I divided the letters of her name into three syllables: Le No Re. Then I interpreted those three syllables as the pitch A-flat, pizzicato notes with silence, and the pitch D. This motive is both in the larger structure of the piece and in the foreground as small three-note motives.

During the Depression, the land developed by my great-grandparents was illegally repossessed, and her family lost their plot near Selkirk and moved a mile west. Yet the Red River and the old family homestead continued to be an important source of artistic inspiration for my grandmother. Because of her love for the Red River, *Born by The River* also depicts the water's movement through constant rhythms and the quick rise and fall of pitch patterns. The piece is also composed around the idea of fuzzy memories. Although the fiddle tune around which it is based represents the river, I also use it to depict a memory that comes in and out of focus. Thus there are times in the music when everything seems a little off, then for a moment all voices come together perfectly. But that lasts for only a few seconds and then the clarity fades. This depicts my memory of playing *The Old French* with my grandparents, and you can hear this in the excerpt.

♪ ***Mama's Painting: Louis Riel's Dream***<sup>6</sup>

In 2015, a few years after I completed *Born by the River*, I was commissioned

<sup>6</sup> <https://youtu.be/XEenrLI3f90>. Excerpt from *Mama's Painting*, text by Joyce Clouston. The clip is from the end of the second movement and into the beginning of the third movement. Performed by Marcus Scholtes, violin I; Sharon Lee, violin II; Rebecca Diderrich, viola; Miriam Stewart-Kroeker, cello; Heidi Wall, piano; Karen Sunabacka, narrator. Recorded by Earl McCluskie on February 28, 2018 at Conrad Grebel University College during a noonhour concert. The piece is available on SoundCloud: [https://soundcloud.com/karensunabacka/mamas-painting-louis-riels-dream?si=e5a196d812eb44aa9d802e7050395320&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/karensunabacka/mamas-painting-louis-riels-dream?si=e5a196d812eb44aa9d802e7050395320&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing).

to compose a piano quintet for the Agassiz Chamber Music Festival in Winnipeg. This gave me the opportunity to write a second piece about, and inspired by, Lenore. I called it *Mama's Painting: Louis Riel's Dream*. When my Métis grandmother was in her fifties and sixties, she started a large project she called "Louis Riel's Dream." She began with five sketches that she intended to turn into five paintings. These paintings were to highlight the history of Western Canada through the stories of the Indigenous peoples, illustrating the clashes of cultures and politics in what is now known as Western Canada and pointing to a future where people of all races could live in harmony. Lenore never finished this project, and all that remains are two unfinished paintings.<sup>7</sup>

Because I was so compelled by my grandmother's project, her artwork and her inspiration from Louis Riel,<sup>8</sup> I decided to complete her art project musically. I sought collaboration with members of my family, using my mother's prose to start each of the five movements of the piece, and inviting my sister, Andrea, and aunts, Lisa and Lana, to contribute artworks to display at the concert. The premiere was a wonderful and collaborative event. Composing the piece was a musical completion of my grandmother's five-painting plan, and another celebration of her and an exploration of her struggles with her identity, as well as a glimpse at the history of the Red River Settlement.

This piece marked the first time I collaborated with my mother. Her writing is deep and personal, and I was thirsty for more information about our family and how we fit with the larger Métis community. But after writing this piece and engaging with my mother's writing and her memories of my grandmother, I couldn't stop asking these questions: Why was it that my grandmother did not know she was Métis? Why was her mother so determined to tell everyone that her husband was Scottish? I figured a lot of this had to do with racism towards the Métis, but recently I read Jean Teillet's *The North-West is our Mother* and have a better understanding of why my

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<sup>7</sup> The promotional artwork for the author's Benjamin Eby Lecture (October 21, 2021, Conrad Grebel University College) on which this article is based is the first of these paintings.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Riel, born in 1844, was executed for high treason by the Canadian Government in 1885. He was a Métis leader and founder of Manitoba, and a central figure in the Red River and North-West resistances. Many books have been written about Riel, but a basic article is <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/louis-riel>, accessed January 11, 2022.

ancestors would actively work to hide their heritage. When the Manitoba Act was signed in 1870, and Manitoba became part of Canada, an expeditionary force from Ontario was sent to the Red River Settlement. This force was led by John Christian Schultz, a member of the Canada First movement that, among other things, believed in Anglo-Saxon and Protestant superiority. Schultz was active in the Red River Settlement before 1870, the founder of the Canada First branch in the North-West and no friend of the Métis.

There were over ten thousand people in Red River when the Expeditionary Force arrived. Eight thousand were fairly evenly split between English and French Métis. But the arrival of the troops, just over one thousand men, established the emotion that was to dominate the population for the next two and a half years – fear.

...The Expeditionary Force...was readily available to carry out the revenge envisioned by the Orange Lodge ... One of Schultz's supporters summed up their goal: "The pacification we want is extermination. We shall never be satisfied till we have driven the French half-breeds out of the country."<sup>9</sup>

In the 1870s the social environment of the Red River Settlement, which had been about cooperation and consensus, changed with many political white settlers enforcing a reign of terror on the Métis who remained in the Settlement. For my ancestors, there was racism within the family between those of Scottish or Swedish heritage and those with Métis and mixed heritage, but they could all claim they were English or Scottish. For the French Métis, it was much worse: They were both Métis and Catholic. The new settlers and military men, gathered and fired up through a propaganda campaign led by Schultz and others, tended to be Orangemen from the Orange Lodges of Ontario.

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<sup>9</sup> Teillet, *The Story of Louis Riel's People*, 241-42. The Orange Order in Canada, a branch of a fraternal organization that began in present-day Northern Ireland, dates from roughly 1812. Orange Lodges were at one time the chief social institution in Upper Canada (Ontario), organizing community and benevolent activities, and helping British Protestant immigrants to settle. The Order remained a dominant but controversial political force into the 20th century.—Ed.

My ancestors were able to continue working on their farms north of Winnipeg, in their English Parishes, staying mostly out of the line of fire. The area along the Red River north of Winnipeg was where most of the English Métis had held properties since the early 1800s. However, they were still affected by the way the Government of Canada chose to interpret the Manitoba Act. The original farms of the Métis in all parts of the Red River Settlement were built on ribbons of land along a River.

The Métis built their homes on the rivers, on long, narrow lots they called *rangs*.... The *rangs* were about eight hundred feet wide and about two miles long. Each family built their home and garden fairly close to the river. Toward the back of their *rangs*, they had a commons that provided forage lands for their livestock (their hay privilege, woodlots and other cutting areas).<sup>10</sup>

If you look at the land today from above, you can still see this organization imprinted on the terrain. The land still carries the memory of the *rangs*.<sup>11</sup>

When the Canadian Government half-heartedly attempted to fulfill the Manitoba Act they gave the Red River Métis something called “Scrip.”

In 1870, the Canadian government devised a system of scrip — referred to as Métis (or “half-breed”) scrip — that issued documents redeemable for land or money. Scrip was given to Métis people living in the West in exchange for their land rights. The scrip process was legally complex and disorganized; this made it difficult for Métis people to acquire land, yet

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 268. See also Gerald Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1996), 115.

<sup>11</sup> A survey map of the Parish of St Andrews and Parish of St. Clement's from around 1870 shows the long thin *rangs* branching out from the Red River. The Birston family farm was a little to the north of the Hudson's Bay Company fort. A satellite view shows what the Selkirk area looks like now. The *rangs* are still visible in many places: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Selkirk,+MB/@50.1351314,96.9276506,9690m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x52ea5ff6974200ed:0x71880b8a9d0d7083!8m2!3d50.1435276!4d-96.8754295>, accessed January 11, 2022.



simultaneously created room for fraud.<sup>12</sup>

The land assigned to my ancestors through *scrip* was not anywhere near their community around Selkirk, so they had to repurchase their land along the river, with the next generation purchasing other land available on what had been their shared pasturelands. According to the Manitoba Act they should have been granted that land. Then, as I mentioned before, their purchased land was illegally removed by a large profit-making corporation during the Depression. In summary, the Birston family, my Métis ancestors, lost land in two generations.

♪ *I Wasn't Meant for This*<sup>13</sup>

When my grandmother Lenore Clouston was coming of age, she didn't know about her connection to the Métis. She was deeply connected to the land and community in which she was raised, because her father and grandfather chose to stay in that community, purchasing land that should have been granted to them by the Manitoba Act and repurchasing land that had been in the family for close to 100 years. After experiencing the loss of land, her father, Alexander Birston, a Métis leader in the community, insisted that all his children get a good education. His reasoning was that once you had an education, it couldn't be removed, and you could defend yourself against swindlers. Many of his children became teachers, many of his grandchildren have graduate degrees, and many of his great-grandchildren, including me, have PhDs. I missed meeting him by only a few years, and I wish I could have met him.

With each new piece I've written about my grandmother I've gone deeper into her life and her relationships. In 2018 I was commissioned to compose a piece for *Park Sounds*, a newly formed viola and percussion duo whose members are old friends Jen Thiessen and Ben Reimer. As I was starting work on it, my mother was starting a book about her childhood,

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-scrip-in-canada>, accessed Oct. 1, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> <https://youtu.be/ARk8Kd5mug>. Opening three minutes of movement 1 from *I Wasn't Meant for This*, text by Joyce Clouston. Commissioned, performed, and premiered by Park Sounds (Jennifer Thiessen, viola d'amore and Ben Reimer, percussion) at a GroundSwell concert in Winnipeg, Manitoba on October 6, 2019.

particularly about her relationship to her older sister. She sent me a chapter, and in it I discovered another side of my grandmother: an artistic young woman who wanted to go to art school but whose life abruptly changed during and after World War Two. With my mother's help, we edited the text to a kind of monologue that depicts my grandparents' relationship and struggles before and after the war. The piece is titled *I Wasn't Meant for This* and was premiered in October 2019.

The piece moves from Lenore's disappointments of early motherhood on the farm and the racism she experienced from her in-laws, into her relationship with her husband, my grandfather, and the love they shared. The middle movement is based on a fiddle tune that recalls their experiences at community dances when my grandfather was playing in the band. The final movement recalls their struggles after the war and dealing with his PTSD. Their relationship was difficult; there were times when her deep Indigenous-based values clashed with his settler values, but he was nevertheless drawn to my grandmother and her family and found healing there. They had a beautiful, difficult, and complicated relationship.

My grandmother Lenore was resilient. There was a long period when she was raising kids and shouldering the farm work, while her husband was toiling at the local steel mill and farming around his shift work. But she also found time to develop her art and research her heritage. Then, when she was in her 50s and her children were mostly grown and independent, she finally attended university, enrolling in the Fine Arts program at the University of Manitoba and graduating in the late 1970s. So many of my memories of her picture her in her studio at the farm, working with stained glass, or standing behind an easel, or weaving on her loom. She was producing art until the day she died.

### **III Settler Trauma: Great-great-grandmother Matilda**

When visiting the family farm, we often heard stories about the community and our ancestors. The most heartbreaking of these stories was about Matilda Clouston, who was from the settler side of the family—my grandfather's family, the Cloustons—who came from Orkney, off Scotland's northeastern coast. Many of my Métis ancestors worked at the Manitoba Asylum, now

known as the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, and knew Matilda from there. My grandfather Jack Clouston was her grandson. My mother's Métis family said she suffered because she didn't have a community.

♪ *Never to Return*<sup>14</sup>

I decided to explore Matilda's story for a second piece that I was commissioned to write for the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra in 2013. At the time, I was dealing with my own closeness to mental illness, as I watched my mother struggle with situational depression. (By 2013 she was recovering, much to the relief of all of us.) To deal with my feelings of helplessness and anger about her situation, and to try to understand the life circumstances that can lead to mental illness, I explored Matilda's story through my music.

Matilda was born in Kirkwall on the Orkney Islands in 1847. She married Joseph Clouston, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company who had traveled back and forth between Orkney and Lower Fort Garry before their marriage. He brought his new bride back to Canada with him in the late 1860s to locate in the Red River Settlement. Life was hard for Matilda, as the Settlement was a rough and scary place for her. All her family was back in Orkney. In one particularly difficult and disease-stricken winter, two of her children died. Unable to dig into the frozen ground, her husband wrapped the bodies and placed them in the woodshed. Feeling isolated and alone, Matilda was unable to cope with this loss. She went out to the woodshed and brought her deceased children back into the house, warming them by the fire, insisting that they were not dead. Joseph would then bring them back to the woodshed. After this happened a number of times, he committed her to the Manitoba Asylum, where she would spend the rest of her life. She lived there from roughly 1887 to 1912.

*Never to Return* explores Matilda's life through three Scottish melodies and is a kind of lament: the cry of Mathilda, whose mind was broken by the loss of her children. Her loss and sacrifices gave me life. Her story is part of my story and our Canadian story. Giving voice to her pain, her suffering, and her sacrifices is a way for me to reconcile her story with my own and

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<sup>14</sup> <https://youtu.be/QC5Ntk6eLY8>. *Never to Return*, measures 189-225. Commissioned, performed, and premiered by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra with conductor James Sommerville on November 27, 2013.

the history of the early Manitoba settlers. In the middle section there is a transition from the trauma of loss into a more hopeful section focussed on healing. I based the final section on a Scottish hymn, actually the well-known Scottish traditional melody *Ye Banks and Braes*. I found an arrangement by John Bell and Graham Maule with the words “We cannot measure how you heal” that was particularly pertinent to Mathilda’s story.

The reception to this piece was surprising. Even before the premiere, long-lost relatives who were also descendants of Matilda contacted me and my family with their own stories of mental illness and generational trauma. Hearing these stories was devastating. Many had tried to run from the trauma and abuse that was a result of Matilda’s illness by moving far away from the community and suppressing the stories. They had no idea that there had been mental illness and trauma in the family. I am grateful to my Métis family for the values and traditions we had of sharing stories and caring for each other during difficult times. Growing up, I had often heard those stories, giving me a context and an openness about life’s difficulties. I always knew that I had ancestors who faced hardships—and that I could talk with family and be supported when I too was struggling. The strength within the Métis community lies in its core values of sharing and caring for everyone. Although my grandfather’s family looked down on their Halfbreed neighbors, it was the traditions and values of my Métis grandmother’s family that helped my grandfather thrive.

#### **IV Relationships: Aunt Beverley**

The final two pieces are about my aunt Beverley Clouston and were again inspired by the writing of my mother Joyce. As I have mentioned, Joyce has been writing a book about her relationship with her sister. My mother was the third child of seven in her family. Her oldest sister, Beverley, suffered a birth injury and became disabled at around age six. She struggled with seizures and developmental and physical disabilities, and lived in an institution for 28 years. When group homes became available for people with disabilities, she moved into one where she was loved and treated respectfully. She also stayed with us regularly, always asking how we were doing and bringing us cards and gifts that she had carefully chosen. Her generosity, warmth, and

enthusiasm filled my childhood home every time she came. She died in April 2016, a week or so after my mother and I had visited her. Her joy at seeing me still brings tears to my eyes.

♪ ***English Horn Concerto: In Memory of Beverley Clouston***<sup>15</sup>

When I started working on an *English Horn Concerto* in 2018, I decided to dedicate it to my aunt Beverley. I incorporated her favorite songs—“You are my Sunshine” and “Jesus loves me”—into the second movement. The third movement is based around the fiddle tune “Big John McNeil,” which in Manitoba is sometimes known as the Métis Anthem, a tune she loved and would have heard, and danced to, at the family farm. The piece was commissioned and premiered by the Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra in October 2019.

♪ ***...our inner lives were entwined...embroidered with the same pattern***<sup>16</sup>

Last year during the pandemic I wrote another piece about my aunt, but focused it on the relationship between her and my mother. When Naomi Woo asked me to write a solo piano piece for her and a concert she was doing in Winnipeg, she gave me the theme of “HOME.” I have written many pieces about Manitoba’s big sky, the wind, the grasslands, the northern lights, and the cold crisp winters. But as I consulted with my mother and read some of her recent work, I realized that home is also about deep relationships and deep connections. The title of this solo piano piece is a quotation from the book she is writing. The passage from which I choose the title is as follows:

Much of my life had been influenced by my closeness to Beverley  
– my relationship with my children, my career. My academic  
research critiqued Western public policy historically separating

<sup>15</sup> <https://youtu.be/uCMUtZL8Oes>. Excerpt from *English Horn Concerto: In Memory of Beverley Clouston*. The clip covers the end of the second movement and the beginning of the third movement. Commissioned, performed, and premiered by L’Orchestre Métropolitain on October 10, 2019 in Montreal, Quebec with Mélanie Harel, solo english horn and Alondra de la Parra, conductor.

<sup>16</sup> <https://youtu.be/b-93oZIXsD4>. Opening excerpt from *Our inner lives were entwined...embroidered with the same pattern* for solo piano. Commissioned, performed, and premiered by Naomi Woo and Virtuosi Concerts during an ONLINE recital in March 2021.

the most vulnerable from their families and communities. I explored the values of our mother's family that were rooted in Indigenous Traditional Knowledge where individuals like Beverley were viewed as 'teachers' bringing spiritual gifts to those close to, and caring for them.

In the first year after Bev's death, I felt raw, and in the three years since – an unquiet. I wanted to find a way to express what she'd meant to me beyond and beneath the words of research and publications. In the years during her imprisonment and especially in the months and first year of her recovery from the institution, we'd had troubling struggles, disagreements, and even shouting matches. But we kept reaching for each other and this brought us closer. Every once in a while, Beverley turned to me and said, "You're my sister, I love you Joycie," and then, she'd place her head gently on my shoulder.

I felt the same way about her. I've heard the expression that people can be 'cut from the same cloth', and that was certainly true of our physical appearance, but I believe our inner lives were entwined somehow, as if embroidered with the same patterns, and we recognized these patterns in each other.

My mother describes so beautifully what I saw and what I experienced in our home. To explore the interconnectedness of my aunt and my mother in music, I again developed motives from the letters of their names and their nicknames. During the faster sections, the Beverley pitch collections are in the left hand and the Joyce pitch collections in the right. Through transpositions and transformations of the pitch material I am depicting the ups and downs of their lives, their relationship with each other, and their relationships with those around them. Beverley was an amazing person who had a zeal for life and an ability to state the uncomfortable truth, and she loved deeply.

Although there is no text in the piece, the title and the structure reflect both the close relationship of the two women and the ways I and my siblings experienced the love from them and their relationship.

## V Land and Government

The politics of early Manitoba mainly centered on who did and who did not get land, and has shaped the current concerns of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). A fight is underway that relates to Canada's history, the land, and the relationship between the Métis and the Canadian Government. In 2003, a case was brought to the Supreme Court of Canada, *R. v Powley*, that held that there was a Métis rights-bearing community in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The case was successful at all levels of the court. Unfortunately, this opened the door to people in the East (Ontario and Quebec) claiming to be Métis. These "new Métis" claim that because they have a many-times-great Indian grandmother, they are Métis. This poses a threat to the Red River Métis and to their, and my, rights.<sup>17</sup>

As the arguments were escalating between the MMF and the Métis National Council, president David Chartrand sent a message to members of the MMF that points to how serious this matter is:

Not since the days of Louis Riel have we had so much to lose, with so many wanting to take what we have. Make no mistake, friends, we have a fight on our hands, and it's no different from the fight we had at Frog Plain, at Upper Fort Garry, or at Batoche. There are people from the East who are coming to take what we have, and once again it's up to us to decide whether or not they succeed...<sup>18</sup>

The Red River Métis are again being threatened from the East. As I become more familiar with the larger issues in our political landscape and issues facing Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada, I am struck by how often history repeats itself and how in Canada we seem to be going in circles.

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<sup>17</sup> Métis writers and scholars discuss in detail the issues surrounding Métis identity and those falsely claiming it. See Teillet, *The North-West Is Our Mother*, 480-84; Chelsea Vowel, *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis & Inuit Issues in Canada*, (Winnipeg: HighWater Press, 2016), 36-51; and Adam Gaudry and Darryl Leroux, "White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: The Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3, No. 1 (2017): 116-42; <https://doi.org/10.5749/jcritethnstud.3.1.0116>.

<sup>18</sup> David Chartrand, e-mail (August 19, 2021) and published in *Le Métis*: <https://www.mmf.mb.ca/wcm-docs/news/lemetis>.

The Red River Métis are continuing to fight in court about the mishandling of the Manitoba Act, arguing that in legal terms it is a treaty and that the Canadian Government failed to provide the land grant the Métis were promised. The Supreme Court agreed in 2013, but negotiations continue.

### **Conclusion**

Exploring my grandmother's story, my great-great-grandmother's story, and my mother and aunt's story has opened my eyes to the complicated relationships my family and I have with our multicultural heritage. We live in the intersection of settler and Indigenous values. My grandmother and aunt often had to fight to get their voices heard, and they were sometimes angry. I too am sometimes angry at the injustices I learn about and encounter personally. But I am also in a place of privilege and must fight my own racism that can sometimes be hard to see yet is in my blood.

My mother and I continue to collaborate, and we are starting to move deeper into our heritage, including our connections to Cree communities, and to examine our relationships with other settlers in Manitoba, including Mennonites. Because of the work and encouragement of my grandmother, I know who I am and my place in Canada's history. I am grateful to her for teaching me to be proud of my heritage. Because of that mixed heritage, I have both benefited from colonialism and been wounded by it. My music is where I have found my voice and healed my wounds, and where I continue to explore the complicated relationships of my past and present.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This article is based on the author's Benjamin Eby Lecture, presented on October 21, 2021 at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. <https://youtu.be/NyfvpS8r09U>.